

El periodisme català contemporani. Diaris, partits polítics i llengües, 1875–1939

(Contemporary Catalan Journalism. Newspapers,
Political Parties and Languages, 1875–1939)

Jaume Guillamet

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Culmination of an essential trilogy on the history of journalism in Catalonia

With the publication of the book *El periodisme català contemporani. Diaris, partits polítics i llengües, 1875–1939* (Contemporary Catalan Journalism. Newspapers, Political Parties and Languages, 1875–1939), Dr Jaume Guillamet Lloveras (Figueres, 1950), emeritus professor at Universitat Pompeu Fabra and emeritus member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, has put the finishing touch on his fundamental, rigorous, methodical yet interpretative trilogy on the general history of Catalan journalism. It is a book that brings to a conclusion a successful and academically ambitious project whose substance is the result of 20-plus years of research and writing, a long time if we consider the previous works by this historian, journalist, essayist and university professor.

The three volumes in this opus are envisioned and arranged with the sound goal of organising and articulating three major historical periods, and the titles pay painstaking attention to precise dates and informative yet implicitly well-grounded descriptions. The first two are *Els orígens de la premsa a Catalunya. Catàleg de periòdics antics (1641–1833)* (The Origins of the Press in Catalonia. Catalogue of Old Newspapers [1641–1833]) (Arxiu Municipal de Barcelona, 2003) and *L'arrencada del periodisme liberal. Política, mercat i llengua a la premsa catalana, 1833–1874* (The Start of Liberal Journalism. Politics, Market and Language in the Catalan Press, 1833–1874) (Eumo Editorial, Vic, 2010). And the third one, which has just been released, is cited above: *El periodisme català contemporani. Diaris, partits polítics i llengües, 1875–1939* (Contemporary Catalan Journalism. Newspapers, Political Parties and Languages, 1875–1939).

In addition to contributions from novel basic research, both theoretical and empirical, that has not appeared in previous books by other authors on this specific topic, Jaume Guillamet completes, emends, specifies or nuances works published by other historians and the results of document research drawing from primary sources published in the twentieth century by scholars of historical registral hemerography, such as the seminal work by Joan Givanel i Mas, *Bibliografia catalana. Premsa* (Catalan Bibliography. Press) (3 volumes, Barcelona, 1931–1937), and descriptive historical hemerography, such as Joan Torrent and Rafael Tasis' *Història de la premsa catalana* (History of the Catalan Press) (2 volumes, Barcelona, 1966), which is partly indebted to the work of Givanel.

The common methodology used in hemerographic history studies relies heavily on previous catalogues of periodical publications. Jaume Guillamet himself, with the support of Marcel Mauri, has overseen and carried out projects involving exhaustive inventories, typological organisations and particularised analyses of the regional press, which were compiled in the book *Catàleg històric general de la premsa en català. L'eclosió de periòdics, 1641–1898* (General Historic Catalogue of the Catalan Press. The Newspaper Boom, 1641–1898), the first volume of which was published in 2015, along with a second one with the subtitle *L'expansió truncada, 1899–1939* (The Shortened Expansion, 1899–1939), which is currently being published by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, the academic corporation that has hosted the research project on this subject undertaken by the Journalism Research Group at Universitat Pompeu Fabra.

One of the secondary—albeit partial—sources of this first hemerographic cataloguing work and Guillamet's trilogy is *200 anys de premsa diària a Catalunya, 1792–1992* (200 Years of Daily Press in Catalonia, 1792–1992) (Fundació Caixa de Catalunya, 1995), overseen by Josep Maria Huertas. Other substantial, complementary or auxiliary sources clearly included monographs on newspapers in the Catalan-speaking area and generic or specialised anthologies of articles or individual journalists. Both kinds of sources are referenced unequivocally, comprehensively, precisely and rigorously in the works published by Jaume Guillamet.

Professor Jaume Guillamet's trilogy stands out in our field of study as a research, writing and publishing effort without peer in other major journalistic cultures nearby or accessible to us, with the exception of the four volumes of the *Histoire générale de la presse française* (General History of the French Press)—published by Presses Universitaires de France and directed from the first volume in 1969 until 1972 by Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou—and the four volumes of *Historia del periodismo de España* (History of Journalism in Spain) by Maria Dolores Sáiz and Maria Cruz Seoane, published by Alianza Editorial Universitaria in 1983, 1996 and 2006.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the four volumes of *Historia del periodismo español* (History of Spanish Journalism) by Pedro Gómez Aparicio published by Editora Nacional in 1967, 1971, 1974 and 1981 are the irregular outcome of a highly debatable university method in terms of basic—or primary—scholarly research in sources and their exploitation for publishing.

In the English-speaking world, the only work which seeks to offer a general historiography of journalism—and I should clarify that I am not strictly a historian—is the one published by James Melvin Lee entitled *A History of American Journalism* (Houston Mifflin Co., Boston, 1917), a historical book in two senses: it is very limited in the timespan that it encompasses—given the year it was published—and it is clearly far from our contemporary world. Even though Germany was an early powerhouse in journalism theory—with contemporary milestones like the two extensive volumes of Siegfried Weischenberg's *Journalistik* from 1992–1995—I have not found overarching histories of journalism proper with the exception of the occasional contributions by Jürgen Wilke, who, like Jaume Guillamet, updated the methods of historiographic positivism by introducing statistics, which enable the conceptual and professional evolution of journalism to be related to the demographic and economic evolution.

