



Witness, experiences and the performances of the Brazilian TV reporter*

Testemunha, vivência e as atuações do repórter na TV brasileira

Juliana Freire Gutmann¹

Valéria Maria Vilas Bôas²

Itania Maria Mota Gomes³



¹ Professor of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Communication and Culture, UFBA, Brazil. PhD in Contemporary Communication and Culture at the PósCom/UFBA, 2012. E-mail: jugutmann@gmail.com

² PhD student of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Communication and Culture at UFBA, Brazil. E-mail: lelavbs@gmail.com

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³ Professor of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Communication and Culture of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), Brazil. PhD in Contemporary Communication and Culture by the PósCom/UFBA, 2000; recipient of a CNPQ's Research Productivity Scholarship. E-mail: itaniagomes@gmail.com

Abstract: This article investigates historicity aspects that constitute journalistic reports on Brazilian television, considering the reporter's body as an authentication device for the reports and for the construction of subjectivities. We argue that the concept of being an eyewitness to history, which constitutes the news reporter's identity since the beginning of the Brazilian version of the news show *Repórter Esso*, is a cultural matrix of Brazilian television journalism. We also highlight the reconfigurations of this matrix in contemporary television newscasts – more specifically in *Jornal Nacional* by Rede Globo and in *A Liga* by Grupo Bandeirantes – regarding the news reporter who experiences an event. This process shows a continuing dispute over characteristics and conventions related to the history of television in Brazil and that establish television journalism as a cultural form.

Keywords: Brazilian television journalism; eyewitness reporter; cultural matrices; television genre; structure of feeling.

Resumo: O artigo investiga historicidades que constituem o testemunho jornalístico na televisão brasileira, considerando o corpo do repórter como dispositivo de autenticação dos relatos e de constituição de subjetividades. Argumentamos que a noção de testemunha ocular da história, que configura a identidade do repórter desde o *Repórter Esso*, é uma matriz cultural do telejornalismo brasileiro e evidenciamos reconfigurações dessa matriz, em programas contemporâneos – mais especificamente no *Jornal Nacional*, da Rede Globo, e no programa *A Liga*, da Rede Bandeirantes, – em torno do repórter que vivencia o acontecimento. Esse processo exhibe uma contínua disputa por marcas e convenções que atravessam a história da TV no Brasil e constituem o telejornalismo enquanto uma forma cultural.

Palavras-chave: telejornalismo brasileiro; repórter testemunha; matrizes culturais; gênero televisivo; estrutura de sentimento.

“Hello, Hello, this is the Reporter Esso speaking, eyewitness to history.” The phrase uttered eloquently in the 1940s by the most prestigious radio news broadcaster in Brazil⁴ is perhaps the main memory we share about the country’s journalism self-legitimizing discourse. In this definition, a historical dimension of practice, appropriated to justify its deontology - as Ribeiro (1999) reminds us – is associated with a communicative dimension, which places it as an instance through which we would be placed in relation to the world in the present moment. This locus of interaction relies on the idea of eyewitness as a kind of cultural matrix that produced, over time, ways of being and of making and perceiving journalistic narratives.

On TV, the news appears embodied in bodies and voices (of reporters, anchors, commentators and sources), which constitute a kind of ecology of testimonies, in which the spectator is inserted, also as a witness, to legitimize the narrated story (“It happened, I saw it on TV”). Taking television journalism as a debate topic, the question that concerns us at this moment is not exactly understanding a fact based on testimonies, but understanding testimonies as a form of certifying the reporter as a historically constructed figure. More specifically, we aim to understand testimonies taking shape in the figure of the reporter and constituting the matrix of its actions. Our apprehension of the phenomenon does not address exactly what is said by this subject who has a sovereign voice in news reports, but his presence, his body on the scene and the relations created with the spatial-temporal contexts and his interlocutors.

