

DOSSIER

THE TESTIMONIAL RHETORIC IN NARRATIVES FROM *TRIP, TPM AND ROLLING STONE*

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ABSTRACT - This article analyzes stories from the magazines *Trip*, *TPM* and *Rolling Stone* in order to reflect about the testimonial dimension of first-person journalistic narratives. Recovering studies on the testimony in History, especially those related to the survivors of World War II, and also in Social Communication, the article ponders that, in general, the first-person narrative does not always constitute journalistic experiences by the same ways. Thus, it is observed the setting of a "testimonial rhetoric" on different forms, i.e., the search for a co-presence effect, essential for the authentication of the reports, the narrator and the presented events.

Keywords: Journalism. Narrative. Magazine. Testimony.

A RETÓRICA TESTEMUNHAL EM NARRATIVAS DA TRIP, TPM E ROLLING STONE

RESUMO - O artigo analisa reportagens das revistas *Trip*, *TPM* e *Rolling Stone* para refletir sobre a dimensão testemunhal das narrativas jornalísticas em primeira pessoa. Recuperando estudos acerca do testemunho na História, em especial aqueles vinculadas aos sobreviventes da Segunda Guerra Mundial, e também na Comunicação, o artigo pondera, de modo geral, que a narrativa em primeira pessoa não configura a experiência jornalística sempre do mesmo modo. Observa-se então, o que se pode denominar de "retórica testemunhal", ou seja, à busca de um efeito de copresença, fundamental para a autenticação dos relatos, do narrador e dos acontecimentos apresentados.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo. Narrativa. Revista. Testemunho.

RETÓRICA TESTEMONIAL EN NARRATIVA DEL TRIP, TPM Y ROLLING STONE

RESUMEN - El artículo analiza los informes de las revistas *Trip*, *TPM* y *Rolling Stone* a reflexionar sobre el testigo periodístico en narrativas en primera persona. Recuperando estudios acerca del testimonio en la historia, especialmente los vinculados a los supervivientes de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y también en los estudios de comunicación, el artículo entiende que la narración en primera persona no constituye la experiencia periodística siempre de la misma manera. Así, se observa lo que se puede llamar de "retórica testimonial", es decir, la búsqueda de un efecto de co-presencia, fundamental para los modos de autenticación de la mediación periodística, incluyendo el texto, el narrador y los acontecimientos presentados.

Palabras clave: Periodismo. Narrativa. Revista. Testimonio.

Beatriz Sarlo (2007), in an well regarded essay, gives the name of “subjective turn” to the reevaluation of the subject and the first-person enunciation that takes place in the Western cultures following the proliferation of reports made by survivors of the World War II concentration camps. Given that these survivors did not denied the role of witnesses, claiming for themselves the responsibility to tell what was lived by them and by others, Sarlo observes the ways in which Historiography embraced these reports, which are now taken as truth icons and significant resources to replenish the past, although full of subjectivities. In such a scenario, the witness is placed in a prominent place, and is, again, put in a position in which she/he had been for a long time dismissed from.

According to François Hartog (2011), relations between the historian and the witness date from the publication of Herodotus’ *The Histories*, around the 400s BC, possibly the first time that an epistemological association between “seeing” and “knowing” was promoted. But still during ancient Greece, a detachment between the roles of the historian and of the witness begins to take place, a movement that became more eminent centuries later with the publication of the *Ecclesiastical History*, written by Eusebius in the 4th century. In this classic work, the historian ceases to exercise an eyewitness role in order to consolidate itself as a figure that sequentially orders the testimonies of others, deciding what is considered or not in the canon of texts.

This process reaches its peak around the 13th century, when the historian assumes the qualities of a compiler, i.e. the one that gathers and organizes unrelated texts. In the 19th century, when history, according to Hartog, starts being understood as “the science of the past”, the testimonies begin to be seen effectively as “documents” that should be reinterpreted by a competent authority, one that is able to decipher them: the modern historian. Finally, during the next century, the witness re-emerges as an important element of historiographical making, as “voice and memory alive”. According to Hartog, from the 1980s, we can observe a progressive ascension of the witness, an effect of a “spring tide related to memory that invaded the Western world (and the westernized world)” (p. 227), and that is directly related to Auschwitz and the Shoah.

