

Journalism and history in a change of era

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Abstract

The effects of the digital technologies and the Internet on the social media system offer a change of perspective on the history of journalism, which is now at the end of an evolutionary era. After four centuries, the press and journalism have been replaced in their role as drivers of the media industry by the increasingly dominant audiovisual media, websites and social networks. Consequently, researchers are faced with a new dimension of historical time that affects our most recent past. This study suggests several factors to be considered in connection with the crisis in journalism, the nature of the media and the specific era of Catalan journalism today.

Key words: journalism, history, change of era, crisis, nature of the media, Catalan journalism.

1. Introduction

Rarely do we historians have the extraordinary opportunity to witness a change of era on the issues that are the target of our attention, research and analysis, a time when history is marching towards drawing a demarcation line before the most recent experience, in which the living past suddenly becomes a subject worth studying.

Teaching often requires the researcher to use different criteria to delimit the historical subject matter. When students request it, the time period that should be used for a given research exercise on the immediate past occasionally forces the professor into an exercise in flexibility. The time perspective of facts varies with age and experience. Given a group of Bachelor's or post-graduate students born in around 1990, there are many personal memories that the professor simply cannot share. For example, the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, such a vivid recollection for their parents and grandparents, is pure past to the students. For this reason, one response that I use in such cases is that history begins where memory ends.

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However, at times historical matter which is being examined may penetrate into the researcher's living memory. The notes in this article pose several factors on the repercussions of this fact on research in the history of journalism.

2. The crisis in journalism

The major changes in the information and communication technologies in recent years and their effects on journalism have sparked an unforeseen acceleration in the consideration of historical time. Within this context, when we speak about the possibility of printed newspapers disappearing in the short term, given the unquashable competition from the Internet, and when there are warnings of the consequent irreversible crisis in journalism as a form of news intermediation, suddenly an abyss opens up in the forms of communication and culture which have matured over the course of four centuries. The unease created by the breakneck, unbridled development of the digital network is coupled with consternation over the effects of a financial crisis which is seriously aggravating the capacity of the means of social communication, particularly journalism, to survive. It highlights what could seem like an intrinsic weakness in what has been the major phenomenon in social communication in the contemporary age.

The use of the Internet by the traditional media tends to be dated from the years 1994-1995, the time when the first digital newspapers and news portals appeared, but the impact of their novelty on journalism was not immediately perceptible. In 2002, in the first history of the media that takes this juncture as a boundary comparable to the original milestone of the invention of the printing press, the British Asa Briggs (2002: 347-348) did not yet consider the traumatic effects that the Internet could have on journalism. This should come as no surprise, even though just a few years later those effects became visible and irreversible, with the inestimable magnification by the decline in advertising due to the financial crisis that detonated in 2008.

Not even twenty years have elapsed since the advent of the Internet, and its effects have spread far and wide with extraordinary speed, to such an extent that it has even modified many aspects of our forms of social life.¹ Barely 24 years have gone by since the British Tim Berners-Lee dreamt up the worldwide web (www) at the CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) particle accelerator under the Swiss Alps in 1989. In *Time Magazine*, Briggs compared the open-access, free, global web which he conceived and defended – which would have been impossible without the previous contributions by the Americans Robert Kahn and Vinton Cerf for the TCP/IP protocols and Lawrence G. Roberts for server localisation and routing techniques in data networks – with Gutenberg.

The spread of the printing press dreamt up by that coin-minting German artisan (in around 1450) took place in a fairly brief period in post-mediaeval Europe, but a full century and a half elapsed until the advent of the first weekly

¹ The magazine *Le Temps des Médias* has published a dossier on “Histoire de l’Internet. L’Internet dans l’histoire”, coordinated by Jérôme Bourdon and Valérie Schafer, in its issue 18, spring 2012.

newspapers (in around 1605). The acceleration of historical processes brought about by the Industrial Revolution could already be clearly seen in the late 19th century. Barely a quarter of a century passed from the wireless telegraph invented by the Italian Guglielmo Marconi (1897) to the broadcast of the American Lee de Forest (1906) and the first radio stations (1920). The first television stations, the first mechanical television by the British John Baird (1926) and later the first electronic television by the Russian Vladimir Zworykin (1936) quickly ensued as logical next steps. Comparative studies of these three major processes in printed communication, via Hertzian waves and via the digital network, are of immense interest to researchers.

