

How to Study the History of Journalism? Critical Reflection on the Directions of the History of Journalism

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SUMMARY

In Western Europe and the USA, as in Slovenia, there is little interest in the history of journalism (education and research) by students and scholars. On the other hand, there is a huge interest in (mis)use of the history of journalism (political practice) by some politicians and journalists. This article critically reflects the traditional perspectives of the history of journalism. The study shows that despite major shifts towards a social and cultural perspective of journalism that address the links and interactions among structural conditions in contemporary societies, and despite modest reforms in journalism education and the rise of criticism in this field, the majority of journalism historians still continue their preoccupation with ahistorical and uncritical practice.

Key words: the history of journalism, journalism, cultural studies, theory, methodology

Introduction

In Slovenia, as in other Eastern and Western European countries and the USA, the study of the history of journalism remains more or less insignificant. For example, a course History of Journalism is one of the least popular ones in curriculum offered by the only Department for Journalism in Slovenia. Furthermore, only a small number of research projects were carried out (the last one was finished in the 1980s), and only a few books were written on this theme (e.g. Vatovec, 1961,

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1967, 1969; Amon, 1996; Merljak Zdovc, 2007). The reasons are very diverse and various. One of them is that citizens' interests and responses to all history, not just the history of journalism, have been in decline. In particular, because of our post-socialist condition, there is a common belief that history in general is socially unproductive and that we all must look toward future only. On the other side, there is a huge interest for interpreting the history of journalism and history in general by right-wing politicians, media and journalists. Almost every day we see how these politicians try to re-interpret history (especially, Second World War and socialism history) and use it for their own current political goals. In Slovenia, the right-wing journalists claim that they follow a so-called "pre-second World War journalism school", not knowing much what this is. This is not something typical only for Slovenia. According to Carey (2007: 3), "journalists generally do not know much about history of their craft." Thus, we have a particular type of a paradox here: on one side, there is little interest in the history of journalism (education and research) by students and scholars. On the other hand, there is a huge interest in (mis)use of the history of journalism (political practice) by some politicians and journalists.

The reasons for this contradictory interest in the history of journalism are various. One of them is a lack of critical reflection on the dimension and direction of journalism historiography and ahistorical and uncritical practice by journalism historians themselves (Altwood, 1978; Schudson, 1997). This unreflective representation of history functions as a public resource and standard college text. As a result, such absence of critical reflection contributes the status quo of theory and practice (Hardt and Brennen, 1993). Moreover, it reinforces to the weakening of this field, a lack of interest by students and the manipulation by actors outside the profession (Altwood, 1978; Neron, 1990).

There have been only a handful of convention papers and published essays which have addressed these issues, although the number has increased in the last few decades (e.g. Hardt and Brennen, 1993; 1995; Schudson, 1997; Nord, 2006). And, on the whole, practicing journalism historians have not been a very self-reflective themselves about it all. The plight of journalism historiography is due in part to the absence of a critical self-consciousness. Already Altwood claimed (1978: 4) that: "If this journalistic field is to gain any degree of philosophical or methodological sophistication journalism historians must review the problem of historical judgment, a striving for historical revision". We argue that the failure of journalism historians to address important philosophical and methodological issues has permitted the entrenchment of a single perspective which, consequently, has stifled the field. This article tries to critical reflect this mainstream or traditional perspective of the history of journalism in Western Europe and the USA. We use Slovene historians as an example of the overall problems discussed.

As far back as the early fifties, this loss of vitality in historical research and teaching attracted considerable concern. Peterson suggested that if the history of journalism course, that "shabby little orphan" in the curriculum, was to remain nothing more than a dull chronological story of the press as seen in a vacuum, then "perhaps it had best be put to death, quietly, mercifully" (Atwood, 1978: 4). Also more recent critical reflections of the history of journalism (e.g. Schudson, 1997;

Nord, 2006) show that the history of journalism has touched, but not transformed, by changes of social science in the last forty years, which will be presented in the next chapter. Despite major shifts towards a social and cultural perspective of journalism that address the links and interactions among structural conditions in contemporary societies, and despite modest reforms in journalism education and the rise of criticism in this field, the majority of journalism historians in Slovenia – typical example is the last published book on this field (Merljak Zdovc, 2007) – still continue their preoccupation with ahistorical and uncritical practice.

