

ARTICLE

# A NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LATIN AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY CHRONICLE UNDER AMERICAN LITERARY JOURNALISM PARAMETERS

Copyright © 2019  
SBPjor / Associação  
Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

MARCELA AGUILAR

*Universidad Finis Terrae, Santiago - Región Metropolitana - Chile*

ORCID: 0000-0003-0269-2146

DOI: 10.25200/BJR.v15n1.2019.1139

**ABSTRACT** – The contemporary Latin American chronicle features are very similar to others found in Anglo-Saxon literary journalism. Furthermore: its variety of voices can be framed into the classification of Eason (1984), originally applied to the American New Journalism, that raises two poles of epistemological approach to the reality: Ethnographic Realism and Cultural Phenomenology.

**Key words:** Latin American contemporary chronicle. Literary journalism. Non-fiction.

## UMA APROXIMAÇÃO NARRATOLÓGICA À CRÔNICA CONTEMPORÂNEA LATINO-AMERICANA DE ACORDO COM PARÂMETROS DO JORNALISMO LITERÁRIO NORTE-AMERICANO

**RESUMO** – A crônica latino-americana contemporânea tem características semelhantes às encontradas no jornalismo literário anglo-saxão. E mais: sua variedade de registros enquadra-se na classificação de Eason (1984), originalmente pensada para o Novo Jornalismo americano, que levanta dois polos de abordagem epistemológica da realidade: o Realismo Etnográfico e a Fenomenologia Cultural.

**Palavras-chave:** Crônica latino-americana contemporânea. Jornalismo literário. Não ficção.

## UNA APROXIMACIÓN NARRATOLÓGICA A LA CRÓNICA LATINOAMERICANA CONTEMPORÁNEA SEGÚN PARÁMETROS DEL PERIODISMO LITERARIO ESTADOUNIDENSE

**RESUMEN** – La crónica latinoamericana contemporánea tiene características similares a otras encontradas en el periodismo literario anglosajón. Es más: su variedad de registros se enmarca en la clasificación de Eason (1984), pensada originalmente para el Nuevo Periodismo estadounidense, que plantea dos polos de aproximación epistemológica a la realidad: el Realismo Etnográfico y la Fenomenología Cultural.

**Palabras clave:** Crónica latinoamericana contemporánea. Periodismo literario. No-ficción.

### 1 Introduction

The growing importance of the contemporary Latin American chronicle has been reflected in four areas (Poblete, 2014): 1) The creation of institutions and organizations designed to promote the confluent exercise of journalism and literature. 2) The increase of publications (magazines and books) dedicated to the chronicle. 3) The circulation of documents in relation to the chronicle: decalogues, prologues and ‘foundational’ and prescriptive texts, which delimit the corpus and define the practice of what journalists themselves consider chronic. 4) The creation of awards such as the New Ibero-American Journalism Foundation Excellence Prize; the Crónica Planeta/Seix Barral Award or the Nuevas Plumas, awarded since 2010 by the University of Guadalajara and the School of Portable Journalism.

Despite all this development, there are gaps in the academic study of the contemporary Latin American chronicle: until now scholars have not reached a common nor have its narratological specificities been addressed. This research seeks to contribute in that line. In order to analyze the narrative features in contemporary Latin American chronicle, this investigation selected a sample composed of cases that meet four criteria:

1. Texts of chronological anthologies in books published from January 1994 to December 2017 and produced by:

a) contemporary writers who self-define or who are defined by their peers as *cronistas*, through interviews, essays, prologues or any text that works epitetually over chronicle;

b) selected for an anthology of international distribution, which means being recognized as “chroniclers” in Latin America and Spain. The two compilations that fulfill this requirement are Jaramillo Agudelo’s (2012) and Carrión’s (2012);

c) with texts published in the media, in spaces intended for journalistic content, and

d) published in at least one book defined by the author and/or its publisher, as “chronicle”.

This leads to a list of fourteen authors: Leila Guerriero (2002; 2013; 2016), Martín Caparrós (2006; 2015), Alberto Salcedo Ramos (2011; 2013), Josefina Licitra (2007; 2011), Juan Pablo Meneses (2011), Gabriela Wiener (2008), Julio Villanueva Chang (2012), Cristian Alarcón, Juan Villoro (2004; 2014), Daniel Titingner (2006), Alberto Fuguet, Cristóbal Peña, Marcela Turati and Rodrigo Fluxá (2014; 2017).

The selected *corpus* corresponds to authors of different nationalities and generations. This heterogeneity, taken as a whole, makes it possible to observe in better detail how the chronicle has manifested itself in the period studied.

Once the sample was collected, a narratological analysis of the texts was carried out (Bal, 1990), to find out if the chronicle has unique features or if it corresponds to what literary studies by the Anglo-Saxons call Literary Journalism, a genre that has been developed in newspapers, magazines and books since the nineteenth century.

## **2 Why analyze non-fiction stories with categories from literary studies**

To tell a real story it is necessary to find the facts that are linked to each other and find a beginning and an end, like someone pulling a thread in a skein, within the chaos of reality. As David Herman (1997) states, we manage to make sense of events by assuming causal relationships between some facts and others, thus generating scripts that are combined into stories.