To journalism, the advent of the Internet signalled the end of a third major historical period, the period of 20th-century industrial or contemporary journalism, which itself was the culmination of the process that had gotten underway with artisan or old journalism from the 17th and 18th centuries and the liberal or modern journalism of the 19th century. The concepts of *eras* and *cycles* are theoretical constructs used to study and understand historical processes by considering technological, political, social and professional factors. This model of the three major epochs,² which correspond respectively to the successive prominence of the circulation of news, the initiative of journalists and the hegemony of the media, has inevitably exhausted itself in the early years of the 21st century.

At all the previous times of change, both those perceived at the time by contemporaries and those established after the fact by historians, there was always the sense of a step forward, an evolution based on improving the ways of publishing, printing, distributing, issuing, commercialising and financing. It was the outlook of the process of unveiling new possibilities which fostered and multiplied the ones that already existed. The defensive reactions of newspapers and theatres, concert halls and cinemas to the new developments of the radio and television, and even radio's defensive reaction to television, nonetheless reflected reasonable concerns over the immediate effects of an adjustment and division of the business.

Today the outlook is different, especially for newspapers and journalism, whose very survival is threatened. In a climate of defeat for the large journalism industry, it is not certain that the disappearance of print newspapers in the United States, augured for 2043 (Meyer, 2004)³ on the cover of *The Economist* on the 24th of August 2004 with the question: "Who killed the newspaper?", will actually occur. Yet even if it does not happen and the press retains its own niches in the market thanks to the survival of minority audiences who are

² I presented this model in Guillaumet, 2002, and in Guillaumet, 2003b. I also used it when writing Guillaumet, 2003a. Regarding the impact of the Internet, in this work, pp. 211-212, I limit myself to pointing out the uncertainty regarding the profound change that the very concept of *journalism* is facing.

³ Beyond the misleading title, *The Vanishing Newspaper*, Meyer's title is actually a bid for editors to reinforce the quality and social influence as newspapers' way forward. The reference to the year 2043, on pp. 15-16, corresponds to the calculation of the time when readership of newspapers will drop to zero in the United States in a statistical calculation of a mean pace of decline of 0.95 per year recorded since 1960. Nonetheless, the idea of the imminent demise of paper newspapers has gained fans in Spain, even within the major journalism companies, as shown by the frequent statements by the president of Prisa Group, Juan Luis Cebrián, and the recent book by Lluís Bassets (2013), deputy editor of *El País*.

willing to pay very high retail prices, the end of the major historical cycle of the press seems inexorable. And perhaps the same holds true of journalism as we have known it, even though the Internet is not the sole factor that comes into play in an ancient process of the dissolution of journalism in the media industry (Guillamet, 2009a, 2009b, 2011 & 2012). The development of the informative side of audiovisuals since World War II is also playing a key role, with a thematic and stylistic mimesis that ended up generating newspapers that clearly lost hegemony over the public space and the news market towards the end of the 1970s.

Perhaps we should also reach back to the time when the yellow press erupted, identified with the manipulation of the news by William Randolph Hearst and his contribution to getting the United States embroiled in the 1898 Spanish-American War. However, the most visible moment in the historical perspective is the introduction of the audiovisual. Here is quite a provocative question for researchers: at what point did journalism shift the course of its evolution as a historical phenomenon inspired to serve the public to instead bow to strictly commercial interests? Edwin Godkin's pained reaction in the *New York Evening Post* (Pizarroso, 1994: 442-445) to the excesses of the editor of the *Journal* anticipates the tone of what we heard in the 1990s when we saw the first glimpses of trash TV: "It is a shame that men can do so much evil with the goal of selling more newspapers".

