

## Narrative reporting as a journalistic genre in Spain between literature and journalism

*El reportaje narrativo como género  
periodístico en España entre la literatura y  
el periodismo*

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The relationship between literature and journalism is regarded as ambiguous and conflicting. It would be necessary to underline the complementary nature of the two creative dimensions of human communication in order to assess the combination of creative resources available. By virtue of the exchange of stylistic and structural techniques and strategies produced at the crossroads of the two fields, it is essential to devote attention to the hybrid genres originated by such an encounter, as is the case with narrative reporting. Therefore, this study analyzes its connotative elements, reviewing the evolution of the leading classification theories of journalistic genres in the Spanish context from a comparative perspective.

**KEYWORDS:** narrative reporting, journalistic genres, journalism, literature.

*Las relaciones entre literatura y periodismo son consideradas ambiguas y conflictuales. Haría falta subrayar la complementariedad que existe entre esas dimensiones creativas de la comunicación humana para valorar la combinación de los respectivos recursos creativos. En virtud del intercambio de técnicas y estrategias estilísticas y estructurales, resulta fundamental centrar la atención en los géneros híbridos originados por tal encuentro, como es el caso del reportaje narrativo. Este estudio analiza sus elementos connotativos, repasando las evoluciones de las principales teorías de clasificación de los géneros periodísticos en el ámbito español, según una perspectiva comparativa.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** reportaje narrativo, géneros periodísticos, periodismo, literatura.

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## INTRODUCTION

Besides arousing much controversy within the realm of criticism, not least in the literary one, the relationship between the literary and journalistic universes is frequently regarded as ambiguous and conflicting. Basically, both activities are considered two forms of professional writing to some degree (and specialized genres) which mutually complement and complete one another. Nevertheless, problems arise when it comes to texts featuring creative strategies closely associated with both forms, as their genre is difficult to identify owing to their hybrid identity.

“Hybrid” is the adjective customarily adopted to denote textual categories comprising a “mixture” of thematical, stylistic and structural elements that belong to different contexts. As this research will demonstrate, it is necessary to constantly juxtapose and reformulate the traditional analytical techniques employed to investigate these peculiar textual forms. This process will give rise to a comparison which not only takes account of factors not necessarily exclusive to one field, but which also highlights the close relationship between the literary and journalistic dimensions both from a theoretical and a critical viewpoint.

To start with, this study will seek to illuminate the definition of the concepts of literature and journalism by making reference to literary theory and communicative science. Secondly, the adoption of the comparative method will allow the present author to liken these two macro-areas and focus on the narrative reporting, a genre representing a grey area located between literary and journalistic writing. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to carry out a literature review of the distinctive features of the narrative reporting and, simultaneously, account for its being inextricably interwoven with Spanish journalism. In addition to underscoring the hybridity underlying this genre, this research aims at the recognition of its partial autonomy which, more than any other form, may be regarded as “a *living* text, a *knowledgeable* text, a *noble* text” (Martínez Albertos, 1991, pp. 303-304, emphasis in the original).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

## METHOD

Before devoting our attention to the analysis of the connotative elements of the above-mentioned genre, the narrative reporting, it is of paramount importance to review the development of this subject traced by recent theoretical and empirical studies and, in particular, previous research. Indeed, numerous contributions to this field have been made since the growing interest in “printed” reality was accorded status as an independent discipline, thus affording the opportunity to delve into the classification of its internal structures. Hence, a classification of the various journalistic genres arises from the need to endow the narrative reporting with as much room for investigation as that traditionally acknowledged to the literary dimension. In this respect, explicit reference has been made to the seventies of the former century, when Acosta Montoro (1973) paved the way to the introduction of the *Journalistic*, or *Journalistic writing*, a novel disciplinary approach, in the academic arena.

