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CULTURAL JOURNALISM: CITIZENSHIP, DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to discuss and analyze how cultural journalism can act as an agent for promoting citizenship and strengthening democracy, in addition to assuming a relevant role in its ability to address and influence social issues. As a study method, a qualitative methodological approach was carried out, based on a bibliographic review, which allowed an in-depth understanding of the topic based on a bibliographic review including the analysis of books, academic articles, and other relevant publications on cultural journalism, citizenship, democracy, and social issues. The relevance of cultural journalism as an agent for social and cultural reflection was then discussed, as well as its impact on society based on the main arguments considered to amplify discussions on how cultural journalism, to understand how it promotes and fosters reflection, cultural diversity, and issues inherent to citizenship, especially about freedom of expression and the defense of democracy. Finally, the scope of research on the impact of cultural journalism on the formation of cultural identity in different regions of Brazil was suggested as a means of deepening research on the topics, so that this line of research could reveal important nuances about the role of the media in the construction and maintenance of collective identities based on studies that outline the profiles of cultural journalism's performance in society.

Keywords: Cultural Journalism. Journalism – Citizenship. Journalism – Democracy. Journalism – Society.

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INTRODUCTION

Isagogically, cultural journalism, a specialized branch of journalism, is responsible for covering, analyzing, and interpreting cultural manifestations such as visual arts, literature, cinema, music, and theater, among others (Siqueira; Siqueira, 2007). This field has gained relevance in contemporary society, not only as a vehicle for entertainment but also as a critical space for reflection and debate on social, political, and identity issues. According to Lopes (2011), cultural journalism is a practice that lies at the intersection between journalistic information and cultural criticism, mediating the public's access to a diversity of cultural products and manifestations. In this sense, it plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, promoting critical thinking, and the appreciation of cultural diversity. The importance of cultural journalism goes beyond the mere coverage of cultural events and products. It acts as a relevant tool for promoting citizenship by informing and educating the public about cultural aspects that shape society. Furthermore, cultural journalism strengthens democracy by ensuring that different voices and narratives are heard, contributing to an environment of plurality and public debate through the critical analysis of social issues, such as inequality, exclusion, and human rights. Cultural journalism also has the potential to raise awareness and mobilize society towards positive changes. As Rubim (2013) points out, cultural journalism assumes a political function by engaging with social issues, being a space of resistance and construction of meanings that dialogue with civic practices. Furthermore, to achieve the proposed objectives, a qualitative methodological approach will be adopted, based on a bibliographic review that will allow an in-depth understanding of the topic. The bibliographic review will include the analysis of books, academic articles, and other relevant publications on cultural journalism, citizenship, democracy, and social issues. In addition, a content analysis will be carried out of case studies that exemplify the impact of cultural journalism in specific contexts. This methodology will provide a comprehensive and critical view of the topic, contributing to the understanding of the multiple interactions between cultural journalism and society.

In this sense, as a general objective, this article aims to discuss and analyze how cultural journalism can act as an agent for promoting citizenship and strengthening democracy, in addition to assuming a relevant role in its ability to address and influence social issues.

CULTURAL JOURNALISM: A BRIEF DEFINITION AND ITS EVOLUTION IN BRAZIL

Cultural journalism is a branch of journalism dedicated to the coverage and analysis of cultural manifestations, such as visual arts, music, cinema, literature, and theater, among

others (Piza, 2004). Unlike factual journalism, which focuses on reporting everyday events and happenings, cultural journalism aims to contextualize and interpret culture in its various expressions, promoting a critical and in-depth reflection on its role in society (Ferreira, 2015).

According to Piza (2003), cultural journalism is not limited to reporting on cultural products, but also to producing discourses on culture, contributing to the formation of public opinion and the strengthening of a society's cultural identity. In this sense, Gomes (2009) states that cultural journalism can be seen as a mediating agent between cultural production and the public, facilitating the understanding of and access to the various forms of artistic expression.

The evolution of cultural journalism in Brazil is closely linked to the development of the media and the social and political transformations in the country. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Brazilian press began to dedicate specific spaces to culture, such as cultural columns and supplements in major newspapers (Piza, 2003, 2004). According to Sodré (1999), the emergence of specialized magazines and the creation of cultural sections in newspapers marked a period of consolidation of cultural journalism in Brazil, reflecting the public's growing interest in cultural issues.

During the 1960s and 1970s, cultural journalism in Brazil experienced a period of great effervescence, driven by the cultural movements of the time and the openness provided by the alternative press. During this period, cultural journalism played a crucial role in the dissemination and appreciation of new forms of artistic expression, in addition to promoting debate on topics such as censorship, freedom of expression, and cultural resistance during the military regime (Silva, 2010). In the 1980s and 1990s, with the democratization of the country and the expansion of the media, cultural journalism took on new contours, with the inclusion of new themes and approaches, reflecting social and cultural changes. It occurred during the period. The diversification of cultural agendas and the emergence of new media outlets, such as entertainment magazines and cable television channels, contributed to the expansion of the consumer audience for cultural journalism (Piza, 2009).