In this brief overview of the bibliographic scene in which Jaume Guillamet's trilogy is framed, I have obviously omitted more specific works in my specialisation—the journalism of genders and authors—such as the catalogues of Spanish journalists by Manuel Ossorio y Bernard (published in 1903–1904) and the one by Antonio López de Zuazo Algar (published in 1980–1981), along with the critical annotated anthology by Josep Maria Miquel i Vergés (dated 1937) and, on a Spain-wide scale, the handbook on comparative journalism by José Acosta Montero (two volumes published in 1973).

It is fair to mention Jaume Guillamet's generous previous contributions to the history of the press, which took the form of textbooks and books for popular consumption, but most importantly we should highlight the crucial international landmark *La premsa comarcal. Un model català de periodisme popular* (Country Press. A Catalan Model of Popular Journalism), published by the Generalitat de Catalunya in 1983.

However, the goal now is to delve into significant details and salient aspects of the third and newest volume of Guillamet's trilogy, the *El periodisme català contemporani. Diaris, partits polítics i llengües, 1875–1939*. The intellectual magnitude of the scholarly effort applied in this historical trilogy on such an immensely broad subject of study, namely the newspapers published in Catalonia for 380 years, advised deciding—as Guillamet did—to organise and articulate it with conceptual criteria that are coherent throughout the entire period.

In this last volume, the three parts of the work successfully meet the aspiration of being able to be read from different perspectives.

The first part provides an overview of the 60-plus-year period, interpreted by Guillamet in such a way that links the evolution of the press with the course of ideas and political events. This approach helps readers make their own assessment of a crucial historical period that was uniquely tumultuous, with chronic instability and striking changes of general journalistic interest.

The second part of the book starts with a novel, cogent proposal on academic dichotomies that other authors in typological hemerography have applied. He introduces an original taxonomy

conceived according to the publications' lifetime, a criterion that justifies classifying them into two main categories: stable newspapers and occasional newspapers. Also worth noting is the distinction that Guillamet makes between business newspapers and ideological newspapers, a nomenclature that brings nuances to the different names used by the previous scholarly literature on journalism. During the second half of the twentieth century, experts in this subject used different phrases—industrial, commercial, business newspapers—that the pioneers in the theory of the press coined for a journalistic model that Guillamet describes as a 'business newspaper'. In turn, the 'ideological newspaper' model, as Guillamet calls it, is equivalent to what were called opinion newspapers or doctrinal newspapers in earlier textbooks and treatises. However, these names and divisions are not arbitrary, and Jaume Guillamet proves this and defends it meticulously with statements and comparisons which are quite useful not only to more experienced readers but also to those interested in significant figures on the contemporary evolution of the journalistic, publishing and cultural industries in general.

An extraordinarily noteworthy feature of the last chapter in the second part of the book is the section that the author devotes to the emergence of the corporate culture of journalists. This is a defining feature in the maturity of professional modernity in the mid-twentieth century. Jaume Guillamet examines it from different prisms—associations, trade unions—and with an extensive body of texts from works and articles by journalists who have made incursions into incipient theories of journalism since the turn of the century. The substantial bulk of these 45 pages in Guillamet's book stands as invaluable basic material for inquiring into or complementing professional sociological or anthropological studies on the journalist's profession in the first half of the twentieth century.

This book provides a thoroughly documented and well-grounded contribution confirming the idea that Catalan journalism took a qualitative leap forward in the 1930s, favoured by the convergence of political conditions—republican freedoms, the awakening of radical Catalanism, incipient women's liberation—as well as by progress in the normative use of the journalists' language; the onset of the radio, with its formidable ability to spread news; the outbreak of photojournalism, which was facilitated by the new lightweight cameras like the Leica; and the improved printing of newspapers using the rotogravure process.

The last part of this book is comprised of three chapters which are essentially a well-grounded reflection that serves as a lucid conclusion, coherent with the discourse that seems to have guided Jaume Guillamet since his very conception of the entire work and with the mission of sharing the results of a research and dissemination project that is sure to meet all expectations.

Because we have already reviewed the previous volumes of the trilogy, most notably the second one, what is also quite remarkable in this third one is its use of the positivistic resources that Guillamet includes in the appendix: a bibliography, of course; an exhaustive index of newspapers; a painstaking onomastic index; and tables of all kinds that make it an extremely practical source for careful reading and specialised research.

However, most importantly, this volume, as well as the other two books in Jaume Guillamet's historiographic trilogy, should be appreciated as a stimulus for future researchers. From the more academic and scholarly viewpoint, this colossal work by Guillamet is an example of how progress can be made in a field that has been cultivated and capitalised on so little, like the history of Catalan journalism, by combining precise doses of basic research with a powerful measure of research applied—especially in this case—to a true social transfer of knowledge.