

INTRODUCTION

LITERARY JOURNALISM AS A DISCIPLINE

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Published in 2011, the introduction to the book *Literary Journalism across the Globe* concluded with an open challenge to literary journalism scholars around the world: "... [to] stop referring to literary journalism as a genre ... or even as a form ... and [to] start calling it what it is: a discipline" (Bak & Reynolds, 2011, p. 18).

In those seven years separating the book's release from the publication of this special issue on Literary Journalism by the *Brazilian Journalism Research* journal, the book became seminal and the response to that challenge has been overwhelming. It is evidenced by the many monographs, collections and scholarly articles that have since been published in various languages worldwide. And yet, efforts in establishing literary journalism studies as an independent discipline (that is, an internationally recognized field of study with institutional backing and support from university administrators to

publishing houses, from individual scholars to learned societies, and from commercial enterprises to governmental agencies) have been slow in developing and this very special issue makes it evident.

The reasons for this gap are several. To begin with, as part of the most basic scientific premise, the Literary Journalism Studies field is, as it should be, in constant construction. Give us a field of knowledge that consists only of certainties and we will have a perfect example of a dead field. Based on this fundamental scientific concept, to be considered a discipline, literary journalism will need to continue advancing along many fronts.

To start with, a discipline, of course, needs historians to determine its pedigree and to establish its moments of institutional crises, and literary journalism has certainly been blessed with many of them from around the world: Norman Sims (2007) and John C. Hartsock (2000) in the U.S.; Edvaldo Pereira Lima (1993) and Monica Martinez (2016) in Brazil; Sonja Merljak Zdovc (2008) in Slovenia; Myriam Boucharenc (2001) and Marie-Eve Thérénty (2007) in France; Isabelle Meuret (2012) and Paul Aron (2012) in Belgium; Albert Chillón (1999) in Spain; Charles A. Laughlin (2002) in China; and Isabel Soares (2011) and Manuel João de Carvalho Coutinho (2017) in Portugal.

To this already impressive list of names and countries, this volume of *Brazilian Journalism Research* adds Aleksandra Wiktorowska, with her history of Polish literary journalism and the epistemological struggles it has faced in the last century. Collectively, these historians have established the main periods of literary journalism's development over the centuries, which scholars have since been fleshing out.

A discipline also needs a corpus of primary and secondary texts on which to found itself, and scholarship over the past decade or more has surely increased the number and visibility of the literary journalistic texts around the world. While recovering lost texts for the literary journalism canon and arguing cases for new recruits has been invaluable to the field, a discipline that has been idling in corpus building and discourse analysis alone, which is where literary journalism studies seems to be today, is not entirely advancing. Therefore, we understand that one of the most significant contributions of this special issue to literary journalism studies is to promote a dialogue between the lusophone, hispanophone and anglophone worlds, for, despite all of the technologies available, language is still an effective barrier to the exchange of ideas.

To move forward, a discipline also needs its own theories and methodologies, which have heretofore been borrowed mostly from the disciplines of journalism and literature. This volume of *Brazilian Journalism Research* responds to this current state of affairs by adding articles to those already available that theorize literary journalism studies or explore its methodologies (Hartsock, 2015; Lima, 1993; Borges, 2013; Aare, 2016). Within these pages John C. Hartsock and Cecilia Aare look once again at the important cognitive roles of the narrator and the reader within literary journalism. With a very creative approach, Hartsock offers a self-reflexive piece on the similarities between literary journalism and wine (their production, consumption and appreciation). And Aare complements her prior research on literary journalism's narrative strategies by theorizing the writer–narrator's rhetorical "position of witnessing." In addition, Fabiano Ormaneze, in a piece which evinces the strong bonds between the French and Brazilian communities of researchers today, examines the theoretical implications behind the subjectivity implicit in the act of writing and reading literary journalism, suggesting that Michel Pêcheux's theory of language could help explain literary journalism's role with respect to traditional journalistic production.

Ad hoc research methodologies have also frequently been imported from other disciplines (e.g., framing theory and life history from journalism/communication or deconstructionism and postcolonialism from literature/cultural studies). As such, literary journalism studies is continually faced with the challenge to formulate its own research methods that would allow it both to assert its own authority and autonomy and to lend its epistemological resources to other disciplines that are faced with resolving similar quandaries surrounding textual hybridity, international specificities and historical subjectivity, among others. For example, the reading experience of literary journalism differs from that of traditional journalism and of literature, yet we have repeatedly borrowed theories from both of these fields to explain this reader–literary journalistic text experience.

Within this issue of *Brazilian Journalism Research*, Raúl Osório Vargas, Mitzi Lewis and John Hanc assuage this methodological penury by offering two distinct approaches to the application of literary journalism studies in the education of our student–professionals. Vargas details the interviewing and investigative methods of North American and European literary journalism as a way to examine the epistemology of reportage writing in Brazil and Colombia, while Mitzi

Lewis and John Hanc investigate questions about teaching literary journalism, from broad and narrow perspectives, by surveying educators from various academic departments around the world. Comparativist in nature and transdisciplinary in practice, both pieces show to what extent the methodologies of literary journalism studies are reshaping other disciplines within the academy.

The epistemologies, methodologies and praxes of literary journalism studies are thus inextricably linked to the greater debate of disciplinary identity. Research today in the field has begun opening doors not just to the theorization of literary journalism's aesthetics (text-, author-, reader- and environment-based theories), but also to its bibliographic assessment, its inter-, pluri- and transdisciplinarity applications around the world, and its exportation as an analytical framework to other disciplines (that is, of literary journalism scholarship can influence history, sociology, media studies, communication studies, etc., and thus might be considered an emerging post-academic science).

