

Todo dia a mesma noite: The “Witnessing text” about the fire at Kiss nightclub

TODO DIA A MESMA NOITE: O “TEXTO TESTEMUNHAL” SOBRE O INCÊNDIO NA BOATE KISS

TODO DIA A MESMA NOITE: EL “TEXTO TESTIMONIAL” SOBRE EL INCENDIO DE LA DISCOTECA KISS

Ana Cláudia Peres

PhD and Master's degree in Communication from the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). Journalist at Radis magazine, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), and author of the book "Narrated Cities: A Cartography of Possible Landscapes for Journalism". anaclaudia.peres@gmail.com.

Marta Regina Maia

Professor in the Graduate Program in Communication at Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto. Leader of the Ponto Research Group: Affections, Genders, Narratives. Author of the book "Profiles in Journalism: Narratives in Composition". martamaia@ufop.edu.br.

Received: 04/01/2024

Accepted: 09/01/2024

Published: 11/30/2024

ABSTRACT:

With the aim of answering some questions related to Media Witnessing (which will be presented throughout the article), we will turn our gaze to the book *Todo dia a mesma noite* (Everyday the same Night), by journalist Daniela Arbex, which offers us exemplary empirical material to examine the tension between the idea of “eyewitness testimony” and the other modes assumed by testimony in the contemporary world, when witnessing is no longer just seeing and hearing and starts to also say about the way in which we are questioned by a “Witnessing Text” (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009). For this, we will work with two methodological operators – the testimony and the otherness – in order to identify what, in the reportage, brings us closer to the experience of the other, from the reflections around the “Witnessing Text” and the otherness in the narratives of the present.

KEYWORDS: “Witnessing Text”; A testimony; Otherness; Narratives; *Todo dia a mesma noite*.

Introduction

“But there's something that, if it makes me hear the first and second shots with a sense of relief, by the third leaves me alert, by the fourth unsettled, the fifth and sixth cover me in shame, the seventh and eighth I hear with my heart pounding in horror, by the ninth and tenth my mouth is trembling, by the eleventh I say in astonishment the name of God, by the twelfth I call my brother. The thirteenth shot assassinates me — because I am the other. Because I want to be the other”.

(Clarice Lispector, translated by the authors).

Journalistic practice encompasses numerous possibilities. Even considering that we have surpassed the so-called informational communication paradigm and have managed to reach a relational paradigm, it is not possible to diagnose the presence of a predominantly shared communicative situation in the current scenario. However, we

observe that the numerous openings aimed at breaking away from this hegemony and fracturing conservatisms corroborate the thesis that another journalism is possible.

From the perspective of this article and aligned with other contemporary research (Resende, 2002; Medina, 2008), we consider journalism as a discursive practice that produces meanings, which, much more than providing information, places subjects in relation (França, 2006), through a process that involves not only experience but also and primarily the recognition of *the other* - as opposed to a hegemonic perspective, which often considers the other only as the one "for whom, from whom, and by whom it speaks" (Resende, 2012, p. 154). In this case, we depart from both theoretical concerns that challenge the rational field and from a narrative that, from the standpoint of *praxis*, does not allow itself to be captured by simple forms of accounts indebted to an absolute reality - and in this sense, witnessing text is at least a place where we can turn our gaze.

On January 27, 2013, the headlines of practically all media outlets in Brazil announced a fire of enormous proportions at the *Kiss nightclub* (Boate Kiss, in Portuguese), located in the city of Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul. The number of victims, the second largest in history, indicates the magnitude of the event: 242 people dead, in addition to 600 ones who were injured. The precarious conditions of the establishment, with inadequate emergency exits, overcrowding, as well as a pyrotechnic show with inadequate materials in a confined space, among numerous other problems, contributed to the tragic occurrence.

The reverberation of this story was enormous; however, it still needed to be told from the perspective of the survivors - understood here as those who lived through a radical experience and are now attempting to recount the trauma (Agamben, 2008; Seligmann-Silva, 2010): in particular, from the perspective of victims' relatives. This is what journalist Daniela Arbex aims to narrate in the report-book *Todo dia a mesma noite: a história não contada da boate Kiss*¹ (2018), a journalistic book that we invite to follow with us in this reflection. The experienced journalist has already published *Holocausto brasileiro*, about the pain and suffering of people who "lived" in a mental asylum in Minas Gerais; *Cova 312*, that brings the story of a guerrilla fighter tortured and killed by the Armed Forces in Brazil; and, more recently, *Arrastados: Os Bastidores do Rompimento da Barragem de Brumadinho, o Maior Desastre*

¹ Although not the objective of this work, we cannot fail to acknowledge the enormous impact of this book, which resulted, among other things, in the production of a miniseries by Netflix ("Todo dia a mesma noite"), reaching the sixth position in the top 10 of the most viewed non-English language productions worldwide on the platform. Available at <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/tela-plana/todo-dia-a-mesma-noite-miniserie-da-boate-kiss-entra-no-top-10-mundial/>.

Humanitário do Brasil, that reconstructs the first 96 hours after the environmental crime occurred.

