

## EDUCATION AS RESISTANCE IN LITERARY CRITICISM AND JOURNALISM: BETWEEN PROFESSIONALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF LITERATURE

Nathalia Jabur

**ABSTRACT:** Professionalization and political engagement are usually placed as incompatible in the case of journalism and the mainstream press, resulting in an identification of cultural resistance exclusively with alternative/amateur vehicles. I will use the concept of journalistic field as introduced by Pierre Bourdieu to review these assumptions and to discuss a form of political resistance that acts in one's own area of knowledge, is not overtly political and whose effects are not immediately accountable for.

Drawing examples from my research on two literary newspapers published in the 1950s in Brazil and Uruguay, this paper will focus on the implications of didacticism for literary criticism as a genre of newswriting. The analysis of these newspapers will lead to a reflection on two main issues: a) the conflict between the professionalization and democratization of literature; and b) the definition of resistance as necessarily an action that is against something. The article will reconsider education in journalism as a form of resistance, taking into account its risks of becoming political indoctrination and commercial manipulation, but emphasizing its potential as a way of expanding access to literature.

**KEYWORDS:** Intellectual History; Journalism and Education; Bourdieu; Literature and Politics; Cultural Resistance.

### INTRODUCTION

The educational role of journalism is usually taken with caution and suspicion. It is associated with manipulation and indoctrination, in the sense of instilling certain principles and points of view in the readers, generally with commercial or political intentions. Moreover, it presupposes a (not always real) superiority of the journalist over the reader. In Latin America, the assumption of the existence of an unsophisticated mass waiting for enlightenment immediately rouses the ghosts of colonization. Education has always been considered in the continent as an effective tool of social and political control that reinforces existing hierarchies and preserves 'basic power structures'.<sup>1</sup> This

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1. John A. Britton, 'Molding the Hearts and Minds', *Education, Communications and Social Change in Latin*

controlling power of education can turn journalism into demagogic manipulation disguised as benevolent action.

Didacticism, however, is more acceptable in the cultural pages because of the belief that arts and culture have formative and humanizing powers. This idea is still very prevalent among cultural reporters and critics. A recent investigation into cultural reporters in the United Kingdom showed that they believe arts in general have teaching and healing powers, encourage 'sensitivity', and are a path for 'understanding the world and the human condition'. Most of these critics and reporters see themselves as distanced from the cynicism of other realms of journalism. They 'take on a crusading role' and 'construct themselves as moral saviours, guiding the public towards a better existence through the arts'.<sup>2</sup>

The belief in the emancipatory powers of culture is the basis of a recurrent image in Latin America of the intellectual as a teacher. José Martí defined the intellectual as a 'disseminator of knowledge and herald of the future'; José Enrique Rodó as 'a spiritual leader to the people'.<sup>3</sup> Angel Rama, talking about *Marcha*, says that the function of the intellectual at the time was to clarify, illustrate, explain and help people to attain moral values.<sup>4</sup> In Brazil, this idea originates in the nineteenth century, when all intellectuals, with greater or lesser passion, assigned themselves a civilizing mission.<sup>5</sup>

These images of literature as formative, and of the intellectual as a teacher, were central to more than one literary publication in Latin America in the 1950s, in countries with such different levels of cultural development as Brazil and Uruguay. A comparative analysis of *Jornal de Letras*, a literary newspaper published in Rio de Janeiro during this decade, and of the literary section of *Marcha*, published in Montevideo at the same time, shows that both newspapers defended the importance of disseminating literature for its capacity for creating modern and civilized citizens, imbued with universal values such as justice and freedom.

Their commitment to education was one element of a desire for modernization that became stronger among intellectuals by the mid-1940s and was felt as a collective project by the 1950s. After all, besides the ties with colonization and control, education in Latin America was also seen as essential to the 'prosperity, political unity, and cultural maturity'<sup>6</sup> of the continent. To educate the newspapers' readers was to introduce in culture the progress that was felt in other areas of life with industrialization and urbanization. From illiteracy in Brazil to a simple lack of knowledge of foreign and national ideas in both countries, the low cultural level of their public was seen as a sign

*America*, City, Jaguar Books, 1994, p. xiii.