Through his body, by looking into the viewer’s eyes and due to the fact of being positioned (even if symbolically) in the place of the event, the figure of the reporter imposes itself as an important device for authenticating news reports and for the constitution of subjectivities. His presence – whether by voice, body or camera framing - personifies the very testimonial character of television. In this article, we aim to investigate traces of a cultural matrix that appears as the strength of the reporter’s identity since the *Reporter Esso* in the 1950s. This matrix guides the consolidation of a specific performance, institutionalizing the television news genre throughout the 20th century. In contemporary times, it reconfigures itself as a dimension to the experience of the event. The space of subjectivity, which encompass the ideas of “eyewitness to history” and of “subject implicated in the narrated fact,” does not erupt in a specific period, but rather in a continuous dispute involving continuities and discontinuities that cross time and spaces and produce television journalism as cultural form.

⁴ *Repórter Esso* begins to be broadcast on television in 1952 on TV Tupi.

We have adopted here the expression “cultural matrix” in the sense Jesús Martín-Barbero (2008) used in his various formulations of the map of mediations and which was later reworked by Gomes (2011). Martín-Barbero (2008) showed how TV soap operas negotiate with popular history, evidencing how the practices and forms of popular culture configure the melodrama and, consequently, soap operas in Latin America. We believe that the author, due to the media context of Latin America and the historical moment in which he produced his studies on soap operas, conceives popular cultural matrices as anterior to the processes of mass culture configuration – which would be in line with the political importance that the debate about popular culture, with its characteristics of authenticity and resistance, had in the 1980s among us. Martín-Barbero’s conception of cultural matrices seems to operate “before” or “outside” the media culture, and this to the same extent that he constitutes the diachronic axis of the map of the mediations as the relation between cultural matrices and industrial formats that translates the popular/mass relationship (according to Martín-Barbero (2008), popular matrices are involved in the configuration of mass products). We are working with the hypothesis that, given the consolidation of media culture and the configuration of a technical-communicative environment (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2009b), we should not understand cultural matrices as something pre-media or a-media (GOMES et al. GOMES et al., 2017). In the analytical studies we conducted at the Cultural Studies and Communication Transformations Research Center /TRACC⁵, we noticed that some industrial formats are articulated with media-formed cultural matrices, which in this case would thus be mass cultural matrices or media cultural matrices.

In order to conduct our investigation, we discuss – by identifying the television news show *Repórter Esso* as the media cultural matrix of the convention that takes the reporter’s body as a place for authenticating the journalistic account through the notion of eyewitness to history – the place of the reporter’s testimony and experience in contemporary television. In this article, our analysis focuses on two ways in which this matrix is updated. On the one hand, the coverage made by the *Jornal Nacional* (GOMES, 2009) – which became the main benchmark for Brazilian television news – of the attack on the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 helps to illustrate contemporary performances that reinforce this testimonial sense and to address the changes in the conventional performance of television reporters, which are already occurring even in the most hegemonic expression of the television news

⁵To know more about the Center for Research in Cultural Studies and Transformations in Communication/ TRACC: <http://tracc-ufba.com.br>.

language. On the other hand, the analysis of the performance of reporters of the news show *A Liga*, broadcast by Bandeirantes Network, indicates a different strategy, in which spectators are themselves promised the role of witnesses of the experience that their reporters have of the reported fact as shown on television.

The “eyewitness” reporter: changing conventions

Raymond Williams (2007), investigating the meanings of the word “experience,” distinguishes two important uses of the word since the eighteenth century: the first refers to experience as a set of accumulated knowledge, a past; the second is related to a specific type of consciousness “which in some contexts can be distinguished from ‘reason’ or ‘knowledge’” (WILLIAMS, 2007, p. 172). In this sense, Williams emphasizes that in this second use a distinction is made between different species of consciousness and that “for some, apparently, a thought would *not* be an experience, but a (lesser) act of reasoning or opinion” (WILLIAMS, 2007, p. 172, author’s italics). Thus, the appeal to experience would be an appeal to the totality of being, not to more limited, more specialized states or faculties. This appeal to wholeness goes “against forms of thought which exclude certain kinds of consciousness as ‘personal’, ‘subjective’ or ‘emotional’” (WILLIAMS, 2007, p. 173), but became a problem when experience became a word used to designate a kind of absolute truth in religious Methodism:

A description of 1857 records that ‘there were prayers and exhortations, reports of experience, chants (...) sentimental hymns’. Here is a notion of SUBJECTIVE testimony offered to be shared. What is important, to a more general later sense, is that such experiences are offered not only as truths, but as the most authentic kind of truth. (WILLIAMS, 2008, p. 174, our translation, author’s emphasis)

This notion of testimony as the most authentic truth is certainly still present in the way the reporter’s notion of journalistic testimony helps to authenticate his account of the facts. Thus, says Bruno Leal (2003, p. 1-2),

[...] journalism is based on a credibility pact with its reader, to be put in check and reaffirmed in the elaboration and reception of each one of its stories. Much of this credibility comes precisely from the reporter’s presentation as a witness to the facts. Its presence at the scene of events is one of the key elements for the authenticity and hence credibility of the account it produces.

The materialization of the reporter's body as something visible to the viewer since the emergence of television reaffirms this pact of credibility. The television in Brazil, personified by the body of the announcer and not just his voice, finds in the news show *Repórter Esso* a media cultural matrix to think the place of the reporter-witness in Brazilian television journalism. We selected an excerpt from the *Repórter Esso*'s coverage⁶ of the 1970 FIFA World Cup, held in Mexico. In a news story about the preparations and expectations of the Brazilian soccer team, two reporters are positioned in the same scenario, the hotel where the national team is lodged. A wide-angle shot emphasizes the pool space, players in leisure time, photographers and reporters, interviews with athletes. At the moment one of the reporters asks the player about a move, he tells the cameraman to show a close-up of the bruise on the goalkeeper's face and says: "*now show here for the viewer [...] do a close-up, look there, the blow on Félix's face, in that difficult and extremely important move for the Brazilian national team.*" The presence of the reporter at the "site of the event," as well as the demonstration, through an image, of what is being said function as strategies for certifying the news as a truthful testimony. Another element is clear in the mediator's performance: the dramatic tone and the intimate relationship established with viewers (the reporters engage in a dialogue with the camera) and interviewees (who appear shirtless, inside the pool, looking at the camera and even holding the microphone, taking the place of the mediator).

"Your *Repórter Esso*" (as the program called itself) personified a subject whose authority to speak about the things of the world was constructed by an emotional, eloquent and sometimes personal tone - an element diluted during the second half of the twentieth century, when the body of the reporter is consolidated as an identity form of the television news genre and the values of the so-called "modern journalism" (objectivity, vigilance, impartiality, etc.) become institutionalized. Since then, impersonality and formality are central attributes of the "eyewitness" in the dispute for credibility. The "new" equation predicts that the degree of reliability given to the reporter is proportional to his degree of detachment from the narrated fact, albeit in a witness situation.

According to television journalism manuals of Brazilian broadcasters, which institutionalized their teaching and practice throughout the twentieth century, when the narrator becomes visible on the screen, he must present himself soberly so as not to make his appearance stand out in relation to what is said. At the same time that

⁶ Excerpt captured from <<https://bit.ly/2QMyeJK>> on 26 Mar. 2018.

he is projected in the fact, by reporting it in loco, his body stance must represent an “impartial subject,” a mere figuration of the television news. It is the body of the “civilized man,” who dresses soberly and maintains a serious facial expression and measured gestures. The qualities of this embodied subject are ruled by a relational logic, in which positive value would be related to a supposedly “neutral” quality, a “no-Self” authorized to speak about the fact objectively because apparently not involved in it (GUTMANN, 2014).

Television’s specific characteristic of demonstrating, through image and sound, what is being said by the verbal text reinforces the constitution of this locus of “eyewitness”, whose televisional cultural matrix, as we have seen, is apparent in the *Repórter Esso*. Based on an analysis of the coverage by *Jornal Nacional*, Brazil’s longest-running television newscast, of the terrorist attack on the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, we present reporter performances that reinforce this sense of testimony. In the news story about the mourning demonstrations in France after the attack, broadcasted by the *Jornal Nacional* on January 8, 2015⁷, the visual design of the reporter’s segment⁸ – showing at first a close-up of a Nicolas Appert Street signpost and then moving towards a heap of flowers and candles in honor of the victims of the attack - illustrates, in a redundant way, her verbal text: “Nicolas Appert Street became a place of pilgrimage. People leave flowers, candles, notes.” The authentication of the news story depends on this demonstration process, in which interviews, images and ambient audio function as a temporal and spatial strategy for approaching the facts witnessed by the reporter (in the story, the absence of sound is reinforced by the suspension of the audio when the reporter says: “Silence, in deference to the victims”).