On this occasion, com *Todo dia a mesma noite*, Arbex provides us with exemplary empirical material to examine the tension between the idea of the "eyewitness" and the other modes assumed by testimony in the contemporary context, where witnessing is no longer just about seeing and hearing but also about how we are addressed by a "witnessing text" (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009). As we will see throughout this article, the presence of the journalist should not be understood in its metaphysical sense, since she was not on the scene at the time of the tragedy, but rather through the construction of a "witnessing text" that relates to the recipients.

Certainly, there are differences between the ontological nature of testimony (in its religious, legal, and philosophical dimensions) and the essence of "media testimony" (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009). However, if we agree with Laub (1992, p. 62) and the assertion that "it is not simply a factual datum that is reproduced and replicated by testimony, but a genuine event, an occurrence in its own right", to investigate journalism as a kind of testimony as we intend, it is necessary to broaden our perspective beyond what classical theories preach, still relying on reflections based on seemingly unshakable foundations of objectivity, impartiality, accuracy, and clarity - which have made journalism this offspring of technique and reason, the "beloved child of the enlightenment" (Marcondes Filho, 2002).

Thus, from the outset, some questions arise that we have already been repeating in our research: 1) What does testimony have to say to journalism - and vice versa?; 2) To what extent is journalism also testimony?; 3) In a world dominated by new technologies and the excess of information that, while updating, dazzles the viewer, why testify?; 4) How to testify or, better yet, how to narrate from the place of the witness and make the reader/viewer also a witness?; and 5) To what extent would testimony be able to produce an affective involvement between the one who produces and the one who receives the discourse?

This is what we seek to examine in this article, which aims to analyze the media testimony in Daniela Arbex's book, using two methodological operators - testimony and alterity - in order to identify what in the report brings us closer to the experience of *the other*. However, before proceeding, we consider it pertinent to reflect on the "witnessing text" and alterity in contemporary narratives. This is what we will do in the next sections.

The “witnessing text”

In contemporary times, the status of testimony occupies a central place alongside media practices. Inserted in a context where there is sometimes an uncomfortable feeling that everyone witnesses everything all the time - or even that everything is testimony - Daniela Arbex's reportage offers us clues to consider to what extent journalism is also a witness to what it narrates.

We are on the trail of a vast concept that, in general, has become a kind of emblem of the 20th century, largely due to its intrinsic relationship with Holocaust narratives, marked by trauma and the unspeakable nature of the event, but which also unfolds in other aspects. Whether associated with texts of various kinds that elaborate on the violence of dictatorships in Latin America or to reveal the unrepresentable aspects of everyday catastrophes, especially in media times, testimony has become a cornerstone in the most varied reflections on memory, ethics, representation, and language (Seligmann-Silva, 2003; Sarlo, 2007; Agamben, 2008; Didi-Huberman, 2012), spanning disciplines ranging from theology to law; from anthropology to philosophy; from psychoanalysis to literature and communication studies, testimony traverses the gamut of academic fields in the present moment.

Agamben (2008) offers us yet another key to interpretation. It reminds us that, in Latin, in addition to *superstes* (associated with survivors) and *testis* (a third person, which stands between two parts), witnessing also carries the sense of *auctor*. This word indicates "the witness," while "their testimony" presupposes something that carries antecedents and whose reality and force must be certified. In this sense, says the Italian philosopher, "testimony is always an act of authority" (Agamben, 2008, p. 150) and, therefore, we can say that the reporter, as an author, is someone capable of validating the witnessed fact in the power of their account, understanding that there is always an "incapacity" or "insufficiency" in this account.

From this perspective, it is the possibility of thinking about testimony that interests in the course of this article, which seeks to establish an intimate dialogue between testimony theories and journalistic narratives. In its interdisciplinary character, testimony must be understood "beyond what is available as an utterance". That is, it must be understood "not as a mode of utterance about, but as a mode of access to that truth" (Felman, 2000, p. 27, author's highlights).

Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski (2009), who have been expanding the possibilities of reading testimony in the contemporary media context, assert that, in the face of new technologies, each act of witnessing implies some form of mediation, which is configured from "putting an experience into language for the benefit of those who

were not there" (p. 1, translated by the authors). As we traverse a path of intersection between the fields of journalism and testimony, Frosh offers the concept of the "witnessing text," an argument that better encapsulates the importance of media testimony for this article.

In this sense, testimony is not only an act performed by a witness but also what is narratively constructed from a "witnessing text," which elaborates on the journalist's presence at the scene of the event, leading the viewer/reader to both experience the event and believe in what has been told to them. In Frosh's conception, a "witnessing text" is one whose structure interacts with the audience, creating not only an "imaginative experience" about the subject it deals with but also the assumption that the described event itself constitutes testimony. That is, "that the event described really happened, and that the text was designed to report it" (Frosh, 2009, p. 61).

The emphasis in these cases shifts from the origin of the discourse to the world experience that we imagine from the text. Agreeing with Frosh, we assume that the "witnessing text" indicates to readers that the event should be considered real not exactly because the reporter was on the scene, but because they reconstructed the event through the testimony of third parties and/or based on its traces. Giving the "text" the status of a witness means constructing presence narratively through language strategies. If this realization removes journalism from the position of "eyewitness to history" - that which is allowed to narrate because it saw or was there - on the other hand, it expands the role to which it was confined.