Humanities versus social sciences

According to Nord and Nelson (1981) and Nesmith (1988), one of the main problems of the history of journalism as a discipline is that there has long been little substantive agreement on what constitutes the proper subject matter for historical inquiry by journalism scholars. Nesmith claims (1998: 3) that lack of agreement in large part reflects the long-standing intellectual commitment of major schools of journalism studies to the methods of social science, especially behaviorist sociology. This commitment has marginalized historical inquiry because its methods were “too soft”, “too unreliable” and “unverifiable” and isolated the historians from the mainstream media and journalism studies. For several decades the central debates dividing communication scholars have been constructed around the conflict between “positivist” social sciences and “humanist”, with the concentration of argument being upon quantitative versus qualitative methods of investigation and idiographic versus nomothetic modes of interpretation. On the one hand, the majority of historians – similarly in Slovenia (Amon, 1996; Merljak Zdovc, 2007) – were identified as “humanists”, more interested in the idiographic, the particular, the individual, the unique, the story, while social science scholars and sociologically oriented historians were interested in discovering general laws of behavior, the universal, the explanation that transcends historical and narrative particular. But, Nesmith (1988) based on Nord and Nelson’s classification scheme (1981) also emphasizes, that both orientations reject some important themes. For example, “social science” and “humanities” may have different epistemologies, but throughout history the real world practice of both have excluded certain classes of people from participation in the discovery and representation of “truth”, which will be discussed latter.

According to Nord and Nelson (1981), these two orientations to inquiry are not necessary in conflict. They suggest that each can learn something from the other. Historians have always borrowed ideas from other disciplines and have always prided themselves on their methodological pluralism. For Nord (1989: 300) the history of journalism was touched by social science, but the impact on historiography of this borrowing of social science theory and methods has been insignificant. But, historians have learned some knowledge from social science (ibid.). First, historians have learned some new ways to think systematically about research design. Second, social sciences theories have suggested new approaches for research in fields such as economics, urban, and political history, and have helped to create largely new fields of study in social history. Third, historians have learned to use

sophisticated quantitative methods borrowed from the social sciences, which have opened up whole new sources of historical data. Fourth, the most important contribution of the social science to research design has been something of a retooling of a traditional strategy in historical research: comparison. Social science methodology has thought historians to be more rigorous in setting up and carrying out comparative studies, with close attention to definition of terms, to precise specification of underlying assumption, and to unbiased sampling procedures. Thus, by the end of 1980s, social science research design, theory, and quantitative methods had influenced on changes in historical inquiry, but the impact of social science on the history of journalism has been slight. This argument is still useful for description of Slovenian the history of journalism today, where journalism historians are humanists who have not accepted major theoretical and methodological elements of social science. For example, the latest Slovenian book about Slovenian and world the history of journalism (Merljak Zdovc, 2007) does not include methodological and theoretical background of historical inquiry. This book focuses on empirically based chronological and linear presentation of journalistic periods.

But, this position of the history of journalism is also closely connected with position of journalism (education and studies) itself. According to Deuze (2005), several authors in various parts of the world have signaled a lack of coherence in the field of journalism. Throughout the history of journalism, the field has had to balance between industry and university, each with its own institutionalized expectations and assumptions, leading observers to conclude: “[J]ournalism education [. . .] has ended up as neither fish nor fowl; it feels itself unloved by the industry and tolerated, barely, by the academy” (Raudsepp, 1989 in Deuze, 2005: 444). If one furthermore considers the variety of disciplines and paradigms deployed to understand journalism in general, another contentious factor emerges: the perceived clash of perspectives coming from scholars trained in the humanities, with those in the social sciences. Between and within these backgrounds there exists such a variety of approaches to journalism that authors like Rühl (2000) in Germany or Schudson (2003) (in Deuze, 2005: 444) in the USA lament the ‘folkloric’ inconsistency of the field as well as the impossibility to generate a more or less consensual body of knowledge out of the existing literature.