Could we consider the sensationalist drift of the popular press at the turn of the 20th century as the starting point of the crisis in values of journalism? Godkin's description of journalistic practices based on the "improper representation of acts, the deliberate invention of stories calculated to excite the public, and unbridled recklessness in the composition of headlines" is perfectly applicable to the tabloids that have been the source of information and socialisation for the British working class for an entire century. These popular newspapers have come to the brink of and often crossed the red line that separates the public interest from mere commercial interests, a line that reaches down to the *News of the World* and Murdoch Group scandal in the summer of 2011. It is a less visible phenomenon in the journalistic traditions of Spain and Catalonia, which did not have the possibility of expanding the press to reach the working classes, not even after the transition to democracy. Because of the different planes of analysis in the history of journalism according to national traditions, the question that opens this paragraph may not seem very pertinent here at home, yet it is no less essential for gaining a general grasp of the changes.

3. The nature of the media

The Spanish perception of the journalism crisis is associated with the advent of the Internet and digital newspapers, but to analyse and understand it we must stretch back to the revamping of the press after the death of Franco and the democratisation and liberalisation of radio and television in the late years of the transition to democracy, once the Spanish Constitution was approved (Guillamet, 2011b). The four previous decades had been a paralysing hiatus, precisely when audiovisuals were becoming increasingly hegemonic in the international media system, displacing newspapers from the prime role they had historically played. The successive displacement of newspapers that took

place in New York in the years after the 114-day printers' strike in the winter of 1962-1963 already had to do with other factors, with competition from audiovisuals in news and advertising.⁴ Since 1936, Spain had remained on the sidelines of the general evolution in journalism because of the three years of Civil War and the subsequent hibernation of the media system under the utter control and censure of the dictatorship. This had devastating effects during the thaw.

The expectations of the freedom and expansion of the daily and weekly press upon liberation from the Franco regime were frustrated by a sudden shift in perspective, without the newspapers having the chance to experience the great era as they had in other countries after the end of World War II. In 1976, the only problems may have seemed to be the reorganisation of the market in view of the appearance of new titles and the increased competitiveness stemming from the attainment of full freedom of the press. The liberalisation of the radio and television airwaves in the early 1980s and the premiere of private television stations ten years later had substantial effects on the public's attention and advertising contracts, and consequently, too, on the financing of a product which had to be sold under cost price. The successive waves of business concentration in the press and the formation of multimedia groups ended up leading to a situation which in some respects may be seen as an oligopoly, in which the newspapers are merely one part of the business, and not always the most important part.

A historical look at this universal process, with the corresponding nuances for each national and local situation, should detect a factor which is not always taken into sufficient consideration since it is not evident: the different nature of the different media. First of all, we should recall that neither radio nor television are truly journalistic media and that news is not where the most space and resources are invested. Nor is news the purpose for which the sound and audiovisual media were created. Furthermore, of the three traditional acknowledged purposes of journalism, entertainment has ended up coming to the fore, eclipsing the other two: news and education. It has even ended up penetrating them with an increasing sense of performance.

