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Spanish and Latin American narrative journalism: a comparative of issues, influences, publications and points of view of a new generation of authors

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Abstract

Introduction. Narrative journalism has achieved an important growth in Latin America, in the context of the so-called *boom* of the Latin American *crónica*. At a more modest level, in the Spanish sphere this journalistic modality that uses literary tools to tell real events, has experienced a particular boost relying on specialized publishers. The aim of this research is to compare points of view, issues, influences and publications between Spanish and Latin American journalists. **Methodology.** The study is based on in-depth interviews with 22 leading narrative journalists from Spain, Argentina and Chile. **Results and conclusions.** Despite the diversity of designations, journalists from both latitudes agree when identifying the keys of the genre and pointing out the difficulties for its development, due to the lack of publishing channels in mainstream media, replaced now by books and magazines. Together with the variety of subjects addressed, there are differences between the work of Spanish and Latin American journalists in narrative structure planning as well as the reciprocity of professional references.

Keywords

Narrative journalism; journalism and literature: *crónica*; journalistic genres and Spanish and Latin American journalists.

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Translation of paper by **Yuhanny Henares**
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1. Introduction

In the last two decades a series of events inviting to explore the boost of Latin American and Spanish narrative journalism have converged. With different features and expressions, diverse phenomena promoting this journalistic modality have been developing in a parallel manner. This growth's spearhead has been Gabriel García Márquez Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism (FNPI), created in 1994, and has established the physical, intellectual, professional and academic grounds of narrative journalism. Through its meetings and workshops it encouraged the exchange between hundreds of narrative journalists (Jaramillo, 2012: 12) and contributed to forge a generation of authors (Sierra Caballero and López Hidalgo, 2016; Puerta, 2017, Cuartero 2017b: 675) and provide visibility to journalistic creations nurturing from literature's compositional and stylistic techniques. The emergence of new publication channels, with reference magazines such as *Gatopardo* or *Etiqueta Negra*, or editorials and collections dedicated to narrative journalism, has drawn the attention towards a genre that allows the journalistic bet on long formats, innovative approaches and creative freedom required by narrative journalism.

The effervescence around this journalistic modality concentrated especially in different countries of Latin America, up to the point that some authors have not doubted in appealing to the “boom” of the Latin American *crónica* (Rodríguez Marcos, 2012) to refer to a phenomenon that others, such as Caparrós (2015:480) or Guerriero (2016: position: 1248-1262) question both for the growth dimension as well as for the confusing nature of the name of ‘*crónica*’. In Spain, the consideration has been much more limited, despite an emerging editorial support and publications affiliated to narrative journalism (Cuartero, 2017a: 43). Diverging experiences in one and the other side of the Atlantic invite to contrast, compare and analyze points of view and publications of Spanish and Latin American authors.

2. State of the art

2.1. Historical roots of the relationship between literature and journalism

From the start of the XVIII century, press constituted a privileged space for literature, both as dissemination channel – most of XIX novels were published in the form of periodical chapbooks before being published in book format (Cruz Seoane, 2008: 28)– often as an efficacious way of “subsistence through writing” (Ramos, 1989: 90), of “getting initiated in the literary exercise” (Cantos, 2003: 323) or having a more direct contact with readers (Martín Sevillano, 1996: 39) for writers of great prestige, as Rotker outstands (2005: 97). This tension between the literary and the journalistic was not exempt of polemic at the end of the XIX century, in some Latin American countries (Ramos, 1989; Rotker, 2005) as well as in Spain (Rodríguez and Angulo, 2010), where the controversy about the artistic nature of journalism was reflected on several discourses of access to RAE.

With the precedent of *Diario del año de la peste*, by Daniel Defoe (1722), the connection between journalism and literature and realistic sensitivity present at the end of the XVIII century and beginning of the XIX century, encouraged the emergence of genres such as modern novel and the reportage

(Chillón, 2014: 155-158). Hartsock positions the origin of the tradition of literary journalism in the decade of 1890 in the North American context (2000: 21), as a result of a critical awareness, united to new forms of talking about reality, which enlightened the trend of reporters known as ‘muckrakers’ in one of its most singular aspects. This tradition of journalistic works that used tools typical from literature, without abandoning the rigor and veracity of information, has continued through the XX century, by the hand of renowned names such as Ernest Hemingway, Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe or Norman Mailer, in the United States; George Orwell, Ryszard Kapuściński, Oriana Fallaci and Svetlana Aleksievich, in Europe; Mariano José de Larra, Manuel Chaves Nogales, Francisco Umbral, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, in Spain; and Rodolfo Walsh, Gabriel García Márquez or Elena Poniatowska, in Latin America.

2.2. A conflict of names

Despite the tradition and universality of the phenomenon, trying to give a name to the convergence space between journalism and literature generates controversy in the academic field (Herrscher, 2012; Carrión, 2012; Chillón, 2014; Angulo Egea, 2014). As Bak says, the concept of narrative or literary journalism is a social and cultural construction influenced by the journalistic culture it develops in (2011: 130) and susceptible of being introduced under different names (Josephi *et al.*, 2009: 75-76). To the classical names of ‘literary journalism, new journalism or journalistic literature’, labels such as ‘literary news writing’ (Parratt 2003: 96-100), ‘new new journalism’ (Boynton, 2015) or ‘slow journalism’ (Greenberg, 2012: 381; Rosique-Cedillo and Barranquero-Carretero, 2015: 453) have been summing up in the last years, broadening references mentioned by Chillón (2014) and, in any case, do not exhaust the extensive list provided by Many (1996), in the Anglo Saxon field. In this context, for decades the bet on the term ‘literary journalism’ (Sims, 1984; Roiland, 2015) was prioritized, although in the last decades –specially thanks to the promotion of Nieman Foundation, in the USA– ‘narrative journalism’ has imposed strongly (Palau-Sampio, 2017; Cuartero, 2017a: 54). In this research we bet on the use of ‘narrative journalism’ due to the lesser symbolic load (Vanoost, 2013: 147) and –despite it does not limit only to narrative options– this naming is acknowledged both in Spain (Herrscher, 2012) as well as the French-speaking area (Lallemand, 2011; Vanoost, 2013; Pélissier and Eyrès, 2014).