In other words, if we admit it is possible to reconstruct an event from the experience of third parties or those who witnessed it and then recounted it, and if we accept the existence of a "witnessing text" in journalism capable of imaginatively leading readers to the center of the event, it becomes easier to understand Frosh's argument (2009) that testimony can occur both in the direct relationship established between the witness and their own statement and in the interaction that occurs between the text and the audience, making readers witnesses as well.

This narrative movement also operates in the mnemonic dimension. We notice that many of these testimonial works contribute to the clarification of responsibilities and the process of reparations for traumatic events, for example. By bringing new narratives about these events, they confer to testimony a leading role in the reappropriation of the past, which is always open to new problematizations, as memory is related both to remembering and forgetting. By bringing up the issue of the "witnessing text," we are thus acknowledging the potency of this type of production for journalistic practice.

If Beatriz Sarlo (2007) criticizes the excess of testimonies, especially the notion of truth that often accompanies certain individual testimonies, Seligmann-Silva (2010) disagrees with this perspective, as in Brazil there was a deliberate propagation of policies of forgetting after the dictatorial period in the country (1964-1985). Although not the focus of this work, we cannot refrain from reflecting on the place of testimonial memory in the dispute of meanings in a society that still values certain silences about its past. We can turn to Paul Ricoeur (2012), who, by situating memory as a mediator of temporal experience and narrative operation, locates it in three levels of interpretation: the manipulated, the impeded, and the compelled. Considering the work under analysis, we are particularly interested in the implications of compelled memory, which refers to what Ricoeur (2012) calls a "duty of memory" and is linked to a reparative character, that is, the need for justice so that it never happens again.

From this standpoint, we assume: 1) witnessing is an act performed not only by a witness but also by a text; and 2) the bond established between the public and the text is also a form of testimony. This allows us to inquire about what a "witnessing text" can do or what difference it can make in the lives of those who access it? Before attempting to answer this question, which we will do in the final part of this article by analyzing Daniela Arbex's journalistic work on the fire at the Kiss nightclub, it is important to advance another methodological operator that we will use in this article: alterity - which directly engages with the perception of *the other* and the possibility, in journalism, of weaving narratives about the experience of *the other*.

Alterity

If we consider, as Boltanski (2015) does, that testimony is associated with a commitment to *the other*, then we assume a relational perspective that, in a way, supports journalism, albeit not hegemonically. As Roger Silverstone observes, "everything we do, everything we are, as subjects and actors in the social world, depends on our relationship with others: how we see them, know them, relate to them, care for them, or ignore them" (2002, p. 249). Recognizing the relevance of *the other* in this process reveals an attitude that is not always present in journalistic practices, as highlighted by Fernando Resende (2014) when criticizing the media approach that excludes those who do not align with the stereotyped perspectives of capitalist logic.

This logic disregards differences and reduces the possibility of dialogue, which is what guarantees, in some way, the recognition of *the other* in the world. By pointing out the "foreigner" within us, Julia Kristeva (1994) argues that "when we flee from or fight the foreigner, we are fighting against our own unconscious - this improper part of our own impossibility" (Kristeva, 1994, p. 201). This dynamic of embracing differences

results in what she calls "cohabitation," which enables the tense or gentle encounter between people. Reflecting on the ways to translate this otherness in media narratives, Silverstone (2002) poses two questions that lead us to reflect on this process: "how do I represent the Other in what I write or film without, on the one hand, making it exotic? [...] without, on the other hand, absorbing it into the very sense I have of myself?" (p. 249). Complex questions, but ones that can be problematized in the object of study presented here.

Before delving into the analysis of the report-book, however, we find it pertinent to briefly address the social dimension of the experience between individuals, in this specific case, between journalists and sources/characters, so that we can understand how this communicative relationship occurs. After all, the configuration of narratives can follow a reductionist or broader path depending on how the journalist opens up to this exchange, recognizing the differences, similarities, and absences in this dynamic.

Continuing with Silverstone's reasoning (2002), who diagnoses the role of the media in social interaction processes, we can say that the current technological media spectrum can contribute to bringing people closer together or even interdict them, especially when it simplifies events and shapes people based on mercantile interests. The numerous examples of representations of the periphery, celebrities, violence, among many other situations, conveyed by the media, can trivialize images leading to the erasure of *the other* or, at worst, to indifference.

Considering this broader perspective, it is worth invoking some ideas from Emmanuel Lévinas, a philosopher who works with the ethical notion of responsibility towards the other, especially since we are living in a time where cases of intolerance and violence seem to prevail in our daily lives. By situating language as an element of access to the other, Lévinas (2009) elucidates the issue of the singularity of the self, as for him, generalization represents death. It is in the space of relation, therefore, that this singularity is expressed, which the philosopher will call the "presence of the face" (p. 59). Not the face outlined from physical and biological features like the forehead, eyes, nose, and mouth, but as the possibility of singularity guaranteed by the humanization of this interlocution. According to Lévinas (1980), the face, thought of as a sign, can freeze into a plastic form and thus alienate "the otherness of the Other," since "the manifestation of the face is already discourse" (p. 53).

