

LITERARY NONFICTION  
IN WORKS BY ISABEL ALLENDE AND GUADALUPE LOAEZA

DISSERTATION

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By

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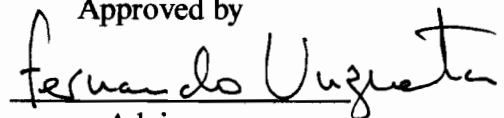
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes selected works by Isabel Allende (Chile) and Guadalupe Loaeza (Mexico) within the theoretical framework of literary nonfiction. It also provides a comparative study of the history and the characteristics of literary nonfiction in both Latin America and the United States.

For Allende, this analysis is limited to her novels *La casa de los espíritus* (1982) (*The House of the Spirits*; 1985), *De amor y de sombra* (1984) (*Of Love and Shadows*; 1987), and *El plan infinito* (1991) (*The Infinite Plan*; 1993). The focus is on the literary nonfictive techniques or characteristics of these books, revealing how they coincide with testimonial novels and documentary reportage. At the same time I show how Allende's writing not only lies in a borderland between fact and fiction, but also that it has a distinctive testimonial purpose. However, I do not argue that these novels *are* literary nonfiction, or that Allende intentionally *writes* literary nonfiction, but rather how different elements of this literary form appear in these works as part of her writing style.

Unlike Allende, Loaeza is an active literary journalist, a chronicler of the here and now. At this point in time the body of her work is comprised of seventeen published texts. This dissertation centers mainly on her chronicles, which I investigate within the framework of Mexico's unique type of literary journalism -the contemporary Mexican

chronicle. Loeza and her fellow Mexican chroniclers document and critique the society in which they live -including its economy with all of its failures and its corrupt and inept power system-, referring again and again to the political *misfunction* of their society. I therefore do not study specific texts, but rather themes that reappear in many of them, what Loeza calls her "obsessions." I demonstrate how her writing has a definitive purpose: to expose events to the public so they may demand accountability.

Allende is most widely known as a novelist, whereas Loeza is a practicing literary journalist and has not published a novel. My choice of these two writers who appear so fundamentally different, whose only point in common would seem to be the mere fact that they are -or were, in the case of Allende- also journalists, is to analyze literary nonfiction in two distinct literary genres -the novel and the Mexican chronicle. This dissertation also reveals both authors' similarities, for not only are they natural *storytellers*, but they also hold many other things in common that include comparable backgrounds, their style of using a matter-of-fact tone and underlying sense of humor in their writing, and their moral and ethical insights addressing primary issues of our time.

To my mother and father, Barbara and Arthur Shellenberg,  
who have always been there for me

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#### FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Spanish and Portuguese, Latin American Literature

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

After all, the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature and so forth are not laid up in heaven. Every specific situation is historical. And the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any given definition; the boundaries themselves are constantly changing.

Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 33

If literature is distinguished by its quality of permanence, and journalism is ephemeral, there has been much significant writing, surely, which does not attach itself wholeheartedly to either standard; writing which has the interpretive cast of literature as well as the contemporary interest of journalism.

Edwin H. Ford (cited in Hartsock, 241)

#### 1.1 Proposals and overview of this dissertation

Just as Mikhail Bakhtin's statement in the epigraph above intimates the transformation of writing, so too have the scholars of literary nonfiction been claiming the same about their form or genre. One of the main ideas that will enter into most of the discussions throughout this dissertation is that writing is not static, but ever-changing, and it is increasingly more difficult to classify. The foundational starting point of this thesis will be its theoretical framework, and that is why I will begin by demonstrating exactly what constitutes literary nonfiction and the contemporary Mexican chronicle. I will then examine how this kind of writing fits into or functions in different works by Isabel Allende (Chile) and Guadalupe Loaeza (Mexico).

For Allende, I will focus on the literary nonfictive techniques or characteristics of her novels *La casa de los espíritus* (1982) (*The House of the Spirits*; 1985), *De amor y de sombra* (1984) (*Of Love and Shadows*; 1987), and *El plan infinito* (1991) (*The Infinite Plan*; 1993). I will not only demonstrate how the writing in these three texts parallels what scholars affirm about some of the stylistics or features of literary nonfiction, but also how it crosses borders between fact and fiction, residing somewhere within the boundaries of what Aníbal González calls that “murky, rhetorical frontier” (*Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative* 10). There are a limited number of sources that study either literary nonfiction or journalism’s influence in the Latin American novel. As a starting point, I will use Aníbal González’s and Mario Castro Arenas’s texts which will be reviewed in chapter two. I will also add commentary from scholars of literary nonfiction in the United States where appropriate.

Unlike Allende, Loaeza is an active literary journalist, a chronicler of the here and now. At this point in time the body of her work is comprised of seventeen published texts. This dissertation will center mainly on her chronicles, which will be investigated within the theoretical framework of the contemporary Mexican chronicle. I will not study specific works, but rather themes that reappear in many of her chronicles, what Loaeza calls her “obsessions” –some of which are racism and classism, corrupt politicians, the economic crisis and the indigenous uprising in Mexico’s southernmost state of Chiapas. Accordingly, I will be using sources that investigate the Mexican *crónica* (“chronicle”) and the *cronistas* (“chroniclers”), especially those by Carlos Monsiváis, Linda Egan, Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen, which will be previewed in chapter two. I will also illustrate how her use of irony –particularly satire– as well as other literary devices,

accentuate the importance of the content, i.e, how “style as substance”<sup>1</sup> functions in her writing.

My choice of these two writers who might appear to have nothing in common, except the mere fact that they are both Latin American women writers who are –or were, in the case of Allende– also journalists, is to present a more extensive analysis by examining literary nonfiction in two distinct literary genres –the novel and the Mexican *crónica*. Regarding their differences, Allende is most widely known as a novelist, whereas Loaeza is an active literary journalist and has not yet published a novel. At the same time, nearly anyone in literary academia would be familiar with at least one of Allende’s works, and would more than likely hold an opinion of her writing, whether favorable, unfavorable or ambiguous. Allende is considered the “leading female literary voice from Latin America and best-selling female writer in the world.” Her works have been officially published in thirty languages, as well as some unofficial versions in Turkish, Vietnamese and Chinese (Rodden, Introduction to *Conversations with Isabel Allende* 2). It is also worth noting that of the 203 articles listed in the MLA *International Bibliography* about her work, not one studies the journalistic elements in her writing. On the other hand, it would be highly unlikely to find many in literary academia that are not Mexicanists who would be aware of either Loaeza or her writing. In fact, there are not many who understand exactly what the Mexican chronicle *is*.

However, both have written a collection of short stories that deal with women’s issues: *Los cuentos de Eva Luna* (1987) (*The Stories of Eva Luna*; 1991) by Allende, and *Primero las damas* (*Ladies First*; 1995) by Loaeza. Additionally, both gained instant

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<sup>1</sup>Ben Yagoda lists three requirements for literary journalism as “innovation,” “the reporter at the forefront,” and “style as substance” (preface to *Art* 14-16).

fame with their first book, although Allende's was worldwide for *La casa de los espíritus* (1982) (*The House of the Spirits*; 1985),<sup>2</sup> Loaeza's fame for *Las niñas bien* (*The Well-to-do Girls*; 1987) was restricted to Mexico. Therefore, this dissertation will also reveal both authors' similarities, for not only are they natural storytellers, but they also share many other things in common that include their similar upper-class backgrounds, their style of using a matter-of-fact tone and underlying sense of humor in their writing, their concern for the social and political, and their moral and ethical insights confronting primary issues of our time.

## 1.2 Rationale and objectives

Albeit there *are* studies of nonfictive elements in the novel, they are limited in their focus on elements of *journalism*, but not of *literary journalism*, and there are not many of them at that. Likewise, there are not many studies that concentrate on factual fiction or journalistic literature. In a recent survey of MLA *International Bibliography* listings from 1963 through the summer of 2001, there are a total of five entries for "literary nonfiction," three for "journalistic novel," seventeen for "nonfiction novel," two for "factual fictions," eighteen for "creative nonfiction," thirteen for "literature of reality," one hundred and twenty-five for "nonfiction," forty-three for "literary journalism" –some of which are borderline cases– and one for "periodismo literario."<sup>3</sup> Regarding the Mexican

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<sup>2</sup>It should be added that while Allende's first novel brought her almost instant renown world-wide among the general public, literary critics were divided. It is also worth noting that Allende has received 26 literary awards from nine different countries (Rodden, Introduction to *Conversations 2*).

<sup>3</sup>Many of the 226 total of studies are articles, some are vague about the content, and the works in discussion tend to focus on Capote, Mailer, Thompson, Didion, et al. On the other hand, there are 31,305 entries for "fiction," and 66,033 for the "novel."

*crónica*, there are one hundred and sixty-three entries, but most are of the historical writings of the early conquest or of colonial Mexico. Those that discuss the *crónica* as it is currently practiced in Mexico concentrate mainly on chronicles by Carlos Monsiváis, Elena Poniatowska, José Joaquín Blanco or Cristina Pacheco, and only two investigate Guadalupe Loaeza's contributions to the form.

Therefore, this dissertation will: 1) make a significant contribution to the investigation of the rapidly developing field of literary nonfiction, through in-depth analyses of three novels and Mexico's unique type of literary journalism as it is practiced in the contemporary Mexican chronicle; 2) provide a thorough yet concise comparative study of the history and characteristics of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in both Latin America and the United States; 3) thus pave the way for future investigations that show how these literary forms or genres compare and contrast on both sides of the border.

Although there are many critical studies of Allende's first two novels –*Casa (House)* and *Amor (Love)*–, there are none that concentrate on the literary nonfictive features in these works. Additionally, whereas these two books are known for their Chilean reality and strong female characters, very little has been written about Allende's fourth novel, which is set in the U.S. –mainly California– and has a male protagonist. Hence, I hope to shed some new light on the importance of this novel, which has been virtually overlooked by critics of her work, but which could be used as a textbook for guiding students on a historical as well as a cultural tour through the U.S. from the post-World War II period to the end of the decade of greed of the 80s. To my knowledge, there are no “American” novels that cover that same time span with the *cultural* insights that Allende manages to bring to the forefront. These analyses will thus contribute to the existing research on her writing.

My approach to Allende's novels will consequently be different from other studies on her work for the following reasons: 1) I will show how *nonfictive* elements from so-called *truth* genres function in her *fiction*, i.e. how characteristics of literary *nonfiction* –implying not made up–, and *journalism* –insinuating truth and objectivity–, parallel the writing in her *novels*, a genre that in its name indicates that it is *not nonfiction*; 2) I will cover *all* areas of literary nonfiction, including testimonial and documentary aspects as well; 3) I will provide new insights into *Plan*, at the same time offering another deliberation about how literary nonfiction can be applied to Allende's fiction.

Likewise, an investigation of Loeza's literary journalism will not only contribute substantially to the study of narrative literary nonfiction in Mexico –specifically the contemporary Mexican chronicle– but it will also serve to introduce Loeza as a writer/*cronista* of significance. Even in her own country, Loeza is better known for her satirical chronicles of Mexico's *gente bien* (“well-to-do”), and it is likely that many there are not even aware of the extensiveness of her writing. In a career that only spans twenty years, she has published seventeen books and has written many more chronicles –not published in texts– that have demonstrated a definitive purpose: to expose events to the public so they may demand accountability. The body of her work –if taken in its entirety– could provide a social, economic and political portrait of Mexico, at a time (the 80s and early 90s) when Mexicans had forgotten why they had fought the first social revolution of the twentieth century.

My objectives for the examination of Loeza in this dissertation are: 1) to provide a new exploration into the contemporary Mexican chronicle that at the same time offers a comparison to similar types of literary journalism as practiced in the U.S. and Latin America –opinion or interpretive articles; 2) to present an analysis of Loeza's writing that



demonstrates the value of both its “style” and “substance” in order that scholars of the form can compare her work to other *cronistas*; 3) to offer a thematic approach to her writing in order to cover a wider variety of texts and textual material; 4) to illustrate through her “obsessions” what is wrong with Mexican society –its political ineptness and corruption, its economic injustice, its racism and classism, the tragedy of Chiapas– factors contributing to Mexico’s state of ungovernability; 5) to show how that state of ungovernability, exacerbated by neoliberal policies and the signing of NAFTA, played a role in the defeat of the seventy year “dictablanda” (“soft dictatorship”) of Mexico’s ruling party –the PRI.

### 1.3 Chapter outlines

Chapter two will trace the history of literary nonfiction narrative and literary journalism in both Latin America and the United States. It will also provide a clarification of the terminology and an in-depth study of the characteristics of the form. I will begin with a discussion of the ambiguity or lack of consensus for what this literary form or genre is called. I will continue with a complete yet succinct history of the development of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in Latin America, and will then do the same for the U. S., including in each section the so-called “rules of the game” or guidelines that correspond to these forms. The analysis will not only lay the groundwork for the theoretical framework for the investigation of Allende’s and Loaeza’s work in the following chapters, but it will also serve as a guide for a comparative study of literary nonfiction forms on both sides of the border.

An examination of *La casa de los espíritus* (*The House of the Spirits*), and *De amor y de sombra* (*Of Love and Shadows*), will make up the corpus of chapter three. I

will explore various aspects of literary nonfiction writing in these two works which portray Chile's history, especially the coup of 1973 and its aftermath which forced Allende into exile. I will demonstrate how different features or characteristics of literary *nonfiction* appear in her *fiction* as part of her writing style, and will use theories, interpretations and ideas by well-known scholars who have dedicated much time to the investigation of the genre. Since much has already been written about *Casa (House)*, the focus will be on Allende's incorporation of nonfictive elements in the testimonial passages of its final chapters. *Amor (Love)* will also be examined as both a testimonial novel and documentary reportage.

Chapter four will center on *El plan infinito (The Infinite Plan)*. I will analyze this work within the same parameters as I did the novels in chapter three, again within the framework of literary nonfiction, stressing its use of documentary reportage and documentary realism, as well as its literary journalistic characteristics. I will also include a discussion of Latin American *testimonio* in this chapter for the parts of the novel where the life of the white male protagonist is intertwined with the story of the Mexicans/Chicanos that underlies the narration.