To the variety of names, we must add the confusions generated regarding the use of the term *crónica*, which in different Latin American *crónicas* has imposed so strongly that it phagocytosed the concept of narrative or literary journalism. Misunderstandings derive from the different meanings attributed to the *crónica* term in Spain –a modality linked to latest events and with a brief format– and the most disseminated in Latin America –long-winded journalistic productions, very demanding in terms of research and immersion and with a huge variety of sources–, and to the fact that the acquired meaning in the latter overlaps, in the Spanish case, with the domains traditionally known as typical from the reportage (Palau-Sampio, 2018). Despite the expansion in Latin America, the vagueness and the abusive use of the *crónica* concept does not convince renowned authors like Martín Caparrós (2015: 480) or Leila Guerriero (2016).

2.3. Publishing channels

The production characteristics of narrative journalism –time investment on research, elevated cost and the demand of a wide space of publication– have determined the minoritarian nature of this journalistic modality, often restricted to a limited group of media. However, the boost from North American magazines such as *Harper’s Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire* or *Rolling Stone* is worth mentioning which, different from the Spanish case (González de la Aleja, 1990), have allowed the existence of a

natural habitat for this kind of narrative journalism for decades. This tradition originated in the Latin American field with the birth of publications such as the Colombian *El Malpensante* (1996), the Colombian *Soho* (1999), the Mexican-Colombian-Argentinean *Gatopardo* (2000) or the Peruvian *Etiqueta Negra* (2002), while in the Spanish context the boost occurs in the start of this decade, with magazines such as *fronterad* (2009), *Jot Down* (2011) or *5W* (2015). The emergence of reading digital devices and publication platforms (Palau-Sampio, 2013) has opened new possibilities for this long-winded genre, together with the demand of deeper and more developed contents, far from the immediacy traditional media have bet on up until now. Nevertheless, despite the impact of these phenomena in narrative journalism, magazines still have problems to get economic benefit online (García Galindo and Cuartero, 2015).

The role that the book played historically in the North American context –since the first *muckrakers*–, has gained strength in Spain as well, with the appearance in recent years of specialized editorials such as *eCícero* (2012-2015) and *Libros del KO*, or that bet on narrative journalism, like *Círculo de Tiza* or *Libros del Asteroide*, in the Spanish case. In Argentina collections of Tusquets (Mirada Crónica) and La Marea are worth mentioning, and in Chile, Catalonia or Ceibo, besides punctual bets of large editorials.

3. Objectives and methodology

This research starts from a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews performed to 22 outstanding narrative Spanish, Argentinean and Chilean journalists in order to delve in their experience in the development of a journalism that narrates actual facts using literary resources. The corpus selection complies with four premises: generational, temporary, geographical and publication support (Cuartero, 2017b: 34-41). Authors included are part of a generation of narrators born between the start of the 70s and the 80s- with the exception of Virginia Mendoza, in 1987– (see Table 1) and who have, beyond the professional trajectory in different media, some publication in book format, as exponent of a long-winded journalism. These publications also belong to a stablished period, with the last decade as reference, and works like *Historias del monzón* (2007) and *Camaleón* (2017) as dividing line. The sample includes twelve Spanish journalists, eight Argentinean and two Chilean. However, the selection is balanced between Spanish and Latin American representatives, since the journalist Álex Ayala Ugarte developed his professional activity from Bolivia.

The interviews with Argentinean journalists were done during two research stays [2] in Buenos Aires in 2015 (Daniel Riera, Josefina Licitra, Miguel Prenz, Javier Sinay, Federico Bianchini) and 2017 (Sebastián Hacher, Sonia Budassi, Victoria de Massi), while the interviews to the two Chilean authors (Rodrigo Fluxá, Javier Rebolledo) correspond to a stay in Santiago, in 2016. Interviews with Spanish journalists were done in 2015 [3] (Daniel Utrilla) and 2016 (Xavier Aldekoa, Alberto Arce, Álex Ayala Ugarte, Nacho Carretero, Nazaret Castro, Álvaro Colomer, Íñigo Domínguez, Ander Izagirre, David Jiménez, Gabi Martínez and Virginia Mendoza)