As discourses produce meanings and are activated primarily by the dimension of presence, rather than by simple essentialist conditions, we can again turn to the condition of the foreigner that underlies this other. In this relational movement, we can identify with, reject, or be indifferent to, but never distant from, the other. This dynamic

can ensure that reality cannot be understood solely by the way a certain conception of "me" conceive it. "We cannot assume that the world is simply as we know it, merely a projection of our experience, nor can we erase it, pretending it does not exist [...] there are things that we do not fully understand, nor can we understand" (Silverstone, 2002, p. 250).

This discussion is particularly interesting to us because, aside from highlighting its ethical dimension, it provides insights into how journalistic narratives are shaped. It prompts us to inquire whether they adhere to colonialist, sexist, racist, and misogynistic perspectives aimed at maintaining power, or if they contribute to disrupting such discourse. Hence, our aim is to understand the extent to which this gaze towards reality can be subject to domestication. To achieve this, we will scrutinize our subject of study, considering media testimony through two methodological lenses - testimony and otherness - to discern how these testimonies portray the experience of *the other* and in what manner they manifest themselves in reporting.

Testimony and alterity in the report-book *Todo dia a mesma noite*

"When Gustavo Cauduro Cadore opened his eyes, his face was covered in food. A man was pulling his hair forcefully, and a woman was rolling him on the bed. The two were arguing. The veterinarian's heart was pounding, but he couldn't speak. He had a tube inserted in his throat, through which oxygen was helping him breathe. Terrified, he thought he had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Mentally, he wondered what he had done to end up in that place. As far as he could remember, he had managed to escape from the burning nightclub. Had he gone mad?" (Arbex, 2018, p. 175, translated by the authors).

The passage above is from the opening of the chapter "Opening the Eyes," in the final third of the book *Todo dia a mesma noite* (Every Day the Same Night – a rough translation of the title into English). It's undoubtedly a testimony. Gustavo Caudore is one of the survivors of the tragedy at the Kiss nightclub, which Daniela Arbex narrates in her reporting as if she herself had witnessed the moment when the young man wakes up in the Emergency Hospital in Porto Alegre, where Gustavo had been transferred after the tragedy in Santa Maria. By telling the story through a "witnessing text," the journalist herself becomes a witness to the pain and suffering of parents, friends, victims, and healthcare professionals in the struggle to resume life after the early hours of the fire. In the present tense, through the narrative, the author makes us, readers, also witnesses. This is a hypothesis that we seek to prove here.

During the course of the report, the journalist offers the reader the opportunity to get to know Gustavo, Maíke, Andrielli, Flavinha, Mirella, Gilmar, Vitória; Sérgio and

Nadir, Guto's parents; Natalício and Marise, Lucas's parents; Marta and Silvio, Silvinho's parents; Carina, Thanise and Camila's mother; hundreds of others. She does this through numerous discursive marks of witnessing text, revealed through the encounter between the reporter and her interviewees in dialogues reproduced with precise details and in the meticulous description of the moments before and after the tragedy.

In this type of reportage, the experience is recounted through traces, understood in Walter Benjamin's conception (2012) as a way of coming into contact with what has passed. For the philosopher, "the trace is the appearance of a proximity, no matter how distant what left it may be" (Benjamin, 2009, p. 490). Interestingly, in the philosopher's work, the term in the original Latin, *Spuren*, has received various interpretations - besides traces, marks, vestiges, footprints, it has also been translated as "witnessing text." A scholar of Benjamin, Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin, defines trace as marks left against silence and forgetting or as that which "inscribes the memory of a presence that no longer exists and that always runs the risk of being definitively erased" (Gagnebin, 2009, p. 45).

In the book *Todo Dia a Mesma Noite*, it wouldn't be possible to touch upon the real if not for the traces that reach us through a "witnessing text." It's through these traces that we learn that, on the night he lost his life, Guto was wearing the jeans his mother had bought him as a gift during the holidays; that Thanise preferred All Stars to high heels; that Heitor smelled honey in the wildflower; and that among the cell phones found among the debris of the nightclub, "there were already 134 missed calls with the name 'mom'".

Silviano Santiago (1989) argues that there is a contemporary way of narrating and positions the journalist as a "postmodern narrator," one who conveys something by "narrating information" (p. 39). This narrator's role is to observe in order to recount what they have seen. "It's as if the narrator demands: let me look so that you, the reader, can also see", Santiago summarizes (1989, p. 45). According to the author, in current times, experience is provided by a gaze cast upon an experience outside of oneself, which therefore "asserts itself through the gaze it casts around, following beings, events, and incidents (and not through an introspective gaze that collects experiences lived in the past)" (Santiago, 1989, p. 45). In this narrative, the journalist takes a step further.