Unlike “your *Repórter Esso*,” when she shows her body, the reporter, in the passage described, looks at the viewer, but does not suggest any kind of dialogue with him. Interviewees do not “look” at the audience, but at the reporter, thus underscoring the presence of the journalist on the scene, highlighted by the camera’s wide shot in all interviews. This creates a kind of mediation layer (frame) essential for the proposed communicative strategy: only reporters would be allowed to bring testimonies about the fact to us.

⁷ Available at <<https://glo.bo/2EnbN8b>>. Accessed on 26 Mar. 2018.

⁸ Reporter’s segment: a segment in which the reporter’s image appears. The segment is inserted in the middle of the story (Gutmann, 2014, p.268).

The element of continuity here, in relation to the *Repórter Esso*, is the accreditation of what is being said by the construction of the reporter as an “eyewitness,” and not by her inclusion as a personage of the action narrated. At the same time, it is clear that there is a discontinuity when the emotional tone present in the verbal interpretation of the mediator is obliterated. It is possible to note the effort, from the verbal and audiovisual point of view, to put the reporter in the place of the one who witnesses the fact to make the story authentic. As a way of validating the reported actions, the spectator is also summoned to witness, in order to see, attest, verify, prove, or even witness what is being said by the narrator.

As Leandro Lage (2015) points out, recent research into Brazilian television has observed rhetorical, discursive and performance transitions in this type of “witness-reporter” construction (FECHINI, 2008; GUTMANN, 2014; VILAS BÔAS, 2018). His performance becomes more flexible and he effectively occupies the scene of events as an “actor” and not just “the one who reports.” An aspect that was already archaic⁹ – the tone of intimacy and the dramatic personifications of the *Repórter Esso* – reappears and is reconfigured in the present. There is now the assumed configuration of a *persona*: the journalist who interprets representations of the citizen, the social subject who is involved in his reports and makes his body a place of personification of the news (Gutmann, 2014). In this second movement, the established “standard of conduct” – the reporter attesting to his presence at the place of the event by assuming a “no-Self” stance – is blurred by the assumed configuration of a “Self” that uses its body (facial expressions, gestures, more or less proximity to the screen, varied intonations of voice, etc.) as an expressive device for communicating what is being said.

Jornal Nacional’s coverage of the attack on Charlie Hebdo in 2015 is an example of this other model of testimonial performance. In a report on January 13, 2015¹⁰ on security measures adopted by the French government after the attack, the reporter treats his own coverage of the facts as part of the “news” being reported.

⁹ Jesús Martín-Barbero (1995) addresses Raymond Williams’ observation of the importance that the heterogeneity of social temporalities experienced in each society at a given historical moment must have in any cultural analysis. The central notions for Williams (1979; 2008) are those of residual, archaic, dominant, new and emerging. Williams addresses archaic elements to mark a distinction with what he understands as residual elements. Archaic is “that which is fully recognized as an element of the past, to be observed, examined, or even occasionally to be consciously ‘revived’ in a deliberately specialized way. What I mean by ‘residual’ is very different. The residual, by definition, was effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present” (WILLIAMS 1979, p.125). For Martín-Barbero (1995, p.44), considering the heterogeneity of temporalities means “a new way of introducing the historical dimension in the communication processes,” what he does when addressing the mediation of the historical relation of cultural matrices with industrial formats.

¹⁰ Available at <<https://glo.bo/2QMplzK>>. Accessed on 26 Mar. 2018.