Table 1. Authors and books included in the sample

Journalist	Country/ Birth	Books published
Xavier Aldekoa	SP, 1981	<i>Océano África</i> (2014)
Alberto Arce	SP, 1976	<i>Misrata Calling</i> (2011) <i>Novato en nota roja</i> (2014)
Álex Ayala Ugarte	SP, 1979	<i>Los mercaderes del Che. Grandes hazañas de personajes minúsculos</i> (2012) <i>La vida de las cosas</i> (2015)
Federico Bianchini	ARG, 1981	<i>Desafiar al cuerpo Del dolor a la gloria</i> (2015) <i>Antártida: 25 días encerrado en el hielo</i> (2016)
Sonia Budassi	ARG, 1978	<i>Mujeres de Dios. Como viven hoy las monjas y religiosas en la Argentina</i> (2008) <i>Apache. En busca de Carlos Tévez</i> (2010) <i>La frontera imposible: Israel-Palestina</i> (2014)
Nacho Carretero	SP, 1981	<i>Fariña</i> (2015)
Nazaret Castro	SP, 1980	<i>Cara y cruz de las multinacionales españolas en América Latina</i> (2014)
Álvaro Colomer	SP, 1973	<i>Guardianes de la memoria. Recorriendo las cicatrices de la vieja Europa</i> (2008)
Victoria de Masi	ARG, 1982	<i>Carlitos Way. Vida de Carlos Nair Medem</i> (2016)
Íñigo Domínguez	SP, 1973	<i>Crónicas de la mafia</i> (2013) <i>Mediterráneo descapotable. Viaje ridículo por aquel país tan feliz</i> (2015)
Rodrigo Fluxá	CHI, 1980	<i>Solos en la noche. Zamudio y sus asesinos</i> (2014) <i>Crónica Roja</i> (2016)
Sebastián Hacher	ARG, 1976	<i>Gauchito Gil</i> (2008) <i>Sangre salada. Una feria en los márgenes</i> (2011) <i>Cómo enterrar a un padre desaparecido</i> (2013)

Ander Izagirre	SP, 1976	<i>Cuidadores de mundos</i> (2008) <i>Groenlandia cruje</i> (2012); <i>Plomo en los bolsillos</i> (2012) <i>Mi abuela y diez más</i> (2013); <i>Los sótanos del mundo</i> (2013) <i>Cansasuelos</i> (2015)
David Jiménez	SP, 1971	<i>Hijos del monzón</i> (2007) <i>El lugar más feliz del mundo</i> (2013)
Josefina Licitra	ARG, 1975	<i>Los imprudentes. Historias de la adolescencia gay-lésbica en la Argentina</i> (2007) <i>Los otros. Una historia del conurbano bonaerense</i> (2011) <i>El agua mala. Crónica de Epecuén y las casas hundidas</i> (2014)
Gabi Martínez	SP, 1971	<i>Sólo para gigantes</i> (2011)
Virginia Mendoza	SP, 1987	<i>Heridas del viento. Crónicas armenias con manchas de jugo de granada</i> (2015)
Miguel Prenz	ARG, 1978	<i>El heredero del General: la desconocida historia de Mario Rotundo</i> (2011) <i>La misa del diablo. Anatomía de un crimen ritual</i> (2013) <i>Gigantes. La guerra de los dinosaurios en la Patagonia</i> (2015)
Javier Rebolledo	CHI, 1976	<i>La danza de los cuervos</i> (2012) <i>El despertar de los cuervos</i> (2013) <i>A la sombra de los cuervos</i> (2015) <i>Camaleón</i> (2017)
Daniel Riera	ARG, 1970	<i>Buenos Aires bizarro: las más extraviada de todas las guías</i> (2008) <i>Nuestro Vietnam y otras crónicas</i> (2012) <i>Ventrílocuos. Gente grande que juega con muñecos</i> (2012)
Javier Sinay	ARG, 1980	<i>Sangre joven. Matar y morir antes de la adultez</i> (2009) <i>Los crímenes de Moisés Ville. Una historia de gauchos y judíos</i> (2013)
Daniel Utrilla	SP, 1976	<i>A Moscú sin kaláshnikov. Una crónica sentimental de la Rusia de Putin envuelta en papel de periódico</i> (2013)

Table of authors' own creation

In order to analyze the working philosophy and the nature of works published by narrative journalists included in the sample, the study presents the following research questions:

PI1: How is the narrative journalism conceived, from the perspective of the characteristics and boundaries that define it?

PI2: How do they value this journalism possibility and what are the main limitations for their development and publication?

PI3: How do they work in the documentation process, in the design of structure, writing and editing?

PI4: What kind of topics are handled?

PI5: What are the references when working on their publication?

4. Results

4.1. Multiple designations for a shared territory

If the denomination of the confluence space between journalism and literature generates polemic in the academic field, it doesn't seem that this baptism is less problematic for the authors, who define their activity under an heterogeneous scope of options, evidencing that the terminology issue is far from being solved.

Six of the Spanish interviewed journalists (Xavier Aldekoa, Alberto Arce, Álex Ayala Ugarte, Nacho Carretero, Ander Izagirre and Virginia Mendoza) identify their work under the label of narrative journalism. Mendoza expresses herself bluntly: "I say it clearly: what I do is narrative journalism" [1], while Nazaret Castro only attributed to herself some of the chapters of her book *Cara y cruz de las multinacionales españolas en América Latina* (2014). The rest of authors, even though they deem it adequate, feel more comfortable with alternatives such as literary journalism, in Gabi Martínez's case. On the other hand, for Daniel Utrilla this term is rather contradictory and suggests a slight nuance: "stylistically literary journalism", to clarify that it is literary in its form, but not in the context, so to avoid confusions. Others, such as Álvaro Colomer, suggest alternatives of Anglo-Saxon inspiration, such as 'fact fiction', since he doesn't believe in the complete veracity of current narrative-journalistic stories.

In different Latin American countries, Argentina among them, the name *crónica* has gained relevance in the last years, up to the point of becoming the most extended one, used by respondents to refer to a "genre that in form and contents are hand by hand", an intersection between "the narrative that is originally fiction and the data and research journalism", as Josefina Licitra says. However, this concept was not rooted as strongly in the neighbor country, Chile, where journalists such as Rodrigo Fluxá or Javier Rebolledo prefer to talk about reportage. Fluxá maintains that "a long reportage must be a narrative experience, that besides informing, it must also entertain and thrill [the reader]. I do not tend to call it *crónica*, but deep inside it is the same." In this dance of names, Sonia Budassi clarifies that in Argentina they call interview precisely what in Spain or Chile is called reportage, and that this term coincides with what there is known as *crónica* –"with many sub-genres"–, with the "literary narration of real facts, following the classical definition coming from the Yankee New Journalism and that in a certain way García Márquez takes up, saying it is a tale that is true". For Sebastián Hacher it is "a way

of telling the reality in such a way that the reader can imagine what was investigated in his head, generating images through words.”