This way of understanding the world is related to what has been called “the linguistic turn”, the idea that we can only apprehend reality through words, giving it form in the process. Chillón (1999) takes up these concepts and links them with his reflection on the logomitic nature of language, which synthesizes knowledge and image, abstraction and sensoriality:

This is, in my opinion, the decisive fact, derived from that Nietzschean conception about the rhetorical structure of the language on which we have been reflecting: that by giving names, the subjects inevitably give form to the ‘reality’ in which we live, observe, evoke or anticipate; that *all human diction is, always and to some extent and in a variable way, also fiction*; that it is not that one of the possible modes of diction is fiction - with the so-called ‘non-fiction’ and its genres, for example - but that diction and fiction are constitutively one and the same thing; and that the challenge for scholars, in any case, is to discern the degrees and modalities in which the fiction constitutive of all diction is given in the truly existing communication. (Chillón, 1999, p. 62, italics in the original).

The discussion has been long. Frus (1994) proposed that the experience of reading stories about characters and events that we know exist or have occurred “is the same as reading invented stories” (Frus, 1994, p.36). In her opinion, the reader only distinguishes one from the other thanks to the conventions of the genre in which they are framed. Confusion is generated when an author uses conventions of a referential genre to provoke an effect of reality in his work, or to provoke a debate on the borders between some genres and others. According to this perspective, it is the text itself that tells the reader how it should be read. If that reading agreement is not clear or is misleading, the reader will be confused or deceived. However, Lehman (1998) affirmed, opposing Frus’ approach: although from a purely textual point of view a fiction story and a non-fiction one can be structured in a very similar way, even with brands that seem to combine them in the same genre, the nonfiction text will always be evaluated in a different way, because inevitably it will be compared with the real facts, as the characters portrayed in it will be evaluated in comparison with their references in real life. This is what Heyne (1987) defined as the condition of adequacy of a text, which is judged by others different from the author. A text may completely fail in its adequacy even if the author has declared his intention to tell a true story (what Heyne calls his factual condition).

The fiction text is judged as a complete work, the nonfiction text can only be judged properly in relation to the reality that inspires

it. Frus explains that a particular reader, or many of them, or almost all, has no possibility of contrasting the text against its references. But that does not extinguish the referential nature of that text, its original vocation. If a reader discovers that this text fails in its condition of adequacy, as Heyne would say, that destroys the story as real.

Of course, the factual condition and the adequacy condition are only the starting point of a nonfiction story. To be a story it must be structured as one. From that perspective, the narrative analysis of fiction and non-fiction texts is the same; the same concepts and analytical tools are applied, because in both cases it is literature, something that Chillón defines as “a mode of knowledge of aesthetic nature that seeks to apprehend and express linguistically the quality of experience” (Chillón, 2014, p.92). That definition fits well with what Gabriel García Márquez said about the journalistic-literary chronicle: “Literature constructed with materials from reality” (cited in Caparrós, 2015, p.52).

The first part of this article focuses in the narrative mechanisms of Latin American chronicle and shows that they are similar to those used in Anglo-Saxon literary journalism. Based on these similarities, the second part states that the contemporary Latin American chronicle can be studied using classificatory proposals originally thought for New American Journalism, and that have already been updated and applied to the production of non-fiction literature in Europe. Establishing this dialogue can be relevant in future studies on Literary Journalism.

### **3 Narrative analysis of the contemporary Latin American chronicle**

Genette (1989) takes Todorov’s classification (1978) about the problems of the story: time, aspect (point of view) and mode (distance, which in American criticism is usually approached as problems of showing/mimesis, or telling/diegesis), and redefines them as problems of time, mode and voice. Whenever there is a distortion of one of these aspects, says Genette, it is because it seeks to cause an effect on the reader.

Studying the temporal order of a story is confronting the order of events or temporal segments in the narrative discourse with the order they have in history. Any alteration is an anachrony, which

can be a prolepsis (“any narrative maneuver that consists in telling or evoking a later event”) or an analepsis, that is, “all subsequent evocation of an event prior to the point where we are at the history” (Genette, 1989, p.95).

The analepsis can be external, that is, to occur completely outside the time of the main narrative (the present of the narration); internal, if it occurs completely within the time of the main story, or mixed, when its starting point is earlier and its end is within the main story.

In the chronicle it is common to use the analepsis, that is, the leap backward, towards a time that is outside the time of the main story, to explain how a character or a situation came to be as they are now. “The external analepsis, by the simple fact of being external, is at no risk of interfering with the main story, because its mission is to complement it” (Genette, 1989, p.105).

In the chronicle there is also prolepsis, that is, the leap into the future. The usual way to use it is in the conditional: months later, I would remember, for example. This use provokes an authoritative effect of the narrator, because it shows that he knows how the events are projected from the present, something that it’s out of the reader’s reach.

Saavedra (2001) distinguishes this resource as one of the ways in which the nonfiction narrator demonstrates his knowledge and marks his authority over the reader. Thanks to the fact that the narrative is situated in a present different from the real present, when investigating the events the chronicler can organize the story in such a way that events that already occurred in reality appear, in the plot, as events that will occur in a future that the protagonists still do not know.