Since I will be examining Guadalupe Loaeza's literary journalism as it is practiced in Mexico today, I will be including a continuation of the history of the Mexican *crónica* in chapter five which will pick up where the discussion left off in chapter two. I will be adding more definitions, features and poetics of the contemporary Mexican chronicle as well. An introductory overview of both Loaeza and her work will be included in order to demonstrate how her writing has contributed to the development of the Mexican *crónica* over the last twenty years. It will also illustrate how her seventeen books have covered some of the most consequential issues in Mexico's recent past –social, political, economic

and historical. The chapter will serve as a foundational background for the discussion of her texts in chapter six.

Chapter six will begin with a presentation of Loaeza's depiction of the different categories of Mexico's *gente bien* that will serve to demonstrate two of the basic problems underlying Mexican society –its racism and classism. I will then discuss Loaeza's other obsessions which were pointed out earlier. This thematic analysis of her work will demonstrate that she is an author of substance, that her work addresses moral and ethical issues of Mexican society. I will also illustrate her narrative style of incorporating irony, humor, parody and oftentimes sarcasm into the narrations of her obsessions. The main purpose of this chapter will be to offer an examination of the contemporary Mexican chronicle which will contribute to the relatively small quantity that exists, at the same time introducing Loaeza as a chronicler/writer of consequence.

#### 1.4 Conclusions

Regarding Allende, one has the feeling that the events or happenings in her novels are true or accurate because they are brought alive so vividly, and I will attempt to show how this is due to the nonfictive elements that she incorporates into her literature. At the same time, Allende's novels under scrutiny in this dissertation encompass themes that are historical in scope, bringing not only history but also recent events alive, in order that readers may actually feel the realities presented, interpreting them according to his/her individual life experiences. Loaeza on the other hand, ironically *interprets* the news of the day in her chronicles, and dares her readers to interpret *her* interpretations of occurrences by decoding the irony which she employs to expose them. I have chosen themes –that she herself calls her “obsessions”– rather than texts, for my examination of Loaeza's writing. I

have done so in order to show her evolution in both the treatment and the interpretation of these “obsessions” over the twenty years of her career as a writer/chronicler.

In conclusion, this dissertation will reveal how both Allende’s novels and Loeza’s chronicles illustrate what Ezra Pound claimed about literature itself, that it is “news that stays news” (cited in Kerrane, “Making” 20).

## CHAPTER 2

### Literary Nonfiction Writing on Both Sides of the Border

Things that are cheap and tawdry in fiction work beautifully in nonfiction because they are true. That's why you should be careful not to abridge it, because it's the fundamental power you're dealing with. You arrange it and present it. There's lots of artistry. But you don't make it up.

John McPhee (cited in Sims's "The Literary Journalists," 3)

#### 2.1 Laying the groundwork

In this chapter I propose to offer a concise study of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in both Latin America and the U.S., not only to lay the foundation for the examination of Allende's and Loaeza's work in the ensuing chapters, but also to provide a guide for showing how the genres compare in both Spanish and English-speaking countries. I will begin by discussing what these forms are called, follow with a history of the evolution of this nonfiction literary writing, and end with the rules or guidelines that determine it. This investigation will fill the void that I encountered when I first began to probe into the fields of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in the U.S. and Latin America and discovered that there was not one study that covered both of these areas at the same time. I will therefore include comparative observations to point out and clarify the similarities and differences of this nonfiction literary writing on both sides of the border. Additionally, I will briefly compare and contrast the history of the Mexican

chronicle with literary journalism, broadly understood as it is practiced in both the rest of Latin America and the United States.

## 2.2 Addressing the terminology: Is there a consensus or is it a moot process?

Although more and more universities have begun to offer courses on Spanish American nonfiction narrative, there is still a great deal of disagreement about much of the terminology. The same problem with nomenclature arises in literary journalism and/or nonfiction narrative courses in English or Journalism departments across the U.S.<sup>4</sup> The more I immersed myself in the research of this dissertation, the more I became aware of the conflicts, ambiguity, inconsistency and lack of unanimity in what either the scholars of the form or the writers themselves labeled their work. I will therefore attempt to provide a summary of my investigation in order to guide readers who are unfamiliar with the terminology or wish to see how it developed. It will also assist in clarifying future references to the terms as they are addressed in the following sections of either this chapter or in subsequent ones.

It is worth noting how so many today still perceive the term “literary journalism” as “New Journalism” in the U.S.,<sup>5</sup> or as “nuevo periodismo” (literally, “new journalism”)

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<sup>4</sup>Norman Sims, “The Art of Literary Journalism” 3; Mark Kramer, “Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists” 21; Ben Yagoda, Preface to *Art of Fact* 13; Thomas B. Connery, “Discovering a Literary Form” 3.

<sup>5</sup>In the introduction to his comprehensive study titled *A History of American Literary Journalism*, John Hartsock claims that the term “literary journalism” is “by no means the universal designation for the form,” due to its “problematic nature” (3). He points out that he prefers to use Thomas B. Connery’s “more conservative usage of ‘form’” rather than the term “genre” for literary journalism (3). On the contrary, John Hellman argues that literary journalism, what he is calling “new journalism” in his 1981 work *Fables of Fact*, is “most properly understood as a *genre* of literature. Like realistic fiction or romantic fiction or fabulist fiction, it has an aesthetic form and purpose making

in Latin America, not realizing that the New Journalism, as practiced by Tom Wolfe, et al, was in essence a cultural form or style that was practiced in the 60s and 70s (John J. Pauly, “The Politics of the New Journalism” 110-111).<sup>6</sup> In 1937, Edwin Ford described literary journalism as “writing that falls within the twilight zone that divides literature from journalism” (cited in Hartsock, 241).<sup>7</sup> From then on, many have taken that statement as a starting point for their own perspectives on the form. Aníbal González likens Ford’s “twilight zone” to a “murky, rhetorical frontier” (*Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative* 10), and in his introduction to *Texto híbrido: Entre ficción e información*, Juan J. Pindado calls it the “zona de nadie” (“no man’s land”; 4). Likewise, Ben Yagoda contends that literary journalism is a “profoundly fuzzy term,” but adds that he uses it for the name of his course “for lack of a better term” (13).<sup>8</sup> Norman Sims claims that there are some scholars who focus on the hybrid nature of the form, since it

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its ‘final direction’ inward” [my emphasis]. He holds that since it corresponds to Northrop Frye’s definition “that fiction is ‘a work of art in prose,’ we may then without logical difficulty call new journalism fiction” (24). Hellman saw the artistic and creative value of the form, and was one of the first in the literary field to undertake a serious, albeit brief, investigation of the history of what he was still calling “new journalism.” Additionally, it is clear in Hellman’s study that he is not just referring to the new journalists of the time, since he includes the eighteenth century writers Daniel Defoe and James Boswell among its practitioners. Connery affirms that James Murphy also used “literary genre” to describe the new journalism in 1974 (“Discovering a Literary Form” 19).

<sup>6</sup>This idea will be developed further in the second part of this chapter while tracing the history of literary journalism in the U.S.

<sup>7</sup>However, the term “literary journalism” was not commonly used for the form until Norman Sims’s *The Literary Journalists* came out in 1984.

<sup>8</sup>Sims and Connery use Literary Journalism for their course titles as well. On the other hand, Kevin Kerrane says that John McPhee opts for “The Literature of Fact” for his course (*The Art of Fact* 485), although he himself (McPhee), is one of the better known literary journalists in the U.S.

combines “the fiction writer’s techniques with facts gathered by a reporter.” He argues that, although that may be true, he prefers the term “literary journalism” over “hybrid” writing (“The Literary Journalists” 4). My purpose for referring to these scholars is not to illustrate their lack of agreement on what to call the form or how to describe it, but to show that they are all alluding to the same thing: that there is, and has been, an interest in at least trying to name this type of writing that is journalistic in its factual claim and literary in its artistic style.

Similar confusions arise with the use of designations for nonfiction narratives in general, what W. Ross Winterowd calls the “other” literature. Although there are many definitions or at least attempts at definitions for this particular area of literature, a distinction should first be made between literary nonfiction<sup>9</sup> and what John Warnock calls “nonliterary nonfiction.” In his introduction to *Representing Reality: Readings in Literary Nonfiction*, he establishes the differences between the two by explaining that nonliterary nonfiction is “exposition, the research paper, technical writing.” He holds that “literary nonfiction is nonfiction that emphasizes story, or narrative –accounts of action in time.” He also maintains that “literary nonfiction may include essay or exposition, but it tends to place these in the context of the story,” or by including the “stories as an important part of the discourse.” He concludes that literary nonfiction is similar to fiction in that “readers are meant not just to understand what an account is about, but to experience something directly related to what the account is about” (xix).<sup>10</sup> This definition

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<sup>9</sup>In his introduction to *The Literature of Fact*, Ronald Weber calls literary nonfiction “a new hybrid kind of factual fiction,” but he argues that it has not “supplanted the novel or rendered obsolete the accomplishments of old journalism” (4).

<sup>10</sup> See also Lounsberry’s “Realtors” for another discussion of the distinction between what she calls “artful literary nonfiction” from “the often artless and droning



will be important to keep in mind while discussing Latin American literary journalism and the contemporary Mexican chronicle later in this chapter, since the story –or the news being narrated– is just as significant as the style in which it is related.

Additionally, many who have either studied or created these hybrid forms have also tried to find an appropriate terminology. In his 1977 work titled *Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel*, John Hollowell made the claim that whatever we call these hybrid forms “of narrative reportage,” they “have capitalized on the growing popularity of nonfiction,” and “have successfully conveyed the national confusion and the cataclysmic tenor of American life” (10). All of the following labels could be classified under this type of writing, although some have become more widely used than others: “faction” (Arthur Haley), “fictuality” (Mas’ud Zavarzadeh), “literary nonfiction” (Chris Anderson, John Warnock),<sup>11</sup> “the literature of fact” (Hayden White, Ronald Weber), “fables of fact” (John Hollowell, John Hellman), “the art of fact” (Barbara Lounsberry, Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda), “factual fiction” (Lennard Davis, Ronald Weber), “true life novel” (Norman Mailer), “the *pseudofactual* novel” (Barbara Foley), “artful literary nonfiction” (Lounsberry), “the literature of reality” and “creative nonfiction” (Gay Talese and Barbara Lounsberry),<sup>12</sup> “nonfiction novel” (Truman

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expository prose that floods the category of ‘nonfiction’” (xi).

<sup>11</sup>“Literary nonfiction” is not only the terminology for the form used by Anderson and Warnock, it is also widely used in a general sense for referring to artful nonfiction narrative. Likewise, Talese and Lounsberry’s coinage of “creative nonfiction,” as well as Capote’s “nonfiction novel,” have been commonly employed in critical discussions.

<sup>12</sup>In their *The Literature of Reality: Writing Creative Nonfiction*, Talese and Lounsberry apply the term “literature of reality” for what they conceive as literary journalism or literary nonfiction. They claim that the literature of reality “should have the texture, the rhythm, the pacing, the coloring, and the drama of the work of art, yet it should hold to the standard of verifiable truth.” They add that it is “an art form, and those

Capote)<sup>13</sup>, and “the queer genre” (Ronald Weber). In addition, Weber lists other terms -- “art-journalism,” “essay-fiction,” and “journalit,”-- to describe what he calls “Nonfiction with a Literary Purpose,” which is the title of his introduction to *The Literature of Fact* (1).

At the same time, the problems surrounding the taxonomy for literary journalism and literary nonfiction are not exclusive to the U.S. or the English-speaking world. Beth E. Jörgensen points out that, except for *testimonio* and autobiography, serious critical studies of “nonfiction literary writing” in Latin America are sorely lacking (“Facing Facts: New Approaches of Nonfiction Narrative in Mexico” 119).<sup>14</sup> And although Latin America can boast over four centuries of this type of writing, theorists there have encountered the same difficulties addressing terminology for their distinctive forms, just as their counterparts in English-speaking countries. Some scholars who study the form as it is practiced in both Spain and Latin America --such as José Acosta Montoro, Alberto Dallal, Joaquín Roy, Annelies van Noortwijk and Anke van Haastrecht-- tend to favor the use of two nouns to explain the form: “periodismo y literatura” (“journalism and literature,” my emphasis). José Promis prefers “prosa híbrida” (“hybrid prose”), while Juan J. Pindado

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who practice it can be artists as great as any poet, dramatist, or novelist” (31).

<sup>13</sup>John Hollowell states that in a series of interviews, “Capote coined the phrase ‘nonfiction novel,’” and “defined his work as a fusion of journalistic and fictional narrative forms” (x). It should be noted that Donald Pizer, in his 1974 article “Documentary Narrative as Art: William Manchester and Truman Capote,” employed the phrase “documentary narrative as art” to describe Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, saying that it was “nonfiction writing with a self-conscious literary purpose” (cited in Weber, *The Literature of Fact* 3).

<sup>14</sup>She claims that the absence of scholarly studies in this area lies in direct contrast to the huge effect that nonfiction writing has had “on the formation of Latin American letters since the colonial period,” and the widespread “popularity of contemporary nonfiction among the general reading public” (119).

opts for “textos híbridos” (“hybrid texts”). Silvina Marsimian de Agosti labels it “literatura de la no ficción” (“nonfiction literature”), yet, like Dallal, Amando de Miguel, Noortwijk and Haastrecht, she also uses the term “periodismo literario,” a literal translation of literary journalism. In addition, de Miguel employs the term “literatura periodística” (“journalistic literature”). Lastly, Dallal also uses what he calls “periodismo cultural” (“cultural journalism”) in a discussion about Mexico, whose distinct literary tradition, he explains, is so unique in Latin America due to its historical link to the *crónica*. This *uniqueness* will be evident in the discussion of Mexico’s contemporary chronicle, both in this chapter as well as in the examination of Loeza’s work in chapters five and six.