One consequence is the dissolution of journalism into the media industry. With the exception of strictly news programmes and documentaries, the vast majority of radio and TV news programmes have been permeated by the forms of entertainment. The exceptions are the public channels, which are no longer the ones with the largest viewership, and it is not certain that this phenomenon will not encroach there either. What is already happening on some private stations is that news programmes, especially on television, are shifting towards light or dramatic topics, which are regarded as more popular, at the expense of political information in the broader sense. This is the last aftereffect of prime

⁴ Of the sixteen newspapers that New York had in 1900 and the twelve in 1920, only three remain, *The New York Times* and the tabloids *The New York Daily News* and *The New York Post* (Talese, 1969: 302-303). In a series of appearances before the Foreign Relations Committee in 1966, *The New York Times* journalist James Reston outlined newspapers' difficulties in retaining their advertising investment given the competition from radio and television (Reston, 1966: 79-98). In his memoirs, Reston (1991: 46-47) evokes the impact of radio news on the newspapers of New York back in the 1930s, which reacted by even further highlighting the reasons behind the news rather than simply recounting events which had already been reported by the broadcasters.

time, since the 1950s when US television stations moved news and political debate programmes to the times with a lower viewership.

Newspapers' mimicry of television has gone from initially adopting eye-catching, bright designs and topics capable of drawing more attention to subsequently incorporating television stars and other celebrities as regular contributors, at the expense of the traditional figure of the journalist. This is further accentuated in newspapers which have business ties to radio and television stations, which also play at exploiting the most prominent journalists in non-news activities associated with entertainment, showbusiness and advertising. In relation to the different nature of the media, we should consider the structural factors which situate journalism in a position of weakness and inferiority.

The first is making it free of charge. We should not forget that the issue of free pricing dates from far before the onset of the free press around the turn of the century, and that as long as the advertising bubble did not deflate after 2008, it seemed destined to do great harm to what since then has been known as the paid press. The first free media were radio and television, thanks to the advertising and/or public subsidies which have been used since the 1920s as the sole forms of financing programmes which the public may pick up free of charge without the intermediation of a point of sale or a subscription. And since almost one century before that, the press was also largely free inasmuch as advertising partly financed its cost, a possibility perceived and applied by the Frenchmen Émile de Girardin and Armand Dutacq in *La Presse* and *Le Siècle* in 1836.

The entire history of journalism revolves around the possibility of making newspapers available to the broadest public possible, with the most interesting contents possible, and just like in any industrial competition, at the lowest price possible. The fact that this equation was very difficult to fulfil was reflected by the young Walter Lippmann (2003: 259-263) in his 1922 book *Public Opinion*, during newspapers' peak era, which was also so well described by Georges Weill (1934, 1994) in his history of the newspaper, which even today is the best account of the field. Lippmann, who viewed journalism as the investigation that should feed public opinion, bemoaned the fact that the public was not willing to pay much to be well informed, since they considered the news a free good comparable to the air they breathe.

The question of costs is common in printed, sound and audiovisual journalism. Developing in-house news, different to what the wholesale agencies and press offices of governments and companies or other outside representatives provide, comes at a high cost, primarily because of the cost of maintaining correspondents abroad and sending special envoys. Yet it is also expensive due to the salaries of the writing and editorial teams made up of expert journalists who are capable of examining the news independently and critically, looking beyond the agenda of governments, companies and other actors in the public sphere. Due to the very nature of each medium, these costs are the highest and the most difficult for newspapers to earn back.

The second is accessibility. The nature of audiovisuals allows for direct, universal access to the audience without any complication other than simply changing the channel from the ease and comfort of wherever they are. Radio has a simpler machinery and logistics, and television has more technical and human requirements, but they are both media that are easy to access, simultaneous and

changeable, which give the audience multiple, continuous possibilities, in addition to the variety of contents, vivid communication, and personal and household companionship. The press is a distant, cumbersome medium which requires the act of buying each of its products, with the added cost of time and transport and the additional effort of reading it, which leads to a smaller and more selective audience.

The third is the relationship with advertising. The press' dependence on advertising revenues is even further accentuated when it ceases being the main support or space where this advertising is inserted. Not only is it a quantitative factor, given its smaller share of what is called the advertising "pie"; the audiovisual media also offer advertisers registers that are more vivid, creative and appealing to the audience. The accentuation of the competition to attract advertising revenues is speeding up the drift towards showmanship in both style and content. Advertising had never before so heavily conditioned the media's editorial orientation by demanding the largest audiences possible, the maximum audiences, leading to the increasing impoverishment of the quality of the programmes, which is also contaminating the pages of newspapers.

