



## Journalism, Image and Power: Repertoire for Racial Representations

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### Abstract

That the media, including the so-called social networks, have become a constitutive vector of social realities is an inescapable fact; who are responsible for organizing and prioritizing the agenda of debates, defining the thematic priorities that affect the public space no one doubts. It is not without purpose that the notes of researchers from different theoretical fields converge to an inevitable conclusion: with the weakening of institutions and discourses before computers of the social fabric, information systems are infused as protagonists in the promotion of social bonds, of sharing, because of visibility regimes in vogue.

theorists of hypermodernity, corresponds to a deregulated, saturated, protruding, hyperbolic, overflowing time.

Not surprisingly, this inescapable reality confers new attributes on social dynamics, highlighting key dimensions of the changes we are witnessing, touching the heart of what is today called power.

By using the phrase that leads this article, "every image of power is based on the power of the image", we ask: how can we take the repertoire of images that circulate daily as a source for examining topics such as representation, identity/identification, power and other derivatives? To what extent do the images subscribe and reinforce the power holders and those who are destitute of them?

How can we claim from journalism another management of the image of historically discriminated groups, since it gives rise to discursive processes that ground the frames of reference that feed social representations?

In a world where 'being is to be perceived' (*esse est percipi*), as Georges Berkeley has said, the power that the image confers on us, although volatile, is a power that selects and cuts patterns, which institutes cultural ideals, and therefore is a power that makes visible, hierarchizes the visible and invisible. It is a power in collusion with the notion of ideal of self, the psychic instance that accompanies each of us throughout life as a figure of what we owe or want to be; gives primacy to selective cognitive fields, to vectors that guide us in the apprehension or perception of the world [2].

In this hyper, protruding, overflowing society, everything or almost everything seems to surrender to the logic of appearances and spectacle (facebook that says so). Without much resistance, journalism, the main activity of the media, has long since acceded to this logic.

A spokesman for the ideals of plurality and democracy, he weaves his speeches according to the trend of the contemporary world. More than taking care of the public thing, responsible for its foundation, journalism manufactures its news taking into account the so-called sensation society, where the images play a preponderant role.

According to Muniz Sodré, "what counts here is not the argued opinion, but the emotional or affectionate opinion"

### Introduction

It accentuates this trend, the uninterrupted flow of imagery resources to which we are subjected by the multiple channels of communication, where diverse artifacts gush on the screens (TV, computer, cell phones) and other media. Decidedly, we are bathed in the images that are placed before us and with them we redefine the fluid identities that inhabit us. Remember: the label "civilization of the image" has already served to account for this reality.

It has become a currency for the claim that we live in a time marked by visual technologies with images of various hues overpopulating the world.

From the oldest feature, from the drawings on the walls of Lascaux to the ephemeral digital productions, the image appears as a pole of attraction for social exchanges. The overabundance of "devices of the eye" makes the world readable because visible; irrevocably newspapers, magazines, billboards, busdoors, electronic and digital screens have become an inseparable part and fundamental mark of the everyday landscape [1].

Lipovetsky says that the age of emptiness, in which we live, is the age of communication as a form of contact, expression of desires, emancipation from the utilitarian yoke, preponderance of form. The profusion of images, insist the

(which justifies the fact that President Barack Obama's self-esteem with Prime Minister David Cameron and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt at Nelson Mandela's funeral will yield more comments than the striking image of Obama's greeting to Cuban leader Raul Castro - an event that undeniably matters to world politics [3].

Some reflections on power, in the light of its visibility, may give us some addresses of tentative responses to these shifts in the journalistic sphere.

## Power and Its Media Incarnation

Ideological-political pluralism and the openness of the media certainly relativize power. Thanks to the press in general, the interlocution between power and public opinion becomes larger and leads the political representatives to expose themselves more, since they want to be heard/are forced to show themselves. The representation by images (photos, pagination of printed newspaper, newspaper images on television and on the Internet) becomes absolutely central: what the media radiates is not only what it represents, it gives to see and to understand; it is the light itself, what allows us to see: outside the media, the world around us ceases to exist. Just as the sun is the energy of the visible, which gives the view, from it comes the light, the condition/unavoidable cause of visibility, the media allow us to see the power, vectorize its meaning, its value and its force, at the same time which are the emitter, the spotlight without which there is, today, what to see. More than the absolutist power, whose light came from another power, power itself emanates from it. The power of visibility has undoubtedly shifted greatly: what depended first and foremost on the incarnation of power, self-posting, is now subject to other laws, at the service of networks and organs, largely private, which have the visible, determine the quota of the visible that will give to the power, fit it and organize according to their own standards, within market paradigms that tend globally to privilege the social status quo [4].