Though, the reevaluated witness has a very particular defining condition, one that puts her in regiments of identification and legitimation that greatly differs from previous periods. Shoah’s witness is a survivor, marked by the trauma and the experience of horror. In the historical catastrophe from which the witness emerged with life, others

encountered the opposite faith, and it is in relation to these other ones that the survivor establishes his testimony (AGAMBEN, 2008; HARTOG, 2011; SARLO, 2007). Thus, the survivor's report strongly claims a relation between presence, experience and narrative, in a way that the person that lived what is told defends its acknowledgement because of the connection between these elements.

From the diagnosis drawn by Sarlo, Márcio Serelle (2009, 2010, 2012) proposes the possibility of a subjective turn in the field of journalism, indicted by a growing motion of "recovery of the self in contemporary journalistic narratives" (2009, p. 34). These narratives, as well as post-Shoah testimonies, would be marked by the immediate relation between the individual's experience and speech condition, so that they establish themselves in a subjective truth in order to grasp the truth of the narrated event. In other words, for being present in the scene of the event, the reporter projects himself in the story, using the first-person and demanding a witness condition in order to legitimize his place of speech.

To support this approach of a subjective turn in contemporary journalism, Serelle (2010) utilizes three main examples: the "reporter's books" (MAROCCO, 2011) *Gomorra*, by Roberto Saviano; *Putin's Russia*, by Anna Politkovskaya; and *De Cuba, com carinho*, of Yaoni Sánchez. All three books are defined by him as "stories of counter-power" whose prosecution content put the writers in direct conflict with some instance of power (in *Gomorra*, with the Neapolitan mafia; in the other two cases, with the government of their respective countries), interfering too deeply into their life stories (Saviano is sworn to death by the Camorra and lives under Italian state protection; Sánchez faces constant clashes with the Cuban government, that has repeatedly censored and criticized her; Politkovskaya was murdered in 2006). Therefore, considering the proper nature of each work, the three reports could present a certain affinity with the testimony of the Shoah, as they are structured around a narrator who, in order to put himself/herself in witnessing condition, reveals traces of subjectivity and affectivity, so that narrated events become intertwined in his/her own biographical path.

While Serelle is looking at quite specific cases in the world journalism, this article refers to the presence of first-person narratives in contemporary news stories of three magazines published in Brazil: *Trip*, *Tpm* e *Rolling Stone*. The choice is due to the fact that they are magazines about culture and behavior, a segment of publishing market that historically straggles from an editorial policy that defines an agenda

primarily on recent events, being more interested in long stories about themes and people who would likely be of interest of their readership. In this sense, they also seem more open to various possibilities of narrative construction, including those in which the narrator produces self-reference gestures through the writing in the first-person.

The examples used here for our proposed discussions were collected in different editions of these magazines, from a research that included stories published between 2010 and 2014. Overall, two observations can be made. First, that there is a remarkable recurrence of first-person narratives in *Trip*, *Tpm* and *Rolling Stone*, however, these narratives do not constitute the journalistic experience always in the same way: in this article, we will present stories where the first-person has unique and not necessarily consonant roles. Second, that the adoption of the first-person in journalistic narrative serves often to what can be called “testimonial rhetoric”, that is, the search for a co-presence effect, essential to the authentication of the reports, the narrator and the displayed events.