This issue of *Brazilian Journalism Research* spearheads this debate on literary journalism's disciplinary status by offering contrastive views of its nature as a literary technique, a journalistic genre, or an academic field of inquiry. The current realities of literary journalism at a disciplinary crossroads are taken up here by Rogério Pereira Borges, as well by Beatriz Guimarães de Carvalho and Rafael de Almeida Evangelista. Borges suggests that literary journalism's narrative constructions of the self and the other, which unite subjective discourse and objective reality data, makes it highly adaptable to biographical studies, whereas Carvalho and Evangelista point out how the similarities and differences in immersive reporting and ethnographic fieldwork that conjoin literary journalism and anthropology could be harnessed to improve both disciplines' encounter with and narratives about the Other. Gustavo de Castro et al pushes that crossroads metaphor to its limits, using João Guimarães Rosa's *Com o Vaqueiro Mariano* (With the Cowboy Mariano, 1952) to demonstrate how literary journalism functions transdisciplinarily in its seamless weaving of narrative-, reality- and culture-based modes of communication not encountered in other pedagogical fields.

Not everyone, however, is for the establishing of literary journalism as a discipline, and for valid reasons. For all of its advantages, disciplinary status also has its drawbacks. An academic discipline signifies an institutionally-recognized and sanctioned pillar

of scientific inquiry that addresses and resolves problems deemed important by society, advances research pertaining to that field (and its many branches) and forms future scholars who will continue this bilateral research/pedagogy paradigm. In other words, it is about forming disciples, akin to a couple reproducing children who will share not only their unique DNA but also their specific ideals, values and traditions – common traits which, nonetheless, undergo a transformation when it becomes apparent that tomorrow's problems cannot always be resolved with yesterday's answers. As Mark Kramer (1995) once stated in his introduction to *Literary Journalism*, rules are meant to be bent, or even broken, as much for the disciplines themselves as for their disciples, lest rules become dogma, and all scientific inquiry is quashed under the edicts of unwavering faith.

A recent alternative to the academic discipline is a field of research termed “studies,” which signifies inter-, trans- or pluridisciplinary modes of academic research that gain widespread recognition within the university model and thus create, like a sitcom spin-off, an additional, albeit smaller, disciplinary branch (or branches) of the scientific tree. Studies evolve either from the organic modification of a discipline's DNA over time (socio-cultural, political, technological advances, etc., such as gender studies) or from the intentional grafting of one subdiscipline onto another (such as sound studies, a combination of film studies and sound engineering, with film studies having already emerged from cultural studies' break with the disciplines of literature and history). Here, an appropriate metaphor would be the contemporary blended family, a social unit where one or both parents bring to the new couple children from a previous relationship, adopt, or have a child or children themselves, and subsequently face the daily challenges of integrating all family members despite their various pre-existing ideals, values and, at times, polarized cultural traditions. In other words, disciplines create disciples, studies engender polyvocality.

Would gaining disciplinary status thus elevate literary journalism to celestial status or, precisely, mire it in the institutional squabbles that have gravely affected every modern discipline from physics and math to economics and history? It is a question that literary journalism studies, in its push to occupy a vacant seat at the disciplinary table alongside literature, journalism, anthropology and ethnography, has yet to ask itself.

This issue of *Brazilian Journalism Research* concludes, then,

with two articles that debate this concern of disciplinary status from opposite poles of the epistemological spectrum. On the pro-disciplinary side is Edvaldo Pereira Lima, who proposes a literary journalism discipline that educates and empowers the body politic through narratives which focus on transformation and on the expansion of consciousness. On the anti-disciplinary side is Richard Lance Keeble, who argues for a “radical democratization” of literary journalism studies which effaces the cultural elitism of academic disciplines, especially those in the humanities, and dismantles the canons they have built, which traditionally value aesthetic over political commitment. Both articles offer convincing arguments that scholars of literary journalism studies would do well to heed as the field steers itself down the path toward disciplinary status. As in any academic environment, what strengthens literary journalism studies is its diversity, not its monocultures nor its monocular vision.

This issue’s gambit is that, just as the praxis of literary journalism has been carving out its niche in the world of journalism, the study of literary journalism will need to branch out and explore new frontiers within the academy. In contemporaneity, in which the very notion of science is under constant revision, this change extends far beyond the metaphor of an adolescent’s passage into adulthood. As a mature adult, literary journalism studies will need to weigh the theories and methodologies of its parent disciplines – literature and journalism – against its own epistemological wants and needs and, in so doing, establish its own means of addressing the many questions and quandaries that preoccupy it, as much today as tomorrow.

While such critical thinking may elicit contrastive responses from both sides of the literary–journalistic spectrum, as the articles and essays published here demonstrate, the editors of this issue of *Brazilian Research Journalism* welcome that debate, firmly believing that nothing new emerges without dialogue, from outside and inside the discipline. After all, literary and journalistic studies are not haunted by their many, at times antagonistic, schools of critical thought. On the contrary, both are made richer by them. As the Brazilian adage goes: “In the struggle of the sea against the cliff, none suffers but the shellfish.” And yet, the shellfish not only survives that eternal battle; it also thrives and prospers. This volume thus hopes that any debate that it generates will ultimately serve literary journalism studies in establishing itself as a discipline unique to itself, but always open and willing to foster a dialogue with other fields of knowledge.

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