But all this gear is put into operation under the veneer of pluralism of voices. A significant part of the space/time that the press gives to the subjects that concern us (family, religion, work, housing, transportation, leisure, personal relations of all kinds), whether in journalistic forms, in fictional forms or in other modalities of narratives verb-visual, leads us to believe, by way of illustration, that the rich and the poor coexist calmly, that you speak between distinct social groups hierarchically flow without hiding injustices. Normally, such narratives do not put into question the coexistence, as if normalized, of frontally subalternized social categories with privileged layers.

Although the "naturally incarnate" and ostensible civilization of power in its apparatuses (dynasties, elites of privilege) has been forgotten, the power of media presentation, in very general terms, does not expose or make visible the power it should - democratic order - being the majorities, transforming social interaction. Certain dislocations of the power to make visible open more than appreciable spaces to criticism, revolt and opposition, yet they normalize and trivialize both the world of money and interest, the gap between manual and

intellectual work that make it invisible. But it seems, if we are realistic, that they serve, in a most ambiguous way, to serve as a screen, as denunciations of generalized social disparities to the logic of venality and profit. The light creates shadows and it does not seem exaggerated to say that the shadows remain immense, unassailable. In these shadows, bodies of black men and women demand another visibility, the visibility that empowers and humanizes.

## New Mediations and the Status of Power

These changes, true transfigurations, are clearly not thought of without the fundamental role that the media play in the visibility of power, in which the written press had during "long century" a primordial role. The pluralist mode (newspapers of various tendencies), which can be said systemically, the critical contents of the press, the interpellation with the public power that the media is source or mediation (representing social groups) served over time to consolidate and stress democracy.

Thinking about the corporeality of this power, it is not difficult to detect that it appears directly visible, in person, in the images of the television and online covers when, for example, a public person makes a statement, participates in an event and of electoral campaigns, gives interview or, lastly, gives opportunity to assume a fait-divers (love affair or something like that) was not public function [5].

The face, the body play, the voice, everything becomes familiar. An almost intimate relationship can be established: the president can cry in front of us, her voice can be seized.

We are surprised by smiles, confusions with the minister next door, glances of admiration for feminine forms, pouting between spouses in official ceremonies, facial expressions of discomfort among rival presidents. On the one hand, the public person allows himself to be more "human" on the other, he cannot always escape the ubiquitous and scrutineering chambers. Power is coming: we see parliamentary representatives exchanging insults and punches, and in the same way, power is confirmed, it reaffirms itself: the image of the authority in question emphasizes its importance. The position and function require enhancement, the photography or film scene may show a pungent or hilarious power. The incarnated institution exists, but its everyday vision - its vulnerable visibility - tends to deconstruct the sacredness of power.

## Some Historical Bids

Power and visibility is binomial dating back to the seventeenth century and recalls the figure of the sun king, Louis XIV, and other absolutist courts where the figure of power is shown, where to be seen, contemplated and revered evidence and exalts the supremacy of "who commands and from who can"; where ceremonials exist to project the figure of power around some eminences (including high clergy, lacking in modesty and humility). The closer to the powerful,

the more we can see with them masters, prelates, etc., participating in the aura of this star system.

Nobles always escorted, always dressed in clothes that mark them, the distribution of the seats in the churches and in the processions, to walk on foot, of carriage, on horseback, the power of the estates is shown, it is exposed in public and the popular ones make of the ostentation of the their privileged superiors a source of joy, delight and even debauchery. It is a "natural" order, but displayed to be firm. It is not, however, only the figure and figuration of the exponents that expresses power, which is exposed to the gaze, but every society accedes to these grimaces, which slowly move from the state order of ceremonies and rituals, from the norm of preeminence and hierarchy.

The other mark of visible power, besides the great festivals, celebrations and ceremonies are evidently the monuments erected to manifest the desire for glory (Versailles, is an appropriate example). They are evidences of the pre-eminence, of the sovereignty that demonstrate, precisely, greatness and strength. The celebratory and commemorative ceremonies of the national festivities continue until today, in the paper to show off, to officialize and to legitimize the power by its visual aesthetic and sonorous.