Consequently, regardless of the nomenclature, Sims asserts that since the late 70s, “two of the most fertile fields of study in nonfiction have been literary journalism and the borderlands between fact and fiction” (preface to *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, v). In the first comprehensive study of the form in 1977, John Hollowell insists that “[t]he new fusion of novelistic technique and factual reporting raises complex questions beyond the scope of a strictly literary study.” He adds that traditionally, the “distinctions between elite art forms and the popular arts, and between ‘art’ and ‘non-art’ seem continually to be evaporating.” He ends by agreeing with Tom Wolfe, who theorizes “that varieties of journalism have replaced the realistic novel as the dominant form of writing in America” (xi). Sims also asserts that those who attempted to study this emerging genre discovered “that whatever the form was called, it was ill-defined” (6).<sup>15</sup> At the same time, John Hartsock maintains that “the problem of identification is also

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<sup>15</sup>Hartsock cites Ronald Weber from p. 1 of his *Literature of Fact*, who declares that “this category of serious writing is not well-defined, and the many terms used to describe it..., have done nothing to clarify matters” (6).

political” in the sense that there have always existed rifts between English and journalism departments. He explains that those who are associated with English studies, such as Chris Anderson or Barbara Lounsberry, favor the term “literary nonfiction,” whereas those “affiliated with journalism studies,” such as Connery and Sims, opt for “literary journalism” (6). However, the focus here should be that whatever the nomenclature, more attention needs to be given to the study of nonfiction narrative or imaginative hybrid forms that cannot be easily classified. For as Lounsberry asks: “If we live in an age of nonfiction, then why is critical appreciation of this work so rare?” (“Realtors” xi). That is one of the topics which I propose to elucidate in this thesis.

Albeit the lack of unanimity in this discussion of the terminology, which has been shown to be the case in both the U.S. as well as Latin America, the matter can be summed up in a statement by Hartsock in the conclusion of his work. He insists that anyone who studies this form must face the fact that theoretically, what can be asserted about literary journalism can “often be said of literary nonfiction and vice versa” (251). Consequently, in my examination of Allende’s novels in chapters three and four, I will be using commentary about literary nonfiction and literary journalism interchangeably, depending on what the scholars themselves have chosen to call the genre of nonfiction literary writing about which they are writing. Thus, just as there is no consensus about what to call these hybrid forms, there are no clear-cut borders for writing that claims both the factuality of its discourse and its creativity, and there is much that straddles both sides of the literary fence. Therefore, recalling Bakhtin’s statement at the beginning of chapter one, how can there be any rigid boundaries between genres when literature itself is in constant transformation?

### 2.3 Journalism and Literature in Latin America

In his 1988 investigation *Periodismo y literatura*, Alberto Dallal contends that great strides have been taken in the development of both journalism as well as literature, that have evolved into a “new vision” in the ways that the writer and the journalist produce their works. These in turn have led to the overlapping of both the literary and journalistic genres, as well as a blending of their languages, resulting in a “proliferation” of works that cannot be immediately catalogued as either journalistic or literary. Moreover, Dallal alleges that a new type of novel has arisen that is not easily distinguished from research, reportage, or the chronicle (34).<sup>16</sup> He clarifies this last statement by predicting that literature will again undergo a deep process of transformation, resulting in a new type of literature that will be enhanced by journalism (35).<sup>17</sup> In the same mode, Mario Castro Arenas, one of the precursors in the study of journalism in the novel, whose 1969 work *El periodismo y la novela contemporánea* predates Dallal’s, points out that a “divorce between the novel and journalism” no longer exists, and that without a doubt, a review of the development of the modern novel reveals its comprehensive and consistent journalistic

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<sup>16</sup>“Del desarrollo expansivo de la literatura y el periodismo (temática, estructural, formalmente) ha surgido una ‘nueva visión’ que ha desbordado los recipientes que tradicionalmente mantenían sujetos y apartados a los textos del escritor y del periodista, de suerte que las relaciones establecidas hoy día por ambas actividades se localizan en una imbricación de los géneros literarios y periodísticos, en una yuxtaposición de los lenguajes que otrora ambas actividades utilizaban, en la proliferación de ‘obras’ que antes era posible catalogar rápida y esquemáticamente y que en nuestros días dudamos de catalogar de inmediato como literarias o periodísticas. Hoy por hoy surge una novelística que se confunde con el *estudio* de la investigación especializada y con el reportaje y la crónica” (34).

<sup>17</sup> “[N]o cabe duda de que sobrevendrá una especie de literaturización más acentuada del hacer periodístico, y de que la literatura habrá de sufrir un proceso más profundo de transformación gracias al periodismo” (35).

influence (122).<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Aníbal González asserts that both journalism and the modern novel have been intermingling with and “interpenetrating each other since their respective origins in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” and therefore there are so many similarities between them” (“The Ends of the Text: Journalism in the Fiction of Gabriel García Márquez” 62). He explains this in a later study, by saying that “*difference* is at the heart of the link between literature and journalism,” but at the same time, there is also “[a] dialectic of difference and resemblance” running through each of them (*Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative* 9). He declares that both “narrative fiction and journalism transfer into their respective spheres elements from each other’s domain,” and thus the resulting works are harder to define or categorize (*Journalism* 10). Furthermore, González adds that in the latter half of the twentieth century, narrative journalism has evolved into what he calls a “literary genre of sorts,” and thus the gap between literature and journalism has become “correspondingly smaller” (“Ends” 62). He illustrates this by giving as an example Gabriel García Márquez’s *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (*Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, 1981), saying that it “takes place in that murky region where journalistic reportage and the novel intersect” (“Ends” 66).<sup>19</sup>

In a discussion about journalism in Colombia, Carlos Vidales makes the universal claim that “[l]os literatos crearon el periodismo y los periódicos formaron a los literatos.

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<sup>18</sup> “[E]l divorcio entre novela y periodismo es inexistente. Creemos que la oposición es únicamente el resultado de un prejuicio tendencioso de ambas partes y que, por el contrario, lejos de existir entre novela y periodismo una diferencia intrínseca, el examen de la evolución de la novela contemporánea demuestra la penetrante, sustancial, constante influencia del periodismo sobre ella” (122).

<sup>19</sup> The same could be said of García Márquez’s *Noticias de un secuestro* (1997) (*News of a Kidnaping*; 1998), which *The Chicago Tribune* calls “[a] potent mixture of the newshound’s well-documented detail and the novelist’s tragic vision” (back cover of the 1997 Penguin Books’ translation).

No hubo prensa sin literatos, ni literatura sin expresión periodística” (“men of letters created journalism, and newspapers formed the men of letters. There is no press without men of letters, nor literature without journalistic expression”; cited in Noortwijk and Haastrecht 10). What Vidales affirms about literature and journalism in Colombia could be applied to all of Latin America, as well as Spain.<sup>20</sup> However, as González notes, although it is widely known that there exists a “link between narrative fiction and journalism,” it is also one of the areas of Spanish American literary history that has been the least researched (*Journalism* 6).<sup>21</sup> At the same time, both Vidales’s and González’s statements intimate one of the most common assumptions among the majority of the critics, scholars, or writers themselves, that most of the great writers from Latin America have been journalists (Otero 23; Castro Arenas 11; Acosta Montoro 56; Roy 123; Noortwijk and Haastrecht 7; Pindado 6; Carpentier 5; González, *Journalism* 6).

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<sup>20</sup>Another example is given by Raúl Silva Castro, who attests that Agustín Edwards, an authority of Chilean literature and journalism, claims that any writer of distinction in Chilean literature first honed his intellectual skills in journalism (introduction to *Prensa y periodismo en Chile (1812-1956)*, xii). Edwards’s full statement reads: “Todos los hombres de alguna significación en las letras chilenas han hecho sus primeras armas intelectuales en el periodismo” (xii). Likewise, it should be noted that examples such as Edwards’ abound, and are given in every one of the studies listed below.

<sup>21</sup>He adds that “satisfactory theoretical works are still lacking on the general literary-historical problem of the interaction between narrative fiction and journalism” (7). What González means here is that albeit a few studies have addressed this problem, they have not been comprehensive in scope like his investigation, and they have failed to adequately discuss how journalism interacts with fiction. I not only agree with González, but his claim also coincides with Hartsock’s which will be cited later.

## 2.4 A brief history of the development of literary journalism or literary nonfiction in Latin America

### 2.4.1 The body of the research

Before attempting to summarize a history of Latin America's version of what Pindado calls "the zona de nadie entre la literatura y el periodismo" ("the no-man's land between literature and journalism"; 4), it should be pointed out that the most extensive work, that at the same time is the most comprehensive in its historical coverage, is Anibal González's *Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative* (1993).<sup>22</sup> The premise of his study is that journalistic discourse is "an ongoing and evolving entity," that "is a growing and ever more powerful presence as well as a versatile critical instrument" that Spanish American writers use in their "attempt to pry open the secrets of national identity and of literature itself" (41). Pindado's 1998 work titled *Texto híbrido: entre periodismo y ficción; Periodismo o literatura?*, is useful for a concise look into the development of hybrid prose in Latin America since the first "crónica," and that most closely resembles literary journalism.<sup>23</sup> Pindado explains that the goal of his work is "conocer mejor los rasgos distintivos de los textos híbridos" ("to become more familiar with the distinct traits of hybrid texts"), and, at the same time, to highlight their "valores

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<sup>22</sup>This is also the reason for which I will be using more references to González's work than to any of the others mentioned in this section that deals with the history of journalism's links to narrative fiction in Spanish America. Additionally, one of his articles titled "The Ends of the Text: Journalism in the Fiction of Gabriel García Márquez," will also be used for studying Allende's novels in chapters three and four. I will not be using his *La crónica modernista hispanoamericana* since *Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative* is so thorough in its discussion of how the *modernista* chronicles influenced the contemporary Mexican chronicle.

<sup>23</sup>However, his focus is limited to only one type, specifically the "artículos de opinión," that were published in the Spanish newspaper *El País* by several Latin American authors during the 1980s.



poéticos” (“poetic values”; 4). Annelies van Noortwijk and Anke van Haastrecht’s *Periodismo y literatura* from 1997, is directed more on peninsular literary theory, and although it does contain a few essays that deal with Latin America, only one is historical in scope, and that one exception is Carlos Vidales’s “Colombia: El primer siglo de periodismo (1785-1900).”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Gustavo Otero covers exclusively the history of journalism in the Americas, together with its contribution to the evolution of cities and cultural development, in his well-researched study from 1953 titled *La cultura y el periodismo en América*.<sup>25</sup> José Acosta Montoro’s ambitious work from 1973, titled *Periodismo y literatura*, both volumes I and II, contain a thorough investigation of literature in the history of journalism world-wide, dating from Roman times. The section “Periodismo y literatura” (pp. 50-91 of vol. I), provides valuable explanations and definitions of terminology. Mario Castro Arenas’s *El periodismo y la novela contemporánea* (1969), offers a comprehensive history of the subject its title professes,

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<sup>24</sup>Noortwijk and Haastrecht state that one kind of literary journalism, what they call the “artículo periodístico” (literally “journalistic article,” but whose meaning in English would more closely resemble “editorial essay”), is extremely important and more popular in Spain than anywhere else in Europe, perhaps due to the Spaniards’ spirit of commenting on everything, as well as to their inclination towards “arbitrariness” (8). “Destaca sobre la extraordinaria importancia del artículo periodístico en España, tanto por su abundancia como por su popularidad, mucho más cultivado que en cualquier otro país europeo. Esta desmesurada afición por el artículo se explicaría por encajar éste perfectamente con la manera de expresarse de los españoles, ese gusto por comentar y opinar de todo, que podría provenir de la centenaria tradición del arbitrio en España” (8).

<sup>25</sup>He also insists that in the early years of its formation, journalism in the Americas was always produced by men of letters (23), or by those who not only held some form of degree, but who also possessed a superior cultural, mental, and ethical capacity (24). “Pero, un periodista en nuestra América ha sido siempre un hombre protético y múltiple,... es decir, ha sido escritor, poeta, tribuno y periodista” (23). “Si se considera la gran responsabilidad social del periodista, es indudable, que quien ejerce esta función debe no sólo estar provisto de un título sino de una capacitación superior como cultura mental y ética” (24).

although again with a world-wide scope, like Acosta Montoro's.<sup>26</sup> His study concludes that journalism in the nineteenth century influenced the novel with its scrutiny and examination of reality, in turn contributing to the transformation of society in its "social, political, religious and cultural" aspects, and that these same influences, along with the evolution of its formal characteristics, continued throughout the twentieth century (124).<sup>27</sup> Joaquín Roy's *Periodismo y literatura* (1986), is highly beneficial for its focus on literary journalism, what he calls the "zona fronteriza entre la creación artística y el periodismo" ("the borderland between artistic creation and journalism"), as it was practiced in both Spain and Latin America through 1986. It contains an excellent discussion of the characteristics and poetics of literary journalism as it is employed in Spanish-speaking countries, and will therefore be useful in the analysis of Loaeza's work in chapters five and six. Additionally, Carlos Monsiváis's prologue to his compilation of Mexican chronicles titled *A ustedes les consta*, includes a thorough investigation of the evolution of Mexican journalism, as well as a history of its newspapers and journals. It will be used to trace the almost five hundred year history of the *crónica* in Mexico, as well as its development into a type of literary journalism that is created there today. Likewise, Linda Egan's *Carlos Monsiváis: Culture and Chronicle in Contemporary Mexico* (2001) will be valuable for

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<sup>26</sup>It is worth noting that of the eight studies in Castro Arenas's work, only two focus on Spanish-speaking countries --Spain and Peru. His other investigations include North American, British, French, Italian, German, and Russian novels.