In general, it seems to be in agreement to the vast bibliography produced about the testimonial speech’s foundations that one of its conditions of approval would be precisely the assertive proposition of a link with reality, in order to attest the veracity of the events and experiences narrated (SARLO, 2007; HARTOG 2011, RICOEUR, 2007; AGAMBEN, 2008, among others). If the journalistic narrator calls a referential relationship with a specific reality of which he intends to speak of, then it does not seem strange that, in some cases, he can assume a rhetoric that is commonly associated with the witness. Indeed, it is possible, without major problems, to say that the association of the terms “testimony” and “witness” to the journalist’s work is not something exotic or unusual. To say that the reporter witnessed the facts or summon another individual to give a testimony of some issue or event are ideas that seem to be already incorporated as what is socially understood as journalism. However, according to Frosh and Pinchevski (2009), these generalized notions of testimony reduce the semantic potentiality of the term, simplifying the multiplicity of appropriations that it receives in dialogue with journalism and, in a broader spectrum, with the phenomena referring to media communication today. For the authors, the media testimony should be perceived in at least three instances: the testimony performed in the media, the testimony performed by the media and the testimony performed through the media.

For John Durham Peters (2009), the condition of “have been present” is precisely what ensures to the testimony its argumentative

force. The presence of the individual in the scene of the event would therefore be its main fiduciary element, a kind of “proof” that he really “was there”. In this sense, Peters moves away from Frosh and Pinchevski by arguing that there is a singularity in the events that can only be perceived by those who share with it a co-presence in spatial and temporal terms. This means, for instance, that to watch a football match broadcasted “live” on TV would not have the same “testimonial force” as to watch it in the stadium. However, the core of Frosh and Pinchevski proposal lies precisely in the testimonies performed by the media and through the media, since they would reveal the existence of other possible levels of mediation between media processes and the emergence of oneself as a witness. With that, they propose that the bodily presence of an individual in the narrated event should not be taken as a paradigmatic element of testimony – at least not the mediatic one.

When analyzing the first-person stories published in *Trip*, *Tpm* and *Rolling Stone*, we find a set of narratives in which the reporter, through the narrator that he or she creates, claims to have been present at some event or social reality, to then offer himself or herself to speak of the experiences lived there. In these stories, first-person emerges as a sign of self-reference able to place the narrator either as the main character of the plot, or suggesting his/her association with a character (which refers to a person of flesh and blood) that would have “effectively” witnessed the events. In such stories, the spatial dimension of presence, the act of being there in person, seems to be fundamental not only to ensure a kind of testimonial rhetoric to the narrative, but it would be, at the very last, what justifies its own existence.

1 JOURNALISM AS A LABORATORY OF EXPERIENCES

In the article “Na barriga da besta” (“In the belly of the beast”), published in 2010 by *Rolling Stone*, the reporter Yara Morais gives a report of the period she lived in a rented shack in Morro do Piolho, “one of the most dangerous and poorest areas of southern São Paulo” (MORAIS, 2010, p. 95). The experience was motivated by her college course conclusion paper and, as we can observe in the section below, profoundly marked the then journalism student:

Without any drinking water in my shack, I was there with the exclusive goal of buying a soda to quench my thirst. But I gave an honest answer, in detail: I told I was a journalism student, who four days ago had rented a shack for a month to live in that area

because that was the only way I could do my course conclusion work, whose theme was “periphery”. [...] But I did not tell that *I had the distinct feeling that everything in my life would change after this experience*. Nor that my mother said, “You really are crazy”, or that I left for the South Zone carrying a 14-inch TV, a mattress and a backpack with two pairs of sneakers, jeans, sweaters, an old skateboard, R\$ 80, a telephone card and a single ticket, not knowing that *I would live situations there that even the most experienced crime reporters have never seen or lived to tell* (MORAIS, 2010, p. 96, our emphasis and translation).

In the highlighted passages above, it becomes clear the intensity (or at least the desire for it) of the experience to the narrator. With some hyperbolic trend, the young reporter tells the reader about what she lived in Morro do Piolho, as if the unfolding of those events still resonates in throbbing ways in her own biography. It seems to be clear in her speech that she managed to go deeper than any other reporter into that reality of misery and violence:

A group of five men led by Gabriel broke down the door and took a man under 30 years old who was sleeping. They blindfolded his eyes and, leaving him with only a white underwear, unhurriedly sliced his flesh, first with a switchblade, then with a large, sharper knife, such as those used in butcher shops. The shiny blade slid through the body with the merciless patience of death, ripping his skin. Gabriel's eyes just watched, cold, while the hands of his soldiers did a macabre outline with the tip of the object. Each one of them cut a bit, in a bizarre ritual of revenge. The cuts were small, however, deep and aplenty. Blood gushed. (...)