2. Gemma Harries and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 'The culture of arts journalists: Elitists, saviors or manic depressives?', *Journalism*, no. 8, 2007, p. 635.

3. Nicola Miller, *In the Shadow of the State. Intellectuals and the Quest for National Identity in Twentieth-Century Spanish America*, London, Verso, 1999, p. 111 and 114.

4. Angel Rama, *La generación crítica, 1939-1969*. Montevideo, Arca, 1972, p. 12.

5. Jean Marcel Carvalho França, 'A educação dos bárbaros', *Tópico*, January 30, 2007, INTERNET; <http://p.php.uol.com.br/tropico/html/textos/2828,1.shl>

6. Britton, 'Molding the Hearts and Minds', *Education, Communications and Social Change in Latin America*, City, Jaguar Books, 1994, p. xiii.

of backwardness.

*Jornal de Letras* and *Marcha* wanted to replicate the cultural environment in Europe, where reading was part of the routine and literary newspapers were sold in newsstands. They also wanted to become a modern space of debate, analysis, reflection and circulation of ideas. Finally, journalism was itself a symbol of development and the two publications can be seen as microcosms of the process of cultural modernization: to maintain a cultural product for so many years involved the need to reconcile the same controversial forces at play in an evolving cultural industry, such as intellectual creation, market and politics.

Their idea of modernization in literature was strongly committed to the consolidation of the cultural industry. It included the professionalization of writers and critics, a solid publishing market, proficient readers and conscious consumers. The newspapers' projects of education were the materialization of these goals: to form readers was to form consumers and—in countries with a less than solid publishing market, as in the case of Brazil, or one that was almost inexistent, as in the case of Uruguay—it was also to form writers.

Literary criticism was considered a key factor in this process of education and modernization. The newspapers claimed that it had some specific goals, such as guiding the readers in their choice of authors and books; giving them access to what was produced in foreign countries; creating a space of debate and reflection for authors about their literary activities and the practical aspects of their work; and, finally, writing their countries' literary history which involved conservation, but also suggestions of future possibilities.

The analysis of the 1950s is crucial to give historical depth to certain concepts related to resistance—such as intellectual engagement—that were consolidated in the 1960s and 1970s. During the dictatorships, political commitment became almost compulsory for intellectuals in Latin America and exclusive to the left. These newspapers show that during the previous decade, groups that were at opposite poles of the political spectrum shared the same kind of idealism and engagement with cultural projects.

#### THE ROLE OF CRITICISM: TEACHING READERS AND GUIDING CONSUMERS

The 1950s started with an international publishing crisis that was intensified in Brazil and Uruguay because of long-standing structural problems, such as the reduced market for books. In Uruguay, reading levels were high, but its small population was a natural limit to the market (and this was true for every industrial sector). In Brazil, the high levels of illiteracy made reading an activity for a few privileged people, even after the publishing boom of the 1930s. The loss of the already scarce readers of literature was aggravated by the high price of books, due to the rise in labour costs, taxes and postal prices and the shortage of paper, and by the popularization of other forms of entertainment, such as cinema, radio and illustrated magazines.

The crisis in publishing led to reflections on the function of criticism. The crisis forced the newspapers to consider the book as a commercial product as much as intellectual production. Some newspaper writers believed there was a relation between the lack of interest from readers and the absence of professional criticism. They accused criticism of being closer to book promotion and of turning readers into ill-informed consumers. The newspapers' critics believed that the existence of informed consumers, who based their decisions on intellectual appreciation, was a natural consequence of the formation of skilled readers through rigorous criticism.

In general, context, analysis and an accessible tone were characteristic of the critical articles of both newspapers. Any information—events, authors, books—was contextualized; thus, most articles included biographical information on the author and the importance of the book for its time and field. They offered readers information to elaborate their own opinion on a subject, develop their taste and expand their cultural knowledge. They mixed different levels of literary analysis: articles aimed mostly at already initiated readers, but could also be appreciated by the common reader, as they were directed towards a readership that formed part of the general public.