Daniela Arbex did not witness the exact moment at three seventeen in the morning when stage producer Luciano Bonilha Leão placed a glove on the hand of vocalist Marcelo de Jesus dos Santos, who would then ignite a firework, initiating the

horror. She couldn't have seen it. Still, she "casts a gaze" upon an "experience outside herself" so that, ultimately, "the reader can also see." Even though there is an attempt in the text to explain the inexplicable, from the witness's point of view, the moment will always be unattainable. Therefore, we suggest that the "witnessing text" becomes a bridge between "those who were there" and "those who were not," as Roy Brand (2009) intends. And the relationship established between the structure of this text and the audience becomes as relevant to the act of witnessing as that which occurs between the witnesses (considering here the characters heard during the investigation of the report) and the reporter.

Let us consider another passage for examination:

Marta and Silvio Beuren were still mourning the death of Silvio's employee's son when they learned that their own son could also be among those affected by the fire.

As the merchant and his wife entered José Mariano da Rocha Street in the Nossa Senhora de Lourdes neighborhood, Silvio noticed from afar that his son's car was not parked there.

– The pickup truck is in the garage, my dear. Definitely.

With great anticipation, Silvio parked the remote control for the heavy brown iron gate. Inside, it was empty (Arbex, 2018, p. 62, translated by the authors).

We are witnessing the moment when, distressed, Silvinho's parents begin to search for their son. Up until then, they were 14 kilometers away from Santa Maria, and upon hearing the remote possibility of their son being among the victims of the fire at the Kiss nightclub, they hastened their return from their refuge at the country house. We witness the dialogue between a mother and a father, taking turns trying to calm the heart filled with insecurity, doubt, uncertainty, but still with hope, the desire to find their son's car in the garage. To reach this level of detail, the reporter, who certainly did not experience the scene, takes an active stance in this process by defining "who or which voices contribute to narrate the events selected for broadcast" (Maia & Barretos, 2018, p. 4), and also employs all the technical precepts of journalism (source verification, data collection, precise investigation, etc.). However, in this excerpt, knowing how everything happened is as motivating as understanding how we experience the event.

How do we feel when confronted with these testimonies? What emotions do they evoke in us? These questions were suggested by Roy Brand (2009). In a text analyzing the presence of testimony in Gus Van Sant's film *Elephant*, about the Columbine massacre - when two students invaded an American school, killing 23 people and injuring 15 - Roy Brand explains that in narratives of suffering, we turn to

the figure of the witness not to witness the facts, but to witness the fact that the event cannot be reduced to mere facts. Bringing this reflection into the field of journalism, we infer that in narratives that value the "witnessing text" like this one, the question posed is no longer, as Brand (2009) points out, about what this testimony is about? Or: How reliable is this statement as a testimony of an experience? Or even: How can I know who these characters are and if what they tell me is true? These are the questions that classical journalism, indebted to the old maxim of the "eyewitness to history," continues to repeat. In this case, the questions prompted by the text are of a different nature, as if, in seeking the truth of the facts, it was possible to find something beyond, approaching the complexity of what is being narrated.

Building upon what has been presented thus far, we assert that when recognized in the narrative not merely as a procedural aspect of routine, but as a narrated experience, testimony has the potential to enhance an affective dimension, a propensity for alterity, which is often erased from classical journalism narratives. Whether having privileged access to the event or not, whether participating directly in the event or not, it is within the "witnessing text" – as we have already observed – that the effect of presence is configured. This allows us to state that within the journalistic process, witnesses include not only the journalist, the sources, and the spectator who becomes a witness through the testimony of others, but also the text itself, which enables individuals to imaginatively immerse themselves in the event.

In this report, the journalist constructs a presence in the text in such a way that, even though absent in space and time, the reader is given the opportunity to access the event as if they were "experiencing the experience" themselves. Let's see how Daniela Arbex narrates the night of that Saturday which, for a group of friends, had begun much earlier, when the four were getting ready for the celebrations of one of their birthdays, Andrielli or Andri, as everyone affectionately called her, at the Kiss nightclub.

On that January 26th, 2013, it was no different from other events. Flavinha's friends gathered at the manicurist's house to get ready. Vitória, the girl who dyed her hair red with fabric dye, lent Andri her black dress, one of her favorites. Flavinha, the group's official makeup artist, decided to wear blue, which, alongside gold, was one of her lucky colors. Mirela, who had been Miss Santa Maria as a child, wore a traffic-stopping red jacket. Meanwhile, Gilmara opted for a little black dress with sheer fabric at the neckline (Arbex, 2018, p. 92, translated by the authors).

When distanced from the ontological foundation that makes the presence of the witness at the event obligatory, we begin to outline other possibilities for journalism. In this case, as in most journalistic accounts linked to traumatic events, the reporter was not 'there.' But even if she were, like some direct survivors of the tragedy, she would not be given total dominion over the event. It is worth recalling external literature and remembering, once again, what Agamben told us (2008, p. 162): witnesses "are neither the dead nor the survivors nor the submerged nor the saved, but what remains between them". Although remaining loyal to the event is vital for testimony (in any of its forms), it is necessary to understand it as something that unfolds over time. Thus, the 'being there' should not be apprehended in its metaphysical sense as being able to occupy the place at the exact moment the event occurred (Brand, 2009). This does not mean that the event happened exactly as revealed in the account, but that is how it was apprehended.