An hour later – the longest 60 minutes of my life – a straight gunshot on the forehead, almost a sign of affection by that point, ended the terrible scene. The man died in front of me and there was nothing I could do to save him. The message was clear: do not mess with us, do not screw with us, do not owe us if you cannot afford it. The body was left there, only to be found by the police. Back in my shack, alone, I struggled to ease the brutality of what I've witnessed and to face it as part of my college work. I wanted to forget that I had just seen a cruel murder, but I was not able to. I could not stop the crying, he was a human being. There were no comments about that death anywhere in the community. What was the identity of the murdered man? Who was the mastermind of the crime? No one knows, no one saw. Although nothing can snatch that scene out of my memory, the requests for forgiveness, the screams, the crime law should be followed to the letter (MORAIS, 2010, p. 96-97, our translation).

The report of Yara Morais, as seen above, approaches the stories analyzed by Serelle, because it seeks to articulate a “real” situation with the life experience of the reporter, who then appears as the very witness of a situation that is considered traumatic or “risky”. All intrusive effort of guiding the reporter's investigation points to the anchorage in her presence on site, a dimension of spatiality that establishes the journalistic testimony in the proximity between witness and event.

In this story for *Rolling Stone*, the gesture is quite clear: the reporter believes that she will only be able to honestly speak about Morro do Piolho if she can live there for a while, if she can talk face to face with people, if she can endure the same difficulties that the people there does, to see with her own eyes what they see every day – in short, if she is able to experience that social reality. It was not enough *to see up close*, she had *to see from inside*, to experience. Therefore, the intensity of this closeness relationship seems to be used by the journalist as a legitimizing narrative feature, which is based in the effort to abolish the distance between the witness-reporter and what she narrates.

In this sense, Morais' story seems to confirm the observation of Beatriz Sarlo that, from the reading of Ricoeur, says that testimonies originated of the Shoah established model roles for testimonies of any kind, even if they can be perceived as borderline cases, experiences that are distant from ordinary:

The testimony of the Holocaust became a testimonial model. What means that a limit case transfers its features to non-limit cases even in completely trivial testimony conditions. It is not only in the case of Holocaust that testimony requires its readers or contemporary listeners to accept its referential truthfulness, putting in the foreground moral arguments sustained on respect for the person who endured the facts on which he/she speaks. Every testimony wants to be believed, but not always brings in itself the evidence by which one can prove their veracity; they must come from outside (SARLO, 2007, p. 37, our translation).

In these proliferation conditions of a testimonial rhetoric, it becomes possible that other narrators can assume the role of a witness, even without referring to a traumatic event. Not coincidentally, the credibility relationship between reader and narrator is critical, given this relationship's desire to be believed and to be understood as being true (RICOEUR, 2007). As noted in Yara Morais' story, when elaborating a first-person report, organized around her own experiences during the investigation process, the reporter channels the requests for credit to the narrative in herself, calling for a testimonial situation. In this sense, her intention seems to be exactly the one of throwing a rhetoric of testimony into operation, in order to make an appropriation of the communicative conditions attached to it. Explicitly, Morais says "I was there, so you can believe me".

However, we must keep in mind that the place of speech built by a reporter-narrator is set in a very specific communicational circle, where we can found a number of values and practices that makes his/her testimony incorporate the features of journalistic mediation. In this

sense, there seems to be a gap between those two witnesses (the one from Shoah and the journalistic one) which places them under distinct conditions of social recognition. As pointed by Sarlo, the survivor's testimony establishes its legal and social trust bonds based on the radicalizing existence of the critical event, and this puts it in a certain state of exceptionality. In other words, the testimony's astonishing breach of the ordinary gives it a sort of shield that makes ethically uncomfortable questioning its truth. On the other hand, the testimony of the reporter-narrator, even when marked by situations of trauma and by profound negative interference in the individual's life, does not reach the radical nature of the testimony of the Shoah, opening flanks, therefore, to questions about its truth and even of its reliability.