The idiosyncrasy of this genre, according to Miguel Prenz, resides in the challenge presented, between freedom and the narrative game and the responsibility with the background and information: “*Crónica* as such is mere writing. For me, the only thing of journalism therein, is the search of information, then it is just writing.”

Colomer does not discuss the validity of the term “narrative journalism” nor questions that his publications are defined as “new journalism”, but shows his concern about the fact that this label might become a “sieve of bad journalists”, considering the difficulty for the reader to contrast some data. Also, Daniel Riera warns about this problem when indicating that “sometimes there is an underestimation of reality in certain chroniclers” and try to replace it “with the narrative artifice or directly with fiction” which, in his opinion, “is part of a mistake in understanding what this profession is about.”

The label of narrative journalism is not familiar for Íñigo Domínguez, but he would frame his work within the pathway outlined by the New North American journalism, with the purpose of “telling things in a different way, moving beyond 5w’s and objectivity, that is something more personal”, through the author’s involvement. David Jiménez maintains that in the “literary journalism or reporterism”, “the literary surname” is what allows “simply going beyond information or *crónica*”, contributing to the way of telling stories in an informative manner, “a way of narrating that is very well looked after, more paused, deeper, that also allows going beyond the experience when covering that information.”

This entails being clear about a consideration with the reader to whom large format texts are targeted. Licitra thinks that, so that the reader follows a long-winded story, “an exhaustive research is not enough, we must also present it in a narratively beautiful manner, otherwise, you are not read.” In the same line, Javier Rebolledo gives his opinion when it comes to explain how he conceived the narration of the series of books initiated with *La danza de los cuervos*: “Before the structure, there is the consideration for the reader. I do not believe in extensive papers, I try to make a story that is humanly digestible, thinking in terms of introduction, climax and ending.”

To the danger of replacing the flaws of a research with an artifice there adds, as some journalists interviewed explain, the invasive author, hoarding the text with his presence and experience, without leaving room for the story and manifesting in the use of the first person. Nacho Carretero explains that he was clear about the fact, since he started his research about drug trafficking, that he was not going to appear in the *Fariña* story: “I was immediately clear about the fact that I didn’t want to appear because I conceive the book as a reportage, a wide reportage”. In his opinion, he must use the first person only when it is pertinent, and this is determined by the type of story to be told, an idea Álvaro Colomer shares. On her part, Virginia Mendoza, ensures she doesn’t feel comfortable with it, in the same line expressed by Fluxá: “There are people that do it wonderfully, but I am very shy about it.”

Among journalists who bet on this resource, the keys and limits are imposed by their relationship with what they are telling. In Nazaret Castro’s case, she attempts to show her ethical and political position. In Xavier Aldekoa’s case, it is conditioned to not hoarding the story’s protagonism. Alberto Arce, however, does not conceive another way of narrating a story: “I am in the middle and I am telling it to you, then I write using the first person, because it is something happening to me, I am being told about it. Like everyone else, I have my prejudices, my way of perceiving reality and, therefore, I am telling

you.” David Jiménez has further objections towards it, despite using it, he does not consider it convenient in mainstream journalism –“I believe protagonism must always be in people, places and situations you find. And you are simply a witness”– but in his books he decided to use it because he wanted to create a closer experience.

The concern about the use of the first person is lived with more intensity among Spanish than among Argentinean journalists, in whom this presence has been naturalized, although not everyone uses it nor considers it necessary. Licitra states she has a “scarcely dogmatic view”: “It doesn’t bother me at all, it is another narrative form. What you need to see is the pertinence it might have within a text.” In her opinion, when well used “it may offer relevant information” and ensures that it doesn’t have anything to do with the author’s vanity: “I believe there are absolutely conceited texts and with a very strong author’s presence written using the third person and very well measured texts in first person.” Prenz advocates for distinguishing between “to write using the first person” and “about the first person”, and establishes an inflection point to include it in his texts or not in the role played by the narrator, in the fact of transcending this role to become a character, to be involved in the text or in the action being told. Although, as Bianchini indicated, it is about a “functional” first person, who does not express his opinions, but instead shows the reader he is there. Reluctant to use it from the start “because he was afraid to succumb to arrogance”, Javier Sinay decided for it while preparing *Sangre joven*: “I expressed myself better and accounted for what happened in a more reliable way.”

4.2. Opportunities and constraints for a narrative journalism

The supposed boom of the Latin American *crónica* had a certain echo in Spain since the publication of the two anthologies by editorials in this side of the Atlantic (Jaramillo, 2012; Carrión, 2012). However, the perception of the advertised growth was experienced differently in Argentina and Chile, as Daniel Riera, one of the protagonists, illustrates in an eloquent manner: “A *crónica* of mine was published in an anthology with a girdle that said ‘The new boom’ and got paid 50 Euros for it. Then, if that’s the boom, where do I pick up the other 5.000 Euros?”. Alien to this influx, Spanish journalists do not perceive a very flattering situation. In fact, the reasons exposed by respondents, despite their location, coincide in pointing out three closely related causes that hinder its development: costs, lack of publication spaces and non-massive nature.