That's what the journalist did when recalling the dialogue between a mother and a daughter:

- Daughter, take care of yourself - Ligiane pleaded.
- Mom, you know what I found out? When a mother says "take care!" to her daughter, she means I love you.
- Then, take care (Arbex, 2018, p. 92, translated by authors).

At this point, the reader follows a group of parents in their frantic search for their daughters. Guided by Daniela Arbex's "witnessing text," we already know that, initially reported as survivors, Andrielli, Flavinha, Mirella, Gilmar, and Vitória were not found in the Emergency Room of the Hospital de Caridade nor in the Santa Maria Garrison Hospital. They were also not found at the Municipal Sports Center, where deceased young people were being transferred. Amidst the bodies and foul odor, they were nowhere to be found. At one point, still filled with hope, Andrielli's mother says: "When we find one, we find them all".

In any narrative, even those that claim to account for reality, there is not a single random choice – including or especially the use of quotation marks – in these accounts marked by trauma or suffering, it is up to the journalist-witness to select the characteristics they wish to highlight, of course. But here, more than to mark a distance from the event, the goal is exactly the opposite. It is about implicating the reader. In other words, we turn to testimony as that which brings us closer to the experience and the truthfulness of the facts without necessarily linking them to an objective measure, but rather relating them to a fragmented and subjective composition. It is no longer about ensuring the truth by the fact of "having been there," as has already been said,

or even hiding behind usual evasions such as: "I am just reporting the facts as they happened". In this other narrative modality, the risk of narrating without avoiding the implications that this entails is assumed. And that is no small feat.

It's the way physical presence is constructed in the account that guides us as readers in the position of potential witnesses. Dialoguing once again with Brand's (2009) readings regarding media testimony, we can say that in this narrative, presence is invoked not as proof of truth, but to make us, if not responsible, at least sensitive to the narrated event. Like in this moment of the narrative:

In the pavilion designated for relatives, Ligiane [Andrielli's mother] heard two familiar names: Vitória Saccol and Flávia Torres Lemos. Without understanding which list her daughter's friends' names were on, she asked for help from an acquaintance:

– What is happening?

– Aunt, Flavinha and Vitória have passed away, said Flavinha's cousin.

Ligiane became desperate as she recalled what she herself had said: "When we find one, we find them all."

My God, it's over! Andri is also dead, Ligiane deduced, feeling unwell (Arbex, 2018, p. 123, translated by the authors).

In this report, which helps us investigate the real power of testimony for journalism, the way of telling makes us feel like an observer who participates in the process, a witness. Because the effect of presence has been constructed discursively as Frosh (2009) desires, and because it is precisely a "witnessing text" that creates space for us to experience an event at the moment we have access to it, bringing us closer to the individuals who experienced the trauma to some extent. As we can observe in another passage from the book, when shortly before the party at the Kiss nightclub, another mother and daughter went in search of a new dress. On the day of the fire, this is how the reader is called upon to bear witness:

The red dress was left behind, but not the shoes. Little accustomed to wearing heels, Thanise left the house on that January 26th feeling special.

– Mom, you can't imagine how beautiful I look!" she told her over the phone.

Carina was on duty at the Unimed hospital, where she worked as a nutrition assistant. She couldn't see her daughter getting ready, but she imagined that the dark-skinned, black-haired girl with hair flowing down to her chin wouldn't go unnoticed. Douglas Medeiros, her

boyfriend who didn't go to Kiss because he had to finish a project, had already been won over by her charm.

Around one o'clock in the early hours of Sunday, Thanise spoke with her mother again on the phone. It would be the last time. She mentioned that she was tired, especially because of the high heels, a style she wasn't accustomed to, as she preferred flats and her inseparable All Star sneakers.

– Go to Douglas's house, honey. We'll talk tomorrow. Love you.

– I love you too (Arbex, 2018, p. 188, translated by the authors).

Thanise would die almost three hours after that phone call. Her mother, Carina, then becomes consumed by guilt for being the one to buy the girl's shoes, which she believed had hindered her daughter's escape from the nightclub, as told in Daniela Arbex's text. What happens to the family is a torment in the times that follow.

By becoming witnesses to the phone call between mother and daughter, which we imagine was reported to the journalist in rich detail, we are led on a journey that brings us closer to an event that escapes representation but demands communication (Brand, 2009). Thus, we access not the original and authentic content, but rather, the traces that compose it. As the narrative brings us closer to the event, we realize that we are witnessing not the event as it happened in the past, but the way the past affects the present. After all, the event does not end when a succession of criminal events ends 242 lives and leaves many others in ruins.

The episode - like many others recounted in Daniela Arbex's "witnessing text" that we have highlighted throughout this article - draws attention to the place of listening, essential in testimonial narratives. As indispensable as the need to tell others and make them participants in tragedy or personal drama, as desired by Primo Levi - the Holocaust survivor who testified to the existence of Auschwitz - is the willingness of the listener to lend an ear. Jeanne Marie Gagnebin (2009) evokes a variation in the status of testimony, expanding the concept beyond what is lived or seen - a development that both projects a dialogical function onto testimony and establishes a solidarity, a disposition for otherness.