Theory versus Empiricism

An understanding of the dimensions of history is often fraught with basic problems regarding the conceptualization of the history of journalism itself. “Among journalism historians, theory is viewed as separate from history rather than as an integral part of the historical process” claim Hardt and Brenner (1993: 130), which further argue, that the synthesis of theory and history is not, however, an additive process, where a measure of theory is added to traditional historical evidence to create a more meaningful seamless narrative. Theory, instead, should be understood as the systematic explanations of culturally determined social practices within a continuous historical process (Williams, 1983 in *ibid.*). This type of the history tends to reflect technocratic ideals, and a professional preoccupation with facts, focusing on names, dates, places, and events rather than on meaning and un-

derstanding (Hardt and Brenner, 1993). For example, Slovenian journalism historians (e.g. Merljak Zdovc, 2007) present empirically based, chronological explanations of events clustered in specific linear stages (for example, “preceding stage” is followed by “tradesmen stage” and “industrial stage”), and emphasizes crises, ruptures, and catastrophes, measured and explained as aberrations from the norm of continuity.

According to Nerone (1993), the antipathetical relationship between history and theory that has existed over 100 years as a territorial claim excluding those whose interest or practice did not fit the definition of science or the faith in the cumulative effects of historical narrative that leads to theory. “Historians conceive of themselves as blue-collar worker as concrete and deride the scholars of the abstract” (Nerone, 1993: 147). He further argues that traditional historians excluded popular memory by emphasizing “objectivity” of document and denying the political import of their own narrative. The assumption that facts can somehow be made to stand still so researchers can address them as disinterested observers reflects an “ideology of objectivity” that sees another’s agenda but never one’s own; this view, however, remains dominant among traditional journalism historians. Ironically, the ambition to produce “grand narratives” or theories of history disappeared at a time when the literature of social theories began to rely on notions of theory as history, or theory as narrative. Throughout these times, however, journalism historians have continued to produce (contradictory) grand narratives, failing to recognize not only the discourse of professional historiography but also the practices among themselves. They remain isolated in and by professional institutions, including journals, and unaccustomed to overcoming the fragmentation of the field of journalism and communication studies.

Nerone suggests (1993: 155) that while defining the object of the history of journalism may help clarify at least the positioning of individual exercises in historical research, it may also lead to the discovery that the history of journalism does not exist, introducing the prospect of journalism as an illusionary field of study. In fact, recent theoretical considerations of journalism and communication in other fields, such as literary criticism or cultural studies, have also challenged the position of journalists, using it for its methodological expertise rather than its historical and/or theoretical insights (Hardt, 1995).

Historical doctrine of progress

Another problem inside the history of journalism is “the marriage of the doctrine of progress with the idea of history” as Carey wrote in “The Problem of The history of journalism”, the first article in the first issue of *The history of journalism* (1974), which was also re-printed in the book *James Carey: A Critical Reader* (1997: 88). The impact of this article has not been equated. A dozen authors subsequently used it as their major point of departure in *The history of journalism*, and it is widely cited within and outside journalism and mass communication studies.

This article has called politics of professional history into question. In this article Carey (ibid.) claimed, that dominant interpretation of the history of journalism had

viewed it as one steadily advancing the cause of freedom and knowledge. He called it “Whig interpretation of the history of journalism”.

The Whig interpretation of the history of journalism, to put it all too briefly, views the history of journalism as the slow, steady expansion of freedom and knowledge from the political press to the commercial press, the setbacks into sensationalism and yellow journalism, the forward thrust into muckraking and social responsibility. Sometimes written in classic terms as the expansion of individual rights, sometimes in modern terms as growth of the public’s right to know, the entire story is framed by those large impersonal forces buffeting the press: industrialization, urbanization, and mass democracy. Carey (1974/1997: 88)

In Slovenia, there still prevails this progressive the history of journalism (e.g. Merljak Zdovc, 2007), which represents history as linear – whereby one stage of the journalistic development is neatly and linearly follow one another.