It is relevant to bear in mind that the development of journalism has been traced simultaneously with the occurrence of defining historical events, with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century representing the first stage of informative (or ideological) news reporting. The following step is marked by the evolution of a new form of news reporting recognizable by interpretative parameters; whereas, not until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century did opinion news articles come into fruition.<sup>3</sup>

## LITERATURE AND JOURNALISM

A major event leading up to the exploration of the subject matter from an academic and specialized standpoint dates back to 1845, when Joaquin Francisco Pacheco delivered his opening speech at the Real Academia Española, its title being “Sobre el periodismo y sus relaciones con la literatura” (On journalism and its relations with

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<sup>3</sup> For the reconstruction of the development of journalism, see Gomis (1991, 2008) and Seoane and Sáiz (1983).

literature).<sup>4</sup> The pioneering *Tratado de periodismo*, published in 1901 by Augusto Jerez Perchet, delineates the features of the different textual categories, laying the groundwork for the investigation into the theory of newspaper-related genres. Whereas, in 1930, journalist Manuel Graña published a study titled *Escuela de periodismo. Programa y métodos* (1930) regarded as the forerunner of both the development of such a discipline and the formal training of professionals. Nonetheless, it was not until the late fifties that this field developed independently, thereby establishing a network of relationships between journalism and literature.

One of the first testimonies to the foundation of a novel analytical method is provided by Acosta Montoro's (1973) notorious essay, wherein the intellectual argues that "discussing the relationship between Literature and Journalism is like debating that between the trunk and the branch of a tree which cannot live separately" (Acosta Montoro, 1973, p. 51). The scholar points out that ever since its inception, the journalistic universe has been closely intertwined with the world of literature, thus underscoring the communicative function the press has served from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards: "Newspapers had to be repleted with accounts, reviews and articles..." alluding to the need to produce an effect on people's daily lives "by means of a piece of writing being made public" (Acosta Montoro, 1973, p. 52), besides satisfying a demand for information. The central tenet around which Acosta Montoro's argument revolves is the development of the concept of "communication", viewed as a process whereby the individual acquires rationality and self-awareness regarding the importance of transmission and collective participation. Additionally, he propounds that the communicative act takes place as long as also participation does "and when individuals regularly and periodically inform, they are producing journalism" (Acosta Montoro, 1973, p. 53).

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<sup>4</sup> In the speech given at the Real Academia, he focused on why literature and journalism were then regarded as two different activities; on this occasion, Pacheco expresses his doubts about this issue, wondering whether these two fields are necessarily interrelated.

The author brings into focus the pivotal role fulfilled by the press in the evolution of the communication process. Journalism is the means that has smoothed the path for the emergence of books and newspapers. Traditional and innovative at the same time, the newspaper format immediately indicates several technical differences between the literary and journalistic style. Lacking the linearity and chronology typical of fiction, in journalism, readers play an agential role in reorganizing the reading material according to what most arouses their interest, thus scanning the text for what is immediately relevant to them.

The newspaper's format does not lend itself either to chronology or linearity, but to simultaneity. This is not inconsiderable in relation to the role fulfilled by the reader in the intricate field of communication. Similarly to books, which required linearity and chronological order before the emergence of new techniques, almost always based on the mutual influence between journalism and literary genres; the newspaper, its format, oblige the reader to be also a producer owing to their apparent lack of order. Readers need to reorganize news articles on their own, selecting and giving them shape according to their interest. In journalism, just like in modern literature... the reader contributes to the crafting of the work (Acosta Montoro, 1973, pp. 33-34).

The author's background as well as the generic frame of reference invariably determines the final product, reflecting the higher or lower degree of influence exerted either by literature or journalism. It is no mere coincidence that Acosta Montoro resorts to the antinomy between the French terms *écrivain* (author) and *écrivain* (writer) in order to draw a distinction, also highlighted by Barthes (1972), between the respective idiosyncrasies associated with the journalist and the novelist. The French critic insightfully draws a contrast between the *écrivain* and the *écrivain*: the former is the representative of the literary institutions; the latter, on the other hand, is depicted as a writer lacking in vocation but not in goals, who may be identified with the intellectual. The volume *Critical Essays* (Barthes, 1972) clarifies this distinction, amplifying on the antithesis between these two professionals who shape the articulation of language.

