

## ***ABSTRACTS***

### **The creator journalist**

(Alain Chanel)

The development of new communication technologies (television, computer technologies, telecommunications) in our societies has led to a crisis of identity in the profession. Sociologists and journalists such as Dominique Wolton or Ignacio Ramonet warn us of this danger, whereas other authors, such as Paul Virilio, describe an apocalyptic panorama in which the public succumb to the adverse effects of the computer age, such as the loss of the creative capacity. Against the threat of "denaturalisation" of the function of journalism, the author points to the creative dimension of the journalist and echoes the optimism of the philosopher Felix Guattari, for whom communication technologies will contribute to a reactivating of collective sensitiveness and intelligence.

### **"The French Connection". Political news reporting and the French regional press**

(Édith Rémond)

Since 1945, the power of local journalism in France has grown against that of the large national newspapers. One out of every five families in France reads a national newspaper, whereas one out of very two reads the newspapers of their region. Dailies like *Sud-Ouest*, based in Bordeaux, with a circulation of 400,000 per day and a staff of more than 250 journalists, illustrate the solidity of these newspapers businesses. Thus the regional press has been converted into an essential and indispensable instrument for the conquest of political power, not only for deputies to regional government but also for the members of the National Assembly and also for the Presidency. However, local journalism faces two great challenges; on the one hand, to put an end to its proven compliance with the local political power,

which at times is akin to petty tyranny, and to attain the necessary balance in order to provide journalism of a national dimension, without becoming bogged down by the specific, local circumstances of the journalist.

### **The French press in crisis**

(Dominique Vidal)

The author describes the crisis at present affecting daily newspapers in France, in contrast with the stability of the regional press and the success of magazines. The constant fall in circulation illustrates the progressive loss of power of the large French general daily newspapers. The crisis is rooted in different economic factors, especially the high cost of paper, salaries, of the modern newspaper format, and distribution. To these we have to add the difficulty in gaining advertising income, which has been aggravated by the state prohibition of tobacco and alcohol advertising. The author maintains that there is an urgent need to reflect on how to find a solution to this problem and thus suggests as follows: they should regain the credibility which has been lost (the media have given in to political and commercial interests absolutely and without criticism) and thus comply with the main duties of the profession, thus leading to regaining the confidence and the respect of readers.

### **The use of time indicators in radio and television news programmes**

(Salvador Alsius)

Radio and television news programmes tend to use language which is too cumbersome, owing mainly to the incorrect use of the marking of time ("when" journalism), in the scripts read by presenters and reporters. We have only to listen to how often and tirelessly we are barraged with the words *today*, *tonight* and *this evening*, gratuitously, since most of the time, these words do not give us any relevant information. The cause of this abuse in the use of indicators in time is the homage paid by the audio-visual media to the written press and to the inappropriate adoption of the rules of drafting of the written press. Thus there is an urgent need to design suitable formulas for the radio and television and, ultimately, for these media to recognise the oral nature of the language in which they communicate.

## **The Discredit of Journalism**

(Lluís Bassets)

(Text of the academic year 1999-2000 opening lesson of the Journalism Studies at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra). The author, currently assistant manager of the newspaper *El País*, unfolds a reflexion about how private and state-owned communication media behave, and about the attitude their professionals take towards the search for truth, as the central aim of their task. The author frames this question in the context of the loss of credibility, a very different context from 25 years ago, when a journalist had prestige and embodied the principles of a society just awoken from franquist nightmare with a spirit of freedom of information, as well as impressed by the power of the Watergate affair. The author analyses the circumstantial reasons —socioeconomical, political and cultural— that have placed journalism within a global image of discredit which conceals the effort of some professionals in vindicating and carrying about the essential aim of the profession: the search for truth.

## **Towards a criticism of the news reporting function**

(Josep Maria Casasús)

In this article the author tackles the crisis which, in his opinion, now affects the news reporting function of modern journalism. He questions the criteria employed in journalism to decide what constitutes news and what does not and why some news items are more important than others. His analysis leads us to reflect over various questions, such as, for example, why the journalist places more value on the quantitative rather than on the qualitative aspect of news items, why negative news dominates over positive news, why exclusive journalism wins over accuracy, or who decides, and the criteria used to decide, what is of public interest. The time has come, in the author's opinion, to discuss this issue openly and honestly.

## **Sport as an instrument of social manipulation and political and ideological power and control**

(Jaume Comellas)

Sport is an important instrument of social manipulation in the hands of groups who have ideologically reactionary stances, with obscure interests in power. In

football, the existence of radical followers is the most worrying manifestation of this phenomenon. Moreover, many of these violent groups act with the direct and undisguised support of club managers. This worrying situation is aided by (and in part is the consequence of) the lack of intellectual criticism within the sporting world. Unlike religion, militarism or the destruction of the environment, for example, sport is not subjected to systematic, critical scrutiny from an intellectual and ideological perspective. Breaking the circle of this critical insensibility, concludes the author, has become an urgent and essential task.

### **The end of newspaper offices (From places of thought to administrative offices)**

(Arcadi Espada)

The growing specialisation within journalism has led to the end of the cross-flow of dialogue between different sections which has been a feature of newspapers since their inception. Newspaper offices have ceased to be centres of debate and collective thought, venues of conversation and discussion leading to the collective creation of an intellectual product. This present tendency attacks the very heart of the identity of the journalist, who more and more acts merely as a simple administrator of news items. Furthermore, the journalist's role as mediator is being eroded by the never-ending sophistication of new technologies, which enable information to be transmitted directly to the public without having to pass through the filter of the intermediary, as illustrated by the recent diffusion of the Starr report by internet. Despite this, the author points out that neither the end of the intellectual faculty in news writing nor the development of technological capacities will deal a death blow to the core mission of the journalist: the search for truth.

### **Too dogmatic an approach**

(Josep Faulí)

Journalistic practise has placed a question-mark over the traditional beliefs in this field, which are often thought to be too dogmatic. Examples of this desire for change are the reassessment of the use of the first person, the revindicating of more creative formulas in journalistic writing (as in *New Journalism*) or the tendency to neglect the cultivation of elegant prose in favour of colloquial language. The author points out, however, that these changes should not lead to the aban-

doning of the traditional apprenticeship in written journalism, and also that at all costs confusion between journalism and literature should be avoided. If this confusion becomes consolidated, journalism will lose its own intrinsic objective.

**The communications media of Barcelona and  
the municipal elections of May 1995**

(José Ramón González Cabezas)

On account of their being so recent, the municipal elections illustrate more than any other election the pressures exercised over the press by the political and social agents directly involved in the elections. While the newspapers of Barcelona do not explicitly ask for a vote for a specific candidate, they connive with the political and financial power, to whom they are indebted (payment of debts, loans and guarantees for technological reconversions, etc.). In this context, of note is the force –quite emaciated– of the "muscle" of the journalist against the ownership of the newspaper and party and institutional powers. To complete the reflection of the behaviour of the press at election times, we should also analyse the political information provided by the newspapers, often very distant from the interests of the public, and consider the peculiar situation of the press in Barcelona as opposed to that of Madrid: the recent nature of the political-institutional powers born with self-government no doubt go a long way to explain the lack of a more critical and belligerent perspective of the interior politics of Catalonia on the part of the local-based media.



## CATÀLEG DE NÚMEROS DE PERIODÍSTICA DISPONIBLES

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