<sup>27</sup>"Resumiendo, es innegable que en el siglo XIX el periodismo influye sobre la novela en su sistema de investigación de la vida social, en el adiestramiento en la observación de la realidad y como difusor de ideas motrices en la transformación social, política, religiosa y cultural. En el XX, la huella del periodismo continúa manteniéndose en estos aspectos, que atienden primordialmente a lo que podríamos denominar la 'materia' de la novela, pero al mismo tiempo avanza en el aspecto formal, en la estructura artística del relato novelístico" (124).

addressing the Mexican *crónica*. In addition, Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen's forthcoming *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre* (2002) is the most updated study of the form, and includes feedback from the chroniclers themselves on what they do in their writing. I will use their introduction for discussing Loaeza as well as the chronicle in general. Furthermore, Ignacio Corona's "Contesting the Lettered City: Cultural Mediation and Communicative Strategies in the Contemporary Chronicle in Mexico" from 2001, and "Cuadrando el círculo: lo latinoamericano como 'hot posmodern.' Preámbulo al estudio a la crónica" from 2000, are concise and informative studies of the chronicle and will also be employed in the examination of Loaeza's texts. Although there are a few other studies, none are as significant as Monsiváis's, Egan's, and Corona's and Jörgensen's works which will prove especially valuable in my discussion of Loaeza. Lastly, John Beverley's *Against Literature* will be the starting point for a discussion of Latin American *testimonio*, the type of literary nonfiction most widely explored by critics and academia in Latin American studies in the last two decades. However, it should be noted that these works listed are not the only ones to be cited or included in the analyses of Allende's and Loaeza's work. I will be employing many others as well, throughout the following chapters.

Finally, each of these literary surveys by Latin American scholars include deliberations about the form's tradition in English-speaking countries as well, for a comparison with their own countries' antecedents of the form. Recalling Fishkin's theory presented previously, about some of the greatest English and American writers whose writing evolved "from fact to fiction," it is not surprising that the same occurred in Spanish-speaking countries, whose literary past, albeit different, is as rich as its English-speaking counterparts. Roy coincides with Fishkin by noting that without considering

their journalistic backgrounds, it would be hard to understand the “evolution” of Hemingway, Steinbeck, Shaw, and Faulkner’s prose. He then states that Uslar Pietri, who also combined journalism with literature, claimed that so too did the great Spanish-speaking writers in the past from both sides of the Atlantic (123).<sup>28</sup> However, it should be mentioned that the examples that Roy mentions are works by Bello in *El Araucano*, Bolívar in *El correo del Orinoco*, Sarmiento in the Chilean press, and Martí in *La Nación*, as well as works by Larra, Unamuno, and Ortega in Spain (123). Yet only Unamuno of these authors achieved fame as novelists, like the ones cited above who wrote in English, whereas the others’ works listed by Roy were all literary journalistic pieces published in newspapers of the time.

#### 2.4.2 Tracing the history of journalism in literature (or hybrid writing) in Latin America from the time of the earliest *crónicas* to the turn of the twentieth century

Pindado points out José Promis’s theory that Christopher Columbus’s first writings, or “*crónicas*”<sup>29</sup> about America, demonstrate the “intercalación o entrelazamiento

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<sup>28</sup> “[T]ampoco tiene nada de extrañar que las grandes figuras de la literatura norteamericana e inglesa hayan sido, por etapas intercambiables, periodistas profesionales y escritores. Sin el periodismo sería bastante difícil comprender la prosa de Hemingway, Steinbeck, Bernard Shaw, Faulkner... Uslar Pietri también unificaba periodismo y literatura: ‘las grandes figuras y las grandes ideas de nuestro pasado se expresaron en la prensa. De un lado y del otro del Atlántico’” (123).

<sup>29</sup>The meaning for these *crónicas* (“chronicles”) should not be misconstrued for the one given by Monsiváis in chapter one about the contemporary Mexican chronicle (“*crónica*”). Here, “chronicles” coincide more closely with Hayden White’s definition: “By common consensus among historians of historical writing, the chronicle form is a ‘higher’ form of historical conceptualization and represents a mode of historiographical representation superior to the annals form... in its greater comprehensiveness, its organization of materials ‘by topics and reigns,’ and its greater narrative coherency. The chronicle also has a central subject, the life of an individual, town, or region, some great undertaking, such as a war or crusade, or some institution... Moreover, the chronicle, like

de episodios ficticios en el relato” (“intercalation or weaving of fictitious episodes in the narrative”). Pindado affirms that they are therefore the starting point for a discussion of hybrid prose in Latin America (8).<sup>30</sup> In the same mode, Monsiváis declares that after “observing, taking notes, comparing and inventing,” the Spanish conquistadors, specifically Cortés in his *Cartas de relación*, and Bernal Díaz in his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, wrote chronicles as a means to record the wonders of a strange new world as well as “to perpetuate their fame.” On the contrary, he sustains that the missionaries, like Motolinía, Sahagún, Mendieta or Durán, wrote them not for fame, but to preserve what they could of the natives’ ancient traditions, including their poetry. Moreover, he says that although the chronicles cannot be considered fine writing, Humboldt noted that real feelings about the marvels of the New World is more readily seen in the accounts by these chroniclers than in that of any of the artists or poets (Prologue to *A ustedes les consta* 17).<sup>31</sup> In *Carlos Monsiváis: Culture and Chronicle in*

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the annals, but unlike history, does not so much ‘conclude’ as simply terminate; typically it lacks closure, that summing up of the ‘meaning’ of the chain of events with which it deals that we normally expect from the well-made story” (“The Value of Narrativity” 19-20).

<sup>30</sup>Gustavo Otero also discusses the earliest journalistic writings in chapter one of *La cultura y el periodismo en América*, during what he calls the “Ciclo 1492-1550.” His focus however, is on “El periodismo de América en función social de la vida de las ciudades” (“Journalism of the Americas in the social function of city life”; 9). Likewise, chapters two through five cover the development of writing up until 1825, again centralizing on the foundation of cities and social issues.

<sup>31</sup>“Los cronistas de las Indias observan, anotan, comparan, inventan ... La crónica primitiva no corresponde por sus fines a las bellas letras, pero las inaugura y hasta cierto punto las acompaña. Fue empeño de conquistadores, deseosos de perpetuar su fama; de misioneros que, en contacto con el alma indígena y desdefiosos de la notoriedad, ni siquiera se apresuraron muchas veces a publicar sus libros, y a quienes debemos cuanto nos ha llegado de la antigua poesía autóctona... Humboldt lo advertirá: la emoción auténtica ante las maravillas del Nuevo Mundo es más verificable en los cronistas que en los poetas” (17).

*Contemporary Mexico*, Linda Egan adds that these chronicles “institutionalized the mixed voice.” She insists that the same way that contemporary chroniclers expropriate the fiction writers “internal point of view,” so too did Bernal Díaz by telling us what Cortés or some of the other men were thinking (107).<sup>32</sup>

Anibal Gonzalez maintains that the next instance where “the mimetic relation between narrative fiction and journalism” emerges, would be in the writing that appeared around the end of the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, in their joint effort opposing the authority of the discourses of “religion, the law, and the state,” whose writers alleged themselves to be the sole standard bearers of truth (*Journalism* 13). Nevertheless, he claims that if one were to “broadly summarize” the history of the relationship between literature and journalism in Spanish America, it would begin during the wars of independence from Spain at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when “journalism was placed in the service of nation-building.” And although there was already a proliferation of newspapers from colonial times, broadsides, journals and pamphlets also appeared, especially where the “struggle against Spain was fiercest,” or where “reforming and modernizing impulses took hold among the elite” (*Journalism* 15-16). González adds that albeit these publications are frequently labeled “journalism of opinion,” he would classify them as “brazenly partisan and often violently polemic.” Furthermore, the articles

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<sup>32</sup>She illustrates this in an anecdote explaining that right after Cortés had killed the former Aztec leader Cuauhtémoc for treason, which Díaz felt was bad judgment, he and his men were lost in the jungles of Central America, much to Cortés’s consternation. Díaz then blames his boss’s insomnia and bad mood on a guilty conscience. When Cortés fell and suffered a head injury due to lack of sleep, Díaz explains the injury by implying that it was “poetic justice meted out by pagan America itself” (107). Egan is paraphrasing from part 2, p. 278 of Díaz’s *Historia verdadera*.

demonstrate “the stylistic influence of oratory and drama,” and were intended “to be read aloud to the illiterate masses” (*Journalism* 17).

González attests that the first major text would be the Mexican Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s work of narrative prose called *El Periquillo Sarniento* (*The Itching Parrot*), that came out in a time of heavy censorship, in the midst of the war of independence from Spain in 1816. González professes that it is ironic that “Spanish America’s first self-proclaimed novel<sup>33</sup> was actually a covert form of journalism, a pamphlet ‘in drag,’ passing itself off as a work of narrative fiction” (*Journalism* 40). He also holds that *El Periquillo* does not just resemble a novel because Lizardi calls it one, “but because it incorporates characters, situations, and figures” drawn from the most readily discernible novelistic genre at that time, “the picaresque.”<sup>34</sup> At the same time, he adds that it would be nearly futile to try to differentiate parts of *El Periquillo*’s discourse “from that of the newspapers and gazettes of its day.” Therefore, González claims that it was at the level of rhetoric, where the discourses of both narrative fiction and journalism are indistinguishable in that “murky no-man’s land of figural language shared by all discourses,” that Lizardi was able to express his opinions through the voices of his fictional characters, thereby eluding the

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<sup>33</sup>González uses “self-proclaimed” as a qualifier, because he contends that “*El Periquillo* cannot be considered the ‘origin’ of the modern Spanish American novel, whose roots go back to Colonial works such as Sigüenza y Góngora’s *Los infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* (1693) and Carrió de la Vandra’s *Lazarillo de ciegos caminantes* (1773).” He adds that “[t]he facts of literary history plainly show that the novel has been created and recreated in Spanish America many times and in different places” (*Journalism* 40).

<sup>34</sup>González theorizes that *El Periquillo* could be considered an allegory of Lizardi’s own occupation as a pamphleteer of the time, in other words, “the journalist as *pícaro*, living by his wits, relying on many masters (his readers), using the figural, dissimulating powers of language to attract some readers and to protect himself from others” (*Journalism* 36-37).

editorship of the times (*Journalism* 38-39). Although *El Periquillo* is often considered just a “critique of manners and mores in late-colonial Mexico,” González affirms that because of its furtive incorporation of journalism into its discourse, it becomes a “sophisticated writing lesson,” that is “closer in spirit to the ‘boom’ narratives of the 1960s than to the highly canonized ‘national romances’ of the nineteenth century.” He adds that *El Periquillo*’s investigation into “dissimulation, disguises, and masks in the context of Mexican society prefigures a highly productive thematic vein of Mexican literature,” which is detected in the twentieth century in writers as different as “Rodolfo Usigli, Salvador Elizondo, Carlos Fuentes, and Octavio Paz” (*Journalism* 126).

González asserts that the next major work of journalistic discourse combined with a “novelistic character” is Domingo F. Sarmiento’s *Facundo, o Civilización y barbarie* (1845). He declares that although it was initially considered a “political pamphlet aimed to persuade and move public opinion,” it expanded into “something that outlived its original intent.” He alleges that it is not only “sensationalist journalism,” but it is also a “crime story.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, he argues that the pamphlets and journals from the time of Spanish American independence, ought to be regarded as “precursors” of journalistic

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<sup>35</sup>González concludes “that *Facundo*, the most enduring of Sarmiento’s works, is imbued with the melodramatic rhetoric of journalistic sensationalism, one it shares, to be sure, with the *roman-feuilleton*, as well as with the crime stories that were the *feuilleton*’s main source of inspiration. This rhetoric gives *Facundo* its literariness and its novelistic qualities, but also keeps it in an inchoate state due to journalism’s counterbalancing insistence on veracity and verifiability” ( 47). At the same time, it is worth noting that González’s thorough coverage of sensationist journalism and the crime story –in both the historical realm as well as definitions and examples– in chapter three of his *Journalism* titled “Sarmiento and sensationalist journalism: *Facundo* as crime story,” is comparable in scope to Hartsock’s exhaustive treatment of the subject in chapter four of his *History* titled “Narrative Literary Journalism, Sensational Journalism, and Muckraking.”



sensationalism (*Journalism* 42-47).<sup>36</sup> Additionally, besides *Facundo*, other works of nineteenth century Spanish American narrative, that reside in what Roy calls the “zona fronteriza entre la creación artística y el periodismo” (“borderland between artistic creation and journalism”; 28), are the literary essays by Andrés Bello in *El Araucano*, Simón Bolívar in *El correo del Orinoco*, Sarmiento in the Chilean press, and José Martí in *La Nación* (123).<sup>37</sup> In the case of Martí, Roy points out that his articles about the United States, that were initially labeled “crónicas,” evolved into, or “became” essays, fifty years later (28).<sup>38</sup> This illustrates Acosta Montoro’s assumption, that “[e]l ‘periodismo’ es la historia del presente, y la historia es el ‘periodismo’ del pasado” (“‘journalism’ is the history of the present, and history is the ‘journalism’ of the past”; 56).

Nevertheless, Martí is only one of a group that includes Manuel Guitiérrez Nájera, Rubén Darío, Amado Nervo, and Tomás Gómez Carrillo, part of whose work is what González calls the “modernist chronicles.” He defines these chronicles as a “genre,”

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<sup>36</sup>González adds that the form that journalistic sensationalism took in the United States and Europe, and which is what Sarmiento used in the 1840s, “is essentially narrative: It tells a story, and the more lurid and unusual, the better” (*Journalism* 44).

<sup>37</sup>These works, mentioned by Roy earlier, have also been included in the studies of all of the other scholars. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that all of the other studies bring up more English-speaking writers of the form than they do of those who wrote in Spanish, except of course, González and Roy. See especially Acosta Montoro, pp. 75-77, and Castro Arenas, pp. 7-15. The reason for this could be that the other studies predated González’s and Roy’s and until these examinations were published, there were none that dealt with Latin American literary journalistic essays in depth. González was the only one who dared to venture any theory on journalism in the novel. That is why I am tracing journalism in literature and literary journalism in both Spanish and English-speaking countries, to provide a source of reference that is thorough in its scope and that will be useful for comparative studies of the form on either side of the border.