## Images of Power and Public Men

Various historical and socio-economic factors (the democratization of Western societies, essentially the formation of a public opinion and a civil society based on law and the market) have made the visible translation of power totally change. Think of figures like President Barack Obama, François Hollande or even Lula, expressive illustrations, no doubt. The "visible" exercise of its power acts in accordance with a new pattern: everything hierarchical in the positions of the dominant has not simply disappeared, but it is in the current logic to counter the old "privileged election" marks. Obama appears in the lightweight and loose stands; the American president shows himself, through gestures and calculated speeches, simple, direct, colloquial in gestures and posture. The French former president, on the other hand, professed a public faith of stripping, almost of humility, a man whose power does not affect the ostensible simplicity stamped with *esgar* and attitudes. We might make similar remarks about former President Lula: his tone and style on the palanques and interviews reflect and generally represent the man of the people, speaking as equals; Lula has, in fact, an irresistible impulse to approach physically those around him, to touch his interlocutors, if not to embrace them (the man of traditional power marks the distance that symbolizes the distinction and facilitates with that the command) [6].

The democratic state man, the elected representatives, have long ago been trying to erase the sacredness of power through the public, the audiences, the traits that once meant, we cannot forget. Power comes close to the constitutionally sovereign people, and risks banalizing itself by making expressive of this represented sovereignty (in both senses, of delegation of power and staging) that it becomes symbolically

the mere spokesman. What does this change in the status of power, vis-à-vis visibility regimes, have to instruct us when we think of the pedagogy of signs that circulate indefatigably? The mere record appearances of our times, which lost the transcendent force they had possessed, has pedagogical character for the visibility of power.

## Image, Power and Journalism

Now the substantive changes in the production and propagation of images of power, the strategies to gain visibility (in excess), the ceaseless investment in appearances and affective/subjective capital - effected by new/other statutes that redefine social codes - not only reach the streaks of political power *stricto sensu*. By extension, prodigiously among us, ordinary citizens, "poor mortals", impelled that we are to show us more and more, to talk, without ceremonies, of private life, to reveal intimacies (a huge bank of images of anonymous people parades in front of us on social networks, the manifestation of mood/emotional states has become very trivial (such as "feeling this or that" on Facebook). All of this plays with the new emerging relational patterns and lodges in today's discourse machines in order to provoke monumental rearrangements in what we once called the public interest. Journalism is a very good example of this process.

In a society in which the principle of transparency, inherited from the ideology of Enlightenment, became a *sine qua non* condition for the construction of democracy, journalism became a thermometer to measure modern values. The specificity of the journalistic account is of the order of, say, "social commitment." It is the founding act of journalistic activity that gives it its uniqueness: the legitimate son of two Revolutions, Industrial and French, journalism is established as a practice linked to the ideals of emancipation, transparency, pluralism and modernity.

It seems to us that from these ideas of the news activity there remained only the desire for transparency, but not that which is indispensable for the republican spirit; it is a kind of superficial and gossipy transparency. Still in the wake of Muniz Sodré: "With the technological developments of the mass media, there has been an enlargement of the public sphere, but only in its material or functional dimensions, without historical correspondence with what formerly meant politics and culture for the consolidation of the bourgeois republic The operation of what was called "cultural industry" required nothing more than the effectiveness of information flows and the mobilization of public attention by the diversified rhetoric of entertainment."

Without the musculature that gave it the initial force to form the public sphere, journalism gains a survival in the contemporary scenario through the sensation of feeling, emitting a torrent of stimuli with images that do not cease, that do not end, that do not cease to shine to ours front. A platform that feeds on hyper-narcism, a taste for novelty, the promotion of the futile and frivolous (remember again President Barack Obama's selfie at Nelson Mandela's wake) and the supremacy of hedonistic ideology gives meaning to

the avalanche of news that is offered as important. We look into these images, which announce the ordinary events and we weave new cut out vision of the world. The transparency of the world today is correlated with access to images that excel at appearances.

## Conclusion

Returning to our initial questions: in what does this establish neighborhood ties with identities and social representations? In the infinite stock of images, black men and women are still deprived of power, because they are still fixed to the imaginary patterns that imprison them in places full of destitution of their humanity. The ideal of the self, the psychic instance that accompanies each of us throughout life as a figure of what we owe or wish to be, as we have already pointed out, is formed and crystallized via images, distributing power to those who bear signs capable of representing (beauty, happiness, austerity, intelligence...). Claudia Silva Ferreira's bodies, of children sold as slaves on the Free Market, sales site, mostly black youth, chained to posts in the country's large cities do not even remotely carry the indexes of those cultural ideals that the press feeds for visibility of the world. To the pluralism of voices in journalism must correspond to the pluralism of images, so that the regimes of visibility that guide the advertising of black men and women are not regimes of exception. Apart from soccer players and artists, the visibility

of power is still embodied in bodies that, even if detached from the sacred power of the past, have the inscription of signs that reaffirm the human; signs that are systematically subtracted from the black population in the imaging devices that come to us (guidelines on behavior, politics, science insistently insist on the absence of blacks). Therefore, to think about democratic journalism is to think, in advance, of the pacts established for the visibility and transparency of the world.

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