*Marcha* believed that criticism was an essential part of a strong publishing market, without which readers would be lost and retract from book consumption. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, the director of the literary pages, blamed the public's rejection of national literature on the lack of serious criticism. Criticism, for him, should make a book accessible and give the reader the opportunity to better understand it. Criticism should establish the basis of a new literary taste, correcting readers' mistaken choices and defining parameters for them to judge a book.<sup>7</sup> This blind faith in criticism, however, was not shared by everyone. Another critic from *Marcha* defended the readers as consumers, raising the issue of quality and arguing that the public could not buy a book only because it was national literature. Like any other product, the book had to be worth its high price.<sup>8</sup>

The section *Crónica de Libros* occupied most of *Marcha*'s two literary pages and usually reviewed one to four books. It consisted of a straightforward presentation of the book—what it was about, description of the plot or main thesis—followed by interpretations, which were textual readings with few references to cultural or literary theories and a great focus on context. The articles were a combination of information and objective data, and thorough analysis and subjective examination, but the latter was always justified by precise examples, sometimes referenced with a page number. During the 1950s, Rodríguez Monegal wrote most of the reviews and this gave consistency to the section's educational goals. He managed to be openly pedagogical and explanatory without lowering the intellectual level of the analysis or treating the reader as incompetent.

*Marcha* also published dense articles of literary analysis or summary reviews about

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7. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, 'El Escritor y el Problema Editorial en Nuestro País', *Marcha*, no. 659, February 20, 1953, p.15.

8. Omar Prego Gadea, 'Letras Nacionales: Reflexiones Sobre los Premios del Ministerio', *Marcha*, no. 690, October 02, 1953, p. 14.

national writers that could be three tabloid pages long, with almost no graphic interruption. These articles, between journalistic text and academic essay, were profound enough to be material for researchers or teachers, but could also be accessible to younger readers, complementing what was taught in secondary school. These pieces were not to be read casually—their amount of information and level of analysis demanded commitment from the reader—and their density clashed with the weekly rhythm of the publication.

*Jornal de Letras* wanted to disseminate the habit of reading to prevent literature from becoming even more exclusive and books from becoming a luxury. Even though the newspaper believed in the influence of criticism in literary life and in establishing the readers' taste, the publication was constantly reflecting on the real effects of criticism on the consumption of books. Rosario Fusco, for example, who ran one of the critical sections in the Brazilian newspaper, argued that the public consecrated the works they wanted, establishing their own hierarchy of quality, without consulting any critics.<sup>9</sup>

*Jornal de Letras* had a full-page section, *Vida dos Livros*, described as 'a guide for the few people who still bought books in the country'.<sup>10</sup> It offered short reviews, usually of ten or more books that had recently come out. The texts were small capsules of information of diverse nature—quotations, anecdotes about the author, notes on the edition—and had a literary quality and spontaneity to them. The reviews were between the dry consumer guide, with brief comments and quick evaluations of the use of a book, and the intellectual commentary, with remarks that emphasized the intellectual value of a work. The section also included a separate box in the centre with a longer article on different aspects of literary activity. The newspaper had another critical section, with more formal and traditional literary analysis, that offered deeper reviews of one book and reflections on general trends in literary writing or history, related to the author or work in question.

The difference in the format and content of the two newspapers shows different uses of journalism for education. *Marcha* was more interested in journalism as an intellectual activity so sometimes it made the newspaper into merely a vehicle to print literary and critical works. By following its aim of cultural education, *Marcha* defied the idea of the disposability of newspapers and managed to become a permanent reference and source of cultural material. *Jornal de Letras* was more aware of the newspaper as a space with its own rules of writing and reading, so its texts were mostly meant to be short-lived. The newspaper took the commercial function of criticism and of journalism more into account, as well as its potential for making literature accessible.