Narrative journalism is scarcely profitable in commercial terms, as Spanish authors Martínez and Colomer, or Bianchini from Argentina indicate. It demands elevated production times and costs that not all media are willing to assume, and even less in the middle of a search for a profitable business model – additionally to the financial crisis in the Spanish case. Martínez explains it like this: “Here we have talked about literary journalism for forty years and then, when I aspired to do a research of similar characteristics, where was the money to be able to develop it? This is an American stuff.” Additionally, there sums the bet on redesigns that shrink texts. Questioned journalists refer to a progressive loss of publication spaces and a limitation in extension, until distorting its nature of long-winded story. “When you are told that with the new design the longest notes have 1.300 words, you notice is not the space of a *crónica*, that they are really not asking for a *crónica*. These procedures unmask the fact there is no such boom”, Licitra says. The same opinion is shared by Sonia Budassi: “There is less and less space and also an impoverishment of chronicler’s fees, there is no desire to invest, therefore I have doubts about the boom of the *crónica*.” Also Rodrigo Fluxá, from Chile, and from Spain, Nazaret Castro say, precisely about this lack of will to dedicate resources, that: “I think journalism lacks the social component, lacks the resources and the will of working more slowly. They are concerned to be the first in telling things, but nobody concerns about telling them properly.” And Virginia Mendoza,

who complains that Spanish media pay very low fees or directly do not pay at all, adds another reason: narrative journalism is not taught on communication faculties, the fact that this journalism exists is not shown.

Abandoned by traditional periodical publications, narrative journalism found refuge in the book and also a channel for expression. A dynamic that repeats on both sides of the Atlantic, despite in the Spanish case is still an outcast genre, without having the levels reached in countries such as the United States. For most authors, the book has turned in the last stronghold where they can write the journalism they need. “The book is the format that better fits the kind of topics I manage, I wouldn’t go back to writing reportages [in periodical publications]”, says Javier Rebolledo categorically, to indicate that this one enables him to unfold the context required by complex themes, such as the ones handled in his trilogy about Pinochet’s dictatorship. Izagirre also mentions the advantage of space it grants to narrative journalism, which the press won’t allow to offer. For Álvaro Colomer is not only the ideal format, but “there is no other format”, since it is impossible to develop a good journalism in a place other than a book, a generalized opinion in which Alberto Arce has an impact in a blunt manner, when emphasizing it is the only format where good journalism is done today. Gabi Martínez coincides with it: “I think one of the opportunities of literary journalism is through the book. It is the loophole left: in newspapers an idea can be pointed out, to sketch something interesting, but the authentic literary journalism should be expressed in a book.”

The emergence of specialized hallmarks and collections has influenced when it comes to facilitating publication. Until turning to *Libros del K.O.*, Íñigo Domínguez ensures that his two works were rejected because editorials, “considered them a classification problem, that is, they didn’t know where to put it. It was not fiction, it wasn’t nonfiction either, it was a hybrid thing and they didn’t know.” David Jiménez mentions a similar problem with *Hijos del monzón*, which accumulated the negative response from five editorials, arguing that it was not commercial. Due to different reasons, the editorial pilgrimage is part of Victoria de Masi’s experience until reaching the firm that finally launched *Carlitos Way*.

However, despite advantages, both Colomer and Domínguez notice some drawbacks. Firstly, even though time is a favorable factor in terms of production, to delve in stories, in the current dynamics of media it is scarcely sustainable, because it requires that a journalist spends too much time focused on a topic. Secondly, crisis has also impacted funding from editorials, which have reduced the bet on contents that have poor sales possibilities. An opinion shared by Gabi Martínez. Under these circumstances, micro patronage has turned in the key to develop projects such as Nazaret Castro’s, *Cara y cruz de las multinacionales españolas en América Latina*.

Although there is the perception of an increasing interest for the *crónica*, respondents are aware it is not a massive genre, as Ayala Ugarte indicates, or that it is not supported by a great tradition, using David Jiménez words. “I believe that the *crónica* has never come out of the consumption circuit of whom writes it or aspires to do so. The common reader does not read *crónica*, but fiction instead. It is a very limited consumption product, that it is seen in a completely distorted manner from inside”, manifests Licitra. For Riera, more than on the genre, the appeal lies on the topic, in the capacity of suggesting issues that empathize with the reader.

A genre complemented with other jobs

For respondents, to live exclusively on narrative journalism is little more than an utopia. Authors outstand the difficulties this entails and suggest it more like a complement, while combining this

activity with other jobs in press or with teaching. All this despite the success achieved by Nacho Carretero or Ander Izagirre –*Fariña* has accumulated sales of 32.000 copies (data from August 2017) and due to the kidnapping of the publication by court order [4], the publication's ninth edition of 25.000 copies is almost exhausted - and *Plomo en los bolsillos*, 9.000 copies–, in the Spanish case, or Javier Rebolledo, with books that positioned as bestsellers in Chile.

Barely a third of respondents has a contractual relationship with media, as reporters or editors, although this is a condition that has changed over time in some authors. This link is established both with traditional media –such as Fluxá (magazine *Sábado*, of *El Mercurio*), De Masi (magazine *Viva*, of *Clarín*), Iñigo Domínguez (*El País*) and Nacho Carretero (*El País*)– as well as digital media –Sonia Budassi (*Anfibia*), Sebastián Hacher (*Cosecha Roja*) or Daniel Riera (*BigBang!*). In the Argentinean case, the tradition of literary workshops transferred to journalism and the power of attraction of Latin American *crónica* –at least in some sectors– allowed respondents to complete their activity with them. This teaching labor has an outstanding relevance in Josefina Licitra's case or, at a more academic level, in Miguel Prenz's case, professor of the school of journalism TEA.