Carey identified sensationalism and tabloid journalism¹ as the setback of Western journalism, similarly in Slovenian journalism (Amon, 1996; Merljak Zdovc, 2007). Such representation of the history is an “important political project” (Hardt, 1995: 2), because whatever “has a history [...] acquires acknowledged legitimacy; therefore the way to acquire legitimacy is to invent or discover history” (Neron, 1990: 18). The present re-invention and re-interpretation of the history of journalism in Slovenia is primarily a political project that attempts to gain a hegemony position in a current political battle. It represents right-wing political parties as liberators of Slovenian nation from “communist torture”.

According to Carey (ibid.), the problem with this interpretation, and the endless studies and biographies executed within its frame, is simply it is exhausted; it has done its intellectual work. One more of this history written would be redundant. Brennen (1995) names this essential perspective on the history of journalism as “a linear notion of development” and criticizes historians, who “often combine a linear understanding of history directed toward progress with a belief in time-bounded and unchanging historical truth” (Brennen, 1995: 200). According to Hardt (1995), these histories functioned as public resources and standard college texts, they related a story of the journalism that is incomplete at best and perpetuated a specific myth of journalism, media, and democracy that reinforced the perception of the entrepreneurial character of newspapers, or their political mission, and ultimately “legitimizes the teaching of journalism as a form of industrial production” (Hardt, 1989 in Hardt, 1995: 8).

In his article, Carey called for cultural history and sought to “ventilate” the field by adding to traditional the history of journalism a “systematic cultural history of journalism” (ibid.). He pleaded for a cultural history to recover “past form of imagination”, particularly the history of reporting. Because “journalism is a cultural act”, he suggested that historians trace the emergence of the report “as a desirable form of rendering reality” until “its disappearance or radical reduction as an aspect of human consciousness” (89).

But, how to do that? How to operationalize cultural history? There was a seed of conflict, or at least misunderstanding. While Carey’s main interest lay in the world “cultural”, the operationalizers homed in on the world “systematic”. Basically,

they passed by the fundamental philosophical criticism which Carey had outlined and focused their concerns on the application of Carey's cultural approach to research data instead.

All of the authors of the three papers on "operationalizing Carey" in *The history of journalism* – Marion Marzolf (1975), John Erickson (1975), and Richard Schwarzlose (1975) – imagined that his call for the cultural history required the discovery of "beliefs and values" in the content of the journalism of the past. Erickson was the most expansive, arguing that the "basic values" of the larger culture might be "reflected in" or "embodied in" the content of the press and the content of press criticism (1975: 40).

But, what did Carey mean by "culture"? He defined cultural history as the "recovery of the past forms of imagination, of historical consciousness." He wrote: "By culture I merely mean the organization of social experience in the consciousness of men manifested in symbolic action. Journalism is then a particular symbolic form." (1974/1997: 90). But, whose "consciousness"? Was he was thinking about the professional culture of journalists or the larger culture reflected in the journalism? In his *The history of journalism* article, Carey seemed at times to be talking about the profession and at times about larger culture. For Carey, journalism is a cultural text: "When we study the history of journalism we are principally studying a way in which men in the past have grasped reality" he wrote in the *The history of journalism* article (1974/1997: 93). "We are trying to root out a portion of the history of consciousness. [. . .] Journalism not only reveals the structure of feeling of previous eras, it is the structure of feeling of past eras or at least significant portion of it" (ibid.). As an illustration, Carey cited Albert Kreiling's study of the black press. "We do not study the Black press because it passively reflects Black consciousness; the press is not merely a source of data about Black social history," he wrote (ibid.). "Black consciousness is forged in, it exists in, the Black press". (ibid.)

But could past "consciousness" be teased out of the content of journalism? If so, by what methods? Content analysis? Discourse analysis? In his work, Carey offered no model of how the cultural history of journalism might be done. Carey's student David Paul Nord (2006: 124) critical argues that throughout Carey's writing he almost always focused more on what journalism could be and should be rather than what it was or has been in history. If culture is conversation as Carey claimed, then he believed that journalism must be part of that conversation-the civic part. He insisted that citizens – readers must be active participants in journalism, not mere spectators – or journalism would not even deserve the name "journalism". Despotic societies only go through the motions of journalism, he said: "Journalism as a practice is unthinkable except in the context of democracy; in fact, journalism is usefully understood as another name for democracy" (1974/1997: 89). "This is utopianism, but utopianism of the inspirational variety", claims Nord (1997: 125) and adds that Carey deplored much of the journalism they saw actually practiced, a journalism that separated the roles of journalism and reader and what turned citizens into consumers. But then he quickly turned to what journalism should be. Thus, Nord finds it difficult to see what Carey's idealized vision of a democratic participatory conversational journalism had to do

with actual experience of journalism as a historical institutions. For Nord, ordinary people reading and using journalism, not just the content of journalism itself, is the focus of cultural history.