Here are two examples of prolepsis in the work of Salcedo Ramos. Both are from his chronicle “Memories of the last brave. The story of Rocky Valdez”, part of the anthology *La eterna parranda* (2011). In the first one, prolepsis is combined with iteration:

Wherever you go, people will follow you with their eyes. Wherever you go you will stumble upon some villager who will raise his thumb in front of you as a sign of reverence. Wherever you go you will stumble upon countrymen aware of your path. The eldests, because they knew you when you were in the news; the youngest ones, because they have seen you already become a legend. (Ramos, 2011, p. 26).

In the second example there is a curious mixture of prolepsis and analepsis in free indirect style, which also seems hyperbole, but refers to real data from the biography of the boxer “And let’s not

mention – the pedestrians will insist when they come across you – the bustle that you caused in Europe among the most renowned actors of the time. Jean Paul Belmondo would pick you up at the Paris airport, Omar Shariff would visit you at the hotel in San Remo, Alain Delon would go shopping with you in Monte Carlo” (Ramos, 2011, p. 24).

In the Latin American chronicle, Leila Guerriero dominates with mastery the jumps in time. The following examples will show that prolepsis is one of the brands of her style. The first one is from “The giant who wanted to be great”, published for the first time in the Spanish magazine *El País Semanal* in 2007 (all the texts that follow were selected in her anthology *Frutos Extraños*, 2009): “It will be a strange night. He will talk for hours and, when it is over, the rain will stop, the street will be a carpet of insects under the milky light of the lanterns, and the next day there will be an incendiary sun. Endless” (Guerriero, 2009, p. 33).

It is also in “The trace in the bones”, originally published in *El País Semanal* and *Gatopardo* magazines in 2008: “In a while they will ring the bell and Patricia will go down the stairs with a small urn. There, in that urn, will carry the remains of María Teresa Cerviño” (Guerriero, 2009, p. 90). “Tomorrow, in a discreet room in the neighborhood of Once, over the newspapers with news of yesterday and in the lumpy light of the afternoon, everything will dry: the bones, the broken sweater, the shoe like a rigid tongue” (Guerriero, 2009, p. 99).

And in “René Lavand: magician of a single hand”, published for the first time in *Frutos Extraños* (2009), before in press:

Afterwards, he will cry twice. Brief, almost dry: the handkerchief from his pocket to his eyes, an incandescent jellyfish in the afternoon that barely illuminates. He will cry, first, remembering his father: the way his father feared a cruel destiny for that son committed to the impossible: to be a single-handed magician. He will cry, later, remembering a woman he did not choose. That he let go. (GUERRIERO, 2009, p.268).

As it is distinguished in the previous quote, Guerriero can jump to the future and within that prolepsis make an analepsis. And the opposite too: she constructs prolepsis within the analepsis, that is, when he is telling a moment in the past she makes a leap into the future – which is still past for the main story, but which is a more recent past –, in order to generate an omniscience effect. In this passage of “Blood ties”, published in *Paula* in 2005 and, with the name of “The stolen granddaughter of Buscarita Imperi”, in *Gatopardo*

in 2006, the ability with which Guerriero moves through the time is noticed in two paragraphs:

Thirty-four years later, on June 14, 2005, the Supreme Court of Justice of Argentina declared unconstitutional the laws of Final Point and Due Obedience, established in 1986 and 1987, which prevented the repressors of the dictatorship the country had suffered between 1976 and 1983 were judged for their crimes. To declare the unconstitutionality of the laws, the Court would be based on the case of a Chilean citizen named José Liborio "Pepe" Poblete and his wife, the Argentine citizen Gertrudis "Trudy" Beatriz Hlaczik, both abducted, tortured and disappeared in the year 1978 in the El Olimpo concentration camp in Buenos Aires, parents at the time of an 8-month-old girl, also kidnapped, named Claudia Victoria Poblete, who would reappear twenty-two years later under another name as the daughter of a lieutenant-colonel in battalion 601 of Intelligence of the Argentine Army and his wife, a housewife of 70 years. But that September 17, 1971, Buscarita did not know anything about all that -she had no way of knowing- and put the teapot to boil. September, behind her, began to be the cruel month. (Guerriero, 2009, p. 232).

The initial paragraph of Guerriero's "The man from the backdrop" is an achrony: it is a monologue of the main character that is impossible to place at an exact moment in the story. Here it is evident that certain temporal phenomena are also voice phenomena. This culminates, as if it were a staging, to make way for the story:

I, of all men, pass my hands through this dark cloth like thick blood that seeps into my sleep and my vigil and I ask him to speak to me, tell me what those who made you wanted for you. I, Miguel Cisterna, Chilean, resident in Paris, passenger inhabitant of Buenos Aires, alone, hidden, denied, boarded up, crazed, obsessed, I am the one who knows. I am the one who embroiders. I am the man from the backdrop. (Guerriero, 2009, p.273).

In the chronicle, the story dominates in real time, through the dramatic construction scene by scene, with a detailed record of the dialogue and the meticulous description of the environment and the characters. This provokes in the reader the sensation of living the moment related at the rhythm it really happened. As in this passage from "The pozole man", by Marcela Turati, compiled in *Los malos* (Guerriero, 2016):

It is not yet eight o'clock in the morning, but today, Monday, January 13, 2014, at the home of Mrs. Rita Lopez, in Guamúchil, Sinaloa, there is an atmosphere of turmoil. Two of her daughters are accommodated in the chairs arranged in the covered backyard. They wait for the call that Chago -as they name



Santiago- will make from jail. On days like today, when they are waiting the call, Doña Rita prohibits turning on the radio, television or any other device that makes noise and could prevent to hear the phone ringing.