More specifically, it might be contended that what constitutes the common ground between the *écrivain* and the *écrivain* is no less than words themselves; however, Barthes regards words as structures rather than instruments: they are defined as expressive devices aimed at the fictional reproduction of reality. Accordingly, Barthes employs the term “fictional” given the seeming impossibility of overlapping the structure of language with that of reality. In fact, on the part of the *écrivain*, literature will always result in an unsatisfactory compromise owing to his or her human nature; the *écrivain* is bound to be a living subject producing works affected, albeit indirectly, by reality.

On the contrary, the *écrivain*'s activity seems to be solely and directly committed to reality. On closer analysis, the *écrivain* possesses the ability not to lose themselves in the labyrinthine corridors of language, in as far as his or her goal transcends the mere word; they do not necessarily pursue the recreation of that parallel and alternative world of words which is in turn inhabited, by definition, by the *écrivain*. “Thus language is restored to the nature of an instrument of communication... Even if the writer pays some attention to style, this concern is never ontological” (Barthes, 1972, p. 147).<sup>5</sup> In response to the endless shapes which reality can assume when rendered in

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<sup>5</sup> This dichotomy aims to represent the “professional” polarization arising out of the extension of the literary function as a distinctive feature of the modern era. Indeed, Barthes builds up a detailed profile of the two figures, drawing a clear distinction between their attitudes, goals and roles: “The author participates in the priest’s role, the writer in the clerk’s; the author’s language is an intransitive act (hence, in a sense, a gesture), the writer’s an activity. The paradox is that society consumes a transitive language with many more reservations than an intransitive one: the writer’s status, even today when writers abound, is much more problematic than the author’s. This is primarily the consequence of a material circumstance: the author’s language is... the unique object of an institution created only for literature; the writer’s language, on the contrary, can be produced and consumed only in the shadow of institutions which have, originally, an entirely different function than to focus on language: the university, scientific and scholarly research, politics, etc.” (Barthes, 1972, pp. 147-148).

writing, he concludes by calling for a fusion between the *écrivain* and the *écrivain*, whose contributions turn out to be essential to reproduce the complexity underlying reality. While the *écrivain* is described as the person who “works up his utterance” (p. 144); the *écrivain*’s role is to be attributed to the journalist, acknowledged to possess a “transitive” ability which proves clearly evident in the task of conveying, witnessing and informing an audience by means of language. Regardless of the striking differences between the *écrivain* and the *écrivain*, at the close of Acosta Montoro’s (1973) argumentation, the scholar adopts a metaphor that dispels any doubt about the relation between the journalist and the writer, depicted as “navigating on the same ship steered, on alternate days, by literary institutions, unless they decide to shipwreck and drown themselves” (p. 79). To sum up, in Acosta Montoro’s opinion, the function of journalism is to spread news, inform and entertain the audience on a regular basis; in addition to this, the writer also makes reference to styles and forms characterizing the contents of the newspaper.

#### TAXONOMY AND EVOLUTION OF JOURNALISTIC GENRES

The issue pertaining to the theories of classification of journalistic genres has not ceased to arouse scholars and communication science experts’ interest. Nowadays, the hypotheses put forward during the 1960s and 1970s are tentative and insufficient to satisfactorily explain certain phenomena which are still undergoing a complex process of continuous evolution. These transformations clearly reveal the versatility and the potential of each and every genre and, more importantly, speak to the importance of regularly updating the genre classification systems. This operation intends to demonstrate the variety and diversity of the factors affecting the distinctiveness of each genre. Among them, it is worthwhile highlighting the author’s degree of intentionality and intervention, the format (text and/or monographic or journalistic publication) and the ultimate generic *afférence*, that is to say, the extent to which the generic features emerge in the text. The latter enables the analyst to create separate categories into which genres can be grouped, thus laying down the conditions of a pact based on the fulfilment of

basic criteria for recognition and coherence. Lastly, it is relevant to take into consideration the target, namely, the reading public towards whom the communicative act is geared.

Hence, the theoretical formulations developed during those years may be considered a valid starting point on which to build a more innovative approach; on the one hand, by accepting the contribution of the previous tradition, on the other, by widening its scope. Currently, redrawing the boundary lines between genres is viewed as an old-fashioned practice, albeit predominant until recently, as the universe of modern communication requires flexibility across genres so as to open doors to the interaction of different, yet similar, fields of creation such as literature and journalism.