<sup>38</sup>“José Martí tuvo que esperar medio siglo para ver cómo sus ‘crónicas’ sobre Estados Unidos eran encuadernados y se convertían por derecho propio en ‘ensayos’” (28).

comprising “brief articles on virtually any subject,” that were penned in a “self-consciously literary style,” and intended “to be entertaining as well as informative” (*Journalism* 84). He contends that these “chronicles became literary laboratories” where their authors experimented with innovative styles and ideas that they shared with other writers.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, these writers, whose chronicles most closely resemble today’s literary journalism, were for the most part dependant on the publication of their work by the newspapers for their livelihood, and hence linked to journalism in a practical way. It is therefore ironic, that although they started in journalism, some later saw themselves as only artists, thereby professing “journalism’s fundamental incompatibility with literature as an art,”<sup>40</sup> disintegrating, at least for a time, “the close relationship between journalism and narrative fiction” that had been noticeable in Spanish America since before the wars of independence (González, *Journalism* 17-18). Monsiváis illustrates this by citing Rubén Darío, who criticizes Martí for wasting his literary talent on “simply anything,” when there is “nobody on earth” who can measure up to his mastery of stylistic devices. Yet, like Monsiváis points out, so too did Darío waste his “diamonds,” i.e. talent, on journalism,

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<sup>39</sup>González says that the chronicles often made up “more than two-thirds of an author’s published writings,” as seen in many of the Modernists’ *obras completas* (*Journalism* 84).

<sup>40</sup>González cites an excerpt from a caustic condemnation of the corruption of journalism, written by the Modernist Cuban poet Julián del Casal in an essay in 1893: “Journalism, as it is understood today among us, is the most nefarious institution for those who, not knowing how to place their pen in the service of petty causes, or disdaining the ephemeral applause of the crowds, are possessed by the love of art. But of art for art’s sake, not of that art that predominates in our society, that repugnant mass of local excrement which, like rotting food on golden dishes, is served up daily by the press to its readers” (*Journalism* 84).

even admitting that it provided good “exercise” for bolstering one’s writing skills (prologue to *A ustedes* 35).<sup>41</sup>

However, González indicates that besides the modernist chronicles, there were many other works of narrative fiction from the same time period that also displayed marked characteristics of journalistic discourse. He lists some that were first circulated serially in newspapers: José Marmol’s *Amalia* (1851-55), Manuel Payno’s *Los bandidos de Río Frío* (1889-91), and Ricardo Palma’s *Tradiciones peruanas* (1872-1883); as well as some of the realist and naturalist novels from the 1870s and 1890s (*Journalism* 17). Of these works, González points out the importance of Palma’s *Tradiciones*, whose wielding of information obtained from “Colonial as well as contemporary Peruvian newspapers and journals,” demonstrate his direct awareness of the history of Peruvian journalism (*Journalism* 67). González cites from a letter written by Palma to Alberto Larco Herrera in 1907, where Palma defines his form: “The tradición is not so much history as folk narrative, and, as you know, common folk are the biggest liars. People have taken a liking to [my tradiciones] not because they contain much truth, but because they reveal the spirit and expression of the multitudes” (*Journalism* 62). Likewise, González features Palma’s *Tradiciones* as demonstrative of a unique form of writing that he claims, “are antigenealogical” since they are neither “essay, nor short story, nor essay on manners, nor legend” (*Journalism* 63). Accordingly, they defy classification by crossing borders of

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<sup>41</sup>“Martí, –dice el admirable cronista Rubén Darío– gasta sus diamantes en cualquier cosa. Sus prodigalidades de Aladino no deben asombrar. No hay sobre la tierra quien arriende mejor un periodo y guíe una frase en el *steepchase* vertiginoso, como él; no hay quien tenga una troj de adjetivos como la suya, ni un tesoro de adverbios, ni una *ménagerie* de metáforas, ni un Tequendame verbal como el suyo.... Darío también gasta sus diamantes en el periodismo seguro de que “no mata sino a los débiles. Un intelectual no encontrará en la tarea periodística sino una gimnasia que lo robustece” (35).

genres in their exposition of the history and culture of their time, illustrating Bakhtin's theory about how not only literature is continually transforming by crossing "the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature," but even the borders themselves are in continuous transmutation (*The Dialogic Imagination* 33). At the same time, some of these *tradiciones* --the ones that are taken from contemporary newspapers-- resemble literary journalism, in the way that they focus on the depiction of popular culture, and narrate events of the moment in a literary style.

#### 2.4.3 Latin America's journalistic literature in the twentieth century

González points out that the Modernists' claim of journalism's elemental disparity with literature as an art, was broken in the 1920s with the avant-garde writers who wanted to "escape from literary tradition," and felt that they could do so by imitating "journalism and its devices" (*Journalism* 104). Additionally, he contends that a lot of the characteristics of avant-garde literature are also features that it either shares with or appropriates from journalism. He enumerates them as: "the demotion of the author, the spatialization of language, the passion for novelty, action, and color, and the penchant for brevity and synthesis" (*Journalism* 103). He affirms that some of the most apparent and notable examples can be found in Jorge Luis Borges's work, especially in his collection of stories called *Historia universal de la infamia* (*Universal History of Infamy*, 1935). González asserts that not only were the stories based on actual crimes and criminals that had been in newspapers, but also Borges's inclusion of a "brief bibliography of sources at the end of the book," render the work as journalistic (*Journalism* 104-105). Nevertheless, González warns that in reality, "the avant-garde's apparent embrace of journalism" hid a "strategy to undermine the ideological prestige and power of journalistic discourse," that

was rooted in journalism's presumed capability "to become a transparent medium for facts." But, at the same time, he insists that once they carried out this critique, Spanish American writers again began to "deal with journalism on an equal footing," as they had done before the turn of the century. In addition, González holds that "other precursors of the 'boom,'" including Alejo Carpentier, along with "the novelists of the 'boom' themselves," continued to break down "the hierarchical difference between journalistic and fictional discourses" (*Journalism* 108).

Furthermore, González declares that "contemporary Spanish American fiction" continues to establish its connection to journalism, not only through its use of journalistic discourse, but also to its link "to ethical or moral considerations." He adds that journalism has infused "an ethics of writing" into contemporary Spanish American narrative (*Journalism* 111). He purports that the "return to ethics" is essentially due to the writers' prominent roles in their societies, and therefore their "greater access to journalism and the media." But the greater their name recognition, the greater the responsibility of that prominence. He explains that as "the influence of religious discourse" has declined,<sup>42</sup> the "journalistic code of ethics" has become "analogous to the physicians Hippocratic Oath." Hence, González holds that contemporary Spanish American fiction has essentially supplanted "religious discourse with journalism as a textual marker for ethical or moral issues," and lists as examples Julio Cortázar's *Libro de Manuel* (*Manual for Manuel*, 1973), Mario Vargas Llosa's *La tía Julia y el escribidor* (*Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, 1973) and *La guerra del fin del mundo* (*The War of the End of the World*, 1981), as well

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<sup>42</sup>González states that nineteenth century Spanish American writers, whether believers or not, broached ethical questions "in a language fraught with religious overtones." He gives Palma's *Tradiciones* as an example, referring to his "frequent allusions to the Devil as an emblem of social satire" (*Journalism* 110).

as García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* from 1981 (*Journalism* 109-110). Moreover, González raises some questions about these ethical implications in writing, for which he says there are no simple answers. One is singularly pertinent to this dissertation, for it is relevant to the discussion of Allende's novels in chapter three, as well as to Loaeza's chronicles in chapter six: "Does fiction writing tend to be complicitous with the sources of social and political oppression, or is it, on the contrary, an inherently subversive and antiauthoritarian activity?" (*Journalism* 111).<sup>43</sup> The first part of this question does not correspond to either writer, for if so, they would be promoters of right-wing propaganda. Yet the latter part is applicable to both authors, since Allende's novels set in Chile reveal the deceit of the military regime, and Loaeza continuously attacks the powers that be in Mexico with her trademark irony and humor in her chronicles. This question will be deliberated again in the chapters pointed out above.

González discusses another kind of writing that took its inspiration from the anthropological approach to the "life history," as well as from the new journalist writers like Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer: Spanish American documentary fiction. He adds that documentary narratives affirm the earnest and personal commitment of their authors to "the social and political issues of their day." He highlights the Mexican Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* (*Until I See You, My Jesus*, 1969) and *La noche*

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<sup>43</sup>Another question is: "What does it mean to be a writer in countries where the vast majority of the population is illiterate?" This question does not really pertain to either Allende or Loaeza for the way that it is worded. Allende has resided in the United States since 1988 and her country --from which she had to exile herself-- was Chile, whose population is mostly literate. Likewise, Loaeza's country is Mexico, and although a large majority is poor and unable to afford books, the vast majority is not illiterate. Lastly, he asks: "Can one truly write 'beyond good and evil,' or does all fiction contain implicit moral judgments?"(111). The latter part of this question could be applied to Loaeza's writing, since so much of what she does concerns "value judgments." This will be addressed in chapters five and six.

*de Tlalteloco* (*Massacre in Mexico*, 1971) as two of the “most ambitious” and noteworthy examples. In both of these works, González maintains that although the persona of the journalist is significant, it either lingers in the background in *Hasta*, or emerges in *Noche* as simply an “editor and transcriber of the voices and the documents” presented in the text. Consequently, he professes that documentary fiction displays itself “as a nonliterary, direct transcription of the human voice,” as is the case with Jesusa Palancares in *Hasta*, or “the protesters in *Noche*.” Hence he declares that journalism is similar to documentary narrative in its effort “to create an impression of immediacy” by converting language into a candid, distinct means of communication (*Journalism* 121-122). Documentary fiction will be discussed again in the examination of Allende’s novels, specifically in the narrations of intense historical drama such as the coup and its aftermath in Chile in chapter three, and the Viet Nam war in chapter four.

Likewise, this sense of “immediacy” for transcribing the voices of those marginalized by society is characteristic of *testimonio*, one of the areas of literary nonfiction writing in Latin America that Jørgensen claims has received the most attention in the past two decades (“Facing Facts” 119).<sup>44</sup> John Beverley defines *testimonio* as an essentially distinct narrative mode that “is not, to begin with, *fiction*, because we are supposed to consider both the speaker and events narrated as real” [Beverley’s emphasis]. At the same time, and perhaps more importantly for it is in keeping within a context of literary journalism, he notes that the “legal-religious connotation implicit in its convention implies a pledge of honesty or sincerity on the part of the narrator that the

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<sup>44</sup>The other area is autobiography, and will not be included in this discussion of literary nonfiction since it will not be studied in this dissertation.

interlocutor/reader is bound to respect” (*Against Literature* 73-74).<sup>45</sup> Beverley also states that the *testimonio*’s roots go back to colonial times with the *crónicas* (eyewitness narrative accounts) of the Spanish conquistadors,<sup>46</sup> and continue in the nineteenth century with the *costumbrista* national essays and the war diaries of military leaders such as Bolívar or Martí. The tradition arose again in the 1960s with the “direct participant accounts of political and guerrilla activism, usually presented without literary pretensions,” such as Che Guevara’s *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (*Against* 71-72).<sup>47</sup> The kind of *testimonio* that the majority of scholars or critics perceive to be the most readily recognizable is Rigoberta Menchú’s *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (*I, Rigoberta Menchú, an Indian Woman in Guatemala*; 1984). It involves a first-person narration “by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of events he or she recounts,” and “not a professional writer” (Beverley, *Against* 70). This model will be included in the analysis of Allende’s *El plan infinito* in chapter four. Nevertheless, another type that will be used for the examination of Allende’s novels in both chapters three and four, is what Beverley labels the “novela-testimonio.” He provides as an example the Cuban writer Miguel Barnet’s *Biografía de un cimarrón* (*Autobiography of a*

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<sup>45</sup>In the same mode, Jörgensen adds that Latin American *testimonio* “places special demands on us to read the testimonial act of witnessing as both factual and true” (“Facing” 120).

<sup>46</sup>For examples he gives Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (*A True History of the Conquest of New Spain*) and Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca’s *Nafragios* (*Shipwrecked*).

<sup>47</sup>In the same vein, Abril Trigo holds that “testimonios existed long before the enshrining of *testimonio* by US academics,” and are “densely allied to journalism, the chronicle, and political activism” (“Why Do I Do Cultural Studies?” 79).



*runaway slave*, 1966),<sup>48</sup> and maintains that the U.S. version would be *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (1970) (*Against* 71-72). However, the discussion of the testimonial novel in chapter three will center on Chile's testimonial literature that arose after the Pinochet-led coup of 1973 and its aftermath. On the other hand, the focus of chapter four's study of *testimonio* will incorporate not only Beverley's model of the "novela-testimonio," but also the kind generated in Menchú's work

As I end this short summary of Latin America's journalistic literature and literary nonfiction in the twentieth century, I should add that Loeza's work that will be examined in chapters five and six is a unique kind of literary journalism called the contemporary Mexican chronicle. Therefore, a separate investigation is warranted that will trace and examine this particular area of hybrid prose exclusively. The study which follows will first start with a brief overview of the type of literary journalism practiced in Latin America, and will continue with an examination of the Mexican *crónica*.

#### 2.4.4 Latin America's version of literary journalism in the twentieth century

Miguel Angel Díez, the director of ALA at the time, makes the claim in his introduction to Joaquín Roy's *Periodismo y Literatura* (1986), that ALA was the precursor in what he calls a "género" ("genre") that was "[n]i mera crónica, ni literatura," (neither merely chronicle, nor literature"), but rather that "zona fronteriza entre la creación ensayística y el periodismo" ("borderland between the essay and journalism"; 11-12).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Beverley notes that Barnet alleged that "he was adding a literary dimension to what began simply as an ethnographic document" (*Against* 72).

<sup>49</sup>ALA is the "Agencia Latinoamericana," ("American Literary Agency"), founded by the Aragonese journalist Joaquín Maurín Juliá in 1948 in New York. Díez asserts that

Roy claims in the prologue to his *Periodismo y Literatura*, that he does not intend to offer any definitive theory on either the essay or journalism, but rather to “explorar el territorio que ambos comparten” (“explore the territory that both share”; 13). Yet he warns that there are numerous definitions of the essay, many of which albeit creative are inaccurate, and accordingly declares the best source to be José Luis Gómez Martínez’s *Teoría del ensayo* (1981). Roy draws from Gómez’s study to establish what he maintains are the essential characteristics of the genre, especially those that correlate most closely to journalism. He lists them as 1) currency of the topic, 2) the writer’s role as expert of that topic, without being comprehensive in its treatment or precise in citing sources, 3) subjectivity versus objectivity, 4) conversational style without fear of digressing from the topic and making suggestions to the reader (who should be regarded as an active participant in the narrative), 5) absence of a definitive structure, 6) universality of themes. He adds that all of these features should be accompanied by a pronounced style (31-32).<sup>50</sup> Roy concludes that some journalistic genres can occupy territory bordering on the essay,

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although it operates out of the United States, it is an independent journalistic organization controlled by Latin Americans, that provides service to more than 150 newspapers in both Spain and the Americas (11-12). Roy says that in 1981, Miami University (in Florida) acquired all of the archives of ALA (15). He includes in a footnote (pp. 15-16) that the archives were comprised of more than 30,000 pages, including over 17,000 articles and 1,300 letters, and insists they are an important part of the intellectual history of both Spain and Latin America, that spanned a period of almost 40 years.