– Is the phone well hung? – asks nervously Doña Rita (qtd. as cited in Guerriero, 2016, p.101).

In this passage another resource is noticed, which is mixed with the scene: the iteration, which allows to account for what happens again and again in the lives of its characters. Turati moves frequently between the story in real time and the summary: it is her way of managing information without losing the dramatic tension. Here is another fragment of the same text, which combines dialogue and summary:

– How many people did you dissolved?

With his left eye almost closed by inflammation, scrapes on his face and a bump on his head, Santiago Meza replied:

– Like three hundred.

The answer was followed by a shower of questions from the reporters:

– What kind of people did you dissolved?

– The ones they brought to me.

– You killed them?

– They brought them dead.

[...]

– What did you do with the remains?

– I threw them in a pit.

– In what pit?

– Here, in this house.

Meza Lopez then made a gesture with his head to the ground they were walking on, the military and the reporters: a vacant lot bordered with cement blocks. The interrogation lasted less than five minutes and, although brief and concise, Meza López answered everything they asked him. He said there were no women or children among his victims and that he received 600 dollars per month for his work. He said first that he had dissolved 300 people in a single year, although afterwards he clarified that 300 was the total number of victims he had discarded during the 10 years he had practiced the trade. He gave details to the press about his way of working, with a simplicity that surprised everyone. The main component was caustic soda. The cooking method, high heat for a whole day. The capacity per week, three bodies. (qtd. as cited in Guerriero, 2016, pp. 97-98).

As seen in this passage, the change in speed in the story is not due to stylistic reasons, but to the needs of the story. The dialogue at the beginning shows the personality of Meza López and places the reader in the middle of the horror, as if he himself were standing over the common grave. The summary, with its accumulation of data, is designed to provoke nausea. The narrator has total control of the story: she knows how to hit where it hurts the most.

#### **4 Peculiarities of voice and mode of the narrator in the current Latin American chronicle**

The speaker can be a narrator who does not participate in the story (heterodiegetic) or one who participates (homodiegetic). Usually the one who does not participate tells the story using the third person (he, she, they), while the one who participates usually narrates through the first person (me, us). These two types of voice, according to Genette, combine with the mode or point of view of the narrative. He distinguishes three possible combinations:

- Internal focalization, in which the narrator seems to know the same as one of his characters (this regardless of whether the narration is in first or third person). It can be fixed or multiple.
- No focalization, or zero focus, in which the narrator seems to know more than any of his characters.
- External focalization, in which the narrator only seems to know what is possible to observe from outside, from a certain position or place, which prevents him from moving in time and space as well as having a vision of the inner life of his characters.

When analyzing the texts of the Latin American chronicle according to its narrative elements, the dominant presence of an external narrator is distinguished. He is a narrator who speaks in the first person, but not because he concentrates on telling what is happening to him, but because he often interjects comments about what happens in the reality he is observing. Usually the narrator tells what the character thinks, feels or perceives, through narrativization, but there are also chronicles that have only external access and that show the characters through dialogues and observation. In both cases, however, the aspect of the narrator's reflection is present.

Among all the chroniclers analyzed, Martín Caparrós stands out as one of the most recognizable personalities, as a narrator in his texts and as a media character, outside of them. In his book *Lacrónica* (2015), he claims paternity of the current concept of chronicle, at least in the Argentine press. In his 23 texts included in this corpus a narrator is clearly distinguished, with characteristics that he has made explicit in his essays on the subject:

My chronicler is Argentine, looks closely, listens greedily, is surprised, knows less and more than I know; from time to time he is happy to be where he is, from time to time he has a bad time in those places. My chronicler is moderately educated, very middle class with sensitivity to others, poverty,

ways of oppression and disgrace. My chronicler, from time to time, doesn't care about anything and takes care of himself, but in general it is an apparatus of looking: one that absorbs. (Caparrós, 2015, p. 144).

Of course he narrates in the first person, although he avoids writing "about the first person" (Caparrós, 2015, p.166). He combines aspects of narration and reflection, and his writing is very consistent (it maintains the same elements in all the corpus analyzed) except in the angle and access: in the stories related to characters and phenomena of current affairs in Argentina, it usually has a simple angle, while his travel stories usually have a multiple angle, which allows him to complete the experiences of the trip with information from other times, for example.

Despite all the stylistic freedom he adopts, his narrator rarely has inside access to the characters. He even takes care to expose the limits of his interviewees' statements, as he reveals in his chronicle "The yes of the boys", when the "pimp" Bobby acts as an improvised translator of the testimony of Jagath, a child prostitute from Sri Lanka: "Bobby said Jagath was telling him [...] Bobby said, and I'll never know if everything was invented" (Caparrós, 2015, p.184).

