

## Adding to the Canon of Latin American Literary Journalism

*Literary Journalism and Latin American Wars: Revolutions, Retributions, Resignations* edited by Aleksandra Wiktorowska, Margarita Navarro Pérez, and Mateus Yuri Passos. *Regards croisés sur le monde anglophone* (Different Perspectives on the Anglophone World) Series. Nancy, France: Presse Universitaire de Nancy-Éditions Universitaires de Lorraine, 2020. Paperback, 262 pp., 20 €; USD\$22.75.

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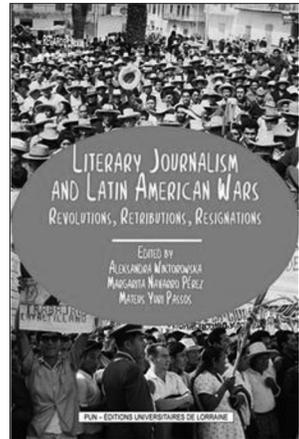
There is an undeniable need to expand the scholarly work on literary journalism beyond the boundaries of the Anglophone world, as new international authors and global traditions are added to the discipline's canon every year. With that growth comes a retrospective look, sometimes shy or understated, at what has been missed and needs now to be recovered or reformulated—productions and lineages that did not garner the attention they deserved on their own merit, in their own time.

A welcome effort as part of this restorative endeavor, *Literary Journalism and Latin American Wars* is the latest release in a series published by the Université de Lorraine: *Regards croisés sur le monde anglophone* (Different Perspectives on the Anglophone World).

This is also the third volume in the *Regards* series to explore literary journalism globally, with a specific focus on war. (The two preceding books are *Literary Journalism and Africa's Wars* and *Literary Journalism and World War I*.)

The series states as its mission the reconsideration of cross-disciplinary practices and methods. An inherently interdisciplinary practice, literary journalism is, through that lens, a good universe to observe and explore. As part of this effort, *Literary Journalism and Latin American Wars* proposes, in the words of the series editor, to “discern what . . . constitutes literary journalism on an international scale and how that writing affects our understanding of a given war and its impact on the people and nations involved” (xiii).

The book delivers on its promise thanks to the number and diversity of the authors it discusses, much more so than to the originality of its corpus and some of the central ideas that give form to the anthology. One of these ideas (full disclosure: it echoes and quotes this reviewer's work) references four core values of Latin American literary journalism (its political undertone, a progressive teleology, a sense of jour-



nalistic urgency, and its rejection of authoritarian regimes), and attributes them to the “bloodshed” that underlies the creation of “these [Latin American] nations” (3). The connection may tread on an oversimplification, if one considers that most of the Global North, especially the United States, has been built on the ashes of genocide, war, slavery, and plunder, while the literary journalism produced there rarely follows those same four principles. Despite this and a few other misfires, the book’s approach to the authors and their work is as valuable as it is necessary.

*Literary Journalism and Latin American Wars* is structured in eight sections, each one led by an excerpt of a work of literary journalism in its original language, followed by its English translation. After the original work comes a gloss that contextualizes the literary work and offers background on the writer. Finally, each gloss gives way to a critical essay deepening the reflection on the authors and their work. Out of the eight critical essays in the volume, six are in English and the last two are in Spanish.

Due to its structure, the volume allows for readers unfamiliar with the Latin American literary journalism tradition to take a deep dive into topics and events as dissimilar as the civil war in Syria, seen through the eyes of Brazilian journalists Sylvia de Arruda Botelho and Patricia Campos Mello, in an interesting section by Monica Martinez (17–34); or the migrant crossings from Central America and Mexico into the United States, as reported by Óscar Martínez, in a chapter by Patricia Poblete Alday (231–45).

Aside from its focus on Arruda Botelho and Campos Mello, Monica Martinez’s first section of the book projects laterally to gender and class divides in literary journalism in Brazil, bringing an extra topic of conversation to the fore: why is war coverage predominantly a male activity? Or, better, what are the aspects of war that women can reveal and explore with more clarity than can men?

Lilian Martins and Marcelo Bulhões’s section on Brazilian journalist Antonio Callado and his *Tempo de Arraes* (101) is especially interesting, vivid, and poignant. Virtually unknown in the Anglophone world, Callado is an extraordinary chronicler of the socialist organization of mill workers in the Pernambuco of the 1950s and a worthy heir to Euclides da Cunha’s tradition of reporting on peasant upheavals. Callado’s breach of the journalistic fourth wall and his technique of adding himself as a silent, yet present character—with opinions and a strong political point of view—during the organization of the peasant leagues, reveal an interest in describing the political guidelines that the central government was tracing in mid-twentieth-century Brazil, leading to a bloody war of extermination waged by the elites against the workers affiliated with the Brazilian Communist Party. The connections between journalism, politics, and opinion are as present in Callado’s work as in most of Latin America’s literary journalism before and after him.

A later section, Aleksandra Wiktorowska’s “Ryszard Kapuściński in Latin America, Latin America in Kapuściński’s Writing” (131–52), presents a vivid take on the Polish writer’s connections with the subcontinent and his blend of great writing, mythopoetic exaggeration, and a passion for the underdogs, at a time of violence, coups, and CIA interventions. Closely following Artur Domosławski’s biography, Wiktorowska focuses on the original work that Kapuściński chose not to translate

into English or Spanish and describes how the author used his reporting as source material for the development of universal narratives in the form of book projects. In his longer work, Kapuściński shies away from the specificity present in his reporting. He edits out particularities to commit to universal, trans-cultural storytelling.

The one salient note of disillusionment that readers of this volume may experience is brought about by the brevity of the anthologized excerpts, especially relative to the critical sections. To fully understand and enjoy excerpts of original work of literary journalism still unknown outside the Latin American world, it would have been valuable for the volume to offer meatier, more substantial translations of the chosen work, prioritizing authors who have not yet reached the bookshelves of the Global North.

With that in mind, *Literary Journalism and Latin American Wars* is an important addition to the introductory bibliography on literary journalism in Latin America, bringing to the table new names and references that will hopefully become part of a global canon in this field. Any such effort is not only laudable but deserves our full attention and support.