By assuming a type of testimony that also belongs to the listener, regardless of their direct or indirect participation in the event, the author reminds us that there is an unpopulated place that can and should be occupied in favor of transmitting the experience. This desired expansion of the concept of testimony allows not only the testimonial act but also an approximation between worlds and an opening for the other's story to be taken up and transmitted in different words (Gagnebin, 2009; Seligmann-Silva, 2009).

Final considerations

By highlighting an extended concept of testimony that also implicates the recipient - that is, by giving journalism the status of a "potential witness" - our purpose was to address testimony not only for its eminently political character (Seligmann-Silva, 2008; Gagnebin, 2009) - in its guideline for repairing a historical past - but also seeking a unfolding of the sensitive order by emphasizing the affective potential and the disposition for otherness that certain narratives play in this journalism.

From this perspective and bringing the discussion to an even broader form of testimony facilitated by media testimony, we attribute to journalism, essentially, the role of potential witness. "You can't say you didn't know" (Ellis, 2009, p. 73, emphasis added). This apparent sense of "knowing everything" would imply a sense of responsibility, no matter how small the commitment, towards events. It's as if the "mundane testimony," ordinary, of common people, gives us the opportunity to know what is happening with others concurrently with what is happening with me (Ellis, 2009). If it's possible, therefore, to point out a consequence of this model of testimony, perhaps it's precisely its ability to put society on permanent watch, with the public both witnessing and sharing worlds at the same time (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009).

The main aptitude of this recipient-oriented model lies precisely in eliciting reactions from the public such as "This could have happened to me." It's when "we make the collective both the subject and the object of everyday testimony, witnessing its own historical reality as it unfolds" (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009, p. 12). By replenishing our capacity to imagine the pain and suffering of other ordinary people wherever they may be, media testimony prompts individuals to become more aware.

There is a comforting yet overly naive optimism in believing that knowing about the plight of others necessarily leads to action. Similarly, assuming that being informed about the world's misfortunes drives involvement with the suffering individual seems overly hopeful. We do not claim to discuss the moral consequences and implications that media testimony entails. Nevertheless, and with due reservations, the idea that this type of testimony has the potential to connect us since it fuels our inclination to empathize with the suffering individual - to draw closer to them - is, at the very least, hopeful. Given the relational nature of this testimonial journalism, we can understand it, to some extent, "as a proactive gesture, as it presents perspectives that lead us to the knowledge of narrative modes that broaden our understanding of journalism" (Resende

& Peres, 2016, p. 134). If, as suggested by Luc Boltanski (2015), witnessing means, to some extent, committing to the other, it becomes imperative to probe journalism for what, in some narratives, as is the case with *Todo dia a mesma noite*, contributes to the action of individuals in affecting and being reciprocally affected.

Referências

- Agamben, G. (2008). *O que resta de Auschwitz*. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial.
- Arbex, D. (2018). *Todo dia a mesma noite: A história não contada da boate Kiss*. Rio de Janeiro: Intrínseca.
- Benjamin, W. (2009). *Passagens*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG; São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo.
- Benjamin, W. (2012). *Magia e técnica, arte e política: Ensaio sobre literatura e história da cultura* (8ª ed.). São Paulo: Brasiliense. (Obras Escolhidas, 1).
- Boltanski, L. (2015). A presença das pessoas ausentes. *Revista Parágrafo*, 2(3), 147-156. Recuperado em 20 de novembro, 2022, de <http://revistaseletronicas.fiamfaam.br/index.php/recicofi/article/view/338>
- Brand, R. (2009). Witnessing trauma. In P. Frosh & A. Pinchevski (Eds.), *Media witnessing* (pp. 1-10). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2012). *Imagens apesar de tudo*. Lisboa: KKYM.
- Ellis, J. (2009). Mundane Witness. In P. Frosh & A. Pinchevski (Eds.), *Media witnessing* (pp. 1-10). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Felman, S. (2000). Educação e crise ou as vicissitudes do ensino. In M. Seligmann-Silva & A. Nesterovski (Eds.), *Catástrofe e representação* (pp. 1-10). São Paulo: Editora Escuta.
- França, V. (2006). Sujeito da comunicação: sujeitos em comunicação. In V. França & C. Guimarães (Eds.), *Na mídia, na rua: Narrativas do cotidiano* (pp. 61-88). Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.
- Frosh, P., & Pinchevski, A. (2009). Introduction: Why media witnessing? Why now? In P. Frosh & A. Pinchevski (Eds.), *Media witnessing* (pp. 1-10). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gagnebin, J. M. (2009). *Lembrar, escrever, esquecer* (2ª ed.). São Paulo: Editora 34.
- Kristeva, J. (1994). *Estrangeiros para nós mesmos*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco.
- Laub, D. (1992). Bearing witness or the vicissitudes of listening. In S. Felman & D. Laub (Eds.), *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history* (pp. 57-74). Nova York: Routledge.
- Lévinas, E. (1980). *Totalidade e Infinito*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- Lévinas, E. (2009). *Entre nós: Ensaio sobre a alteridade* (3ª ed.). Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Maia, M. R., & Barretos, D. do C. (2018). O testemunho como elemento central na produção jornalística: A narrativa de Operação Massacre. *Rizoma*, 6(1), 1-13.
- Marcondes Filho, C. (2002). *A saga dos cães perdidos*. São Paulo: Hacker Editores.
- Medina, C. (2008). *Entrevista: O diálogo possível*. São Paulo: Ática.
- Miyashiro, K. (2023, janeiro 31). Minissérie sobre a Boate Kiss entra em ranking mundial de audiência. Recuperado em 02 de fevereiro, 2023, de <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/tela-plana/todo-dia-a-mesma-noite-miniserie-da-boate-kiss-entra-no-top-10-mundial/>
- Resende, F. (2002). *O olhar às avessas: A lógica do texto jornalístico*. (Tese de doutorado, Escola de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo).
- Resende, F. (2012). Falar para as massas, falar com o outro: valores e desafios do jornalismo. In V. França & P. Vaz (Eds.), *Comunicação midiática: Instituições, valores, cultura*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.