<sup>50</sup> “Entre las características consustanciales al ensayo, Gómez Martínez destaca las siguientes, que resultarán fructíferas al investigador de la relación con el periodismo: actualidad del tema tratado, no resultar exhaustivo en el tratamiento de los temas, el papel del escritor como especialista, la imprecisión en las citas, el aspecto subjetivo, el carácter dialogal, la ausencia de una estructura rígida, la presencia de digresiones, la función de sugerencia al lector, al que se considera como miembro activo de la creación ensayística, y la universalidad de la temática. Todo esto deberá estar acompañado de una voluntad de estilo” (31-32). It should be noted that Roy is paraphrasing from pp. 83-84 of Gómez Martínez’s *Teoría*.

namely the “editorial” and the “artículo interpretativo” (literally an “interpretative article”).<sup>51</sup> He attests that the latter embodies what Alexander Stitch, in a 1972 article titled “Persuasive Style: Its Relation to Technical and Artistic Styles,” calls a “persuasive-functional style,” as well as emotion, subjectivity, and personally addressing or involving the reader (32).

Most of these guidelines laid out by Roy coincide with the kind of literary journalism practiced by Mitchell, Liebling, et al, whose articles were published in *The New Yorker*, previously referred to as the “champion of a narrative literary journalism” in the U.S. from the time of its origin in 1925 (Hartsock169).<sup>52</sup> Roy himself acknowledges this connection, by noting that in English departments across the U.S., the anthologies that are used for teaching the essay consist mainly of writing that was first published in weekly

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<sup>51</sup>“Ahora bien, algunos géneros periodísticos (resultados de las varias funciones del periodismo) pueden ocupar zonas tangenciales con el ensayo: el editorial y el artículo interpretativo” (32).

<sup>52</sup>In sections 2.6.5 and 2.6.6, similarities will be shown by scholars of U.S. literary journalism that correspond with most of these characteristics. Regarding feature number 1, Yagoda uses the term “currency” and Sims and Kramer use “actuality” (section 2.6.6). For the first part of number 2, Sims insists that literary journalists must do extensive investigation through “immersion” or what Wolfe calls “saturation reporting,” which would afford them expertise on their subject matter. Likewise, Lounsbury stresses the importance of “exhaustive research” for writers of “literary or artistic nonfiction,” and with Talese, refers to the same thing as “reality researched” (section 2.2.6). Referring to number 3, Connery maintains how literary journalism must “make a statement or provide an interpretation” about the culture or people presented (2.6.5). Number 5 corresponds with Sims who also emphasizes how the structure of each piece should have its own dynamic and not conform to any formula (section 2.6.6). Additionally, Gómez’s claim at the end about a “pronounced style” corresponds to Lounsbury’s “fine writing,” “the writer’s artistry” (2.6.5), and with Talese to “reality presented –with style,” or to Yagoda’s “style as substance” (2.6.6). On the other hand, although the second part of number 2 and numbers 4 and 6 do not compare to U.S. literary journalism, they do correspond to the Mexican chronicle which will be discussed in section 2.5.

journals such as *The New Yorker* or *Harper* (33).<sup>53</sup> However, the reason for the correlation would most likely be due to the fact that ALA adapted the North American model into its version of literary journalism (27-28).<sup>54</sup> ALA's founder, Joaquín Maurín Juliá, corroborates this in a letter dated from July of 1955, to the Spanish writer Juan Antonio Cabezas, who found it difficult to adjust to ALA's standards, but who wanted to have his articles published in its syndicated dailies. Maurín explains to Cabezas that if he wants to continue working for ALA,<sup>55</sup> he will have to immediately conform to American standards of journalism, i.e., to "Americanize" his articles as much as possible by writing a

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<sup>53</sup>It should be noted that the type of literary journalism published in these magazines would be referred to as either "stories" or "human interest stories" in the U.S., but *not* "essays," as would be the case in Spanish-speaking countries. Roy defines the term "story" in Spanish as "reportaje" (122) and Corona and Jörgensen use "notas de color" for human interest stories (introduction to *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle*, 6). On the other hand, the inclusion of these pieces of literary journalism, i.e. these "stories," into anthologies on the essay just underscores once again the fluid nature of the genre. One of the examples that Roy gives is Deanne K. Milan and Naomi Cooks Rattner's anthology from 1979 titled *Forms of the Essay*. Currently, works that would have been included in the past in that type of anthology, would now be seen in collections with "literary nonfiction" or literary journalism" in their titles. See for examples Sims's 1984 *The Literary Journalists* or Chris Anderson's *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy* from 1989.

<sup>54</sup>"ALA tuvo que asimilar rápidamente toda la evolución del periodismo moderno y la adaptación del modelo norteamericano a las características de los rotativos hispanoamericanos, en un terreno tangencial entre la literatura y la información que apenas había sido trillada por los especialistas" (27-28).

<sup>55</sup>Roy notes that Maurín hired Cabezas in order to be able to bring news about Spain to ALA's Spanish American readers (50). "La contratación de los trabajos de Cabezas tenía el objetivo de distribuir material sobre España para los hispanoamericanos" (50). On the other hand, Pindado's study centers on the Latin American authors (Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, Cristina Peri-Rossi, Mario Benedetti, Mario Vargas Llosa) whose literary journalism was published in the Spanish newspaper *El País* for the same reason, except that this time, the Spanish *El País* would be bringing news about Latin America to its readers in Spain.

story based on a current event (44).<sup>56</sup> He warns him that some of its syndicated dailies have already stopped publishing his articles for following too closely the European model, and not the North American kind to which they are accustomed (45).<sup>57</sup> Consequently, since Cabezas could not tailor his writing to American journalistic style, by being both informative as well as “palpitating with news of the moment,” he was told that ALA was no longer interested in his work (46).<sup>58</sup> Roy summarizes Maurín’s requirements as factual-based accounts that are based on real news of the moment, that allow the reader to experience the places presented by the writer (46-47).<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, in his discussion of the characteristics of ALA’s literary journalism, particularly the “artículo de opinión” (literally “opinion article”), Roy refers to Amando de Miguel’s list of features for the form: 1) “a provocative title that attracts the reader’s

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<sup>56</sup>“No sabemos hasta qué punto a usted le interesa seguir colaborando con nosotros. Pero en el caso de que no le disguste, convendría adaptarse lo más posible a la manera periodística americana. Es decir, sobre un tema de actualidad –aunque sea insignificante– construir una crónica-reportaje. Es nuestro interés que usted siga colaborando con nosotros, y por eso, haciéndonos eco de nuestra experiencia, le invitamos a americanizar tanto como sea posible sus correspondencias, que a nosotros, personalmente, nos parecen admirables, pero que tienen que ser sometidas a la dura prueba de un público hecho a una manera especial de considerar el periodismo” (44).

<sup>57</sup>“Hemos observado una publicación menos frecuente de sus en los diarios a que servimos, y creemos que eso es debido a que la prensa latinoamericana, influenciada por la de Estados Unidos, tiene características que la diferencian considerablemente del periodismo europeo” (45).

<sup>58</sup>“Como motivo de los artículos no nos interesa: ni historia, ni crítica bibliográfica, ni interviús. Tampoco estamos interesados en un nuevo desarrollo de un tema ya desarrollado por usted anteriormente. Su tendencia a hacer *crónicas* –es usted un maravilloso cronista– no corresponde al periodismo americano, que desea que los artículos sean informativos y palpitantes de actualidad” (46).

<sup>59</sup>“Tres son las características de los artículos que Maurín aconsejaba a Cabezas como ideales: actualidad, basarse en hechos y que diera al lector la impresión de estar ‘viajando’ a los lugares tratados por el autor.”

attention;” 2) a persuasive first line, that serves as a “*lead*”; 3) a meaning that is essentially contradictory in nature; 4) “documentation to support the thesis”; 5) a circular ending. In addition, Roy holds that ALA’s opinion articles employ a formula based on the balance of the following elements: “culture, lyricism, melancholy, refinement, and currency” (110).<sup>60</sup> The features or poetics of this type of article compare precisely to those used in syndicated columns, such as the kind created by Ellen Goodman or George Will in the U.S., or Carlos Monsiváis or Guadalupe Loaeza in Mexico.

In order to obtain these characteristics, Roy uses Arturo Villar’s survey. Villar requested theories on poetics from the literary journalists who collaborated with ALA, specifically asking them “for whom, why, and how they write” (110).<sup>61</sup> It is worth mentioning that Sims did the same thing several years later to establish the characteristics of literary journalism in the U.S., by getting feedback from the writers themselves on how they would define the form.<sup>62</sup> The Venezuelan Uslar Pietri responded that the question left him baffled because it made him realize that he is not only unaware of how or in what

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<sup>60</sup>Roy is citing from de Miguel’s *Sociología de las páginas de opinión*, Barcelona: Ate, 1982, p. 21. “Las técnicas de este género serán las siguientes: 1) un título provocador que atraiga la atención del lector; 2) una frase inicial efectiva, como el *lead*; 3) sentido paradójico con uso aparentemente contradictorio de negaciones; 4) documentación para respaldar la tesis; 5) un final que cierra el círculo. A la vista de numerosos ejemplos, los artículos de opinión usan una fórmula basada en el equilibrio de estos ingredientes: cultura, lírica, melancolía, amenidad y actualidad” (110).

<sup>61</sup>“Arturo Villar solicitó a los colaboradores más destacados que mandaran sus teorías acerca del género de sus escritos. Concretamente se les preguntaba para quién escribían, por qué escribían, y cómo escribían” (110).

<sup>62</sup>This idea of asking the practitioners themselves rather than looking at the existing theories was a proposition advanced by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his 1973 work *The Interpretation of Cultures*: “[I]f you want to understand what a science is, you should look in the first instance not at its theories or findings, and certainly not at what its apologists say about it; you should look at what the practitioners of it do” (5).

manner he writes, but that if he does have a method of writing, he must do it without recognizing how he does it (Roy 110).<sup>63</sup> Roy highlights other commentaries to Villar's queries. He says that Germán Arciniegas, one of the most widely read column writers on the continent, retorted that his biggest obstacle resides in the fact that creating interest is such a problem because what interests *him* "lacks importance" (111).<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the Cuban writer Carlos Alberto Montaner replied to Villar that he was not sure that his articles were even any good, and much less if he had a "recipe" for them (Roy 110).<sup>65</sup> In a similar mode, the Uruguayan writer Dora Isella Russell's response echos Montaner. She also claims that "there is no recipe," except maybe for candor about what is said, and the total commitment of the writer to his or her task (111).<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the Panamanian Gloria Guardia's contention is that the commentator's job is based on the ethic of his/her "inalienable right" to total freedom of thought and speech, at the same time denouncing

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<sup>63</sup>"Se me pide que explique la manera y el método que empleo para escribir un artículo de prensa. La pregunta me deja un poco perplejo. La verdad ahora me doy cuenta, es que no sé bien cómo, ni de qué manera lo hago, y si hay algún método que aplico, acaso sin darme cuenta" (110). This statement is taken from "El arte de escribir" (The Art of Writing), *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, marzo de 1979, pp. 57-59.

<sup>64</sup>"La dificultad para mí está en que me interesan cosas que carecen de importancia. Crear el interés es un lío" (111). This is taken from "Asuntos muertos y asuntos vivos" ("Dead and Live Affairs"), *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, enero de 1979, pp. 44-46.

<sup>65</sup>"Ni yo estaba seguro de que fueran buenos, ni mucho menos de tener una receta" (110). This is from *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, noviembre de 1978, pp. 56-57.

<sup>66</sup>"No hay receta. Acaso, la de ser sinceros, la de ponerse enteros en lo que se dice; la de acometer con entusiasmo la tarea" (111). This is taken from "Literatura y periodismo," *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, enero de 1979, pp. 44-46.

anything or anyone that would attempt to control ideologically the will of the people (Roy 111).<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, Roy asserts that Montaner rendered what could be the most solid poetics of the article or journalistic essay: 1) a refined title to attract the attention of the educated reader; 2) a first paragraph that grabs the reader's attention; 3) a five-hundred word limit; 4) a uniquely personal style; 5) rudimentary syntax; 6) a topic of human interest; 7) an ethical perspective that forbids deceit; 8) a circular ending (110-111).<sup>68</sup> To these Roy adds that most of the collaborators insisted on concision and clarity, and some emphasized a candid relationship between the writer and reader as well (111-112).

Likewise, Roy presents the characteristics laid out by Azorín, whom he recognizes as one of the twentieth century's most celebrated Spanish experts of the form, to show how his poetics of the articles of the columnists overlap with many of those given above by ALA's literary journalists. Roy refers to Azorín's 1944 *Decálogo*, which lists: 1) "brevity"; 2) "clarity"; 3) address "only one basic idea"; 4) avoid erudition; 5) abstain from insults or caustic expressions; 6) tell what one has personally seen, and avoid "indirect references"; 7) evade taking the worst side unnecessarily; 8) suggest, rather than attempting to impose

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<sup>67</sup>"Este trabajo se funda en una ética que acoge el derecho inalienable de libertad de pensamiento y palabra y que condena, asimismo, todo aquello que atente contra la autodeterminación de los pueblos, a través de la manipulación ideológica" (111). This is from "Sí, escribir es un reto," *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, junio de 1979, p. 52.