Interestingly, in this sense, the presence of the reporter in Morro do Piolho is part of an experiment, a laboratory exercise that seeks to promote a supposedly radical experience. However, the reporter-narrator is in Morro do Piolho not as a "survivor", as someone that actually lives there, but as a foreigner – such as defined by Simmel (1983) in his classic essay – who cannot, even if she wants to, break the distance between her and the others. In the report, there is a passage in which this idea is very clear. When she is asked for a "serious conversation" with Gabriel, leader of the criminal group in Morro do Piolho, Morais reveals her desire to enter that reality so she is able to tell the truth like no one in the media does, "to show life as it really is".

"You wish to speak to me?", I asked Gabriel, entering his shack. "Yes, I do". We sat down, and he, before telling me what he was planning for that day, asked the same question he had already asked before, but never sounded so seriously. "What do you want here? Why do you care so much about the story of this poor people of the favela?" Staring at his eyes, I replied that my interest there was to show in my work, through the lives of all the people I've met there, that the slums need to tell their stories without fear or restraint. I said I was there mainly to show life as it really is. And I completed stating that I would not need to put myself at risk just for a whim or a desire for adventure. I felt an overwhelming need to show the reality of the majority of Brazilians who live in the big cities (MORAIS, 2010, p. 97, our translation).

By revealing her intention to produce a report about her experiences in that community, the reporter confirms the existence of an agenda that guided her actions, even if only initially. Since before Yara rent her shack in Morro do Piolho, she had already predicted minimally how she would act in the place, which recording equipment she would take, how she would try to get information about that reality she was proposing to investigate. In this sense, even with the

existence of an immersion work of the reporter in this social space, her intentionality ends up reinforcing her foreigner status. Her own position as a reporter ends up becoming kind of a fence that prevents her full incorporation to that reality, to the lives of those people. So, could it be possible to think, as suggested by Serelle (2009, 2010, 2012), that in the context of an exemplary nature of the survivors' testimony, the reporter-narrator could be enjoying a credibility that it is not necessarily inherent to his/her own self?

2 BETWEEN THE SEEING AND THE HEARING: THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CO-PRESENCE

In a Marcelo Ferla's story about the Brazilian writer Luis Fernando Verissimo, also published in *Rolling Stone*, the self-referential narrator emerges through the first-person plural, indicating that reporter and interviewee are in the same place, where they are talking to each other: "We are in the living room of Verissimo's house, decorated with paintings and many books, in the leafy neighborhood of Petropolis, where he was born and resides with his wife, Lucia" (FERLA, 2012, p. 84). Then, the first-person traces cease to explicitly appear in the text, but the notion that the reporter personally interviews Verissimo is sustained:

For someone who stayed for about two hours reminiscing with details about old times of jazz and soccer, comfortably seated in his daddy's red chair, with one foot on the stool and without shoes, emphasizing memory lapses is too much self-criticism. More than small oversights, there were many breaks. The always restrained feeling and an almost methodical discretion set the tone of the conversation, punctuated by well-aimed phrases from who undoubtedly knows the extent of words. Verissimo is a man who listens too much and speaks too little, perhaps because he expects the genius of his writing to be sufficient. However, he becomes even more restrained when commenting on the spectacular generation in which he figures, and that has been treated as irreplaceable after every loss. (FERLA, 2012, p. 84, our translation)

In this paragraph, which follows the one in which the previous quotation is located, the first-person signs are not explicit, but the fact that it was used previously causes us to keep it in thought. The enhanced image is still of the co-presence, that seems to reveal here something that is socially understood as a reporter's ability while performing its job, i.e., the practice of the interview. As we can see, the focus of the story is precisely the interviewee, a famous person who, for several reasons, would

be a subject of interest for the reader and for the publication itself. Unlike stories such as the one of Yara Morais in Morro do Piolho, the agenda here is not necessarily interested in the reporter's experience, since what is really aimed for is the other one. This way, the first-person does not seem to refer to situations in which the narrated events deeply intertwine to the life stories of the narrator; nor characterizes narratives centered in the revealing of subjectivities and affectivities of this enunciation individual. Here, his testimony seems to occupy a place that is different from the one occupied by the testimony of experience reports, although both do anchor in a spatial dimension of presence.