Hardt (1995: 17) also critically argues that Carey's insistence on the importance of a cultural history, reminiscent of Raymond Williams, however, concentrated only on the historical potential of the text as producers. It fell short of engaging in an examination of Williams's idea of culture as a "whole way of life". Instead, Carey proceeded without further references to institutional power, the importance of the process of work, and impact in the world of journalism on the construction of the texts. But, Hardt agrees with Nord on the role of the Carey's article in studying the history of journalism: "He offered a first theoretical break by an informed and sympathetic critic of the history of journalism and suggested opportunities for reconstructing debates of the uses of history in the context of cultural studies" (ibid.).

Neglecting of the actual journalistic production process

The history of journalism in Western Europe and the USA, as in Slovenia, has celebrated the achievements of public life and ignored the histories of groups traditionally excluded from the public on grounds of class, ethnicity or gender. For example, there is a lack of any analysis of the role of women and ethnic minorities in history of Slovenian journalism.

According to Hardt (1995: 7), traditional perspective has produced a historical narrative that resembled the type of political history that sought to explain situations, practices and events of the powerful by investigating and analyzing the activities of media elite of owners, editors and star journalists. Consequently, historians provided a cultural construct, based on an ideological vision of communication, journalism, media and democracy that privileged the bourgeois definition of social relevant and politically decisive groups of society. As a result, biographies of famous journalists become welcome celebrations of media institutions rather reflections on the process of editorial labor.

Journalism historians succeeded in perpetuating a specific theoretical position that favored the political or ideological safety of the "Great-Man history" and its perspective from the top at the expense of vision of history that acknowledge the whole process of social existence. This position relied on the validity of facts and documents from traditional business and government sources at the same time it rejects accessible cultural or social expressions of existence and participation in the world of journalism and communication. The resulting historical narrative focused on the editorial role of journalism and constructed the press as a moral leader in society, disregarding a different, less uplifting or restorative, function of reporting. (Hardt, 1995: 12-13)

Thus, dominant journalism historians have been neglected the actual journalistic production process. Further, Hardt (1995) emphasizes, that many more or less contemporary alternative analysis of gender, migrant, and race journalism (e.g. Mills, 1988, Brennen, 1995; Wolseley, 1990) show, how the journalism of gender, race, and ethnicity has been significant contributor to the growth of culture, com-

munication and journalism in American society, and that provides an alternative representation of the past, threatens the ideological basis of traditional the history of journalism.

Lack of structural elements

The history of journalism in Western Europe and the USA and similarly in Slovenia is an ahistorical and uncritical practice, because it neglects structural elements, social and political issues in society. Fredric Jameson (1971 in Hardt and Brenner, 1993: 131) refers to decontextualized, atheoretical, and ahistorical presentations as “pseudo history,” characterized by an “obsession with historical rise and decline, the never-ending search for the date of the fall and the name of the serpent”. Historical inquiry that relies on the collection and description of evidence, often to the exclusion of explanation and understanding, however, results in a preference for detail that overshadows larger fundamental concerns.

According to Feldstein (2006: 470), the “Great-Man history” school of biography was not just that it approached hagiography; it also oversimplified the past, ignoring the importance of larger social, economic, and political forces that usually shaped history more forcefully than any single individual. History regarded biography as trivial or, in kinder moments, fragmentary.