The majoritarian condition among narrative journalists interviewed is 'freelance', something that combines the typical struggles of depending on publication –especially those that cover conflicts or, in Aldekoa's case, a continent like Africa– with the freedom to be able to manage working timelines or treated topics. Izagirre ensures that he couldn't have wrote it, if weren't for the flexibility that his freelance condition allows and the opportunity to perform his work in a slow manner, of going back to it and stop to treat it calmly. In Javier Rebolledo's case, leaving the media he worked in, the newspaper *La Nación Domingo*, allowed him to dedicate fully to themes he could only publish partially or that have been stored away up until then.

The main difficulty for whom works linked to conventional media, such as Iñigo Domínguez or Nacho Carretero, is having time to invest in the elaboration process, which tends to be developed on days off, holidays or night 'shifts'. Victoria de Masi, who prepared her book while working in *Clarín*, illustrates the situation in an eloquent manner: "The writing took five 'full' months, working simultaneously, without holidays nor vacations, nor birthdays, nor Netflix, nor twitter."

4.3. Work strategies

Respondents coincide in pointing out that the documentation process does not only represent the needed starting point for their works, but also the stage that greater effort entails, that often exceeds the writing time. This is confirmed by the Spanish Iñigo Domínguez or Nacho Carretero. The latter says: "Let's say that the research or information gathering is very arduous, tough, it was the most difficult part of the book." But it also was the experience of Latin American journalists such as Miguel Prenz, Josefina Licitra, Rodrigo Fluxá, Sonia Budassi, Victoria de Masi or Sebastián Hacher, who dedicated to fieldwork reportages for many years as well as to conduct interviews to document their productions. Or Rebolledo's, who accumulated the knowledge of five years of researches and tenths of judicial files before writing *La danza de los cuervos*. "I like to investigate, I get quite obsessed with themes", admits Javier Sinay, up to the point of exhausting all possible pathways before seating down and write. Not in vain he dedicated four years to delve on the facts told in *Los crímenes de Moisés Ville*.

Although they share the philosophy of narrative journalism as a dilated process over time, it requires an in-depth research stage, the way of shaping this study shows relevant differences between Spanish and Latin American journalists, originating in the previous definition of the structure and in the

subsequent edition stage. In this sense, Nacho Carretero constitutes an exception among Spanish journalists, because it is the only one who ensures that, from the start, he developed a basic scheme, from beginning to end, for

Fariña, although he completely changed that structure afterwards. In Arce's case, the works discarded by the agency –in his priority work as correspondent in Honduras– which marked in a way the backbone of *Novato en nota roja*, while Utrilla alludes to the chaotic nature of the structure of *A Moscú sin kalashnikov*: “Perhaps, the most complicated thing was having to reorganize all that enormous amount of memories and *crónicas* and reportages, in such a way that the large scenarios of Moscow could appear.”

The extraordinary nature of the way Carretero works in the Spanish context contrasts with a variety of formulas Argentinean and Chilean professionals use before materializing their publications, from sophisticated conceptual maps –Javier Sinay–, up to schemes unfolded on whiteboards –Miguel Prenz–, “huge flip charts” hung on the walls with characters' features –Rebolledo's style– or themes indexes –Sonia Budassi. Despite the flexibility and openness to changes that may raise during the process, the usual standard is designing a structure as starting point before writing. Hacher uses conceptual maps elaborated in his head, but states that his working method has changed over the years. “Before I gathered everything and made a lot of notes and then I wrote. Now I am working with the daily format about the things that happen to me. What I do is to take all the material, generate a structure, a huge pastiche and then finetune.” However, despite the previous schemes, De Masi emphasizes that the essence of narrative journalism is related to “problem solving” that emerge while writing: “The text keeps asking, and you need to know how to listen”, she specifies.

The editor's figure –ongoing or developed by a good part of Latin American journalists interviewed– is not usual in the Spanish case. However, in this exceptionality there are Aldekoa's experiences, who underlines the relevance of editing tasks in his writing, responsibility of his colleague: “The truth is that I sign the book, but Júlia's work, in that sense of correction, edition, was a very good one.” On his part, Íñigo Domínguez values the editing process of his second work, *Crónicas de la Mafia*, as very gratifying, in charge of Libros del KO. For Rodrigo Fluxá, the experience as edited author allowed him to see the relevance of the dynamic of “returning a text three times, or talking about it before writing.”

Miguel Prenz highlights the value of an external and respectful, honest view that tells the author “this works, this doesn't work” and, in this sense, underlines Leila Guerriero's work, editor of several book collections and *Gatopardo* magazine: “There is no workshop that teaches you what I learnt with her; besides, she is super respectful. Leila knows how to edit because she knows how to read, that is the key. When she reads she understands and what she recommends is being understood from that position.” Budassi shares that other's view might help a lot in enriching the narration. Although the first reaction is rejection when many comments from the editor come with a text reviewed by the author several times, Bianchini explains that after some time, of trying the comments made, in most cases, he ends up understanding the editor's proposals. “In others I don't, and I argue why. Since I have worked a lot on them, I have decisions about almost all things.” For Hacher, the advantage of being an editor is that it allows self-edition “as you write.” Javier Sinay, who worked as editor in the magazine *Rolling Stone* in Argentina, adds one more: “It enriches my work as chronicler.”

4.4. Topics of interest

The topics treated in book format by journalists included in the sample respond to a wide scope of topics, that comprise from memory and identity to the research of criminal phenomena, issues of social nature, with a more sociological treatment or focused in singularities.