These differences were inevitably informed by the state of the publishing market in both countries, the type of audience of each publication and the newspaper's relation to its readers. Both newspapers were read by the educated middle-class, but the average reader of *Marcha* was more critical and erudite than the average reader of *Jornal de Letras*. This reflects the early solution to illiteracy in Uruguay and the steady expansion of primary and secondary schools that made the distribution of cultural capital more

9. Rosário Fusco, 'Revista dos Livros: Dois Ensaios', *Jornal de Letras*, no. 15, September, 1950, pp. 2 and 3.

10. Odylo Costa Filho, 'Apresentação', *Jornal de Letras*, no. 7, January, 1950, p. 3.

uniform. In Brazil, with illiteracy rates of 50%, education—not to mention learning—was the privilege of a small minority.

The readers related to *Marcha* with more equality. At this point in the 1950s, *Marcha* had been published for a decade, so it had incorporated new, young, unformed readers. This group did look up to the newspaper, but they did so with no sense of intimidation. The readers followed the intellectual debates from the literary pages and some sent their collaborations to the letters section. The letters they sent were as well written as any criticism published on the literary page.

*Jornal de Letras* was published in Rio de Janeiro, but had readers in different parts of the country, such as small villages in São Paulo, Minas Gerais and especially Pernambuco, where its directors were from. If there is one aim the newspaper successfully achieved, it was reaching the intellectuals in the provinces, who felt (and, in a sense, were) excluded from national literary life. Most of these readers were thirsty for cultural knowledge and the newspaper worked as an intellectual mentor for them. Many of the messages in the letters section asked for advice on books to read, where to buy or find them, and even bibliographical references on a specific subject.

*Jornal de Letras* faced more frequently the dilemma between the public's desires and the kind of publication the periodical wanted to become. The great merit of the Brazilian newspaper was to adopt journalistic formats and to maintain the intellectual level of the content, that is to say, to take into account the desires of the readers without sacrificing what they considered high intellectual standards. The publication argued that the readers liked more approachable texts, shorter chronicles about recent issues and variety of content and form. It attempted to satisfy these demands, mixing journalistic and popular formats, such as questionnaires with intellectuals, interviews and reportages, with a more formal criticism that demanded previous knowledge of a theme and led to complex reflections.

The Brazilian newspaper also had to deal more directly with the influences of the publishing industry that showed signs of recovery by the mid-1950s. In one issue, five out of the ten books that were reviewed in the section *Vida dos Livros* were published by the same publishing house. Coincidentally the only advertisement on the page was from this same publisher.<sup>11</sup> It was not clear if this was the result of a formal agreement between newspaper and publishing house, or if it was a spontaneous reward from the publication. The scarcity of advertisers made the newspaper refer to them as 'benefactors of culture' for wanting to publicize their business in their pages.

The lack of criticism focused specifically on consumption in *Marcha* was a consequence of the non-existence of a publishing industry in Uruguay until the mid-1950s. Uruguay had an almost artisanal production of books that scarcely covered the demand for didactic books. Most of the books reviewed in *Marcha*'s pages were from Argentine or Mexican publishers. In the section dedicated to cinema, there was more consumer-oriented criticism. This thematic focus reflected the strong film culture of the country, in comparison to the literary culture.

11. n/a. 'Vida dos Livros', *Jornal de Letras*, no. 25, July, 1951, p. 5.

In both newspapers, however, educational aims usually overwrote their considerations of the book as a consumer good. Sometimes they mentioned the use of a book—if it was entertaining, boring, worth reading—but always based on examples, rather than a superficial rating aimed at recommending a product. In general, the critical articles were so instructive that they became more interesting than the book reviewed, making its purchase secondary to the process of literary education.

The relation of the newspapers with the publishing market was not business driven. They believed the market could be submitted to intellectual standards with no harm to intellectual integrity. They did not see the publishers as businessmen who were in different areas of the cultural process, but as intellectuals who shared with them the same goals of cultural modernization.

#### FORMING WRITERS: PROMOTING LITERARY ACTIVITY AND CONTROLLING ITS QUALITY

Among the newspapers' public there were many readers with writerly aspirations. Writing was a very popular activity, especially among young people, but the publishing crisis complicated access to publication for novelists who wished to become professional authors. If the high costs of book publishing prevented publishing houses from investing in new names, self-publishing, nevertheless, became more common, making the most important form of legitimization of a writer accessible to anyone with money and literary ambition.