Caparrós conjectures about the inner life of his characters in his book *Amor y anarquía* (2006). In a chapter (republished in *Lacrónica*, 2015) he recreates how, according to forensic evidence, were the last moments before the suicide of the protagonist, an Argentine girl living in Italy:

Let us suppose that around five o'clock in the morning of Saturday, July 11, 1998 María Soledad Rosas entered her room with the certainty that she was living her last minutes. Let us suppose that she had decided: that she entered thinking that she had finally understood this was her destiny; that she had finally found the courage needed to do so. (Caparrós, 2015, p.345).

Thus, each paragraph begins with a "let us suppose", which opens the way to the details: the broken curtain, the shower cable wrapped around the neck, the knees bent to drop the weight, so that the reader is carried away by what the narrator conjectures, until in the last line Caparrós wakes up: "Although everything may have happened in so many other ways" (Caparrós, 2015, p.347).

## 5 The distance in the narrator of the Latin American chronicle

Booth (1996) distinguishes between dramatized and non-dramatized narrators. In the case of dramatized narrators, whether in the first person or in the third person, some are mere observers and others are narrators-agents who produce effects in the flow of events. The narrator may or may not comment, and here we distinguish three types: the ornamental, the rhetorical and those that make up the dramatic structure.

Crossing the distinction between observing narrators and agent narrators, there is the distinction between narrators self-conscious of themselves as writers and narrators who rarely or never discuss their scriptural tasks, as if there weren't aware of being writing.

When applying the analysis of Booth to the contemporary Latin American chronicle corpus, it reveals having predominantly a narrator:

- Dramatized, that is, built as a character in the text, through his comments.

- Close to the implied author (agrees with him in his views of reality, is reliable).

- Close to his characters: usually he does not question them; on the contrary, empathizes with them.

- Close to the reader: the chronicle's narrator considers himself as someone who is on the same level as the reader, is like him. He does not necessarily handle all the information and many times his stories are about how he discovers events. He usually says where he got the data from and who told him what, and often expresses doubts about what he has achieved or even about the rigor of his record of events. The mediation of the narrator is evident and causes the effect of receiving a version of the facts: as if the reader were listening to the oral story of a witness.

A very clear example of this kind of narrator is found in the work of Salcedo Ramos. Its closeness is manifested in various narrative constructions. In "Memories of the last brave. The story of Rocky Valdez", he uses the second person to rhetorically dialogue with his protagonist:

Now, as you walk with me through a narrow corridor lined with street vendors, you distill an air of complacency. You can tell from a distance that you like to be who you are. You can tell by leagues that, although you insist that the past is "an old scabbard", you love to evoke it. Not in vain you keep all those garments that prolong the already remote time of

splendor. When you show them off, you knock Briscoe out again, you're the one you've always been: the master and lord of courage. The champion, my friend. The champion (Ramos, 2011, p.30).

The closeness to his characters and the reader leads him to laugh at himself, in "The testament of the old Mile", in the same anthology:

Zuleta asks me, with an air of mockery, if I have any idea about how they produced the fire. He is convinced that I ignore the answer and he makes me feel it with a certain irony in his eyes. Maybe he also thinks that I am a diminished creature, a poor Christian who would be killed if civilization did not act for him. When he confirms that, in fact, I do not know what the hell he is talking about, Zuleta answers his own question. (Ramos, 2011, p.44).

And that closeness allows him to be vulnerable to misfortune, as is shown in another text of the anthology, "A country of mutilated":

At the end of the trip, when I begin to transcribe the testimonies of the victims, I will be overwhelmed by so many horror stories that are similar and, nevertheless, different (...). Life loses meaning when the act of walking unsuspectingly on the land of the ancestors is like playing the sinister Russian roulette. The soul falls apart, falls into the death trap long before the foot. And it leaves us more and more broken and more fucked up. (Ramos, 2011, p. 390).

## **6 How the definitions of literary journalism are applier to the chronicle**

After this analysis, it is worth asking if the narrative characteristics found in the Latin American chronicle are different from those found in other types of Literary Journalism. For this, it is necessary to compare the findings of this research with other studies. The most studied genre is the so-called New Journalism, so it is useful to look at the conclusions of the researchers who have focused on it.

The New Journalism captured the academic interest practically from its emergence. The research has focused on the similarity of this non-fiction genre with the realistic novel that Wolfe (1973) had already enunciated in his famous Prologue to the anthology *The New Journalism*.

Weber (1980) distinguishes between an existential and

a rational form in his book *Literature of Fact*. However, it fails to fit everything published in Literary Journalism in his matrix. Eason (1984), in his essay “The New Journalism and the image-world: two ways of organizing experience”, proposes a new classification, according to the way in which they approach reality.

The texts characterized as New Journalism, says Eason, share some important characteristics: “Reporters usually focus on events that symbolize a deeper ideology or cultural mythology, emphasize the worldview of the individuals or groups under study, and show absorption of the aesthetics of the reporting process by creating texts that are read as novels or stories” (Eason, 1984, p.52).

Despite these similarities, he says, the texts reveal two approaches to the reporting experience. One of them, more clearly reflected in the works of Wolfe, Talese, Capote and Sheehy, can be characterized as “ethnographic realism”. The other, represented by Didion, Mailer, Thompson, Herr and Dunne, can be characterized as “cultural phenomenology”.