Based on Lukacs (1970), Hardt and Brenner (1993: 131-132) expresses the consequences of such an approach, when historical figures are debased to the level of inanimate objects and lack humanity, and every epic relationship disappears in the descriptive style. Lifeless, fetishized objects are whisked about in an amorphous atmosphere. They use Lukacs’ term “narration” to designate writing that stresses understanding and meaning, offers explanations, and establishes proportions. Events and historical figures are contextualized, and connections are made between events, characters, and the complex development of social, economic, and political factors in society. The emphasis is not on bare facts but instead on evidence as it appears within colliding social forces, in interaction with the totality of life. The current emphasis on description over narration is directly attributable to the development of capitalism, which causes the dehumanization of individuals, the domination of their experience, and the veiling of historical understanding. Theorizing as an intellectual practice eventually results in adjustments or changes of our interpretation of reality, and therefore of reality itself. It is through alternative positions, such as work in cultural materialism, that opportunities exist for the observation and analysis of cultural practices that produce meanings and values within the historical conditions of society and help determine reality. Indeed, as Hardt and Brenner (1993: 132) suggest, that cultural materialism, as it penetrates the realm of objects to identify the underlying relations among individuals, provides a meaningful alternative. It reconceptualizes the notion of history as a living dialectical process of continuity and discontinuity, of evolution and of revolution; it views history not only as catastrophe, crisis, and rupture, not only as domination and oppression, but also as opposition, challenge, and regeneration (Williams, 1989 in Hardt and Brenner, 1993: 132).

There have been attempts to modify this practice through rededication to a history of the structural elements of media institutions, their economic power (Nord, 1988). Michel Schudson (1978) included sociological perspective into his work and offered a “social history of American newspapers” that extended an account of the rise of “objectivity” in journalism and therefore an understanding of embeddedness of journalism in the culture of science and technology. In this context, his work supplied a glimpse of the role of reporters in the institutionalization of the factual as a representation of reality and their relationship with editors. His explanations of journalistic conduct gave at least a sense of the working conditions at that time (Hardt, 1995).

Many journalism historians also look to economic and technological explanations of any changes in news language and technique. Factual reporting and objectivity arose because telegraphic news agencies demanded language “stripped of the local, the regional and the colloquial” that they could then sell across America (Carey, 1986: 164). The “inverted pyramid” news story, with its summarizing “intro” and the news presented in descending order of importance, came about because unstable telegraph lines during the American Civil War forced correspondents to give the most important news first (Stephens, 1988: 254). Political reporting and commentary in Britain declined because the development of newspaper printing into a high-capital industry led proprietors to look to sell news to wider and wider audiences (e.g. Chalaby, 1998). Economic and technological developments are certainly, as Raymond Williams phrases it, “conditions” for the development of the discourse of the modern mass media (Williams, 1961: 194).

Another break with traditional version of journalism has occurred in the contribution of number alternative historians (e.g. Solomon, 1993; Brenner, 1995, 2005) who suggested that a critical perspective on the history of journalism is emerging. For example, Hardt and Brenner (1995) devoted the book to history of journalists and news workers. But, as Hardt themselves claims in his book (1995: 19), whether it will help raise the historical consciousness of the field by addressing a wide range of social and economic issues and reconstituting a cultural history of journalism practices and public interests, however, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

This study shows that existing the history of journalism in Western Europe, the USA and also in Slovenia is characterized by an absence of understanding history – in terms of a cultural context and condition for the development of theoretical work. The impact of social science on the the history of journalism has been slight. The history of journalism represents progressive perspective on the history of journalism, empirically based, chronological explanations of events clustered in specific stages. One of the main reasons is a lack of any critical reflection on the dimension and direction of the the history of journalism in Western Europe and the USA and similarly in Slovenia, linked to an absence of self-reflection by journalism historians themselves.

Such absence “reinforces the status quo of theory and practice as ahistorical and uncritical” claims Hardt and Brenner (1993: 130). They also argue that on a fun-

damental level journalism studied must realize that it is the critical thought of individuals in their specific existential situation in society that discovers the contradictions that characterize human existence. In such endeavors it is always necessary to return to human practice, its forms, and its relations to cultural, political, and economic formations in society, and to realize that theory is not independent of people. It is impossible to grasp individual practice without an understanding of the historical conditions under which concerns about culture, and notions of a common culture, in particular, have been articulated. It is also necessary for a critical theory of journalism to explore the world of artistic interpretations in its search for understanding the social and cultural practices of society (ibid.).