Currently, cultural journalism faces new challenges and opportunities with the advent of digital media and the growing use of social networks. These new platforms have enabled greater democratization of access to cultural information, although they also raise issues related to the quality and depth of the analyses carried out. According to Pereira (2020), cultural journalism in the digital age needs to reinvent itself, seeking ways to maintain

relevance and rigor in cultural coverage, amid the abundance of information and the speed of the communication flow.

CULTURAL JOURNALISM AND CITIZENSHIP

Cultural journalism can be considered one of the most important sub-areas of social communication in the process of citizen formation by contributing information and promoting cultural education (Woitomicz; Becker, 2014). Oliveira (2004) notes that cultural journalism is a type of journalism that acts as a mediator between culture and the public, presenting diverse cultural productions and encouraging critical reflection on them. According to Martins (2017), cultural journalism can transform the public into active participants in culture, promoting awareness and civic engagement.

Through reporting, criticism, and analysis, cultural journalism can expand citizens' horizons, offering them a deeper understanding of cultural and social issues, which in turn stimulates critical thinking, essential for active participation in a democratic society (Piza, 2004). According to Lima (2019), by exposing the public to different perspectives and cultural contexts, cultural journalism fosters an environment of dialogue and mutual understanding, essential for social cohesion and citizenship.

According to Cerigatto (2015), the educational role of cultural journalism also manifests itself in the promotion of media literacy, enabling citizens to interpret and critically evaluate the information they receive. In other words, this aspect is fundamental in the information age, where the ability to discern between facts and opinions is vital. As Silva (2020) points out, media literacy, promoted by cultural journalism, strengthens the ability of individuals to participate in an informed and critical manner in democratic processes. There are several examples of how cultural journalism has contributed to the promotion of citizenship and civic engagement. Duarte (2010) cites as a notable example the work carried out by the magazine "Piauí", which, through its cultural reports and in-depth investigations, has awakened the critical awareness of its readers on relevant social and political issues. In one of its issues, "Piauí" published a series of reports on the influence of visual arts in raising awareness of environmental issues in Brazil. These reports highlighted how artists and their works can be agents of social change, encouraging the public to reflect on the importance of environmental preservation and the role of art in promoting sustainability (Duarte, 2010).

Another significant example is the work of the newspaper "El País Brasil", which frequently publishes articles on literature, cinema, and music, addressing not only the aesthetic aspects but also the social and political implications of these cultural

manifestations. In a 2019 article, the newspaper explored the relationship between Brazilian popular music and social movements, demonstrating how songs have served as a vehicle for protest and resistance throughout the country's history (Borges, 2023).

According to Piza (2003), cultural journalism can go beyond the mere dissemination of cultural events and works, playing an active role in the formation of critical and engaged citizens, capable of providing a space for reflection and debate to foster the strengthening of citizenship and democracy.

CULTURAL JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Cultural journalism acts as a mechanism for strengthening democratic institutions since it acts as a space for critical reflection and public opinion formation (Sousa, 2009). According to Albuquerque (2019), whether through coverage of cultural events, artistic productions, and debates on identity and collective memory, cultural journalism contributes to the construction of a more informed society that is aware of its plurality. As stated by Habermas (1984), the role of the media in the public sphere is fundamental to the maintenance of democracy, as it provides citizens with access to the information necessary for informed decision-making and active participation in democratic processes.

In this sense, it can be said that cultural journalism goes beyond the simple dissemination of information; it stimulates public debate and reflection on the cultural values that underpin a democratic society. For Peruzzo (2009), considering that in an era in which democratic institutions face significant challenges, such as disinformation and political polarization, cultural journalism becomes even more relevant by promoting cultural diversity and the appreciation of different artistic expressions, strengthening social cohesion and democratic identity, essential aspects for the stability of democratic institutions.

As Dines (2009) argues, the role of journalism as a social interlocutor, freedom of expression, and the plurality of voices are fundamental pillars for a healthy democracy and cultural journalism acts from the exercise of a central role in guaranteeing these conditions.

As Curran (2002) highlights, the media has the responsibility of ensuring that all voices are heard, especially those that are traditionally marginalized. In the context of cultural journalism, this translates into the promotion of a wide range of narratives and perspectives, which reflect the cultural diversity of a society.

Montipó (2022) understands that cultural journalism allows artists, intellectuals, and activists to express their views on social and political issues, contributing to a richer and more inclusive public debate. By giving visibility to the cultural manifestations of different social groups, cultural journalism ensures that the multiple identities present in a democratic

society are recognized and valued. In this way, it acts as a counterweight to the cultural homogenization promoted by large media conglomerates, which tend to privilege content that serves commercial interests to the detriment of cultural diversity.

Despite its importance, Curran (2002) argues that cultural journalism faces problems and obstacles in times of democratic crisis. The growing media concentration, censorship, and persecution of journalists are concrete threats to freedom of the press and, consequently, to democracy. According to Castells (2009), the media is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few conglomerates, which limits the diversity of perspectives and editorial freedom, factors essential for the proper functioning of democracy.