Ethnographic realism responds to cultural fragmentation by giving an account of “what is happening there”, which suggests “this is real”. Cultural phenomenology describes how it feels to live in a world where there is no consensus on a frame of reference to explain “what all that means”. Instead of arguing “this is reality”, the report focuses on the experiential contradictions that put into question the consensual versions of reality.

The difference between these two ways of organizing social reality is revealed in three dimensions, which from my perspective can be reduced to two, as seen in chart 1:

**Chart 1-** Dimensions of organization of social reality

| Reporting dimension | Eason classification                    |   |   |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
|                     | Relation between reality and appearance | Ethnographic Realism  | Cultural Phenomenology  |
|                     |   | Effect of the observer on reality   | It organizes the experience in terms of the traditional duality between image and reality. The reporter penetrates the facade or public image to reveal the underlying reality.                                 |
| Writing dimension   | Possibilities of the story              | The reporter is based on the conviction that observing reality to narrate it is a passive act that does not imply existential responsibility.   | It suspects that the reporter transforms reality by entering it to observe it, which forces him to take ethical decisions.  |
|                     |   | The reporter has faith in the ability of traditional models of interpretation and expression, particularly the story, to reveal the reality. Although reporters incorporate a certain cultural relativism in their attention to the various symbolic worlds of their subjects, this attitude does not extend to the reporting process, which is treated as a natural process. | It considers the story as a way to bring the writer and the reader together in the creation of reality. The narrative techniques point to evidence that stories are a cultural practice to make a common world. |

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the information in Eason (1984, pp.53-55). First column is an interpretation of the author

Reporters who practice ethnographic realism explore social phenomena with the conviction that they can discover, understand and communicate the reality. Instead, says Eason, cultural phenomenology declares itself incapable of accounting for a single reality. These writers constantly reflect on the limits of human knowledge and their own ability to understand the world around them.

In the Latin American chronicle these two poles can also be distinguished. Moreover, assuming them helps to organize the extreme diversity of styles of research and writing of the chroniclers.

If this classification is applied to the corpus studied, the vast majority of the texts' narrators reflect on the limits of what they can know, and raise doubts about the possibility of reaching an absolute, objective truth. They have, therefore, an approach that Eason would classify as closer to the Cultural Phenomenology than to Ethnographic Realism. Their voices are clearly heard in their texts.

Pedro Lemebel and María Moreno, for example, are chroniclers who doubt about the possibility of knowing the final truth about the facts and the characters that surround them. They reveal their subjectivity -their memories, emotions and sensations, their thoughts and mistakes- because they are convinced that the only thing they can be sure of is their own experience. And, sometimes, not even that, as María Moreno warns – with sharp irony – in the preliminary text of her anthology *Theory of the Night* (2011):

I write about what I do not know; if I knew, why would I write it? Far from the vain glory of responding to a stock of knowledge that an authority in absence and sphinx has given it the pleasure of starting to roll, *writing invents*. In short, I am a journalist: faithful to the anecdote of that aspiring editor of the *Crítica* newspaper who was given the test of writing about God, and wanted to specify "for or against"? (Moreno, 2011, p.9, italics in the original)

The works of Moreno, Villoro, Wiener and Caparrós (specially in his recent books) borders the essay and the Op-Ed. Near them, in Chile, are Francisco Mouat and Alberto Fuguet, but with a greater effort to collect and show facts of reality. Fuguet, for example, in "Leyendo Londres" (compiled in Aguilar, 2010) decides to spend his first 48 hours in London visiting bookstores instead of following the classic tourist route, but he knows that it is a very personal and, therefore, risky option:

I'm tired, dizzy, I do not want any more books. Now I want a city.  
I look at the time, I have two hours left, I've wasted my time. Or is it gone? Where did it go?  
What have I known about London? Almost nothing. And almost everything.  
The plane takes off.  
I open one of my new books. Says London 09.  
I smile (qtd. as cited in Aguilar, 2010, p.90).



Further away are authors who have an ethnographic approach to the chronicle with a very recognizable authorial voice, such as Guerriero, Alarcón, Salcedo Ramos and Licitra. At the pole of ethnographic realism are, for example, Rodrigo Fluxá, Marcela Turati and Cristóbal Peña, who seem to be totally committed to reality. Their texts leave little space for the reflections of the narrator, which does not imply that there is no narrator: there is, and he is powerful because he controls the progression of the story, quietly and masterfully administering the information to the reader.

They develop investigative journalism with an obvious narrative component, but because of their emphasis on reporting and not on the way of telling the story they have insisted on their interviews to declare themselves “simply journalists” and not “chroniclers”.

Giles and Roberts (2014) update the Eason typology, emphasizing the narratological aspects of their categories, characteristics that Anderson (1989) had already detected: ethnographic realism includes texts that use literary techniques associated with social realism, while cultural phenomenology is associated with literary journalism. In this way they combine Eason's model with Webb's on rationalism and romanticism in journalism (1974): this author also poses two poles, one that emphasizes objectivity, that is, the adaptation of the reporter's intellect to objects (the data, the facts) and another that assumes that in this adaptation a subjective component always comes. For Webb, all the New Journalism and the literary journalism in general moves near the pole of the romanticism, while the classic informative journalism, the one of the agencies of the news, is the one that situates in the rationalist pole.