<sup>68</sup>"Montaner brindaba al lector el intento más sólido de poética del artículo o ensayo periodístico: 1) el título debe tener una referencia culta hacia el lector educado; 2) el primer párrafo debe ser una trampa que atraiga su atención; 3) la extensión no debe sobrepasar las quinientas palabras ; 4) el estilo debe ser –personal e intransferible; 5) la sintaxis será simple; 6) el tema abarcará todo lo que sea de interés humano; 7) la actitud ética prohibirá que el escritor mienta, y 8) el final debe ser un regreso al principio del artículo" (110-111). This is from *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, noviembre de 1978, pp. 56-57.



an opinion; 9) “save a decisive detail for the end;” 10) refrain from using “series of articles as if they were chapters from books” (113).<sup>69</sup> The guidelines which will be laid out in sections 2.6.5 and 2.6.6 by Sims, et al, will demonstrate how ALA’s specifications for its literary journalism are significantly different from the U.S. version. And although they *do* coincide with editorial page opinion pieces,<sup>70</sup> they do not conform to the guidelines for what is considered to be literary journalism or literary nonfiction in the U.S., except for Montaner’s numbers four and seven.

One final point remains to be stated about Roy’s study, and that is his conclusion that many of ALA’s finest collaborators are also excellent writers who believe that these so-called “opinion articles” can be just as creative as fiction. He cites Jorge Edwards, who says that fiction and the chronicle (“crónica”) both compliment and mutually nourish each other. He adds that in order to know how to create, one first has to know how to name or classify” (121).<sup>71</sup> It is interesting how Edwards uses the term *crónica* whereas others, including Roy, refer to ALA’s literary journalism as interpretative articles or opinion

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<sup>69</sup>“Resulta conveniente aquí señalar las afinidades tangenciales de muchos fragmentos de esta ‘poética’ de los columnistas de ALA con uno de los más elitistas colaboradores de prensa en el siglo XX español: Azorín. De 1944 data ya su famoso *Decálogo* para escribir artículos de colaboración: 1) brevedad; 2) claridad; 3) tratar una sola idea básica; 4) no resultar erudito; 5) no insultar, no usar expresiones ácidas; 6) contar lo que se ha visto, no por referencias indirectas; 7) no tomar el peor partido innecesariamente; 8) insinuar, no tratar de imponer una opinión; 9) reservar algún detalle decisivo para el final, y 10) no usar una serie de artículos, como si fueran capítulos de libros” (113).

<sup>70</sup>Hartsock is the only U.S. scholar to establish that there is no reason why newspaper commentary such as editorial page pieces “cannot be viewed equally as a kind of literary journalism” (11). The others do not even mention this.

<sup>71</sup>“Para mí la ficción y la crónica no sólo no son incompatibles, sino que se alimentan una de la otra. Para saber inventar, primero hay que saber nombrar” (121). This is from “La ficción y la crónica,” *Opiniones latinoamericanas*, agosto de 1979, p. 41.

articles. This chapter will continue with a brief discussion of the Mexican *crónica*, which will be specifically pertinent to the study of Loaeza's work in chapters five and six.

## 2.5 The contemporary Mexican *crónica*

### 2.5.1 Preliminary observations

Linda Egan points out in her 2001 work titled *Carlos Monsiváis: Culture and Chronicle in Contemporary Mexico*, that Carlos Monsiváis is not only considered Mexico's most distinguished *cronista* ("chronicler"), but he also holds the position of being its "most informed and reliable spokesperson on cultural and sociopolitical issues" (xii). She claims that he has been a practicing literary journalist for over four decades, and his audience perceives him to be completely "trustworthy" (9). Monsiváis will therefore be the starting point for the examination of the Mexican *crónica*.<sup>72</sup>

Carlos Monsiváis gives a brief "working definition" of what he calls the "genre" of the "crónica" as a "literary reconstruction of events," where the style or form outweighs the content, and where "*objectivity*" and "*subjectivity*" [Monsiváis' emphasis] overlap. He also says that the *crónica* freely combines first person narration with free indirect style, where the events are seen or experienced interiorly by another person (prologue to *A ustedes les consta* 13).<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding the use of "literary," in this definition, and the fact that "style" and "form" outweigh the content, Egan maintains that Monsiváis has been

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<sup>72</sup>Like Egan, I will be using the Spanish terms *crónica*, and *cronista* interchangeably with their English translations of "chronicle" and "chronicler".

<sup>73</sup>"Persiste, con todo, una definición de trabajo de la crónica: reconstrucción literaria de sucesos o figuras, género donde el empeño formal domina sobre las urgencias informativas. Esto implica la no muy clara ni segura diferencia entre *objetividad* y *subjectividad*,... En la crónica, el juego literario usa a discreción la primera persona o narra libremente los acontecimientos como vistos y vividos desde la interioridad ajena" (13).

arguing for inclusion of what he labels the *nueva crónica* into the literary canon for over 20 years. From his 1987 text “De la Santa Doctrina al espíritu público,”<sup>74</sup> Egan cites his formal complaint:

¿Por qué el sitio tan marginal de la crónica en nuestra historia literaria? Ni el enorme prestigio de la poesía, ni la seducción omnipresente de la novela son explicaciones suficientes del desdén casi absoluto por un género tan importante en las relaciones entre literatura y sociedad, entre historia y vida cotidiana, entre lector y formación del gusto literario, entre información y amenidad, entre testimonio y materia prima de la ficción, entre periodismo y proyecto de nación. (xvii)

What accounts for the chronicle’s quite marginal place in our literary history? Neither poetry’s enormous prestige, nor the ever-present seduction of the novel, are sufficient explanations of the almost absolute disdain for a genre so important to relations between literature and society, history and daily life, information and entertainment, testimony and the raw material of fiction, journalism and the task of building a nation.

Monsiváis’s grievance about the marginality of the *crónica* in literary tradition lends itself to a retracing of the history of the form prior to where it was *last* seen in this study, in the discussion of the modernist chronicles.

### 2.5.2 The Mexican chronicles of the nineteenth century

In the introduction to his *A ustedes les consta*, Monsiváis’s assumptions coincide with González’s theories mentioned earlier about political journalism being a trademark in Mexico, always linked to its concrete historical problems. Likewise they both put Lizardi, discussed in detail previously, at the forefront of their examination of XIX century literary journalism. However, Monsiváis fills in the gap left by González pointing out that the

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<sup>74</sup>The excerpt cited is from p. 753 of this text, that Egan explains was written at the request of Mexico’s prestigious *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*. She says Monsiváis used “the podium offered him” to rebuke the Academy’s “unbalanced critical focus.” It should be noted that the translation of Monsiváis’s statement is Egan’s.

Mexican people, although for the most part illiterate, were “always interested about what was going on in the Nation that excluded them.”<sup>75</sup> He then refers to a statement from 1844 by Guillermo Prieto for *El Siglo Diecinueve*, about how the people on mail days would eagerly await the delivery of the newspaper, which would then be read aloud to them (21).<sup>76</sup> Monsiváis also points out that during the period in Mexico known as the “Reforma” (1857-1862), the people were more interested in the *interpretation* of the news than of the news itself (*A ustedes* 23, my emphasis). Corona and Jörgensen<sup>77</sup> hold that during this time, “liberal newspapers were the forum of political and social debate,” and those contributing chronicles were more often than not either novelists or politicians, rather than journalists, from which we could conclude that the news of the day would be presented with style. Additionally, they make the claim that not only is “the taste for great historical events still an imperative,” but so too is “the observation of contemporary customs” (13) demonstrated in Mexico’s “cuadros de costumbre” (“daily-life sketches”). According to Monsiváis, Guillermo Prieto was like many of his fellow chroniclers, who defended the existence of their country and the customs of all of its social classes by becoming its “memory,” sketching their daily lives in their own vernacular, with their own

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<sup>75</sup>“[E]l pueblo se interesó siempre por lo ocurrido en la Nación que los excluía” (21).

<sup>76</sup>“El día del correo se esperaba con ansia *El Siglo* y en cafés, tiendas, zaguanes y plazas, veíase un hombre leyendo el periódico en medio de una agrupación de gente” (21).

<sup>77</sup>Corona and Jörgensen’s *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre* is forthcoming, with a projected publication date of July, 2002. All page numbers will therefore correspond to the draft of their introduction.

distinctive expressions, obtained by mingling with their subjects in all of their various social functions (*A ustedes* 25).<sup>78</sup>

Accordingly, from the beginning of the nineteenth century until nearly the 1970s, Monsiváis maintains that the Mexican chronicle has had the task of verifying the truth, devoting itself to social change, as well as to meticulously describing daily life that is “idiosyncratic” of Mexico and of the Mexicans themselves, in its ultimate aim of nation-building (*A ustedes* 26).<sup>79</sup> He also alleges that these journalist chroniclers were recognized and acclaimed by the people, who thereby greeted them and applauded them wherever they appeared. These journalists, Monsiváis notes, were celebrities not only for their expertise in writing, but also because they wrote about the people, who in turn demanded of their chroniclers an interest in every aspect and detail of their mundane lives, in both good times and bad. He cites José Tomás de Cuellar who says that he depicted his characters “en plena comedia humana, en la vida real, sorprendiéndolos en el hogar, en la familia, en el taller, en el campo, en la cárcel, en todas partes; a unos con la risa en los labios y a otros con el llanto en los ojos” (“in their full human comedy, in real life, surprising them at home, with their families, in the workshop, in the countryside, in jail, everywhere; some with a smile on their lips and others with tears in their eyes”; *A ustedes*,

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<sup>78</sup>“Prieto, como muchos de sus coetáneos y sucesores, defiende la existencia de un país y una sociedad... el cronista es su memoria... seleccionan las estampas que respiran en lo literario calor hogareño... personalizan gracias a proverbios, refranes y respuestas adquiridas en bodorrios y casamisas, convites y bailes” (25).

<sup>79</sup>“De principios del siglo XIX hasta casi nuestros días, a la crónica mexicana se le encomienda verificar o consagrar cambios y maneras sociales y describir lo cotidiano elevándolo al rango de lo idiosincrático (aquello sin lo cual los mexicanos serían, por ejemplo, paraguayos)... Durante un periodo prolongado el detallismo exhaustivo de los cronistas sirve a un propósito central: contribuir a la forja de la nación describiéndola y si se puede, moralizándola” (26).

30). Cuellar's statement, as well as Monsiváis's commentaries, correspond to Sims's contention that literary journalists often "chronicle" what Susan Orleans labels "the dignity of ordinariness," as well as what Sims says Tom Connery calls "this felt sense of the quality of life at a particular time and place" ("The Art" 4).

Returning for a moment to the modernist chronicles, the Mexican Manuel Guitiérrez Nájera was one of its most celebrated practitioners. Monsiváis centers on Nájera's proclivity towards social critique, as the following citation from the modernist chronicler demonstrates: "La pluma del cronista debe tener dientes que muerden de cuando en cuando, pero sin hacer sangre. Debía haber dicho con mayor verdad: es fuerza que la pluma del cronista pellizque con los labios. De otro modo, la crónica oscila entre la gacetilla incolora y el artículo descriptivo. Para quedar en el justo medio se requiere un prodigio de equilibrio" ("The chronicler's pen should have teeth that bite once in a while, yet without producing blood. I should have said with greater truthfulness: the chronicler's pen should at least nibble with its lips. Otherwise, the chronicle oscillates between the colorless gossip column and the descriptive article"; *A ustedes*, 34). However, it is also Nájera who proclaimed the chronicle's death in 1893 "a manos del *repórter* quien es tan ágil, diestro, ubicuo, instantáneo, que guisa la liebre antes que la atrapen" ("at the hands of the reporter who is so agile, dextrous, ubiquitous, invisible, instantaneous, that he cooks the hare before he traps it"; *A ustedes*, 39). Yet one would only have to look at the times to note that the yellow journalists, the muckrakers, or simply the reporters going after sensationalist news were not only in Mexico, but north of the border as well (Hartsock 159-160). Consequently, Corona and Jørgensen point out that "the practice of literary journalism in general –not only the chronicle– was placed at the bottom of a hierarchy of

cultural forms” (14).<sup>80</sup> It is easy to see why, given Mexico’s chaotic state at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the seeds of the bloodiest conflict in its history were being sown.

### 2.5.3 The Mexican chronicle in the twentieth century –from the Revolution to 1968

Considering the final years of the long “presidency” of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1910), followed by the ten year revolution that began in 1910, continuing with the rebuilding of society after the war and then the Cristero rebellions, and adding to all of this the assassination of three presidents (Madero, Carranza and Obregon) as well as two of its revolutionary legends (Zapata and Villa), it is not difficult to understand the demise of either the chronicle or of literary journalism itself. Corona and Jörgensen hold that most of the narratives during the Mexican Revolution emerged in books, rather than in journals or newspapers, and they give Martín Luis Guzmán’s *El Alguila y la serpiente* 1926 (*The Eagle and the Serpent*) as an example. They add that thematically speaking, “these writings are the closest antecedent to the sociopolitical chronicle of the last three decades of the twentieth century” (15). This idea will be developed in chapters five and six.

According to Monsiváis, in the 1920s and 30s the people again began to look for *interpretation* of the news, rather than just the news itself since they had become skeptical of the validity of the press. They therefore resorted to the political articles of opinion, to find out what their favorite writers thought about the events of the day. News became facts clarified “philosophically, culturally or politically” by the politicians or intellectuals

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<sup>80</sup>This lapse in literary journalism in Mexico corresponds to the “lull” that Hartsock claims that the U.S.’s literary journalism suffered at the beginning of the twentieth century.

José Vasconcelos, Luis Cabrera, Antonio Caso o Lombardo Toledano (*A ustedes*, 48).<sup>81</sup> Monsiváis adds that the articles provided the writers with a subsidiary income, and the retired or disgraced politicians with a chance to either polish or restore their image (*A ustedes*, 48).<sup>82</sup> He also points out that although presidents Madero, Carranza and Calles denounced the licentiousness of the press during their terms, Lázaro Cárdenas saw things differently during his presidency in the 30s. Although he was attacked viciously by many publications, especially the biggest names in both the magazine and the newspaper press for either his radicalism or reform programs, he did not flinch. On the contrary, the more the press attacked him, the more popularity he gained (*A ustedes*, 52-53),<sup>83</sup> just like his contemporary Roosevelt in the U.S. However, things changed with the succeeding presidents and by the 40s, censorship became the norm, and readers had to learn to read between the lines.