- Resende, F. (2014). Representação das diferenças no discurso jornalístico. *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 2(2), 206-223. Recuperado em 22 de novembro, 2022, de <https://bjr.sbpjor.org.br/bjr/article/view/749>
- Resende, F., & Peres, A. C. (2016). Nós, as testemunhas: notas sobre um jornalismo de teor testemunhal. *Revista Dispositiva*, 5(2). Recuperado em 10 de fevereiro, 2023, de http://periodicos.pucminas.br/index.php/dispositiva/article/view/12694/0?fbclid=IwAR1tEqNNQbTRhKsExcyCWuuWSuFf98ou3ppRF7biFvezbDFzLT0syr_Tmm8
- Ricoeur, P. (2012). *A memória, a história, o esquecimento*. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp.
- Sarlo, B. (2007). *Tempo passado: Cultura da memória e guinada subjetiva*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG.
- Santiago, S. (1989). O narrador pós-moderno. In S. Santiago (Ed.), *Nas malhas da letra* (pp. 38-52). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Seligmann-Silva, M. (2003). *História, memória, literatura: O testemunho na era das catástrofes*. Campinas: Editora Unicamp.
- Seligmann-Silva, M. (2009). Grande Sertão: Veredas como gesto testemunhal e confessional. *Alea: Revista de Estudos Neolatinos*, 11(1), jan./jun.
- Seligmann-Silva, M. (2010). O local do testemunho. *Tempo e Argumento*, 2(1), 3-20, jan./jun.
- Silverstone, R. (2002). *Por que estudar a mídia?*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola.
- Siquara, C. A. (2018, janeiro 20). Em livro sobre boate Kiss, Daniela Arbex lida com os traumas da perda. *O Tempo*. Recuperado em 02 de dezembro, 2022, de <https://www.otempo.com.br/diversao/magazine/em-livro-sobre-boate-kiss-daniela-arbex-lida-com-os-traumas-da-perda-1.156469>

RESUMO:

Com o objetivo de responder algumas questões referentes ao testemunho midiático (que serão apresentadas ao longo do artigo), voltaremos nosso olhar para o livro *Todo dia a mesma noite*, da jornalista Daniela Arbex, que nos oferece um material empírico exemplar para examinar a tensão entre a ideia da “testemunha ocular” e os outros modos assumidos pelo testemunho no contemporâneo, quando testemunhar não é mais apenas ver e ouvir e passa a dizer também sobre o modo como somos interpelados por um “texto testemunhal” (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009). Para isso, trabalharemos com dois operadores metodológicos – o testemunho e a alteridade –, a fim de identificar aquilo que, na reportagem, nos aproxima da experiência do outro, a partir das reflexões em torno do “texto testemunhal” e da alteridade nas narrativas da atualidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: “Texto testemunhal”; Testemunho; Alteridade; Narrativas; *Todo dia a mesma noite*.

RESUMEN:

Con el objetivo de responder algunas preguntas sobre el testimonio mediático (que se presentarán a lo largo del artículo), dirigiremos nuestra mirada al libro *Todo día a misma noche*, de la periodista Daniela Arbex, que nos ofrece un material empírico ejemplar para examinar la tensión entre la idea de “testimonio presencial” y los demás modos que asume el testimonio en el mundo contemporáneo, cuando atestiguar ya no es sólo ver y oír y pasa a decir también sobre la forma en que somos interpelados por un “texto testimonial” (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009). Para ello, trabajaremos con dos operadores metodológicos -el testimonio y la alteridad- con el fin de identificar qué, en el reportaje, nos acerca a la experiencia del otro, a partir de las reflexiones en torno al “texto testimonial” y la alteridad en las narrativas del presente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: “Texto testimonial”; Un testimonio; Alteridad; Narrativas; *Todo día a mesma noite*.