This phenomenon is nothing new for the press; it had already been glimpsed with the yellow press running from Hearst to Murdoch, but it has ended up penetrating the pages of most newspapers. In the past, success of a given publication translated into certain figures on print runs and readership that assured a sufficient advertising portfolio to guarantee the profitability of a newspaper; today, the process is the inverse. The goal is now to adapt the editorial contents to ensure that they attain the readership required to earn the advertising revenues needed. Advertising has replaced journalism as the engine of the media industry in the last quarter of the 20th century. The dissolution of journalism, like a sugar cube in coffee, which would be the media industry in our metaphor, permeated the taste for news with new formats and genres inspired by entertainment and showbusiness, in accordance with the nature of the hegemonic media. As an old medium based on reading on paper, the press is facing an uncertain future in which the question of whether it can survive is asked less than how and to what extent it can survive.

The considerations on the historical cycle which has come to a close do not exclude but instead demand some kind of outlook on the cycle that is now starting. A historian always has something to say about the future; the study of the past helps us understand the present while offering information that helps us interpret future trends. The experience of the early years of the Internet, in the almost two decades which have elapsed since 1994-1995, tells us some significant things, some advantages and disadvantages for journalism that seem quite clear. The disadvantages are along the lines of accentuating some of the problems already outlined, the most obvious one being the contraction in the market for printed newspapers, along with the clear difficulty of making digital newspapers profitable because of the culture of freeness inherent in the Web.

The advantages are along the lines of overcoming some of the historical limitations of the press, such as reader participation, the ease of getting news from afar, and access to publishing, which has been direly stifled in the past few decades because of the heavy concentration. Even though it is nothing new, because of the history of the local and associative press, the ease of private creating blocks and web spaces opens up intriguing possibilities for what is

called citizen or participative journalism. It is not always easy to distinguish a journalist by vocation from an occasional interested or spontaneous communicator. Nonetheless, there is an immense possibility of issuing news which journalists should later be able to run through its filter of evaluations, checks and comparisons. Beyond the financing difficulties which strictly condition the possibility of digital journalism with added value, the Web offers the possibility of testing out new cross-cutting formats with the simultaneous, ongoing inclusion of text documents, graphics and audiovisuals.

4. The historical cycle of Catalan journalism

During this context of crisis and change, we have witnessed the culmination of a particular historical cycle: the full attainment of the regular use of the Catalan language in the press. Until 2011, not all the Catalan national newspapers had addressed their audiences in Catalan, although even now the two main ones continue to do so in Spanish as well.

The version of *El Periódico de Catalunya* translated into Catalan since 1997 had heralded the fact that computers could reach the goal of translation that the major newspaper publishers had not considered via other means. *La Vanguardia* ended up taking the same step 14 years later, in May 2011. Even though the two sports newspapers associated with the aforementioned two newspapers have not done the same, and even though four of the eight regional newspapers in Lleida, Tarragona, Sabadell and Terrassa are still published primarily in Spanish, the step that was finally taken by the oldest newspaper with the largest readership and the most political and social influence in Catalonia is extraordinarily important. It signals the possible endpoint of a historical process that has been very long and bumpy. Given the circumstances analysed above, it seems like a fairly positive end result 36 years after the instatement of democracy and 33 after the autonomous regions were created.

The *La Vanguardia*'s delay in opening itself up to using Catalan in order to issue simultaneous editions in different languages, one decade and a half after the technical possibility of automatic translation was revealed, is highly telling of the complexity of the process. It also reveals the importance of this newspaper, which has had a clearly dominant position in the Catalan press market since the early 20th century – more than the *Diario de Barcelona* in the 19th century – despite its distant if not hostile attitude towards political Catalanism. Its major shift in the 1980s, when it was already a century old, brought it closer to the moderate nationalism governing the Generalitat for 24 years, with an accidentalist stance towards support of the central governments – centrist, socialist, right-wing popular party – very similar to the newspaper's traditional stance.