Arguably, Martín Vivaldi (1998) and Martínez Albertos (1998), along with Acosta Montoro (1973) may be viewed as the precursors of Spanish journalistic discourse. Indeed, they provided profound insights into the field of reference by following more flexible approaches to the analysis of the multifarious forms of journalistic genres: written (papers and online newspapers) and audio-visual (radio and television) production. Initially, the newspaper was regarded as the main means to spread news and, at the same time, an instrument for promoting hybrid genres; however, with the passing of time, it gradually came to be conceived of as the abstract point of convergence between literature and journalism, thereupon giving rise to a hybrid interaction. In view of this, the development of genres delineated in this study draws on the classical theory of genres, originally advanced in order to provide a definition of the different conventional printed textual typologies. Nevertheless, recognizing the dramatic changes in the structures and the practices of information and interpretation brought about by the “new” digital formats, the present writer will not address their impact in this study.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The meteoric rise of the media empire has considerably affected the structure, the form and the spread of any journalistic genre. For instance, the widespread use of “new” digital media has opened doors to phenomena such as interactivity and hypertextuality, which have, in turn, extended the expressive possibilities of the narrative reporting. The advent of online



In the 1980s and 1990s, the genre taxonomy significantly developed, attracting the attention of numerous scholars coming from multiple fields: communication studies, sociology, linguistics, literary criticism and even writers. In the years following the publication of *Cursos de redacción* (by the aforementioned Martín Vivaldi (1998) and Martínez Albertos (1998)), other eminent scholars like De Fontcuberta (1993), Gomis (1987, 1989, 1991), Sánchez and López Pan (1998), Casasús and Núñez Ladevéze (1991), Chillón and Bernal (1985), Casals Carro and Santamaría Suárez (2000), Casals Carro (2005), Aguilera (1992) and Parratt (2003) made invaluable contributions to the development of the classification theories of journalistic genres and the field of journalism itself.<sup>7</sup>

In respect of the percolation of journalistic features through other genres, it is relevant to mention Parratt's essay, *Introducción al reportaje*, wherein she undertakes a historical reconstruction of the development of the theory of journalistic genres, elucidates their controversial evolution and expounds on the current critical panorama. In the last section of her study, the author illuminates the characteristics of the *news reporting*, on which this study will subsequently elaborate. The scholar illustrates the history of journalism in the Spanish field, recognizing the role of the University of Navarra in fostering interest in the theory of journalism as an independent discipline.<sup>8</sup> Considering

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newspapers has generated interest in genre classification, thereby calling for a redefinition of journalistic genres where taxonomy is concerned. With respect to the genre under scrutiny, namely, the narrative reporting, this research makes reference to the correspondence between this –which has been theoretically analyzed– and the multimedia reporting typical of modern digital journalism. For further clarifications, see Edo Bolós (2001), Marrero Santana (2008) and Palau Sampio (2007).

<sup>7</sup> The aforementioned texts and authors are those which and whom Parratt has drawn on in her research into the origins of the reporting (Parratt, 2003, pp. 18-28).

<sup>8</sup> In the first footnote, the author cites an extract extrapolated from an article by Santamaria wherein it is made reference to the central role played by the Universities of Navarra and Martinez, especially, respecting the evolution

the influence exerted by journalism over literature and vice versa, her research proves that the origins of this approach (and of the phenomenon itself) date back from the late seventies, when the Northern American *New Journalism* met with resounding success.

Where the academic field is concerned, Parratt refers to the publication of pioneering volumes that became available not before the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in North America. These sought to draw a distinction between the *story* –narration– and the *comment* –opinion–. Further, Parratt conducts a review of the proposals formulated by the above-mentioned scholars, citing van Dijk’s work. The author forges an association between van Dijk’s theories, which establish a dualism between “fact” and “opinion”, and the dichotomy between the narrative (story) and the argumentative (comment) systems of journalistic discourse, borrowed from the American tradition. Casasús and Núñez Ladavéze (1991) spot some inconsistencies in the Netherlandic linguist’s theories, which appear not to make any reference to *opinion newspapers*.