Both newspapers frequently mentioned the excess of writers in their countries as a reason for the proliferation of works of bad quality. They felt responsible for intervening to contain the growing informality of literature, which was the opposite of the professionalization they desired.<sup>12</sup> To compensate for the reticence of the market, the newspapers assigned themselves the role of promoting literary activity by offering space for the publication of literary and critical texts in their pages. By doing so, however, they were also establishing their authority to judge and impose parameters of quality to national literary production, making up for the loss of any process of selectivity due to the lack of a solid system of publishing companies, criticism and informed consumers.

*Jornal de Letras* was focused on revealing new talents, publishing and guiding writers that did not have the means to self-publish, because the newspaper believed the act of creation was only complete with publication. One form of offering writers a chance to see their work in print was the literary contests promoted very frequently by the newspaper during the 1950s. They received hundreds of submissions from all over the country, even though prizes were not high. Winning a contest meant publicity and intellectual recognition. The great glory of publication—the newspaper published the winners' texts—not only represented an opportunity to be read but also to be the subject of critical appraisal. Many new writers were looking to more experienced authors for

12. n/a, 'Literatura fácil', *Jornal de Letras*, no. 73, July, 1955, p. 2 and Monegal, 'El Escritor y el Problema Editorial en Nuestro País', *Marcha*, no. 659, February 20, 1953, pp. 14-15.

reassurance regarding the literary value of their own work.

The contests were important in the discovery of new authors, especially those from the provinces who suffered even more from a lack of opportunities to publish. The winner of the first poetry contest of *Jornal de Letras* was 20-year-old Ferreira Gullar, who turned into one of the country's greatest poets. Mario Benedetti also received a special mention for his poem in a contest for sonnets about Don Quixote promoted by *Marcha*.<sup>13</sup>

*Jornal de Letras* also had a section called *Correio Literário*, that was initially a regular letter section, but became a type of writing workshop because most of the readers sent literary texts instead, asking for publication or an honest assessment. The newspaper's intention was to publish some of the texts in a section called *Os Novos*, which printed mostly poetry by new writers. The newspaper stimulated some readers to continue writing and send more poems, but very few of the texts were considered worthy of publication.

*Correio Literário* published the name or pseudonym of the reader, a sentence from his letter and a comment on his writing. Basic grammatical and orthographical mistakes were common in poems, and generated some harsh comments from Otto Lara Resende, who was responsible for the section. He exposed mistakes, poor rhymes and literary clichés. He insisted on the distinction between writing as a hobby and as a profession, repeating that literature demanded study, discipline and hard work, and not only the heartache that seemed to inspire the readers' writings.<sup>14</sup>

In the contests promoted by *Marcha* during the 1940s, critics also commented on the tendency of writers to plagiarize bad authors, use formulas from radio soap operas or communicate their feelings as if they were writing to an agony aunt.<sup>15</sup> In the 1950s, *Marcha*'s literary pages were more centered on the promotion of professional criticism. During the decade and through his analysis of the work of established foreign critics and of the new Uruguayan generation, Rodríguez Monegal consistently built up a set of norms and references for writing criticism of quality.

The newspaper had a section called *Revista de Revistas*, which was dedicated to reviews of the new issues of Uruguayan literary magazines. The section reviewed the literary texts printed in other publications and commented on the critical essays. *Marcha* was very thorough when reviewing other magazines: the content was analysed, the choices of books and authors were reviewed, the relevance of the texts and the graphic format were commented on. Sometimes, *Marcha*'s journalists adopted a professorial tone and corrected mistakes in detail.

There was much merit in a section like this, since most of the critical essays they were reviewing (sometimes so harshly) were written by colleagues from the same generation, who sometimes even contributed to *Marcha*, for example Mario Benedetti, whose magazine *Marginalia* was among those reviewed. The Uruguayan newspaper

13. n/a, Quem são os vencedores, *Jornal de Letras*, no. 13, July, 1950, p. 9 and n/a, 'El Concurso Visto por Dentro', *Marcha*, no. 407, November 28, 1947, p. 15.