It does not seem to be a coincidence that the intention to publish the edition in Catalan, which was announced during the second leftist government of Catalonia, did not come to fruition until *Convergència i Unió* won back power in the Generalitat. Meantime, the Godó Group's attempts to situate itself in the audiovisual space, which date back in Spanish to the liberalisation of radio and the appearance of private television stations, has taken shape in Catalonia via the attraction of personal and professional resources generated by *Televisió de Catalunya* and *Catalunya Ràdio*. For the time being, the success of RAC1 is a

noteworthy new development after the failed attempts of previous private broadcasters in Catalan, such Ràdio Avui's Cadena 13 and Ona Catalana, in view of the major difficulties faced by the 8TV project. The fears which have been aired about the potential weakening of the broadcasters of the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals – created in 1983 as the Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió – are not irrelevant to these developments, although the most crucial factor is the effects of the recession through the twofold blow of a decline in advertising revenues and cutbacks in public budgets.

There is a transitional journalistic cycle which also ended in 2011 with *El Punt*'s purchase of *Avui* and the consequent merger of the two titles. The fact that the newspaper founded in Girona in 1978 purchased its former elder sibling from Barcelona is a good sign of the direction of the evolution of the Catalan press since the 23rd of April 1976, the date that the first Catalan-language newspaper authorised since the end of the Civil War appeared.⁵ Until the Second Republic, the creation of newspapers in Catalan was the handiwork of personalities associated with the political and cultural forces of Catalanism, such as Valentí Almirall in *Diari Català*, Enric Prat de la Riba in *La Veu de Catalunya*, Amadeu Hurtado in *La Publicitat*, Antoni Rovira i Virgili in *La Nau* and Lluís Companys in *La Humanitat*. Thus, they were all the direct or indirect mouthpieces of the parties, with the sole exception of *La Renaixensa*, which advocated promoting Catalanism without ties to political action.

The first two newspapers in Catalan after the fall of the Franco regime stemmed from initiatives with popular participation, albeit with uneven results, while Jordi Pujol preferred to take charge of *El Correo Catalán* and the weekly *Destino*.⁶ The initially modest *Punt Diari* took off through a Girona-based company, while the merger project of *Avui* ended up in the hands of a foundation controlled by Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya and the Generalitat. Nonetheless, it had to be rescued by the first leftist government in operation from three sides: the Institut Català de Finances, the Godó Group and the Planeta Group. Along with *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico de Catalunya*, created in 1978, it is one of the three survivors of the eleven newspapers that were published in Barcelona during the transition.

Therefore, the rise of the Catalan-language press was not the hallmark of the democratic transition, unlike in the Second Republic. Instead, the new feature was the creation of regional public radio and television stations, instead of merely adapting the decentralised structures of Radiotelevisión Española, which had modestly taken shape in Ràdio 4 and the Catalan circuit of Televisión Española. Regarding newspapers, the new development at this time is the official support that they receive from governments, in the midst of the crisis in traditional print media and their replacement by computers, just a few years after the previous replacement of typographic printing by offset printing. It is a historical novelty which has no precedent other than the so-called “reptile

⁵ Since the approval of the Constitution on the 6th of December 1978, the creation of newspapers no longer requires the authorisation of the public administration.