In this respect, an innovative contribution comes from De Fontcuberta (1993) who broadens the traditional genre classification system by introducing a fourth category: news stories, reports, current affairs and opinion articles. According to the author, throughout the history of journalism, which is traced in parallel with the development of journalistic genres, the boundary lines between forms have become increasingly blurred, thus giving rise to the in-depth reporting.

Analogously, in *Teoría de los géneros periodísticos* (2008), Gomis turns his attention to the crisis of journalistic genres ensuing from the incursions of avant-garde literary forms into newspaper writing with the publication in instalments of experimental literature. On the

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of this field: “The beginning of 1959-1960... saw a change in the naming of the university subject ‘Newspaper Editing’ to which the phrase ‘Journalistic genres’ was added. Professor Martínez Albertos was then entrusted with this task. However, he admits that the adoption of such an approach as well as the original design of a classification of genres and their functions was Professor Antonio Fontán’s brainchild, who headed the university department at that time” (Santamaría, 1991, pp. 107-109).

one hand, the scholar investigates the role of journalists in society, concluding that newspaperwomen and men's mission is to report on social transformations; on the other, he examines the massive impact of new technologies on journalistic practices, contending that the latest technological innovations have resulted in a radical alteration of the previous patterns of newspaper writing. Furthermore, he mentions the ideological shifts, which have shaped modern society, by making explicit reference to postmodernism. Arguing for a historical perspective on the evolution of genres, Gomis, just like De Fontcuberta, aims at the development of a new classification designed to draw a clear distinction between the function of informative (i.e., news, reports, interviews, current affairs) and opinion (i.e., criticism, articles, columns, editorials and vignettes) pieces. Therefore, seeking to devise a taxonomy usable in the academic environment, he sheds light on the most distinctive features of each genre.

Sánchez and López Pan (1998) take another step forward in the development of the classification of genres; instead of concentrating on the stylistic elements or the traditional parameters of objectivity and subjectivity (the dualism between *story* and *comment*), they bring into focus the text's function, thus taking a prescriptive, rather than descriptive, analytical approach to the textual analysis. The starting-point on which the scholars operate is the absence of the dichotomy between interpretation and information. "Informative" and "opinion" articles indeed become new categories, namely, *informative* and *interpretative reporting*. The former includes news stories, that is to say, merely informative texts aimed at exploring current affairs; whereas the latter encompasses articles, editorials, collaborative journalism and personal contributions. In conclusion, both the scholars create a third category, termed "specialized journalism", comprising criticism and articles written by experts; this genre is easily recognizable by the author's scientific viewpoint and the target audience.

Moreover, Parratt (2003) cites Bernal and Chillón (1985), the authors of a study introducing a new macro-label, *creative informative reporting*, along with the conventional categories of *regular informative reporting* and *interpretative reporting*. The two scholars carry out some research into primarily informative texts characterized

by a high degree of subjectivity, and wherein language is an essential means to express the author's opinions. In this light, it may be concluded that the adoption of the descriptive method is recommendable to determine and investigate the inclusive –and no longer exclusive– nature of the new approach to journalistic studies. After laying out the results of a comprehensive study of the most important analytical and critical contributions to the taxonomy of genres, Parratt calls for the constant reinterpretation and maintenance of the theories of journalistic genre classification, especially in the academic field:

Additionally, the traditional typology proves inapt to “accommodate” the sizeable number of variants which are constantly developing as a result of its own transformation. The main problem which theorists and technicians are faced with is the need to establish a comprehensive category suitable for a changeable journalistic panorama increasingly attentive to the competence connected to the rise of audio-visual communication modes (Parratt, 2001, p. 8).

Despite undertaking an accurate reconstruction of the history of journalism, the pivot around which Parratt's essay revolves is the exploration of the narrative reporting's features. Indeed, the researcher regularly contributes to the disciplinary evolution of communication studies, pursuing a structural redefinition of the narrative reporting: on the one hand, by showing its potential; on the other, by meticulously dissecting its composition, which this research will expound on in the following section.