When he says in an off-screen narration, “*Journalists from around the world lined up to interview the colleagues who survived the attacks. It was only possible to enter the building after a body search,*” the image is showing his body experiencing the situation narrated (being searched by the police at the door of the newspaper building). In this segment, he moves, talks in a panting manner and shows himself in the midst of the reported action: as he speaks, he attempts to break through the police blockade at the door of the headquarters of the *Liberation* newspaper, which “*offered some rooms to the survivors of Charlie Hebdo,*” and engages in an unexpected dialogue with one of the local security guards, who prevents him from entering. Acting as the protagonist of the scene, he invites the spectator to accompany/witness his alleged attempt to break through the police blockade and enter the newspaper. What he is saying is demonstrated by his body on the scene: “we can’t go through here because there are many security guards.” The camera, in a sequence shot, accompanies his attempt to speak with one of the armed men “*un minute s’ilvousplaît.*” When barred, he turns to the camera and says, “Oh, you can’t go from here to there, total security.”

To ensure recognition, the spectator is summoned to a position of sharing – of consent, cooperation, collusion and tacit adherence to what the reporter experiences while narrating – and is placed in the space-time of the event by the identification with this *persona*. The sense of interaction through the engagement of the spectator with the action performed by the mediator configures the same *here* and *now* for the communicating subjects. We experience the action, with the reporter, at the alleged moment of its development.

By ensuring that this subject-witness position is maintained, and with it, the demonstration - by images, audio or verbal text – of what is narrated by the reporter, the care not to disrupt the historically constructed link with the viewer becomes evident, reinforcing one of the most consolidated marks that characterize television news as a television genre. At the same time, by adopting another possible reporter’s performance, that of a *persona*, the news show explores a new convention that is configured as a strategy of permanent construction/reconstruction of this complicity with the viewers.

Experience performances: new conventions?

The reporter who makes of his body part of the narrated facts becomes a subject implied in the story told and is understood here as a symptom of the prominent role that “experience performances” have gained in the Brazilian and worldwide TV. In his book *The Power of News* (2003), Michael Schudson highlights the importance of recognizing television forms as specific conventions in societies, drawing attention

to the relationship between the lived experience and the narrative convention that attempts to report it. Thus:

News in a newspaper or on television has a relationship to the “real world”, not only in content but in form [...]. Generally speaking, people do not see news as it happens, rather, they heard about it. Parents do not experience their child’s day at school directly, but learn of it as it is narrated, turned into a story by the child. (SCHUDSON, 2003, p. 54)

The relationship between living the experience and turning it into a story is, specifically, about how we give meaning to our experiences, about how we are able to turn them into something that can be shared, that has meaning for others beyond the individual who experiences the action. Julio Pinto, reworking Dewey’s conception, understands the concept of experience as something related to an immediate present lived by who is involved in the situation. Thus, we agree with the author, for whom “the experience is a kind of theoretical memory of what is lived. The experience is the momentary, the accident, that which is immediately felt” (PINTO, 2010, p.10).

At least in Western television programming, the idea of a journalist as character embodying the experience of events has become a commonplace. To mention a few: the program 30 Days¹¹, hosted by Morgan Spurlock and produced and screened by the FX channel, which shows 30 days of immersion in certain lifestyles unfamiliar to the presenter to discuss social issues; CNN’s Inside Man¹², in which the same Morgan Spurlock pledges to submerge himself in current affairs; 21 Días¹³, a Spanish *Canal Cuatro*’s series that shows the host living in the shoes of distinct groups of people for 21 days, 24 hours a day, to understand and show how they

¹¹ 30 Days originally aired on the US channel FX Networks between June 2005 and July 2008. It was also broadcast on channels in the UK, Australia, Canada, Norway, Switzerland and FX Latin America. Some episodes of the series can be seen on YouTube or on Vimeo, like the first episode of the second season, available at this link <<https://bit.ly/2j8f0ed3>>. Accessed on 29 Mar. 2018.

¹² The show had four seasons between June 2013 and August 2016, screened by US CNN. To view episodes and more information, the program site may be accessed through this link: <<https://cnn.it/2B9lTW2>>. Accessed on 29 Mar. 2018.