François Hartog (1999), reflecting on the ways of coordination between the testimony and the historian, offers an interesting clue to the understanding of those cases in which we found a discrete first-person narrator. Based on Herodotus' *The Histories*, Hartog notes a common point between the historian and the witness: the existence of a strong relationship between seeing and enunciating. That is, the *I saw* within the narrative is understood as an element that ensures credibility to that narrator, after all, he *was there*. Hartog claims that, in the times of Herodotus, understanding the gaze as an instrument of knowledge was practically an "epistemological constant", shared not only by historians, but also by doctors and philosophers, for instance. It was therefore quite common that the narrators, in a self-referential gesture, would claim for themselves a discourse of truth based on the condition of having seen, as if between seeing and saying there were no significant distance. According to Hartog, the epistemological potentiality suggested in this gaze causes it to not be reduced to a simple watch, but that it constitutes itself as an *autopsy*, since it presupposes the presence of a "qualified eye", which is aware of the remarkable facts that can construct the narrative without its credibility being compromised.

Besides the *I saw*, in the classical period, according to Hartog, the narrators also relied in the dynamics of the *I heard*. What the eye of the narrator cannot reach is liable to be known from the eyes of a third party, someone who saw it and can tell it precisely because he/she saw it. In this way, the *I heard* also constitutes itself as a fundamental element for the authentication of these narratives, in a way that it expands the narrator's vision without removing his/her authority, since the report of another still responds to it. However, although the hearing also denotes a *being there*, the eye (the *autopsy*, especially) remains more powerful than the ear, as shown by Hartog.

The ear, from the point of view of make-believe, is less worthy than the eye: this implies that a narrative stuck to an *I heard* will be less credible or less persuasive than another, a neighborly one, organized around an *I saw*. His enunciation mark is, so to speak, less strong. The narrator engages least, keeping some distance from his narrative, leaving therefore more space for the listener to modulate their belief. In short, his reins are loosened up (HARTOG, 1999, p. 281, our translation).

Here we find a historian who asks to be believed by asserting his own presence in face of the event or, failing this condition, in face of someone who was present at the same event. He claims a legitimate place of writing history by making sure: "I say it because I have seen it, or I say it because I've heard from someone who saw it". If we go back to the first-person journalistic stories, these marks of seeing and hearing also appear with great force, in reference to the reporter-narrator figure. In fact, the reporter's image as one who "was there" not only seems to be internalized in a popular imaginary constructed about the journalist, as can also be observed in different studies. When Nilson Lage (2006), for example, sets the modern reporter scope of action, he is quite clear: "The reporter is where the reader, listener or viewer cannot be. He has a delegation or implied representation that authorizes him to be the remote *ears* and *eyes* of the public, to select and to pass on to the public what he thinks to be interesting" (p. 23, our emphasis).

In first-person narrators of journalistic stories, this epistemological power from the *I saw* seems to be a recurring feature to reveal mannerisms and details of the characters, as well as it demonstrates a time that reporter and interviewee were effectively together, as in the following passage:

"Aren't you that actress from... *Tropa de Elite 2?*", discreetly asks the bakery clerk. "I loved the movie." After that, Tainá tells me: "People always make this pause before finishing the question. I never know if they will talk about *Cão sem dono* [the 2007 film in which she debuted as an actress], about *Revelation* [the SBT soap opera in which she starred two years later] or about *Tropa de Elite 2* [the public phenomenon in which she does a small but striking role of a reporter denouncing Rio's militias]". I comment that in a month she will have no more doubts; she will know exactly from what work people recognized her. And she casually asks me: "Do you think so?" (CALIL, 2011, p 46, emphasis in original, our translation)