Though succinct, the literature review of the development of the classification of journalistic genres provided in this section has sought to assess experts' interest in communication studies. Parallely, it has brought to the readers' attention the instability of the borders between literature and journalism in a field wherein taxonomic rigor invariably determines the relationship and the exchange between the two genres. The interaction between journalistic and literary techniques, styles and compositive strategies leads the reader to conclude that it is creativity which provides a solid basis for comparison between the related fields of literature and journalism. Indeed, creativity constitutes both a

difference and a point of contact, where stylistics and pragmatics are concerned, which allows for a contrastive comparison.

### THE NARRATIVE REPORTING

On investigating the inner workings of journalistic genres and their interaction with the literary dimension, attention must be directed to the narrative reporting. Hence, it is vital to account for the predominance of the narrative reporting among the multiple phenomena of hybridization occurring in journalistic genres. Conceivably, the narrative reporting is one of the forms which most lends itself to the influence of the universe of literary fiction, and the most permeable genre by far within the textual classification above reviewed. In this respect, the interest in the signature features of the narrative reporting and its variants arises from this genre's capacity for integration of traditional forms (i.e., narrative and essayism) at a structural, stylistic and argumentative level.

Seemingly, the narrative reporting may be located halfway through the literary narration of an event and its reproduction from a markedly journalistic viewpoint. However, it is fundamental to fathom out the dynamics underlying the creation of the *reporting*, that is to say, it is necessary to spot the generic tensions intrinsic in the creative context from which the text originates and which the text intends to reproduce. In this light, the narrative reporting can be regarded as stemming from the interplay between the literary and journalistic narrative modalities. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, this study seeks to detect the formal and structural elements whereby narration becomes an object of critical investigation and a paradigm within which its author addresses the recreation of real facts and events in the literary dimension, which is created, in turn, more or less explicitly, within the journalistic page. The aim of this study is to devise a methodology oriented to the assessment, understanding and interpretation of those texts that emblemize the interaction between literature and journalism.

The study of the narrative forms, structures and modalities that epitomize the narrative reporting requires special attention and comparative discernment to rediscover the various categories and

potentialities of the macro-category of *interpretative* or *literary reporting*, a field in which it is usual to recognize and incorporate the narrative reporting. The potential permeability that defines the narrative reporting as a modality capable of using various expressive tools, from the newspaper to the literary page, speaks to the interest in redefining its peculiar features. Journalism and literature interact as a consequence of the repurposing and resystematization of their canons, thus giving rise to hybrid forms. The combination of narrative strategies, for example, with information-conveyance techniques constitutes one of the points of interest for the observation and study of the interaction processes above mentioned.

The excursus, delineated to gain a better understanding of textual hybridization processes, takes into account the manifold interdisciplinary proposals listed in the present review, with the purpose of delving into the generic connotative elements of the narrative reporting in relation to the canonical classification of genres recognized by the Spanish literary and journalistic tradition. In this respect, the reporting proves to be an object of study that requires further investigation to reframe the relationship between journalism and literature; indeed, it is regarded as a polyphonic textual typology wherein “the fact is preponderant, [being] viewed from multiple perspectives” (Chiappe, 2010, p. 12). Owing to its variety as well as its thematic, stylistic and structural complexity, the reporting has often been the focus of interdisciplinary comparative studies applied to the investigation of the communicative forms of journalism and literature.

The reporting is the most flexible, complex and, just like the novel, the most multifarious of journalistic genres. In comparison, the other journalistic modalities appear “needy relatives”: they realize important functions... and employ compositive and stylistic techniques fairly rudimentary (Chillón, 1992, p. 191).

Defined as the “epitome of modern journalism” by Acosta Montoro (1973, p. 127), and as the “great distinguishing genre within written Journalism” by Martín Vivaldi (1998, p. 68), this genre and the research into its structural elements have noticeably developed, especially in the

last few years. To start with, critics agree on the major impact this genre has had and the transitive action it has long carried out, thereby adapting the literary narrative framework to journalistic style requirements. From a merely applicative standpoint, institutions and academic journals, such as the Spanish Society of Journalism (Sociedad Española de Periodística, SEP), European and American Journalistic Society (Sociedad Europea y Americana de Periodística, SEAP), the Association of Spanish Journalists Federation (Federación de Asociaciones de Periodistas de Españ, FAPE), the Fundación Gabo and the New Ibero-American Journalism Foundation (Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano) are to be valued for their efforts to preserve and foster the promotion and evolution of multiple journalistic genres, not least, the narrative reporting.