¹³ *Canal Cuatro*’s show had seven seasons, which ran between January 2009 and July 26, 2016, and a one-season Chilean version on Chilean National Television. In all, it had three hosts: Samantha Villar (2009 and 2010), Adela Úcar (2011 to 2014) and Meritxell Martorell (2016). To watch some episodes and to consult other information, the program site is available at this link: <<https://bit.ly/2UyJgl8>>. Accessed on 29 Mar. 2018.

live their lives; and *Dans tes yeux*¹⁴, produced by Arte, a Franco-German television company, in which Sophie Massieu, a blind reporter, hosts an unprecedented journey of sensations and unique encounters around the world. In Brazil, *Rede Globo* airs *Profissão Repórter* (Profession: Reporter), which focus on the reporters themselves, showing the making-off of news stories; and *TV Bandeirantes' A Liga*, is marked by the alleged immersion of its reporters in the daily life of interviewees. Each in its own way, what these programs promise to their viewers is that, instead of relying on the testimony given by their mediators, they will themselves witness the experience of the reported fact, shown on the television screen.

In the field of communication studies, this phenomenon has also been of interest to researchers. In a bibliography obtained from searching in Capes' *Portal de Periódicos* the words “journalism + witness”; “journalism + objectivity”; “journalism + subjectivity”; “journalism + experience”; “journalism + immersive”; and “journalism as experience”; and journalism as experience, new expressions such as immersive journalism (DE LA PEÑA et al., 2010; VAN DE HAAK et al., 2012), point-of-view journalism (MERTES, 2001; VAN DE HAAK et al. 2012) and even an argument for the resurgence of literary journalism through multiple media (JACOBSON et al., 2015) appear to account for a series of relations between the journalistic product and its consumers from perspectives that at times propose an experience of immersion in the news through digital environments (DE LA PEÑA et al., 2010; VAN DE HAAK et al., 2012; BLAAGAARD, 2013), and at times emphasize the personal aspect of the reporter's presence in the news coverage, thus bringing to the surface subjective dimensions (MERTES, 2001; VAN DE HAAK et al., 2012).

In many of these cases, the relationship with technology is highlighted in its potential to enable new connections between the journalistic product and its public, such as the use of 360-degree maps for exploration of territories hit by earthquakes or of a bionic camera eye to make documentaries from a first-person audiovisual perspective, which goes beyond the known uses of subjective camera on television and cinema and approaches the immersing possibilities of digital games avatars. Moreover, the development of increasingly smaller audiovisual recording technologies for uses ranging from the production of family home videos and surveillance functions to

¹⁴The series had 80 episodes over two seasons, shown in 2012 and 2013. Some episodes are on YouTube. The one in which the journalist visits Katmandu, for example, can be accessed at this link: <<https://bit.ly/2L7zkdT>>. Accessed on 29 Mar. 2018. A list of episodes of the program is in IMDB: <<https://imdb.to/2QjZ1xA>>. Accessed on 29 Mar. 2018.

drones capable of being coupled to professional film cameras for aerial imaging has also changed television production techniques.

Television programs increasingly make use of experience-sharing journalistic reports that show reporters in action, but also rely on the recognition of journalism as a social institution. The report thus positions the reporter as someone who, in addition to fulfilling a testimonial role, shares, admittedly, an account of what affects him as a subject. This trend constitutes a communication strategy of contemporary journalistic programs. We will take the Brazilian production *A Liga*, from the television channel *Band* as an example.

In its debut, in 2010, the show made the following statement: “we will experience the news from the inside out,”¹⁵ reiterated in its ads during the programming. In affirming personal experience as a value, the show intends to tell its viewers stories about the world from a specific point of view, that of the journalist who experiences the fact and who is, before being just a witness, a character of his own narrative. In this way, it creates a way of authenticating information in a game between the constitution of subjectivities and the appeal to the values of modern journalism.