14. Joaquim Leonel (pseudonym for Otto Lara Resende), 'Correio Literário', *Jornal de Letras*, no. 27, September, p. 12.

15. n/a, 'Panorama Bibliográfico de 1946', *Marcha*, no. 363, January 10, 1947, p. 15.

successfully reconciled its—seemingly opposed—roles of supporting new magazines in an environment where it was so hard for periodicals to survive, and at the same time, of demanding literary journalism of intellectual quality and critical consistency.

### THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF CRITICISM: THE SEARCH FOR INTELLECTUAL RIGOUR, AND FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

These forms of indirect criticism and quality control were an attempt to define professional writing and safeguard it from complete vulgarization. Two aspects of professionalization were usually discussed in *Marcha* and *Jornal de Letras*. On one hand, there was professionalization as the possession of technical skills and intellectual excellence. Both newspapers felt there was a need to establish norms for critical work for it to become professional. They attributed the lack of criticism at the time to the meagre literary production but also to the lack of people intellectually prepared to write it.

The newspapers complained that the role of criticism was completely corrupted and called for its restoration as a serious activity that could be trusted by the readers. They tried to practice objective criticism, which resulted from study, detailed analysis and discipline, rather than a subjective impression based only on the trends of the moment; or criticism based on friendship, political influence and aimed at consecrating the already consecrated. The commerce of praise that criticism had become was also far from helpful to writers trying to produce work of quality.

On the other hand, professionalization was desired because it afforded intellectual and financial independence. The newspapers' writers believed that a strong publishing market would allow writers to live off their writing, and that it would end their dependence on official validation, poor state subsidies and their need to work multiple jobs, some of them related to the state, as many of them worked as civil servants.

The expansion of readership was, therefore, essential to the professionalization of literature and criticism. It was not only that the magazines needed competent readers and conscious consumers to construct the modern literary culture they envisaged. The education of readers also became a matter of personal interest. Behind their collective project and patriotic intentions of consolidating a national literature, there was also a struggle for survival. The ambiguity of professionalization made their educational aims problematic—and the conflict of interests did not stop there.

The search for professionalization in modern culture establishes conflicting requirements, as observed by Pierre Bourdieu and Néstor García Canclini: the need for specialization and distinction, that differentiates producers from consumers; and the need for the dissemination and democratization of literature, to increase benefits and provide for financial survival.<sup>16</sup> Because modernization and professionalization were

16. Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field', in Benson, Rodney and Erik Neveu. *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*, Malden, MA, Polity Press, 2005, p. 46;. Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1995, p. 17.

linked to the value and importance of literature, the expansion of readership had to be controlled—just as the promotion of writing had to be limited with the definition of quality standards.

The newspaper intellectuals constantly negotiated their wish to make a living from their writings with their horror at the uncontrolled popularization of literature. Both *Marcha* and *Jornal de Letras* criticized the excess of erudition in other magazines and wanted to reach a readership that went beyond the specialist reader. But neither of them were willing to sacrifice what they thought was an acceptable intellectual level in order to expand their readership. They wanted a controlled expansion, as they feared that a complete vulgarization of (the production and consumption of) literature would hurt its quality.

With the consolidation of modern journalism and its norms of impartiality, the newspapers' attention to quality and desire for professionalization influenced their political positions. This inevitably led towards the idea of political neutrality. The publications attempted to be a critical stage, separate from politics. In Uruguay, journalism was seen as a modern space opposed to the officialism of national literature with academies, prizes and bureaucratic speeches. In Brazil, it was the space of cultural entrepreneurship, a way of inserting literature in the same process of development and industrialization underway in other areas of national life.

Politics was seen as particularizing and, therefore, a limit to the cultural modernization they desired. They argued that writers and critics could not avoid having a political conscience and should be involved in daily life and politics (even be attached to a party), but these beliefs should not be central to their writings nor lower the quality of their work. A critic had to build a set of values and standards to evaluate works of art, but these should be aesthetic models and universal values, not political ones. A critic's political stance would only make criticism subjective and compromise its integrity.