In her essay, Echevarría Llombart (2011) outlines the techniques and the structures intimately associated with the narrative reporting, conducting a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of the definitions of this genre provided by distinguished scholars. The author also draws on a number of semi-diachronic studies strongly reminiscent of Dovifat (1959), who, in turns, looks at the narrative reporting as the “report of real experiences” by means of “the vigorous, touching, colorful and personal representation of an event” (Dovifat, 1959, p. 22). Afterwards, she develops a reformulation of the definitions suggested by Martín Vivaldi (1973), Martínez Albertos (1984), Leñero and Marín (1986), Ulibarri (1994), Calvo Hernando (1992), Diezhandino (1994), Muñoz (1994), Grijelmo (1997), and Sánchez and López Pan (1998).<sup>9</sup> Thus, Echevarría Llombart’s work moves in the same direction as that of the other specialists of this field, advancing new theories and systematizations, which allow for a general, innovative and comprehensive view of the possible definitions of the genre.

Complying with the premises of its title, the work offers a lucid and inclusive description of the development of the genre as it is; the narrative reporting emerges as a journalistic narration comprising both descriptive and narrative elements designed to satisfy the informative

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<sup>9</sup> In this chapter Echevarría Llombart (2011) mentioned the reformulation of the definitions of the reporting (pp. 25-29).

demand (featuring in the premise) without articulating it in the form of a news story. An obvious, yet interesting, feature of this genre is its versatility, as a result of which the reporting fits into the *interpretative* macro-category. In addition to this, the work emphasizes the importance of style, which endows the reporting with a personal and subjective viewpoint on reality. In this respect, the adoption of literary strategies for the reconstruction of known facts and events is permitted on the condition that it contributes to the information-conveyance process. Hence, whatever distortion or manipulation of the piece of information for reasons other than reformulation is utterly unacceptable. On the contrary, the focus must be a detailed and faithful recreation of the context of reference.

On the basis of these reflections, it is relevant to refer to Parratt's contribution, which describes the main characteristics of the narrative reporting with a view to the redefinition of the critical approach to the analysis of this genre. Given the larger extension of the narrative reporting in terms of length in comparison with other journalistic forms, the author claims that the writer enjoys considerable freedom of expression, which turns out to be distinctive of this genre. Paying close attention to the structural framework, she points out that the strict prescriptive norms governing the *inverted pyramid* can occasionally be bent in the narrative reporting, which represents a radical departure from the other journalistic genres that serve a merely informative function. This alternative writing mode allows for the combination of an accurate reconstruction of reality with a captivating style attracting the reader's interest.

Parratt underscores the implications of the "no limits", this being, the boundlessness of this form which, in many instances, denotes it, and concentrates on the format: having demonstrated its versatility in relation to the multiple fluctuations in the length of the text, we may hazard a comparison between the narrative reporting and the novel. From a thematic angle, she argues that although the narrative reporting frequently addresses current affairs, it is not expected to go into them as much as new stories. Thus, establishing relative thematic independence, the narrative reporting realizes a complementary function of investigation and description of the various "chunks" into



which the reported event is broken, thereby becoming an object of analysis. As to stylistics, Parratt highlights certain transformations affecting both the definition of reporting and the crafting of its narrative, and points to the introduction of some differences in respect of the traditional meaning of the term, foregrounding the stylistic level:

Frequently, narrative reporters have recourse to literary style, adapting it to the needs of the information so that the final result is an account of actual facts steering clear of an invariably informative method. This style shines through in well-organized paragraphs, with effective transitions, longer and more structured than in information-reporting. These are distinctive features which differentiate this genre from the others (Parratt, 2003, p. 32).