Although they characterize the place of their mediators differently from television news (in *A Liga*, many of them have professional trajectories linked to the entertainment industry), they are described as reporters on the show’s website and in the reports themselves (the mediators speak of their “reporter” work or of “my news report”). Called by their nicknames - Cazé, Thaíde, Mari and Mel - they do not wear visible microphones and dress quite informally. The acting of these performers is combined with the extensive use of hand-held camera, long takes and film editing that privileges cross cutting – techniques¹⁶ to evoke an authenticity effect for the live action.

¹⁵ *A Liga* – a *Bandeirantes* Network show based on the *La Liga* format of the Argentine producer Eyeworks-CuatroCabezas - began to be broadcast in Brazil in 2010 with the motto “the more eyes are seeing, the more they can see.” By 2016, it has had seven seasons on the same channel with a few host changes. The ad for the premiere of the program shown by *Bandeirantes* in 2010 can be viewed on YouTube at <<https://bit.ly/2UxNdq4>>. Accessed on 10 Dec. 2018. Some episodes are also available at the show’s website: <<https://bit.ly/29OHUws>>. Accessed on 29 Mar. 2018.

¹⁶ Martín-Barbero (2008), in his mediation map, describes, between industrial formats and logical modes of production, the mediation of technicality and not of technology. For the author, the change of name highlights that confusing communication with the media is as deforming as believing that they are mere accessories. Technicality would involve business structure, communicative competence and technological competitiveness, which are expressed through perceptual operators.

The episode of *A Liga* aired on April 8, 2014¹⁷, shows the reporter Cazé experiencing the work of involuntary hospitalization agents. He follows the action of the agents, who go out with the mother of an alleged crack user looking for him in the streets of São Paulo and finding him in a hotel downtown. In the long story (28 minutes and 11 seconds long), Cazé is there as a reporter and also as a citizen-subject, who witnesses the scene and reacts to it. His role is not just of an “eyewitness to history”: he acts from the perspective of a “legal-subject” (in speech and body movement). From inside a van, he, the agents and the mother of the alleged drug user pass through downtown streets, approaching people until finding out that he is in a hotel nearby.

In the hotel room, while the agents try to contain the alleged crack user, upon observing that one of the room’s windows is open, Cazé goes and close it, as if he realized that the young man could flee through there. At the same time, interactions are much stronger with the camera, and therefore with the viewer, than with the subjects involved in the fact. At a certain point, he looks at the camera and says, “*Gee, I can’t even describe what I’m feeling, I’ve never experienced such a situation.*” As he speaks, he moves slowly, seeming to be a little unsteady, and steps back. He shows his hand to the camera and says he’s shaking.

From the beginning of the episode, the place assumed by the mediator is an inter-place - it is he who shows to the viewer the scene unfolding from his own experience of it, but it is also him that incorporates a locus of authority, distanced from those directly involved in the event. Thus, early in the episode, Cazé is in a scene in which the questions he asks the officials present are staged from the perspective of his own body, so he is tied up by the public agents simulating the approach taken with patients on the streets. After this performance, he recounts what happened: “*Wow, horrible, man, the feeling is the worst possible [...]; and I’m here filming the story, I’m the reporter, I’m getting it, imagine you’re very high, so you’re an addict, a guy who’s using crack, brother.*”

Cazé does not use a microphone or any channel identification and it is he who asks, on the air, that what may happen next - if they find the young man whose hospitalization was requested by the mother - be simulated with him. The intention of putting himself in the place of the character they are searching even before the situation arises suggests that it is necessary to be in his position to actually understand what is going on. The reporter’s request, however, is presented as a request

¹⁷ Available at: <<http://bit.ly/2H1HMgy>>. Accessed on 26 Mar. 2018.

for information about the agents' work: *"What do you immobilize? The arms behind the back? What is it like? Let's say I'm like... that I'm the user you're looking for. How is the approach made?"* The camera then focus on the hands of the agents, on the use of force to contain Cazé and the reporter's attempts at reaction, with pauses in each shot highlighting his relationship with the agents and the reenactment itself. But although he presented a report attempting to transmit the sensations experienced, the host was aware of himself and therefore does not react violently or actually tries to escape the situation, which he knows to be brief and simulated. When he goes to meet the user's mother, who requested the hospitalization, however, Cazé again takes a position of detachment from the situation, playing the role of reporter.