Aare (2016) states that the most important aspect when classifying literary journalism texts is the consistency between narrator and author (what Booth would call distance). She follows Cohn (1983), who divides the narrative first person into a person who lives the experience and a person who narrates (experiencing and narrating self). Cohn thinks that consonance and dissonance exist within this divided person, which can also be detected between narrator and characters in third-person narrations. Applied to the chronicle, this classification establishes that the consonance prevails if the narrator-chronicler identifies with the reporter-chronicler (his alter ego who lives the experience) and the focus of the story is on the perceived events, that is, on the observation. Dissonance occurs when the narrator-chronicler reevaluates, criticizes or in some other

way distances himself from the perceptions and actions of the reporter-chronicler.

In the book *Sexografías* (2008), there are good examples of that dissonance between the narrator who lives the experience and the one who recounts it. Gabriela Wiener-narrator writes footnotes of the compiled chronicles to reveal details of the Gabriela Wiener-reporter that were not in the first versions of those texts. This dissonance causes the attention of the reader to focus more on the reflections, doubts and self-criticisms of the narrator than on the story itself. This emphasis of Wiener has been accentuated to the point that all his books published after this one focus almost entirely on herself: her body, her memories, her emotional relationships have become virtually her only object of research and writing.

It is consonance that moves the text towards a more mimetic end, while dissonance moves it towards the pole of subjectivity. Aare proposes a typology of five groups, which can also be applied to the current Latin American chronicle:

- Narrator in the third person reconstructed. The reporter has not been present in the story narrated. The scenes are reconstructed from testimonies and documentation. It can be combined with the three forms of targeting. It can be objective or subjective. Corresponds to Eason's Ethnographic Realism. Examples of this type of story: the profiles of Leila Guerriero about already deceased characters, such as Idea Vilariño, Manuel Henríquez Ureña or Roberto Arlt.

- Narrador in the third person retouched. The reporter has been present in reality, but has been silenced in the text. The scenes are constructed from direct observation. It can be objective to subjective. Corresponds to Eason's Ethnographic Realism. Examples: some texts by Marcela Turati and Rodrigo Fluxá.

- Narrator in third person attenuated. The reporter has been present in reality, but only appears occasionally in the text. The scenes are constructed from direct observation. It derives from the internal focus on the reporter, but can, in long passages of the text, be combined with external focus, internal focus on a character other than the reporter, or non-focalization. It can be objective or subjective. It does not appear in the Eason typology. Examples of this narrator are found in the chronicles of Cristian Alarcón, Josefina Licitra, Alberto Salcedo Ramos, Leila Guerriero and Juan Pablo Meneses.

- Narrator in first person consonant. It focuses on the reporter's experience. The scenes are constructed from direct observation. It

has internal focus on the reporter, but is objective (focuses on the object, reality). It lacks a name in the Eason typology. The chronicles of Juan Villoro and Martín Caparrós fit into this category.

- Narrator in the first person dissonant. It focuses on the narration of the reporter. The scenes are constructed from direct observation. It has internal focus on the reporter and is subjective (the story focuses on the subject, his reflections on reality). Corresponds to the cultural Phenomenology of Eason. Examples: the chronicles of María Moreno and Gabriela Wiener, who are constantly questioning what they did, thought or felt at the time of reporting.

The textual analysis allows us to affirm that the chronicle shows similar narrative characteristics than the genre known as literary journalism, and that classifications that have been defined for the Anglo-Saxon corpus can be applied to the Latin American one.

From the point of view of the narrative, the current Latin American chronicle dialogues with examples of this journalism in Europe and the United States. That does not mean that it derives from the New American Journalism: in Latin America there has been an important tradition of literary journalism; *Operation Masacre*, by Rodolfo Walsh (1957), was published before *The New Journalism* by Tom Wolfe (1973); Colombian reporting tradition recognizes influences from French reporting rather than from the United States (Hoyos, 2009), and in Argentina they link literary journalism with its modernist chroniclers and their twentieth-century novelists (Moreno, 2015). However, the Latin American chronicle also dialogues with the texts of Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson and Norman Mailer, as well as with other cultural pieces, not only from literature, but also from cinema, television, theater, opera, tango and even vallenato. It is the dialogical dimension of texts, enunciated by Bajtín (1982; 1986) in 1956: no chronicle is written in a vacuum; each chronicle responds to a previous text, and it is possible to recognize that dialogue although there are decades or even centuries of distance between one statement and another, between a question and an answer.

## REFERENCES

Aare, C. (2016). A narratological approach to literary journalism: how an Interplay between voice and point of view may create empathy with the Other. *Literary Journalism Studies* 8 (1), pp. 106-139.

Argudelo, J. D. (Ed.) (2012). *Antología de crónica latinoamericana actual*. Bogotá: Alfaguara.

Aguilar, M. (Ed.) (2010). *Domadores de historias. Conversaciones con grandes cronistas de América Latina*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Finis Terrae.

Anderson, C. (1989). *Literary nonfiction: theory, criticism, pedagogy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Bajtín, M. (1982). El problema de los géneros discursivos. In *Estética de la creación verbal*. Ciudad de México: Siglo XXI Editores.

Bajtín, M. (1986). *Teoría y estética de la novela*. Madrid: Taurus.