⁶ Jordi Pujol only devoted five paragraphs to *El Correo Catalán* in one chapter of his memoirs entitled “Massa handicaps per portar un diari” (Pujol, 2007: 252-261). There are numerous versions of the case in the monograph “Adéu Correu” from the journal *Annals del Periodisme Català*, 8-9 and 12, 1986-1987, as well as in Guillamet, 1996 (159-167), Novoa, 1998, and Saura, 1998.

funds” created by numerous European governments – including the Spanish government – in the late 19th century; in reality, they are in no way comparable, although there is no dearth of suspicions of private assistance lacking complete transparency. They are the political parallels to those actions undertaken by the Spanish government to help finance the technological reconversion and promotion of the press at school, which is complemented in Catalonia with support for linguistic normalisation. A less apparent new development, which is nonetheless structurally important, was the unexpected expansion of the local press, in which the Catalan language is in majority use, although it is exclusive only in the daily press in Girona and Manresa.

Now that the media’s use of the Catalan language must be considered within the broader context that includes audiovisuals and the Internet, it is time to evaluate the qualitative aspects of its historical process of incorporation, advance, retreat and its latest rally in printed journalism, all of which has lasted approximately a century and a half, since 1865. Nor should we forget the distant forerunner: the gazettes translated from French in 1641, the most similar of the two newspapers under French domination from 1810 and the magazines from 1842 and 1844. The process now underway without interruptions in humorous, literary and political newspapers, the successive newspapers of Catalanism, and a wide variety of magazines are also the history of the quality and innovation of journalism in Catalonia.

Without deflecting interest from the leading newspapers and magazines in Spanish, which are otherwise barely studied, there are three prominent aspects in the innovation of journalism in Catalan which the research has brought to light. The first is the popular openness of the newspaper market in the last third of the 19th century through the large Republican weeklies filled with humour and drawings, comparable to the British working-class’ Sunday newspapers, with equal or even higher readership than the leading dailies. Beyond the popular, anticlerical legend which accompanies their memory, *La Campana de Gràcia* (1870-1934) and *L’Esquella de la Torratxa* (1874-1939),⁷ with more than 60 years of parallel stories, were the means of socialisation and access to reading of broad swaths of the working class, just as *News of the World* (recently defunct because of the poor practices of the Murdoch Group) and other British tabloids were on a larger scale.

The second is the quality of the texts and images in the satirical, literary, sports and political magazines from the first third of the 20th century, most of which drew from French inspiration. *Cu-cut!* (1902-1912), *En Patufet* (1904-1938), *Papitu* (1908-1937), *D’Ací i d’Allà* (1918-1936), *Xut!* (1922-1936), *Mirador* (1929-1936) and *El Be Negre* (1931-1936), the majority of which have been studied considerably,⁸ correspond to the intense deployment of themes and genres at a time which more in-depth studies would reveal to be a golden age of Catalan journalism. Within this same framework, there is a third aspect worth noting, namely the power of the generation of journalists and newspaper

⁷ There is an extensive description of the humoristic and satirical press prior to the Civil War in Torrent i Tasis, 1966, and Solà Dachs, 1973, 1978 and 1979. For an analysis of its role in the 19th century, see Guillamet, 2010 (229-248).

⁸ The most recent contributions are by Capdevila, 2012; Singla, 2006; Geli i Huertas, 2000, and Tresserras, 1993.

writers in the first third of the 20th century, especially the 1920s and 1930s, before the outbreak of the Civil War, when the leading correspondents were also abroad, including names like Joan Estelrich, Josep Pla, Irene Polo, Josep Maria de Sagarra, Carles Sentís and Eugeni Xammar.⁹ This generation, which pops up occasionally in Spanish after the Civil War, had already proven themselves in this language in the major Spanish newspapers. After the 1960s, the Catalan writers' impossible contribution to a press that did not exist in their language gave rise to their presence in the Spanish press, which had been much less usual before the war.