Back in the van, when the alleged drug user is already detained and questioning his hospitalization, it is this reporter role that stands out and Cazé addresses the agent: *"In such a situation, where the patient feels abducted, what do you do?"* Although the detained young man continues to ask who is legally responsible for him at that time, the reporter ignores his reaction. From then on, two scenes take shape: in the back of the van, the mother and agents try to talk to and contain the young man, and Cazé, in the foreground, looking towards the camera, explains to the viewer that the detained is nervous. Whenever the mother's crying, the forceful gestures of the agents – especially their hands containing the detained – and the incessant movements of the young man are shown, Cazé is out of view – he is not part of that moment, he is out of the scene. Whenever he returns to the screen, the reporter constructs, again, a stance of distance to the event to interview the person in charge of the operation. The official sources here have a place of prominence and legitimacy in the discourse.

Thus, even at the center of the scene, along with the other characters, the mediator of *A Liga* builds a detachment that marks his place of authority, his possibility of asserting himself as a reporter. The body that experiences the event as a way of witnessing it also uses codified marks of television journalism. True, the bodies placed in front of the cameras defy established rules, but they also support a certain text and news coverage, a relation with the sources, a framing and editing that highlight the sanctioned place of the reporter and of his testimony in relation to what is "lived."

We can observe another mode of performing the news, which shares traits of experience and testimony, but which is not defined by mere rupture with an earlier pattern of the mediator's attitude to the facts. These historically constructed modes of reporter performance do not seem distinct or opposing, much less episodic; on the contrary, they are cultural forms responsible, in different degrees, for the

establishment of this body which legitimizes the presentations of facts about the world since the beginnings of Brazilian television journalism.

Final considerations

This analytical investigation has shown that disputes over legitimacy, authority and credibility of journalism are related to the locus of testimony created in and by news shows. It is a testimony that has the body of the reporter as its main personification. The forms of these bodies, which translate into conventions, are never casual, due to mere technical and normative choices, but are essentially related to transformations in society and to the ways in which we socially perceive these transformations and articulations.

It is interesting to note how, in more standardized programs, such as *Jornal Nacional*, this locus of experience is now being evoked as a space for legitimizing testimony, while programs that have the idea of experiencing facts as a central strategy still use marks/conventions of the same genre as a form of authenticity constitution, as is the case of *A Liga*. This is because, as we have said, we are talking about a cultural process that is not restricted to a period or a program, but constitutes a permanent process of dispute between continuities and ruptures, naturalizations and denaturalizations in the historical process of establishing the television journalism itself.

Insofar as strategies of articulation between journalistic values and television language are concerned, the modes of constitution of the witness reporter demonstrate how the news shows balance between standardization and innovation in a constant effort to communicate with the viewer in order to keep on being broadcast. For Raymond Williams (2001, p. 33), a *convention* is always a method designed to express a new mode of feeling. We believe that they are a way of accessing a structure of feeling and, thus, the emergence of new characteristics that will challenge the consensus we have concerning procedures, norms, formats, genres. To evaluate how new conventions emerge and how they dispute the tacit consensus demands to be attentive to the processes of persistence, adjustment, unconscious assimilation, active resistance and alternative effort that characterize any process of dispute for recognition in the cultural domain. It also demands a look that constitutes as an “object” the space of articulation between texts, between these and their contexts and their logics of production and reception.

The distinct and sometimes contradictory ways of ensuring social legitimacy through the reporter-witness’s role identified in this article enhance the understanding of practices and institutions based on their relations with culture

and social transformations. They show us how Brazilian television participates in a continuous process of cultural change that may be perceived by a dynamics of reiterating conventions that make, for example, television news a product so recognized in television programming and, thus, reinforces the marks of the genre, and how it adopts new ways of using these conventions and tests new possibilities, establishing new conventions and new trends, even by re-signifying elements considered “archaic.” From this perspective, we think that it is crucial to understand the testimony in a communicative and cultural perspective that shows to us, over time, modes of certifying narratives (in this case, by the constitution of the witness-reporter) in that are in permanent transformation.

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