Furthermore, in contexts of political and social crisis, cultural journalism can become a target of censorship or political pressure, hindering the free expression of ideas and cultural criticism. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue, in authoritarian regimes or democracies in erosion, cultural media can be seen as subversive, especially when they address sensitive issues such as national identity, social inequality, or human rights, which results in a restricted media environment, where cultural journalism is forced to operate under adverse conditions, compromising its role of promoting cultural diversity and democratic debate.

Nevertheless, Miguel (2016) analyzes that, to face the challenges that intertwine democratic issues and journalism as a mediator between power, information, and society, a collective effort is needed from civil society, organizations defending the freedom of the press, and media professionals themselves to protect cultural journalism as a vital force for democracy. This includes advocating for public policies that promote media plurality and freedom of expression, as well as actively resisting attempts at censorship and government control over cultural media.

CULTURAL JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL ISSUES

In terms of social and cultural reflections, cultural journalism addresses issues such as equality, inclusion, and social justice. By discussing diverse cultural and artistic manifestations, cultural journalism promotes understanding and respect for diversity, acting as a vehicle for raising awareness about social issues (Guerra, 2020). Cultural journalism can shed light on neglected aspects of society, questioning norms and opening space for marginalized voices (Ventura, 2005, p. 34).

This type of journalism informs and seeks to educate the public, helping to shape perceptions about relevant social issues by highlighting cultural productions that address, for example, racial or gender inequality (Piza, 2003). According to Cunha, Pereira, and

Magalhães (2002), cultural journalism contributes to social engagement in the construction of a society that fosters the critical and reflective exercise of its understanding of life, so that its approach to social issues makes its scope more comprehensive. According to Sodré (2002), the critical function of cultural journalism is essential for the promotion of social justice, by challenging prejudices and stimulating reflection on social conditions.

The impact of cultural journalism on society can be observed in the way in which It influences public perception of social issues. Woitowicz (2012) argues that cultural reporting that addresses issues such as discrimination, gender violence, and social exclusion has the potential to mobilize public opinion and instigate significant changes.

As Silva (2010) states, cultural journalism has the unique ability to transform art into a tool for raising awareness, and making the public reflect on the social injustices present in their daily lives.

For Santos (2003), the ability to influence public perception is amplified by the accessible and attractive nature of cultural productions, which often use narrative and aesthetics to raise public awareness in a deeper way than traditional informative texts. According to the author, the impact of cultural journalism, especially from the internet, therefore, lies not only in the information it transmits but also in the way it shapes the public's emotions and attitudes towards social issues.

A clear example of the transformative role of cultural journalism in society can be found in the documentary "Quebrando o Tabu," directed by Fernando Grostein Andrade. The film, which addresses the issue of drug decriminalization in Brazil and around the world, was widely discussed in the cultural media and sparked a national debate on drug policies.

By disseminating and analyzing the documentary, cultural journalism contributed to broadening the public debate and raising awareness of the need for a new approach to the drug problem in Brazil (Ferreira, 2013).

In another case, the impact of cultural journalism can also be seen in the coverage of the film "Bacurau," directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles. The film, which portrays the resistance of a rural community in the Brazilian Northeast against violence and oppression, was widely discussed in the cultural press. According to Martins and Mayor (2022), the coverage of the film 'Bacurau' in cultural media outlets was fundamental in sparking discussion on topics such as popular resistance, colonialism, and social exclusion, bringing these issues to the center of public debate. Ferreira (2013) notes that, in addition to documentaries, other communication products such as podcasts, web series, and interactive exhibitions also play a fundamental role in the dissemination of

cultural and social content. These formats, largely interactive and accessible, allow the public to actively participate in the learning and awareness process, making popular culture a vehicle for social transformation internalized in the communication structure transmitted from more popular cultural journalism that adheres to social issues.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this article, we discuss the relevance of cultural journalism as an agent of social and cultural reflection, as well as its impact on society. The main arguments were aimed at expanding discussions on how cultural journalism documents and disseminates cultural productions, acting, above all, as a critical mediator, promoting debates that often lead to significant social changes. It was possible to observe some cases and studies that illustrated how cultural journalism can amplify marginalized voices, influence public policies, and contribute to a more conscious and engaged citizenry.

In short, in terms of contribution to the field, this article sought to broaden the understanding of the vital role that cultural journalism plays in promoting democracy and in the formation of a more equitable society through the analysis of several examples and theories, making it possible to understand the idea that cultural journalism is an instrument for strengthening citizenship and democracy, offering a lens through which social issues can be examined and debated critically.

Regarding suggestions for future research, several areas deserve further investigation. First, it would be interesting to further study the impact of new technologies and digital media on cultural journalism, especially its ability to engage broader and more diverse audiences. In addition, research that examines the role of cultural journalism in contexts of crisis, such as pandemics or social conflicts, could offer more contemporary approaches to how this field can respond to future challenges.

Finally, research on the impact of cultural journalism on the formation of cultural identity in different regions of Brazil could reveal important nuances about the role of the media in the construction and maintenance of collective identities.

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