Among the authors who have more than one book published, some have maintained loyal to a clear work line, while others had a more eclectic trajectory. In the first case, there are authors like Rebolledo, who have treated in his four books topics that have their origin in the Chilean dictatorship, either the episodes of violation of human rights, social connivance with the regime or chameleon-like lives such as a businessman of communist affiliation. Or Sinay, who has walked through the territories of the red *crónica*, from the young crimes to historical episodes, in a similar line to Fluxá's in Chile. In his two publications in book format, Bianchini specialized in extreme conditions, either in sports or survival in Antarctica, coexisting with a scientific expedition. Daniel Riera also maintained an identifiable line, with a particular view about the freak and bizarre, able to raise interest for singular universes such as ventriloquists'. This personal view is evidenced in Álex Ayala Ugarte, who through characters and stories found is able to put a story together and, despite the odd, he is successful in obtaining a universal story. Alberto Arce also shows a clear and identifiable line, through his two publications, where he evidences human violence in Honduras and Libya. Likewise, David Jiménez introduces through his *crónicas*' collection, very hard stories able to reach the deepest part of readers.

In the second case, the authors that have modified their topics, we may find Ander Izaguirre, whose six publications assigned to narrative journalism treat different themes: from the life in Greenland to football or the picturesque characters of his land, although a similar view is always perceived. Sebastián Hacher, is also another one of the authors who has undergone different areas in his three publications. "themes hit you", ensures before detailing that he started talking about "self-constructed popular phenomena", massive and popular topics without excessive visibility –like in the case of Gauchito Gil or la Salada, the greater textile market in Latin America– and then got interested by topics such as police violence and disappearances in dictatorship, until turning to peasants' fights and revindications of original people like Mapuches. Regarding violence, one of the most usual topics in narrative journalism, Nacho Carretero discovered an aspect that has been hidden up until then: the role of the Galician mafia in the world industry of drug trafficking. Likewise, although with a didactic and very funny approach, Íñigo Domínguez shows a journey through the Italian and Italian American mafia through his life.

Convinced about the need of keep changing, Prenz started his trajectory with the profile of a character who declares to be the heir of the general Juan Domingo Perón, he radiographed the context of a ritual crime that moved the Argentinean society and immersed in the conflict of three populations in Patagonia to be able to be erected as reference center of dinosaurs' site. A similar jump is present in Budassi's narrative interest, which identifies a common thread focused on the analysis of stereotypes and stigmas in its incursions in the life of different religious congregations, of a football idol or in the complex reality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Regarding stereotypes and stigmas, Álvaro Colomer digs deeper on those territories that have suffered an unprecedented historic fact, such as Auschwitz or Guernica, and asks himself how their people live there today.

Also in Licitra's case it is possible to recognize, despite the variety of interests, a will of talking about "social problems", which led her to focus her attention on gender identity in adolescence, the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires or the complaints about irregularities causing the flood and evacuation of an Argentinean population. This social concern is also found in Nazaret Castro, who

dared to analyze and denounce the huge negative impact of Spanish multinational companies in Latin America. Victoria de Masi made her debut in large format narrative journalism with the profile of the extramarital son of the former president Carlos Menem, a derailed life where the outlines of an era of Argentina's history is also portrayed. And with the idea of profiling and telling the story of Jordi Magraner, Gabi Martínez initiates her work, although during the research she will get a fascinating and immortal story about the need to pursue dreams.

Xavier Aldekoa, Virginia Mendoza and Daniel Utrilla themes are related to the journey and their personal experiences, as starting point to discover Africa, Armenia or Russia. In these texts the best narrative journalism is mixed with the journey's *crónica* and, at the same time, the author's inner journey.

4.5. Readings and references

Drawing a map of lectures and references of narrative journalists interviewed seems like an immeasurable task. In fact, an aspect present in all trajectories is their condition of ravenous readers, of stories attached to reality –such as Daniel Utrilla, Gabi Martínez and Xavier Aldekoa, who mention both journalistic as well as literary references– but, most of all, fiction stories. Miguel Prenz states so, when he says that nine out of every ten books he reads belong to this area. Virginia Mendoza mentions a fiction author such as Terry Pratchett as her main reference: “It is not only that he offers masterful descriptions that give a lot of idea when it comes to describing people, but also that man had a super anthropological touch.” For Íñigo Domínguez and Gabi Martínez, the work of David Foster Wallace –particularly his story of the experience of a week on board of a luxury cruise, *Something supposedly fun that I will never do again*– is an inspiration and reference. “I like the humor it presents a lot, how he reflects about any trivial thing and overthinks about it”, says Domínguez. And Colomer mentions the publication *Hiroshima*, from the North American journalist and writer John Hersey. In Javier Sinay's case, the interest for the police genre led him to read North American noir novel authors as well as Spanish representatives of the genre like Andreu Martín, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán or Juan Madrid. They are not only narrative readers: Victoria de Masi admits that her first contact with the literary world was with poetry.

References in the field of narrative journalism have some names of relevance, sometimes shared among Latin American and Spanish journalists. For the later, the generation reference is the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński, mentioned by six authors among their references. Xavier Aldekoa, however, decided not to read again *Ébano's* author while writing his book about Africa. “I didn't want to read it again so that it didn't obstructed me too much.” Although Kapuściński's figure is relevant among Latin American journalists –particularly after teaching in a workshop in the New Ibero-American Journalism Foundation–, immediate references have a greater relevance, both historical as well as contemporary relevant ones.