In this context, historical practice involves the experience and expression of culture; it engage human actors in their relation to social, political, and economic institutions and provides a rationale for ways of doing and being (Hardt and Brenner, 1993). Theories are the product of historical practice, within a cultural setting, that emerges as contemporary explanations of society. "History is more than the reconstruction of the past; it is the experience of its effects and an articulation of such a confrontation with the past" (Hardt and Brenner, 1993: 131). Thus, there is a relatedness of history to theory that emerges from the relationship between theorists and their cultural environment.

According to Hardt and Brenner (1993: 132) cultural materialists address the products of a culture at a particular historical moment, they must and will return to the question of meanings or values and thus to issues of class, race, or gender to explain human relations and human struggle. This assumes a different understanding of the history of journalism, for instance, not as a biography of elites or elitist institutions but as an expression of a collective process involving various class interests under specific political, economic, and cultural circumstances. Situating society rather than the individual at the center of inquiry, these researchers focus on writing as socially constituted consciousness, which like all other practices is always aligned. All writing is thought to either explicitly or implicitly utilize specifically selected experience from a specific point of view. The result of a social process, writing is the product of individuals using socially determined forms that are influenced by material conditions of existence. Historians are born into social situations and have culturally determined ways of seeing the world.

Still buried under positivist practices, the history of journalism have to be challenged by the rise of a cultural approach. This remains a difficult and never-ending task, as Walter Benjamin (1968 in Hardt in Brennen, 1993: 135) reminds us, since "in every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it". Such effort, however, is still the work of isolated individuals rather than the collective cause of communication studies.

Thus, a reformation of the history of journalism can occur only when journalism historians have wrestled with the idea of historical time, the historical social process, the role of human beings as communicators have in that process, and theories of society which these imply. The delineation of the bounds of the field of investigation and the definition of categorical distinctions such as journalism, communications, society, culture and so on, are absolutely crucial if journalism historians are to come to an understanding of their own place in the academic enterprise.

The marginalization and consequent devaluation of historical scholarship within journalism and communication scholarship in general continues to foster a large portion of deficiencies of both (Nesmith, 1988). Whether historical scholarship and the historical consciousness it engenders will ever be integrated properly into the practice of journalism and communication studies ultimately depends upon the efforts of those in charge of our academic practice, i.e. conference, departments, scholarly journals, attached them. We agree with Nesmith and call for an active encouragement of such integration through divisional and interdivisional programming, and through journals devotes to the subject.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ Anna M. Jönsson (2004) shows in historical analysis that tabloid journalism is not always bad journalism. She argues that the journalistic other of tabloid journalism has appeared throughout the history of journalism and that the elements and aspects of journalism defined as “bad” in its own time in many cases served the public good as well as, if not better than, journalism considered to be more respectable. Tabloid journalism achieves this by positioning itself, in different ways, as an alternative to the issue, forms and audiences of journalistic mainstream – as an alternative public sphere.
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Kako proučavati povijest novinarstva? Kritička razmatranja o smjerovima povijesti novinarstva

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SAŽETAK

U zapadnoj europskoj i u S.A.D.-u, jednako kao i u Sloveniji, mali je interes za povijest novinarstva u edukaciji i u istraživanjima studenata i teoretičara. S druge strane, postoji veliki interes za upotrebu tj. pogrešnu upotrebu povijesti novinarstva (politička praksa) od strane nekih političara i novinara. U članku se daje kritički osvrt na tradicionalne postavke povijesti novinarstva. Istraživanje pokazuje da unatoč uočljivim promjenama prema društvenoj i kulturnoj perspektivi novinarstva, što upućuje na veze i interakcije među strukturalnim uvjetima u suvremenom društvu, te unatoč skromnim promjenama u obrazovanju novinara i kritikama u tom pitanju, najveći dio povjesničara novinarstva i dalje se nastavlja baviti nepovijesnom i nekritičkom praksom.

Ključne riječi: povijest novinarstva, novinarstvo, kulturalne studije, teorija, metodologija