

BOOK REVIEWS

OLAVO BILAC: THE RETAILER OF THE EVERYDAY

SCHERER, MARTA. IMPRENSA E BELLE ÉPOQUE: OLAVO BILAC, O JORNALISMO E SUAS HISTÓRIAS. PALHOÇA: ED. UNISUL, 2012. 185P.

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The term collection, derived from the Latin, is the junction of *co* and *legere*; the latter comes from agriculture and means “to harvest”, “to choose”, “to collect”. In this perspective, the modern collector performs its harvest searching, in the profusion of worldly things, not the archaic, but the residual; releasing the object of its everyday use, it gives off the time, recovers the former’s place again, does the “time of yesterday” a time saturated of “nows”. “Renew the old world – here’s the impulse rooted more in the collector to acquire something new” (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 229).

Renew the old world is perhaps the greatest merit of the book *Imprensa e belle époque: Olavo Bilac, o jornalismo e suas histórias*, published in August 2012 by Publisher Unisul. When digging the shelves of the stories collector Olavo Bilac, the journalist and PhD in Literature, Martha Scherer, was able to remove the dust of time that was deposited on the shoulders of the writer from Rio, to give him a sense of avant-garde. Opting for the chronicles smallness instead of his entire canonical literature, she gave him lightness. After all, the “Prince of Brazilian Poets”, despite being one of the great names of poetry in the 19th century, was a skilful chronicler. In the shatters of Bilac’s chronicle, there is a whole document of the minimum stories of a city that, while modernized, also produced waste. Therefore, collecting the waste would be the task of “peddler” Bilac.

Would also be up to Scherer acting as a “retailer of the affairs”, whose strictly followed the invitation of Bilac to put her hand in the peddler box: “Put your hand inside it and help yourself” (BILAC in SCHERER, 2012,

p. 110). From that box went Bilac's texts published between 1892 and 1908, which discuss the life within press media and the job of journalist. In her excavation, especially on the shelves of the National Library, Scherer not only unearthed dozens of never before published chronicles, but also determined, on the ground of today, the place of the old. Rescuing the "experiences" lived in a time marked by numerous transitions, she gave them a new meaning, so that would be possible to read the tomorrow through it. Or, as stated by Benjamin (1994, p.229), collectors "become interpreters of fate".

Thus, the book *Imprensa e belle époque* hits to put Bilac as one of those interpreters, whose addressed issues discussed so far by serious researchers of journalistic ethics or by protagonists of bar chats: the question of whether publish suicides or not, the predilection of readers for scandals of privacy, the anticipation of the ombudsman figure, among others, although, at times, the book only catches these issues without interpreting them deeply or without contextualizing them in their vast historical dimension. One example is the mention made to the issue of censorship as one of the impediments to doing journalism. Referring to the measures taken by President Floriano Peixoto, "whose iron hand was forcefully felt by all the intellectuals at that time" (SCHERER, 2012, p. 102), it poorly explains what these measures would be and what was forbidden with such exception practice.

However, in other parts, it brings to light a whole curious contextualization that elucidates the paths that turned the peddler chronicler into the professional journalist. This is the case of pages that recount how the first trade association was organized, the proposed fee schedule, the realization of courses and conferences for fledgling journalists, job stability, benefits and pensions – recurrent concerns of Bilac, shown here by the author as a testimony of the first layers of formation of nascent journalism.

In her predilection for Bilac's chronicles smallness, which would anticipate a whole story in movement, the author puts herself as a collector who appropriates the remains to give them new meanings. This perspective sheds fruitful lights upon our present history, contributing to the late understanding of journalism that arose in times gone by the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. Acting cautiously as a "man who digs", she becomes a Benjaminian collector of small stories of the collector Bilac.

Stories of a time, miniaturized stories, shattered, to fit the cracked sheets of the newspaper. And, despite their transience, they still

live. Still referring to the stamp collector, Scherer shows a perspective similar to Benjamin: “To whoever examines piles of old letters, a stamp, out of use since a long time, on an fragile envelope, says more than a dozen pages reread” (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 57). That is also the intention of the chronicler who, as well as the collector, searches for the residual and the smallness produced by the metropolis and converted into a strategic place for contemporary reflection.

By choosing the residual of chronicle in Bilac, the book *Imprensa e belle époque*, winner of the prize Adelmo Genro Filho of Journalism Research (Best Dissertation in 2011), gives us an overview of the various stories produced in the midst of a metropolis that wanted to be modern and of an activity as modern as the city that engendered it – journalism. Thus, by its small and unpretentious peculiarity, maybe chronicle registers much more the experiences produced no longer in the interiors of homes or bourgeois offices, but in the streets.

In this context, text fragments and ruins acquire fundamental relevance. And the smallness, emptied of its everyday sense, rises again to the observer as poetic or historical material, as resurged for the collector Scherer, who admits: “Diving into the vast heap of Olavo Bilac's chronicles was like trawling a 'story chest' that carries, sometimes untouched, memories of a past that is not over” (SCHERER, 2012, p. 133). Thus, by touching those memories, in a Benjaminian movement, it engraves the past of journalism into the current's lines.

REFERENCES

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