

About Journalism – Sur le journalisme – Sobre jornalismo

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Call for papers

War Reporting

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War reporting holds a unique status in journalism and its studies. This style of journalism is important in terms of representations and imaginations because it is highly regarded. Students often reference it when justifying their professional projects. Bookstores often carry autobiographical works or anthologies from reporters. Many films of fiction use war correspondence as their theme or structure. Lastly, the violence inherent to war (kidnappings, death, repression) also provides for some extraordinary media coverage.

Despite its symbolic power (or maybe because of it), war reporting is not studied nearly as much as it should be. There are some important historical publications such as Knightley (1975 - 2004), a vast account of the propaganda role of newspapers from the Crimean through the Iraq wars or, more recently, Simard-Houde's (2017) wide-ranging survey of reporters, including war correspondence.

Studies on communication strategies employed by armed forces and governments have often interested researchers. Some examples can be seen in publications on Nazi propaganda during the Third Reich (Klemperer, 1996; Y. Arani, 2011; Féraud, 2014); Hallin's study of the "uncensored" Vietnam War (1989); Robinet's publications on the French armed forces' relations with the media during conflicts in Africa (2016); and analyzes of *embedded* journalism (reporters attached to military units) in wars in the Middle East (Bizimana, 2014; Allan; Zelizer, 2004). Studies on the mediatization of contemporary conflicts (Wolton 1991; Boltanski 1993; Beauregard et al. 2002; Charaudeau 2001) are somewhat more frequent, as are studies on the impact of media messages on the public (Eck 1985; Tchakotine 1992). Some studies focus on the role of radio during the Rwandan genocide (Chrétien et al. 1995; Thompson 2006) or on media's contribution to peace processes in Africa (Baumann et al. 2000; Arrous, 2001; Frère, 2005; 2011). Sociological studies are even less frequent, however, we can point to some that focus on special representatives sent to El Salvador (Pedelty, 1994), the rules of journalist relationships in situations of war (Markham, 2013) and professional practices from a gender perspective (Ruellan, 2018; Martinez, 2020). Psychology is rarely used, with works from Feinstein (2013) being the exception.

This inconsistency between the symbolic importance of war reporting and the relative scarcity of publications is what has led to the release of this journal's special edition, *About Journalism - Sur le journalisme - Sobre Jornalismo*. A number of approaches can be employed here.

1 – First, we have **the imagery of war reporting**, its representation, and its circulation. One could question the power of the imagery: when and how it is presented, through which mediums, by which actors, on what supports, in which narrative forms? Access to the field, to actors, to situations, and to archives could also be researched. It involves analyzing the specific difficulties of a dangerous, hidden, politically and culturally sensitive terrain, laden with beliefs and challenges that obfuscate outside views and motivate particular creative forms. This perspective helps to understand how reports on the violence of war are constructed and how they are represented.

2 – Another perspective could be to question **the constitution and the evolution of war reporting**. When did it start, under what conditions, how did it become a specialty? Has it changed since it started? Armed conflict itself has undergone profound changes over the past two hundred years, from online confrontations to asymmetrical warfare, all the way back to trench wars. Is it the same with war journalism? Conflicts today are wide spread and are initiated in poorly defined territories by mostly autonomous and instrumentalized groups, using unconventional acts of war characterized under generic terms such as "terrorism". War is also the means by which rival economic and political powers clash within a country, without having to declare a state of war. This is quite often the case with conflicts related to trafficking and the criminal underworld which are fueled by unlawful businesses and resort to using considerable violence, particularly against the media who report on them. War is a full-on phenomenon. It has a profound and lasting impact on societies and does not always necessarily affect political and social institutions, the economy or the culture. Under these conditions, is war reporting still a recognizable journalistic genre?

3 – **The sociology of war reporters** is also an important point. Who are they, how do they begin their careers, what role does war play in their professional trajectories? Since it began, war reporting has been performed by media employees with no permanent employment relationship. Yet there is a big difference between the military or diplomatic correspondents of old who wrote their own experiences in newspapers and the instability of young *freelancers* working today for whom war is a stepping stone to securing one's place in journalism. The current death statistics show that most of the war reporters who die are almost all locals working in conflict zones, which means that there are now fewer representatives from abroad producing information on war. Many actors in this production are also invisible, especially guides, translators, drivers, and assistants, all of whom are indispensable to reporters in war zones. Lastly, recent conflicts (Iraq and Syria, in particular) have highlighted the important role of social actors, often called "citizen journalists", in capturing and transmitting images of combat and life in war zones.

4 – **The role of the armed forces and governments** as content producers, *press releases*, images, complete or partial media reports can be questioned. We could further investigate the cooperation between journalists, the military, media companies and larger states in times of war. Thus, we can see that production not only comes from tensions, oppositions and competitions between the military and journalists, but also from common interests, of mutually satisfied needs. The real (as well as imagined) ability of the media and journalists to observe and report on war events could be questioned in terms of the means, strategies and communication *know-how* that military institutions and states have developed over the past 150 years. Looking at the cooperation of journalism's interlocutors could focus on the abundance of actors and non-governmental organizations that assist civilian victims and try to influence the course of conflicts and the memory that we will preserve in the future. This is done through support work they perform for journalists, producing their own representations and communication mediums, and collecting data that can be later used to prove abuses and war crimes.

Submission of final articles (between 30,000 and 50,000 characters with spaces, including references and footnotes). Articles must be submitted up until November 1, 2020 to the following email address: denis.ruellan@gmail.com.

Articles may be written in **English, French, Portuguese or Spanish**.

All articles will be subject to **blind peer reviews**.

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