In the first case, Daniel Riera advocates the figure of Rodolfo Walsh or Jorge Masetti as precursors of a narrative journalism that wanted to introduce itself with a North American seal: “I am very annoyed about the canon's coding elaborated from USA, that is, the journalistic *crónica* conceived as a thing that the magazine *Esquire* or Gay Talese or Tom Wolfe invented. And I say: all these guys were good, but they didn't invent anything.” Sinay adds to the historic list, the Roberto Arlt's police *crónicas*. However, undoubtedly, the main references of the current chronicler's generation -and particularly of the youngest – are Martín Caparrós and Leila Guerriero, as Victoria de Masi confirms. Precisely the two most recognizable references of Latin American narrative journalism among Spanish journalists, both with collaborating in *El País*. And a data that is not least relevant for this identification: out of

the few of whom long-winded publications have reached Spanish bookstores. Colomer or Ayala Ugarte include the North American journalist Jon Lee Anderson, with a great bond with Latin America, as one of their great influences, as well as of some Latin American respondents who attended his workshops. The list of reference widens with Gabriel García Márquez, but also Latin American narrative journalists like Alberto Salcedo Ramos, Julio Villanueva Chang or Josefina Licitra –an outstanding name for youngest Argentinean journalists and that attended her workshop, like Victoria de Masi.

If the Latin American narrative journalism is being known little by little among Spanish authors, the same does not happen the other way around. To the local influences there usually add, due to proximity or exchange, some regional ones. The Chilean Rodrigo Fluxá cites his compatriot Juan Cristóbal Peña as a model in this kind of journalism, but also recognizes a great influence in the audiovisual work, particularly when it comes to defining his texts' structure. On his part, Riera mentions the interaction between the Colombian and Argentinean narrative journalism, in a discovering trend the FNPI workshops have contributed with.

It is worth mentioning that some of these authors manifest they didn't have any reference as inspiration of their works. Alberto Arce or Nacho Carretero say that, although they might have them at a general level, they have not used them as inspiration for texts they have written. On the other hand, Carretero, Aldekoa, Izagirre, Arce or Mendoza mention their mutual influences. The later explains: "The person helping me the most was always Ander Izagirre because he came to give a talk and I loved what he did. From them I have been boring him". This indicates two essential aspects. On one hand, that authors follow and read each other, and on the other, that to a certain extent there is a feeling of community among them.

5. Conclusions

Although the term to refer to the field of intersection between journalism and literature is rather conflictive, however, it is not an exclusively Spanish American phenomenon, since the Anglo-Saxon context shows similar debates (Many, 1996). One of the difficulties for cataloguing is the genre's hybrid nature, to which their sums identifications derived from the different journalistic cultures (Bak, 2011), like it happens with the term *crónica*, between the Spanish tradition as well as some Latin American countries' (Angulo Egea, 2017:17-18; Rueda-Acedo, 2012: 246, Parratt, 2003: 40-41). However, despite the scope of names managed, professionals coincide in their definitions when it comes to clearly point out the characteristics and boundaries of the genre, both in its production -a long term process with a state of in-depth documentary search-, as well as in its philosophy – the demand of attachment to reality and referentiality- or the possible narratives offered, when putting literature resources at the disposal of talking about real facts.

The book has turned into a refuge and natural ally for narrative journalism, not only because publication channels in press have closed or reduced their spaces to distorting minimums, but because it offers the necessary time and space conditions. To this trend, the emergence in the last years of new hallmarks and collections has contributed to visibilize and provide identity to the genre. However, the precarious situation has not changed much, since editorial advances barely cover the research stage – or part of it- and its nature of non-massive genre neither guarantees great benefits in terms of copyright. This promotes that, for most of narrative journalists, this is an activity they cannot make a living of, or that must necessarily, be combined with tasks typical of mainstream journalism or teaching. This condemns this journalism to a subsidiary condition, more willful-like or understood as a personal project – like a "need to tell"- instead of an activity promoted or acknowledged in labor terms.

Despite the variety of topics and styles in their works, the conception about narrative journalism and its philosophy, or the common difficulties faced when publishing, allow to identify aspects shared among a generation that, in both sides of the Atlantic, bet on literary resources in their stories about the facts they have investigated about. Nevertheless, we observe interesting differences between the stage previous to writing, that Latin American authors approach from planning, while in Spanish ones spontaneity is prioritized, and also in the subsequent stage, with a clear presence of the editor's figure, especially in the Argentinean narrative journalism. In the three countries, identification of other colleagues who develop this journalistic modality –and to some extent, the community spirit– has a considerable relevance. However, even though the recognition of authors and publications in the Latin American context occurs naturally –workshops and activities of FNPI have contributed thereto–, and even Spanish journalists cite some references such as Martín Caparrós and Leila Guerriero, this reciprocity does not produce the other way around. Among the elements influencing in this fact, there outstands the inconvenient that narrative journalism books do not cross national frontiers in their distribution, which hinders a more direct knowledge of publications, except in the case of acclaimed names publishing in Spanish media. Therefore, we can talk about a common intellectual space regarding narrative journalism, but not about a generational space shared and with feedback of reflections, dialog and exchange between Spanish American journalists.

6. Notes

[1] If another source is not indicated, all citations included in the Results section, have been extracted from the interviews performed with the authors included in the sample.

[2] Linked to European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 645666.

[3] These interviews were performed during the FPU research scholarship (University Professor Training Program) 2013-2017.

[4]. *Fariña* was kidnapped by court (dated February 2018) after the denounce of the Galician former mayor José Alfredo Bea Gondar for a crime of “injury and libels” when telling in the text about his participation in an operation against drug trafficking of which he was absolved (Please see: <https://goo.gl/v8eeC4>). After this kidnapping the last edition of *Fariña* exhausted in a few days, the electronic book has been the most sold in the Amazon platform and Antena 3, making the most of the situation, released the first episode of the series that was intended for later (Please see: <https://goo.gl/fmj2hM>).

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