This short report of a scene occurred in a bakery shows us how the reporter-narrator uses his eyes to build the characterization of his interviewee. Published in *Tpm*, this story seeks to profile the actress Tainá Müller in a moment she was about to get an important role in

a Rede Globo's soap opera. By describing the brief dialogue between Tainá and the bakery attendant, the reporter points out his presence on that particular event, apparently using the testimonial argument *I saw*. Such a gesture is confirmed in the next sentence, in which he makes use of the first-person to comment on what he had just witnessed, reinforcing his status as an eyewitness. It is important to note that the dialogue seen and heard by this reporter-narrator could be taken as a completely trivial and ordinary conversation, but it was elevated to a moment of characterization of the profiled actress precisely because of its mention in the narrative. This choice also contributes to reinforce the idea that the view of the reporter is not a merely uncompromised observation, but rather a kind of autopsy: a representative view of the privileged position and competence of the journalist.

In the stories about Tainá Müller and Luis Fernando Verissimo, the potential of the *I saw* seems to increase as the distance between reporter and source is reduced. So, the situation of co-presence appears to be ideal for the success of the journalistic investigation: if we understand the person to be interviewed as the main event of these stories, the bodily presence of the reporter before this person is what allows him to assume a testimonial dimension. Therefore the present time of the interview is captured by a *being there*, while the past time is accessed through hearing the interviewee, who is taken as the main witness of her own life story:

At 3 years old, first daughter of a humble couple from Porto Alegre, Tainá started reading all by herself, out of nowhere. "My parents called the visits to see me reading the newspaper. I felt like an aberration, the very Elephant Man from David Lynch's film" – she will still mention the American filmmaker, known for his bizarre plots and characters, often during the interview. (CALIL 2011, p. 48, our translation)

The seeing and hearing from the narrator reporter seem, then, to reveal some shades of the investigative process of those narratives, in order to give an aura of credibility based on confidence relations proposed by the testimony. By showing he was in a co-presence situation with his interviewee, the reporter-narrator asks his narrative to be understood as "real", since he was there, he saw and he heard. However, by themselves, the actions of seeing and hearing, in our opinion, do not seem to be sufficient as routes for legitimation of this self-referential narrator, since that, alone, they do not constitute an act of witnessing. There is something more in the reporter-narrator testimony

that makes it sustained not only by its presence in that reality of which he intends to speak about. Not coincidentally, the “I” of these narratives is the reporter, the one who was there to tell us what happened, and this brings consequences to how the narrative is presented and read.

3 BETWEEN SEEING UP CLOSE AND SEEING FROM THE INSIDE, THE NARRATOR

In 2012, a reporter and a photographer are sent by *Trip* magazine to get to know Caldas Country, a major country music festival in Brazil, and their agenda was reporting their experiences and impressions of the event. We can see in this proposition the suggestion that the presence of both professionals in the event could give them the status of witnesses of the festival, people whose reports acquire legitimacy by the condition of having been there. More than that, the presence of reporter and photographer at Caldas Country seems to be the engine that drives the making of the story, as we can observe in the recurring search for anchoring in situations seen and experienced by the narrator:

The 2012 edition of Festival Caldas Country had left a stain on the country universe with shots, fights, streets field with crazed drivers, deafening sound equipment and a torched car (by the owner himself). (...) Still, the fear of a new hedonistic-country eruption in the heart of Brazil was visible. And off we went, me and Jordi, our Portuguese photographer. Two cowboys on their first ride, trying to open ways in the country universe (SPREJER, 2013, p. 76, our translation).

In other passages, the reporter’s foreigner look is even more evident:

For those who expect to find farmers and agrobos, the audience is extremely diverse. (...) We talked to a merchant of Rondônia, a nurse/accordionist of Fortaleza, a gaucho farmer, a policeman from Uberlândia, a chemistry teacher from Duque de Caxias, a paint shop owner from São Mateus (ES), earthmoving business men from São Paulo and a physical education student and *miss fitness* from Unaí (MG). (...) At this point, at the VIP area, the staff seemed already to be half transfigured. Most part of the girls seems kind of standardized, with miniskirts, straight hair and using a neckline. I see a group of guys with cowboy hats and the adhesive “Os mió do Brasil” [*“the best of Brazil”, as written in popular countryside slang*] stuck in their chest (SPREJER, 2013, p. 78, our translation).