The Catalanist rectification of *La Vanguardia* in the late 20th century includes a complete approach to the more dynamic sectors of Catalan culture, and its most advanced and prominent writers appear on its pages the way they had not in the first third of its history. The so-called Gaziol doctrine (Casasús, 1987: 87-118) refers to "Catalanism in Spanish" as preached by the editor-in-chief during the Republican years as a defence against the manifest hostility of the Catalanist world. The merciless portrait of the newspaper and first Count of Godó in the novel *Servitud* by Joan Puig i Ferrer was quite vivid, and Josep Pla repeated it well into the Franco regime in an "homenot" (important man) and Gaziol himself in the bitter pages of his *Història de 'La Vanguardia'* (Puig i Ferrer, 1973; Pla, 1982; Gaziol, 1971).¹⁰ During the transition to democracy, the emergence of a kind of indiscriminate professionalisation of writers and journalists in Catalan and Spanish came from both the liberalising role played by newspapers since 1966 and the weakness of the new Catalan-language newspapers.

The end result of the cycle was the publication of two Spanish-language – with both editions translated into Catalan- and two Catalan-language newspapers in Barcelona, with the presence of *Ara* since November 2010, although not exactly... *El Punt Avui* is a unique case which can cause headaches in researchers into the administration and interpretation of records, which is always so sensitive. It is the absorption of a newspaper from Barcelona by another from Girona, where the company is headquartered, although it has kept the numeration of the former, such that it can be considered the second longest-standing Catalan-language newspaper. On the 23rd of April 2013, *Avui* turned 37 years old, compared to the 38 years and seven months that *La Veu de Catalunya* lasted from the 1st of January 1899 to the 27th of July 1937, one year after the start of the Civil War, when it was appropriated by the CNT-FAI.

The existence of an equal number of national newspapers in Spanish and Catalan – from Barcelona and Girona – is unprecedented, despite the gulf

⁹ For this issue, the anthology by Casasús (1996) is still essential.

¹⁰ Despite this unfavourable presence in the literature, *La Vanguardia* is still hesitant towards historiographic contributions about the newspaper. There are three corporate histories by in-house authors—Rafael Abella, Pedro Voltes and Josep M. Casasús— none of which has been published, so the only recent work available is the one by Huertas, 2006, in addition to an authorised biography of the Godó family (Molina, 2005). The publication of scholarly books – Nogué & Barrera, 2006, and Nogué & Borja, 2011— was welcomed with the usual discretion in the corporate news. The publication of corporate histories is quite common among the major newspapers in the world, such as *The Times*, *The New York Times* and *Le Monde*, among others. Other Spanish newspapers like *El País* (Seoane & Sueiro, 2004) and *ABC* (Olmos, 2002) have them, too.

between their readerships. Ara is also a modest business initiative, with two telling features of the change in cycle: the presence of journalists and writers from the Catalan audiovisual 'star system' among its shareholders, and the combination of paper and online editions. A third feature, which it shares with *El Punt Avui*, is its pro-independence political orientation. This is also a sign of the times, not only because of the increase in this ideology as an important option among the Catalan electorate but also because of the tendency towards greater political commitment among newspapers. This is not limited, as it was in the past, to expressing positions in editorials and opinion columns but instead extends to the selection of topics, the presentation and treatment of the news and the mix of information and opinions, and even the cover headlines, that have been clearly delimited until now.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to Catalan-language newspapers or the Barcelona press but is currently much more accentuated in the majority of newspapers in Madrid as well, principles in some cases verging on the violation of professional. Otherwise, we cannot fail to consider and analyse the specific editions of the five Madrid newspapers in the newspaper market in Catalonia since the transition. Even though the three leading Spanish newspapers in terms of readership - *El País*, *El Mundo* and *ABC*, in addition to *La Razón* and *La Gaceta* - are sold in Catalonia, only the first has a major readership in Catalonia, coming in third after *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico de Catalunya*. The result is an extensive range of options, with even more titles at regional points of sale, revealing the enormous fracture in the supply and the demand in a context of sustained market contraction. This leads us to new considerations about the heavy politicisation of the press as yet another symptom of its crisis and the crisis in journalism itself. Duly noted.

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