

PABLO CALVI, *Latin American Adventures in Literary Journalism*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019.

Pablo Calvi is an associate professor at Stony Brook University's School of Journalism. He is also a well-known and bilingual journalist, specializing in long-form writing. His excellent first book, *Latin American Adventures in Literary Journalism*, is a welcome effort to connect Latin American journalism, and especially long-form literary journalism, with the broader context of Latin American culture, and especially its literature. The inside of the book's cover states that it "explores the central role of narrative journalism in the formation of national identities in Latin America, and the concomitant role the genre had in the consolidation of the idea of Latin America as a supranational entity [and that it] connects the evolution of literary journalism with the consolidation of Latin America's literary sphere, the professional practice of journalism, the development of the modern mass media, and the establishment of nation-states in the region." Calvi's Introduction, on the other hand, includes the following disclaimer in which the author recognizes some limitations, here presented as options: "As a journalist, I have chosen to fold argumentation into the skin of narrative but not to avoid analysis or polemics. (...) in order to follow the path of the narrative journalists it discusses and their tradition—in order to insert itself into that tradition—it [the book] attempts to weave substance and form together" (pp. 4-5). In many ways, Calvi's book partially covers some of the issues the cover promises but, unsurprisingly for such an ambitious program and for a book constituted mostly by separately published essays, it falls short of integrating them into one strong argument, theoretically and historically developed. However, each of the chapters, detailed below, and the book as a whole make a significant contribution to the study of the cultural and historical specificities of both literature and journalism in Latin America and especially of the connections between them. It joins a number of important books on these topics, such as *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina* by Julio Ramos (1989); *Communication in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and Society* edited by Richard Cole (1996); *Watchdog Journalism in South America* by Silvio Waisbord (2000); *Centuries of Silence: The Story of Latin American Journalism* by Leonardo Ferreira (2006); *The Latin American Urban Crónica: Between Literature and Mass Culture* by Esperança Bielsa (2006); *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América: Prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX* by Victor Goldgel (2013). Calvi does mention two of those books: Ferreira's *Centuries of Silence* and Ramos' *Desencuentros de la modernidad*, but they are simply referred to a couple of times and don't even deserve inclusion in the analytical index. Moreover, if Calvi had really wanted to do justice to the broader topics

of the parallel and closely linked development of literature, journalism, and the public sphere in Latin America, he would have had to engage with Osvaldo Sunkel's *Razón y pasión en la prensa popular* (1985), Angel Rama's *La ciudad letrada* (1984), Jesús Martín Barbero's *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1987), or Adolfo Prieto's *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna* (1988), to name a few. None of these books makes the cut. In what is otherwise an excellent book, this failure to engage deeply with books that should have been central to the development of its broader argument marks the limit of Calvi's project, always more narrative than analytical or historical.

Defining Latin American literary journalism as a genre, Calvi states that it "comprehends a type of medium-to-long form referential narrative whose protagonists, characters, and situations have documented existence in the real world [i.e. they are non-fictional], whose focus is usually a current event, and whose intention is social, deeply political, actively militant, and –lastly– aesthetic" (p. 11). He then proceeds to explore the genre's history in Latin America by focusing on one or two writers per chapter. Chapter 1, "The Trial of Francisco Bilbao and Its Role in the Foundation of Latin American Journalism," concludes that the famous trial of Bilbao for "blasphemy, immorality and sedition" (p. 27) and the liberal defenses it elicited were "the first moves towards the affirmation of freedom of speech (...) and had a tremendous impact on the region's (...) literature and journalism" (p. 33). Chapter 2, "Domingo Sarmiento, *Facundo*, and the Birth of Latin American Nonfiction in the Hands of a Political Exile," covers more conventional territory to conclude that *Facundo* is "a perfect synthesis" of Sarmiento's "political, literary, and journalistic activities" (p. 67) and that it connected literature and politics, permanently marking the direction of Latin American literary journalism. Chapter 3, "José Martí and the Chronicles that Built Modern Latin America," studies the trajectory and context of Martí's US-based chronicles and his positing of *Nuestra América* (i.e. not the United States' America) as a second building block to Sarmiento's "civilization and barbarism" towards the formulation of a Latin American political and cultural identity. Here Calvi's deep knowledge of US journalism provides an illuminating setting for Martí's texts. Chapter 4, probably the best in the book, "Modernity, Markets, and Urban Bohemia: The Southern Cone in the Early Twentieth Century," studies the trajectory of popular Uruguayan journalist Juan José de Soiza Reilly in the Argentine magazine *Caras y Caretas* and the newspaper *La Nación* in the context of a true mass readership of working-class readers. Chapter 5, "The Mass Press," follows the dual path marked by novelist and crónica writer Roberto Arlt and Jorge Luis Borges in the magazine *Crítica* in Buenos Aires. Both of them are credited with democratizing and deepening the relationship between media and the mass reading public. The final chapter, "Latin American

Narrative Journalism and the Cuban Revolution,” follows the development of *testimonio* from the 1960s on, as a new genre with old roots in its combination of politics and literary journalism in Latin America. Calvi pays particular attention to the work of Argentine writer Rodolfo Walsh.

In this ambitious and excellent book, Pablo Calvi also points to the double transnational nature of a project connecting mass media and literary non-fictional writing in Latin America. First, because it shows that national developments are always connected to foreign technologies, trips and experiences abroad, and discursive practices explored elsewhere by foreign authors. Secondly, because within the subcontinent, it indicates the impact, in both the nineteenth and the twentieth century, of inter-national Latin America-wide circulating textual and journalistic practices. Finally, Calvi’s book also shows in its best chapters how much we can learn from doing the specific and detailed archival work that is required to do justice to the true complexity of Latin American literary journalism and its impact on the history of discursive practices in the region.

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MATTHEW VITZ, *A City on a Lake: Urban Political Ecology and the Growth of Mexico City*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.

El libro de Matthew Vitz es una historia ecológica de la Cuenca de México; más exactamente, es una historia de su ecología política. Su atributo mayor es colocar en el centro del análisis las relaciones de poder de sus habitantes, incluyendo las instituciones estatales, para desvelar las complejas relaciones entre los humanos y el entorno natural, con especial énfasis en el manejo de las aguas y los bosques. Entre el Porfiriato y el cardenismo hubo una transformación, quizá una mutación, en la correlación de fuerzas políticas de la Cuenca, en buena medida debido a los saldos de la Revolución. Este es el mérito mayor del libro: colocar en una perspectiva historiográfica eminentemente política los problemas, soluciones y actores que de una manera u otra determinaron la utilización de recursos naturales y modificaron el ambiente (por ejemplo pág. 14).

Los tópicos de la historia ambiental de la Cuenca aparecen a lo largo de todo el libro: el Lago de Texcoco, Xochimilco (sus canales, sus chinampas y el acuífero), los bosques del poniente y surponiente. Destaco la importancia que otorga Vitz a las reconfiguraciones políticas que la Revolución trajo aparejada, en especial la demanda por el reparto agrario y la articulación problemática de éste con las políticas conservacionistas de los gobiernos o, en todo caso, de algunos funcionarios; las ciudades no son “entidades discretas,” sostiene