Here, the self-reference gesture appears to demonstrate the presence of the reporter and the photographer in an environment that is not common to them, which they observe with strangeness

and irony. By telling his own experience of participating of Caldas Country, the reporter Pedro Sprejer does not seem to make an effort to “go inside” that social reality and to assume the existing behavioral codes there. He goes to the event, but keeps his distance, something that is especially suggested by the playfulness of his comments. Unlike the story about Morro do Piolho, in this one, it does not seem to be a minimum identification of the reporter with the investigated reality. Here, there is no aim of *seeing from the inside*, because what is strengthened in this story is an idea of *seeing up close*.

When assuming a testimonial rhetoric, the journalistic narrator can benefit from this moral respect given to the person who speaks, drawing from it the premises to which his report could be believed and legitimized. However, the journalist is not an ethically unquestionable witness – in a way, no witness is. Although there is some ethical or moral resistance, the open spots of a first-person narrative cannot be ignored, as noted by Beatriz Sarlo:

Only a naive confidence in the first-person and in the memory of what is lived would seek to establish an order presided by the testimonial. And just a naive characterization of experience would demand to it a higher truth. It is no less positivist (as used by Benjamin to describe the “facts”) the inviolability of the lived experience in the testimonial narration than the one in a report made from other sources (SARLO, 2007, p. 48, our translation).

Agamben (2008) recalls that the challenges of establishing a strong belief in the testimony legitimacy can be found at the very origin of the word, that refers to three terms in Latin: *testis* (the one that puts itself as a third party, i.e. the one who sees and judges); *superstes* (someone who went through an event to the end and is able to narrate it); and *auctor* (the one that validates the act of another). These definitions can point to different functions assumed by journalism in its testimonial rhetoric: we may have a reporter-narrator who tells what he experienced, appearing as a witness of what he lived (*superstes*), but, on the other hand, we cannot ignore a role that is historically requested by journalism of judging the events, of being the one which arises as a third party to hear the other two sides of a story (*testis*). As an *auctor*, the reporter assumes his own self as a composer of a story, who has as objective the legitimacy and recognition of the experience of others. While the *testis* sees *up close* and the *superstes* sees *from the inside*, the *auctor* is a narrator able to enforce, on the strength of his own report, the testimonial dimension of the experience it presents.

Either *seeing up close* or *from within*, we can understand the first-person journalistic narrative as part of an effort undertaken by

informational media and reporters to assume a testimonial rhetoric that, combined with other resources, seeks to strengthen its connection to social reality. The purpose of this effort would be the legitimacy of the story, as it binds the body of the reporter-narrator to the event through the enunciative marks *I was there, I saw, I heard, I lived, or even I survived*. It is a game of *make-believe*, to use the term employed by Hartog (1999), which seems inherent to all narrators who claim to their narratives a connection to a reality. So, when claiming one testimonial rhetoric, the journalistic stories embrace certain privileges that are socially granted to the witness, but also come to carry their ghosts of suspicion, because they are based on the same basic paradox of testimony: to take for itself a place of truth from the presence of the subject at the described event, even if the first-person is not a fully reliable place.

Thus, it becomes necessary to eliminate, or at least reduce, this distrust surrounding the narrator-reporter. This testimony's need for validation points, then, to the essential place that the reader occupies in the legitimation processes of first-person stories. After all, it is from the reader that come the vote to believe. So, to assume a testimonial rhetoric does not necessarily legitimize a reporter-narrator, but starts a legitimation process, in which the results – whether favorable or not – are given only in the act of reading. It is not, therefore, a narrator who, for being in first-person, is intrinsically legitimate and credible. Far from homogeneous, as we have seen, first-person narratives organize, in their own way, relations of trust and distrust, support and refusal involving the mediation, the agents and the very journalistic institution.

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