Similarly to the reconstruction of the early stages of journalism, the essay features an analysis of the historical development of the theories of genre classification, of which the scholar proposes a concise reformulation consistent with the thesis of critics and scholars who have explored its distinctive characteristics. Once again, the point of departure is Dovifat (1959), but the study additionally encompasses the most recent definitions published in the style guides of various newspapers. Actually, the *style guides* are an invaluable means to deepen one's understanding of the core principles underlying the journalistic practice, for they include the accepted stylistic, structural and thematic norms which regulate the journalistic genres.

The two aforementioned essays attach significance to the style guide's role in defining the main characteristics of newspaper writing as they include the prescriptions underlying the code of professional ethics and a set of guidelines both on the composition of written texts and the audio-visual production, thereby aiming at the preservation of uniformity and correctness not only where style is concerned. Conclusively, as it has been demonstrated, the in-depth analysis of the essay *Introducción al Reportaje* has achieved its goal, that is to say, the reformulation of a new classification proposal that includes any possible variation designed to redefine the narrative reporting.

## CONCLUSIONS

The realism and verisimilitude underlying the narration of real events put on paper by the journalist or the writer mark a dividing line between the respective realms of fiction and non-fiction. From a merely thematic perspective, the written account of any real event is to be classified as belonging to non-fiction; however, on adopting criteria and parameters typical of the narratological approach, it is of the utmost importance to highlight the linguistic elements.

The real is not faithfully reproducible since language is a discrete reality thrusting its laws on the factual by cutting, organizing and fictionalizing it. The non-fictional account departs both from ingenuous realism and the purported journalistic objectivity, simultaneously resulting in the destruction of the fictional illusion (Amar Sánchez, 1990, p. 447).

In describing the close link between literature and journalism as “promiscuous”, Chillón (1999) frames this relationship as ambiguous, interchangeable and enriching. His analysis focuses on the development of the modern journalistic forms that are penetrating the cultural sphere wherein literature and figurative art are regarded as part of the category defined as “mass communication society”. It addresses the origin of the hybridization between journalistic and literary prose during the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This transformation has shaped the function of journalism to such an extent that the latter has stopped being viewed as a means to propagate ideology and has become a genre devoted to the assessment of information where “facts are sacred, opinions free” (Chillón, 1999, p. 144). Indeed, this about-face in newspapers’ content reflects the social demand for increasingly compact spaces and markets dominated by products whose informative, educational and narrative aspects are well combined.

The borrowing of markedly realistic expressive techniques and writing strategies, a legacy from the predominant literary tradition characterizing the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has stimulated the development of the narrative reporting as a versatile and flexible genre into which literature and journalism are inextricably

interwoven; therefore, the novelistic and the novel-reporting represent the acme of the process of hybridization between “conventional” journalistic prose and witness literature:

The promiscuous relationships between the novel and the reporting constitute... one of the primary points of convergence between literature and journalism. It is a case of hybridisation of enormous interest as it lays bare the fact that literature and journalism are intimately intertwined rather than separated by clear boundaries: in the first place, both the activities feature words, arising out of language; moreover, ever since its inception, journalism has largely been a narrative culture oriented towards accounting for diverse and complex social realities by means of all forms of account (Chillón, 1999, p. 195).

According to Chillón, the substantial difference between the narrative reporting and the novel-reporting or in-depth novel resides in the extent to which literary elements impact on the structure of the text that was originally based on information ethics. In this light, the former genre comprises texts featuring stylistic and compositive *literary strategies* (e.g., chronicles, travel literature and *costumbristic* writing); whereas the term novel-reporting more generally refers to narrative texts –novels primarily– which address real facts. A comparative review of critical research has opened up the opportunity to touch on various systems of communication and creation, thus proving the initial hypothesis according to which the narrative reporting, on the strength of its formal versatility and transversality, represents the central point of contact between journalistic and literary writing.

To conclude, given the narrative, informative and interpretative potential of the narrative reporting, the present research argues for its recognition as an independent genre within the traditional classification of journalistic forms. The latter observation is grounded in its recurrence and persistence also in digital journalism, wherein the narrative reporting proves to be “a genre into which the greatest creative affordances merge, as demonstrated by the new forms of journalism and certain cases of hypertextual non-fiction, which have not relinquished the possibility of providing narrations combining the rigorous journalistic investigation with literary style” (Palau Sampio, 2007, p. 84).

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