The newspapers' educational projects perfectly harmonized with their notion of intellectual commitment, which, at the time, consisted of a politically moderate position strictly attached to literary matters. The two newspapers defined their intellectual work by an engagement that was limited to their activities and areas of knowledge: journalism, literature, culture and criticism. Through their work, these critics believed that they would be able to give strength and texture to their national literary life. They aimed at a critical but constructive attitude which was far away from the permanent dissent that was consolidated as engagement by the necessity of radicalism during the authoritarian years and the following democratic opening.

In the pages of both newspapers we find debates on the relationship between politics and literature. These debates focused on the experience of the Soviet republics and on political *engagement*, which were voiced by authors like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Although their ideas had a strong influence on the Latin American intellectual environment, the French authors' concepts of commitment were seen as alien to the Brazilian and Uruguayan political and cultural circumstances of unstable political parties with no strong ideological bases and guided by ties of convenience.

As literary and cultural producers, *Marcha* and *Jornal de Letras* faced other problems, which they erroneously believed to be of a practical and exclusively cultural nature. These problems included the difficulties to publish, limited readership and the popularization of new outlets. Their main aim was the development of a modern cultural environment in which national literature would be consolidated as a part of modern global culture, and would be validated as such by foreign countries.

Both newspapers managed to maintain this kind of cultural commitment for more than a decade, until the dictatorships led to more radical positions. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the military coup in Brazil in 1964, the argument for politically disinterested literature became increasingly irrelevant. Cultural education through journalism was no longer considered a sufficient expression of intellectual commitment. *Jornal de Letras* took a conservative position and defended the coup, while *Marcha* adopted an openly politicized and leftist approach to journalism, literature and education.

## CONCLUSION

The relation between education and professionalization in these newspapers points to important general characteristics of resistance in journalism. First and foremost, it shows that any discourse of resistance that originates in the space of a for-profit journalistic vehicle is inevitably contaminated, but also that commercial interference can be kept at bay. Secondly, it tells us that any project that looks to expand reading is eminently political because it addresses—intentionally or not—the democratization of access to literature and culture. Third, it also suggests that even ambiguous forms of cultural commitment have important effects that can produce changes in the long-term.

Journalism as an activity is both economic and intellectual.<sup>17</sup> It is definitely the case that, if the commercial side of journalism is given low priority in a publication (or even one of its sections), this vehicle is more appropriate for political, social and intellectual actions. That is why there is usually an identification of resistance with alternative and/or amateur vehicles. The problem is that amateur vehicles either disappear with time or end up becoming like any other media outlet once they achieve intellectual and economic success.<sup>18</sup>

The dormant publishing market in Uruguay and Brazil made these newspapers' ventures into literary journalism even more respectable. Their longevity was a great merit in a time when most periodicals disappeared after a few issues. Their commercial survival is constantly referred to as a miracle and the result of many sacrifices. They depended on advertising, readers, some tax exemption and, in the case of *Jornal de Letras*, money from their directors and from a wealthy sponsor, who was a poet and businessman.

Both newspapers were founded upon acts of idealism and did not primarily see

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17. Patrick Champagne, 'The "Double Dependency": The Journalistic Field Between Politics and Markets', p. 58.

18. Patrick Champagne, 'The "Double Dependency": The Journalistic Field Between Politics and Markets', p. 52.

themselves as commercial enterprises. They showed awareness of the economic side of journalism, such as the cost of production and sales, but they were always living from one issue to the next.<sup>19</sup> Neither *Jornal de Letras* nor *Marcha* generated profits during the many years they were published—and they never intended to.