Bal, M. (1990). *Teoría de la narrativa (una introducción a la narratología)*. Madrid: Cátedra.

Booth, W. C. (1996). Distance and point of view: an essay in classification. In Hoffman, M. J. & Murphy, P. D. (Eds.), *Essentials of the theory of fiction* (pp. 60-79). Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eic/XI.1.60>

Carrión, J. (Ed.) (2012). *Mejor que ficción. Crónicas ejemplares*. Madrid: Anagrama.

Caparrós, M. (2006). *Amor y anarquía*. Buenos Aires: Planeta.

Caparrós, M. (2015). *Lacrónica*. Barcelona: Círculo de tiza.

Chang, J. V. (2010). *Elogios criminales*. Santiago: Random House Mondadori

Chillón, L. A. (1999). *Literatura y periodismo. Una tradición de relaciones promiscuas*. Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, Servei de Publicacions.

Chillón, L. A. (2014). *La palabra facticia. Literatura, periodismo y comunicación*. Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, Servei de Publicacions.

Cohn, D. (1983). *Transparent minds: narrative models for presenting consciousness in fiction*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Cohn, D. (1999). *The distinction of fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Eason, D. (1984). The New Journalism and the image-world. In N. Sims. (Ed.), *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* (pp. 191-205). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Fluxá, R. (2014). *Solos en la noche. Zamudio y sus asesinos*. Santiago: Catalonia.

- Fluxá, R. (2017). *Crónica roja*. Santiago: Catalonia.
- Frus, P. (1994). *The politics and poetics of journalistic narrative: the timely and the timeless*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Genette, G. (1989). *Figuras III*. Trad. C. Manzano. Barcelona: Lumen.
- Genette, G. (1993). *Ficción y dicción*. Trad. C. Manzano. Barcelona: Lumen.
- Giles, F. & Roberts, W. (2014). Mapping nonfiction narrative: a new theoretical approach to analyzing literary journalism. *Literary Journalism Studies* 6 (2), pp. 100-17.
- Guerriero, L. (2009). *Frutos extraños. Crónicas reunidas 2001-2008*. Buenos Aires: Aguilar.
- Guerriero, L. (2013). *Plano americano*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales.
- Guerriero, L. (2016). *Los malos*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales.
- Herman, D. (1997). Scripts, sequences and stories: elements of a postclassical narratology. *PMLA* 112 (5), pp. 1046-1059.
- Heyne, E. (1987). Toward a theory of literary nonfiction. *Modern Fiction Studies* 33(3), 479-490.
- Hoyos, J. J. (2009). *La pasión de contar: el periodismo narrativo en Colombia, 1638-2000*. Antioquia: Universidad de Antioquia.
- Lehman, D. (1998). *Matters of fact: reading nonfiction over the edge*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.
- Licitra, J. (2007). *Los imprudentes. Historia de la adolescencia gay-lésbica en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Tusquets.
- Licitra, J. (2011). *Los otros. Una historia del conurbano bonaerense*. Buenos Aires: Debate.
- Meneses, J. P. (2011). *Equipaje de mano*. Santiago: Lolita Editores.
- Moreno, M. (2011). *Teoría de la noche*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales.
- Moreno, M. (2015). Todos anfibios. *Anfibia*. Retrieved from <http://www.revistaanfibia.com/ensayo/todos-anfibios/>
- Poblete, P. (2014): La crónica periodístico-literaria contemporánea en Chile. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* 20 (2), pp.1165-1176.
- Ramos, S.A. (2011). *La eterna parranda. Crónicas 1997-2011*.

Bogotá: Aguilar.

Ramos, S.A. (2013). *El oro y la oscuridad. La vida gloriosa y trágica de Kid Pambelé*. Santiago: Lolita Editores.

Saavedra, G. (2001). Narradores que saben más: La “narrativización” del discurso y el “efecto omnisciente” en no ficción periodística. *Cuadernos.info* 14, pp. 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.14.182>

Steensen, S. (2013). The return of the humble “I”: The Bookseller of Kabul and contemporary Norwegian literary journalism. *Literary Journalism Studies* 5 (1), pp. 61-80.

Titinger, D. (2006). *Dios es peruano. Historias reales para creer*. Lima: Planeta.

Todorov, T. (1978). *Teoría de la literatura de los formalistas rusos*. Ciudad de México: Siglo XXI Editores.

Turco, L. (1989). *Dialogue: A Socratic Dialogue on the Art of Writing Dialogue in Fiction*, Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books.

Villoro, J. (2004). *Safari accidental*. Ciudad de México: Planeta.

Villoro, J. (2014). *Espejo retrovisor*. Ciudad de México: Seix Barral.

Walsh, R. (2003). *Operación Masacre*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor.

Webb, J. (1974). Historical perspective on the New Journalism. *Journalism History* 1 (2), pp. 38-42.

Weber, R. (1980). *The literature of fact: literary nonfiction in American writing*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Wiener, G. (2008). *Sexografías*. Bogotá: Seix Barral.

**MARCELA AGUILAR.** Associated professor at Finis Terrae University (Santiago, Chile), and has a PHD in Communication's Sciences from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC). E-mail: [maguilar@uft.cl](mailto:maguilar@uft.cl)

RECEIVED ON: 21/07/2018 | APPROVED ON: 30/09/2018