

Journalism after September 11. Edited by Barbie Zelizer & Stuart Allan. London & New York: Routledge, 2002. 248 pp. ISBN 0415288002.

As the events of September 11, 2001 continue to resonate in powerful ways, a large amount of analysis on the differences between a pre- and post-9/11 world has been and continues to be published in a variety of forums. From national legislation and airport security to the architecture of the World Trade Center, from the most appropriate responses to combat terrorism to the acceptable limits of our civil liberties, the events of September 11 are undoubtedly the most talked- and written-about subject of the twenty-first century. It follows that in the post-9/11 world, there is an inherent need to critically examine how journalists help and hinder an understanding of our world, how we obtain the information upon which our decisions are based, and how we make sense of our lives. In short, there is a need to examine journalism after September 11.

The strength of *Journalism after September 11* lies in its inclusion of several distinct aspects of the journalistic process post-September 11. Drawing its essays from various respected scholars and media commentators, this book critically discusses the short- and long-term journalistic implications of the terrorist attacks in the United States. The book is separated into four distinct sections. Each chapter surveys the changes that 9/11 brought to print, broadcast, tabloid, photographic, and on-line journalism and raises public consciousness by discussing in precise detail aspects of journalism immediately after 9/11.

The book's foreword, written by Victor Navasky, sets the stage by emphasizing the importance of studying journalism in the aftermath of September 11. The flow of news information and ideas is, says Navasky, "the circulation system of our democracy, the way we find out what's what" (p. xiii). Navasky encourages the reader to appreciate that although many of the book's essays are site-specific, the issues cross geographic, cultural, and political boundaries. The introduction, written by editors Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan, suggests that 9/11 was so powerful that it transformed the everyday contexts within which many journalists routinely operate. Zelizer & Allan address the subjunctive dimensions concerning form, content, and journalistic practice as well as the indicative dimensions. In other words, the book not only surveys how journalism *did* look immediately after the terrorist attacks (and, in certain chapters, in the weeks and months to follow), but also how journalism *could* and *should* have looked. While the thematic approaches of each of the four parts of *Journalism after September 11* differ, the underlying goal of the book is to raise various fundamental questions and discuss distinct particularities concerning post-9/11 journalism. The combination of these particularities illustrates wider concerns to the field of journalism.

Part 1, "The Trauma of September 11," raises questions about the immediate coverage after the attacks. Jay Rosen suggests that 9/11 changed the immediate conventions of journalism including the level of attachment journalists were able to employ in their coverage. He notes that the terrorist attacks wiped out the normal boundaries separating the professional position of the journalist from the personal position of an average citizen. Michael Schudson argues that post-9/11 journalism aimed to provide comfort or reassurance rather than information or analysis. He suggests that much reporting after September 11 turned toward "a prose of solidarity rather than a prose of information" (p. 41). Barbie Zelizer ends this first section by questioning the appropriate function(s) of photography in times of trauma. The first section succeeds in inciting an emerging debate over how the attacks initially resonated in the news media.

The second and most intriguing part, "News and Its Contexts," seeks to appropriately contextualize post-9/11 coverage. James Carey offers a historical overview to provide context for the coverage with specific reference to Watergate and the Pentagon Papers in the 1970s. Robert W. McChesney links post-9/11 coverage with its broader economic and

political surroundings. McChesney suggests that U.S. coverage never had a debate over whether to go to war or how best to respond to the attacks. Moreover, he discusses the implications of journalists' choice of sources while covering the attacks. He notes that the range of "expert" analysis was limited mostly to "the military and intelligence communities and their supporters" (p. 97). Karim H. Karim suggests that although the events of September 11 were extraordinary, their reporting—following the initial period of disorientation—was shaped by frames that "had been in place to cover such issues as violence, terrorism, and Islam" (p. 102). Karim's essay offers an insightful plea that the rupture following 9/11 presents a longer-term opportunity for more authentic and insightful coverage of the world. The second section thus logically succeeds the first by successfully connecting post-9/11 journalism to the social, cultural, economic, and political worlds.

Evaluating some of the practices existing at the margins rather than the centres of journalism is the focus of the book's third part, "The Changing Boundaries of Journalism." Stuart Allan discusses the on-line reportage following the attacks. The attacks produced the most dramatic decline in "the availability of major news sites yet witnessed" (p. 123). Also of interest, Allan discusses the ramifications of some Web sites eliminating most of their advertising on the day of the attacks, and he raises queries about the plethora of false information that was readily available. There was ample evidence as the hours wore on that an extraordinary amount of false information, frequently combined with "apocalyptic speculation" (p. 133), was proliferating on the Internet at an exponential rate.

S. Elizabeth Bird examines the tabloid coverage of 9/11 and suggests that the coverage demonstrated the similarities between mainstream and tabloid reportage in terms of their patriotic inclination. Both displayed an adulation of George W. Bush while employing American flag logos as well as personal and subjective sentiments related to 9/11 reports. While Michael Bromley and Stephen Cushion extend Bird's tabloid analysis to a British context, Simon Cottle discusses the role of U.K. current affairs television programs in facilitating public debate surrounding the attacks.

The final section, "Reporting Trauma Tomorrow," examines the ongoing tensions journalists will face in the future. Silvio Waisbord suggests that the lack of debate on why the attacks occurred demonstrates that today's journalists, with their penchant for sensationalism and inability to report without an adherence to official sources, are ill-equipped to serve the needs of democracy in times of trauma. Aside from personal and institutional expressions, Waisbord notes that journalism after 9/11 fostered uncritical patriotism through endless coverage of "banal nationalism" (p. 206). Annabelle Sreberny examines how 9/11 reinforced the American news media's parallel of the Bush administration's "us versus them" rhetoric. This examination effectively problematizes the shifting use of "we" in past, present, and future journalism.

Ingrid Volkmer argues that the concept of a national public sphere has changed as a result of 9/11 and that the news media will play a new role in this sphere. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Arab broadcaster al-Jazeera has "risen almost from nowhere—in a Western viewpoint—to be a major player in the global news arena" (p. 241). Howard Tumber suggests that 9/11 has brought about a decisive change in journalistic culture, specifically concerning the emotional and physical safety of journalists reporting on trauma, wherein news practitioners are now targets themselves.

Despite a conspicuous lack of in-depth analysis on how non-Western news media responded to 9/11, *Journalism after September 11* offers a solid overview of how journalism did and should function after the attacks of September 11, 2001. The book speaks to an audience with a curiosity about journalism and its social role. Because of the news media's privileged position in society in terms of objectivity and facticity, the questions raised in the book are crucial and deserve critical debate. The editors provide numerous divergent opinions and arguments as to how the attacks shook people's notion of the role of

professional journalists in reporting on trauma. This inclusivity is indeed a significant strength of the book and, to this end, the book's editors have compiled a thoroughly readable and useful book.

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