What is admirable in *Jornal de Letras* and *Marcha* is that they managed to transform their intellectual significance into economic value, preventing their idealism from being crushed by economic demands. This was possible because in their market niche and in the journalistic field of those countries in the 1950s, competition was limited. Bourdieu observes that, when driven by urgency, sales figures and individual career considerations, publications replace their direct relation with the readers with a relationship between producers, as commonly happens in more commercial journalistic environments.<sup>20</sup>

That they never wished to be for-profit enterprises helped them to prioritize the intellectual side of journalism. *Jornal de Letras* and *Marcha* did not submit to sales considerations or business decisions. They never aimed at making cultural news more easily digestible to readers, which would have implied a banalization of culture. *Jornal de Letras* and *Marcha* wanted their readers to value culture (as opposed to cultural news) and consequently the newspapers had a critical and complementary attitude to literature. The changes in format and content that they underwent over the years were clearly related to their own and their readers' intellectual maturity, and to the development of their country's publishing markets.

The power of these newspapers resided in the quality of their journalistic and intellectual work, and in the internal and external recognition they enjoyed because of it. They were not only appreciated by their peers, but also cultivated a loyal base of readers—a loyalty that made many readers act like fans of the publications. Their reputation was based on their professionalism: rigorous literary criticism, in the case of *Marcha*, and the diversified journalistic content and format, in the case of *Jornal de Letras*. They did not allow professionalization to prioritize economic success over intellectual improvement and, thus, avoided uniformity and conformity.

Even so, it is clear that *Jornal de Letras* and *Marcha* did not aim at the full democratization of culture and literature. Their desire for an expanded readership never went so far as to reach the masses, nor did they want to erase the difference between producers and consumers. Because the newspapers left politics aside and equalled the expansion of reading and writing to a commercial vulgarization of literature, they limited the reach of their commitment to cultural modernization and development. Their programme of a controlled dissemination of literature swept under the carpet the political and social aspects of education, journalism and literature. Even though *Marcha* discussed in its editorials some changes in the education system and *Jornal de Letras* wrote open letters on the subject, in practice they did not break with the idea of education as a privilege. In

19. n/a, 'Aos leitores', *Jornal de Letras*, no.9, March, 1950, p. 4, n/a, 'Notas e Comentários: Aniversário', *Jornal de Letras*, no. 12, June, 1950, p. 2 and n/a, 'El precio de "MARCHA"', *Marcha*, no. 366, January 31, 1947, p. 4.

20. Bourdieu, 'The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field', p. 44.

fact, their educational projects hid a conservative, class-based political position, which stood against the democratization of literature (this would change, in the case of *Marcha*, from the 1960s onwards, when the literary pages became more political).

There are certainly many problems with the idea of moderate *engagement* and the newspapers could easily be dismissed as conformist, rather than examples of resistance. However, political *engagement* that embraces partisanship on one side of the political spectrum, has rarely ever managed to democratize literature. García Canclini observes that, after the many projects of democratization of art and culture from the 1960s and 1970s disappeared, there was a tendency towards restoring the autonomy of the field and professionalization, and valuing individual work. He suggests that ‘practicable socialization’ might lie ‘in the democratization of experiences together with a professional specialization made more accessible to all classes.’<sup>21</sup>

If we take ‘democratization’ to refer to the democratization of experiences, we can say that *Jornal de Letras* and *Marcha*, as agents of intellectual life, did produce changes in their countries’ cultures. The impact of *Marcha* was greater and felt more easily through the years because of the size and geographic location of the Uruguayan intellectual and cultural fields, whereas in Brazil, *Jornal de Letras*’ readers were dispersed. What brings these periodicals together is what makes them important collective projects: their ability to prioritize intellectual demands and keep the newspapers commercially viable for many years.

Their constant presence as publications for more than a decade turned them into spaces where intellectuals, especially new writers, could develop their tools of criticism and fiction. They were also channels for the distribution of national and foreign intellectual production, since there was not a properly established commercial circuit of books in these countries and the continent until the mid-1950s. They managed to inject vigour into their national literatures and to give impetus to an environment stalled by a publishing crisis that artificially extended the influence of past generations and the weight of official prizes. Finally, the newspapers were able to turn professionalization into accessibility for readers and financial rewards for writers, and to give a depth and texture to cultural life that can only be fully appreciated after many decades.

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21. García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, p. 92.

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