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<sup>81</sup>“En los veintes y los treintas la opinión pública es todavía patrimonio de los entendidos que eligen al artículo político como género determinante. Los lectores, seguros de que la prensa detenta el monopolio de la lectura que vale la pena, van a los artículos para saber qué piensan o van a pensar, se ayudan cotidianamente en la comprensión de sus cóleras e impotencias con los juicios e impotencias de sus escritores predilectos. Noticia es un hecho interpretado filosófica, cultural o políticamente por Vasconcelos, Luis Cabrera, Antonio Caso o Lombardo Toledano y el artículo es la pieza incandescente que –como en el XIX– concentra las preocupaciones agónicas y didácticas por el porvenir y es visión última de la realidad.” (48).

<sup>82</sup>“A los escritores, el artículo les complementa ingresos y les da la retroalimentación vital; a los políticos retirados o en desgracia los aprovisiona de técnicas que brillanten o redimen su imagen ausente” (48).

<sup>83</sup>“El presidente Lázaro Cárdenas entiende las cosas de otro modo. En su sexenio, muchas publicaciones, entre ellas la principal revista (*Hoy*) y el principal diario (*Excélsior*), atacan con saña el radicalismo o el reformismo –elija usted el calificativo ideológico que lo autodefina– del régimen... Cárdenas no se inmuta. Su vigorosa base social le permite asimilar, incluso requerir de estos ataques” (52-53).



Thus, Monsiváis claims, for three decades Mexican's journalistic products were virtually all the same: “propaganda fascistoide, campañas de odio contra la disidencia política o moral, reinado decorativo de toreros y cantantes y estrellas del cine, gula por los temas de *Interés Humano*... creencia en las páginas sociales como aviso triunfalista de la grandeza y la felicidad de una oligarquía, resentimiento de clases medias vuelto populismo, sumisión ante los distintos poderes” (“fascist propaganda, hate campaigns against political or moral dissidence, the decorative reign of bullfighters, singers and movie stars, hunger for topics of *Human Interest*... belief in the society pages as the triumph of grandeur and the happiness of the oligarchy, resentment of the middle classes turned populist, submission to the different powers that be”; *A ustedes*, 65-66).<sup>84</sup> The turning point came with the student movement in 1968.

Monsiváis contends that the student movement brought with it a feeling that the time was ripe for a change to a journalism that was trustworthy again. *Excélsior* was the first to react in 1968, attaining deliverance from its lack of prestige under the direction of Julio Scherer. Monsiváis says that Scherer wanted *Excélsior* to be the voice of “democratic protest” and hence it needed that “las páginas editoriales recuperen su credibilidad y que el artículo, la crónica o el reportaje sean noticia al documentar y analizar la explotación y la represión capitalistas, y al darle rostro y connotación ideológica a los políticos... a quienes se despoja de su aura misteriosa... visibles en su demagogia, su tontería declarativa, su paternalismo” (“its editorial pages recuperate their credibility and that the article, chronicle or story be news by documenting and analyzing exploitation and capitalist repression, exposing politicians for who they are ideologically... stripping them

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<sup>84</sup>This description coincides in many ways to the era of McCarthyism in the U.S. in the early 50s.

of their mysterious aura... visible in their demagoguery, their declarative foolishness, their paternalism”; *A ustedes*, 68-70). Thus it was that journalism came to be critical again, coinciding with the New Journalism in the U.S. as a voice for social change. Monsiváis concludes that the end of the century *crónicas* and reportage are more important than ever, and lists a litany of reasons why, at the same time pointing out that it is a worldwide phenomena (*A ustedes*, 68-70).

This concise history of the Mexican chronicle demonstrates how Mexico’s unique tradition of literary journalism compares to what Yagoda claims about the U.S. version of the form, that “high level literary journalism is a tradition, with each practitioner standing on the shoulders of his or her predecessor” (preface to *Art* 14). However, another point that stands out in this section is how Mexico’s practice of literary journalism is actually the oldest on the continent, for it dates back to the early chronicles from the time of the discovery of the Americas. On the other hand, literary journalism in the U.S. did not begin until the nineteenth century with Whitman, Twain, Dreiser, Crane et al, and *their* predecessors were British –Defoe, Fielding, Richardson and Boswell– practicing on the other side of the Atlantic. Additionally, Mexico’s journalistic literary tradition is the backbone of González’s study tracing the history of journalism in literature in Latin America. Regarding the poetics or characteristics of the *crónica*, they correspond to most of those given earlier in section 2.4.4, specifically to de Miguel’s guidelines for Latin American opinion articles, and to Montaner’s for the journalistic essay, with the exception of the five-hundred word limit and rudimentary syntax. I will not continue here with a discussion of the *crónica*’s characteristics, since they will be addressed at length in chapter five in laying the foundation for the examination of Loeza’s work.

## 2.6 Literary journalism and literary nonfiction in the United States: a brief history

### 2.6.1 The corpus of the research

Before attempting to provide a summary on the history of literary journalism and/or literary nonfiction in the United States, I should point out that the only exhaustive study of the genre is John Hartsock's *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form*. Other scholars, such as Hollowell, Hellman, Weber, Warnock, Connery, Kerrane and Yagoda, and Wolfe, have given succinct background information, some more extensively than others, on what Sims refers to as a developing "major genre" ("The Art" 5), but their summaries are dwarfed in comparison to Hartsock's major piece of research. Hartsock admits in the preface to his study, that when he had decided to undertake what first seemed to him "a reasonable path of inquiry," he was dismayed "when [he] discovered that there was no history of the form." He adds that he was initially "intimidated by the prospect of writing a history of a form for which there was little historiographic perspective" (ix). Although I agree with Hartsock's feeling "intimidated by the prospect of writing a history of [the] form," I would have to say that he did have ample material from which to start, since Hollowell, Hellman, Connery, and Weber's work provide excellent research and more than sufficient background information for a serious point of departure. However, I should also add that Hartsock's investigation goes into much more depth, and clarifies many things that lacked either more explanation or simply more research than the previous studies. Accordingly, Hartsock does have a legitimate argument when he queries how it could be possible at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that the history of the form has continued to "remain largely unnoticed by the academy," in spite of all of the "seriousness of scholarly effort" for over a century (202).

## 2.6.2 The roots of the form and the “first major period”

All of the scholars coincide in placing the British writer Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) as the precursor of the form, referring to him in one way or another as what Kevin Kerrane calls him: “a great factual storyteller, perhaps the first true modern literary journalist” (“Making Facts Dance” 17). He adds that Defoe “built a writing career in the zone between fiction and fact” (Kerrane and Yagoda 23).<sup>85</sup> In “The Realtors,” Barbara Lounsberry points out that “[o]ur current semantic quandary would amuse Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding,” since in their time -the first half of the eighteenth century- they also were grappling with how to label what they saw as “their own new narrative prose form,” what today we call the novel (xii). She explains this by mentioning that out of “desperation, Fielding finally called *Tom Jones* a “comic epic-poem in prose!” (xii). At the same time, Yagoda alleges that the eighteenth century writer James Boswell (1740-1795) “deserves to be recognized as a progenitor” of the new journalism of the 1960s and 1970s, since his *The Life of Samuel Johnson* anticipated “Wolfean ‘status details,’” as well as “scene by scene construction,” giving it “a contemporary feel,” hence “prefiguring the rampant celebrity journalism of today” (Kerrane and Yagoda 29).

Later well-known nineteenth century practitioners of the form include Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Walt Whitman (1819-92), and Mark Twain (1835-1910) (Hollowell, Hellman, Weber, Connery, Kerrane and Yagoda, Hartsock).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>85</sup>It should be pointed out that Defoe, as well as other later British authors –such as Richardson, Fielding and Dickens– would greatly influence writers from the United States.

<sup>24</sup>These are by no means all of the writers mentioned, but they are the most widely renowned and are all brought up as a consensus by the scholars given in parenthesis. Additionally, all of the studies give background information about these nineteenth century writers and provide samples of their works that coincide with the guidelines for literary

Kerrane claims that the British journalist, W. T. Stead (1849-1912), practiced a form of writing in his *Pall Mall Gazette* that Matthew Arnold coined in 1887 as “new journalism.” Arnold described Stead’s style as “brash, vivid, personal, reform-minded,” and, Kerrane adds, “occasionally, from Arnold’s conservative viewpoint, ‘featherbrained’” (“Making” 17).<sup>25</sup> Those familiar with Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, or Norman Mailer’s writing from the 1960s and 1970s could readily make the connection between their style of writing and Arnold’s description of the “first” new journalism.

Yet it was not until the turn of the century, specifically the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century, that “modern narrative literary journalism” came into prominence (Hartsock 153). In “A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Journalism at the Turn of the Century,” Connery indicates that Gerald Stanley Lee, a critic of the time, “recognized a form of writing between journalism and fiction,” and attempted to define it by using the literary terminology of the times. Connery cites Lee, who felt that it was possible for a journalist to become a “transfigured reporter who is more of an artist than artists, an artist who is more of a journalist than the journalists” (9). Additionally, Hartsock holds that it was during this time period that Lincoln Steffans was first purported to have used the actual term “literary journalism,” while he was editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser* (9). Connery notes that Steffans, together with Hapgood and some other reporters from his New York paper, “perceived the possibilities of such a form

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journalism. See also Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America* for full chapter analyses of Whitman and Twain’s work.

<sup>25</sup>Hartsock credits Warren T. Francke as the first scholar in the latter part of the twentieth century to consider W. T. Stead the first new journalist, whose article from 1974 titled “W. T. Stead: The First New Journalist?” predates Kerrane’s study. However, Hartsock does not mention any of the anecdotal information that Kerrane does in his piece.

of writing, envisioned a philosophy or theory of literary journalism, and attempted to enact their philosophy” (9).<sup>26</sup> Hartsock contends that the nomenclature acquired “more currency with the publication in 1937 of Edwin H. Ford’s *Bibliography of Literary Journalism in America*,” which he ascribes as “perhaps the earliest scholarly attempt to characterize the form as ‘literary journalism’” (9).

Regardless of what the form was called at the time, the turn of the century marked one of the major periods of literary journalism, what Connery calls “the golden age of the reporters” (“Discovering 18), with Richard Harding Davis, Stephan Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Hutchins Hapgood, Abraham Cahan, and Jack London as some of its stand-outs (Connery, preface to a *Sourcebook* xii, Kerrane, “Making” 17-18). Likewise, Hartsock states that this period was also known for its sensational journalism and muckraking, used primarily to “uncover” political corruption or social ills and problems caused by the industrial revolution (135-139). He points out that “[i]n this stew of similar and different discourses, where one leaves off and the other begins is not always clear,” since sensational journalism can just as easily resemble, and therefore “‘soil’ the aesthetic ambitions of narrative literary journalism.” So too, he adds, “narrative literary journalism can bear a resemblance to muckraking,” and vice versa (135). At the same time, Kerrane says that this period was also known for its “Victorian social reporters,” who along with the American muckrakers, “aimed at a factual literature of American industrial life.” However, he adds that “[t]heir literary touches came less from artistic design than from

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<sup>26</sup>Hartsock adds that Hutchins Hapgood adopted the style of what was in essence literary journalism in a *Bookman* article from 1905 titled “Chronicle and Comment,” although he did not use the term at that time (9, 37). But Hartsock maintains that Hapgood did use the term in his autobiography in 1939, granting that he had indeed found “Steffans’s idea of a literary journalism” appealing (9).

the writer's sense of moral or political urgency," which resulted in their dramatization of "the reality of poverty, prostitution, and prejudice" ("Making" 17). Kerrane recognizes London as the best example of the Victorian social reporters, saying that his importance is attributed to his becoming a character in his own story in *People of the Abyss* (1902), practicing "the narrator as dropout, undertaking a secret journey to the cultural interior," ("Making" 17).<sup>27</sup> Kerrane affirms that "London's use of the dropout narrator has inspired generations of reporters," and would later be called "immersion reporting" (Kerrane and Yagoda 83-84).<sup>28</sup>

However, the first major period would soon come to a close. Hartsock points out that what followed is best summarized in a quote by literary critic Fred Lewis Pattee, who in his 1915 *History of American Literature*, claimed that the young group of turn-of-the-century journalists, "who for a time seemed to promise revolution," was simply a "passing phenomenon." Hartsock says that Pattee simply dismissed them as "writers who were journalists and promoters of naturalism" (154).<sup>29</sup> But, Hartsock notes, even though the

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<sup>27</sup>Hartsock's views of London contrast with Kerrane's favorable opinion. He claims that "London's *People of the Abyss* is indeed muckraking but also fundamentally sensationalism and fundamentally not narrative literary journalism." He admits that it "mimics" the form, but holds that "the outrage of the author's subjectivity in the service of his socialist cause," along with his "didacticism," lead to one "sensationalizing" intention: "to scare the hell out of the reader not unlike what a hell-fire sermon attempts" (149-150). Latin America's sensationalism will be discussed in the second part of this chapter in Gonzalez's observations of Sarmiento's *Facundo*.

<sup>28</sup>On the other hand, Hartsock credits the origin of "immersion reporting" to Defoe with his *Journal of the Plague Year*. Hartsock cites an eighteenth century scholar named Bonamy Dobrée, who commented on Defoe's *Journal*: "He warmed to the subject of recreation; as you read, you felt it becoming ever more a personal experience. Such *immersion* in the subject... fired his actualizing imagination" (115, Hartsock's emphasis).

<sup>29</sup>In 1915, literary critics began to deny that "journalistic endeavor could be 'literary.'" Yet, at the same time, as "journalism was being repudiated by literature, the

“first major period of narrative literary journalism had passed, the form was still practiced and published during the teens and twenties.” He adds that although most of the practitioners were not as famous as their predecessors, Richard Harding Davis, John Reed, Elizabeth Cochrane (“Nelly Bly”), and Ben Hecht did stand out from the rest (155-156).<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Hartsock says that it was during this period, specifically during the 20s, that “Ernest Hemingway was developing his literary voice” through the practice of “his narrative literary journalism.” He adds that, similar to Davis and Hecht, “Hemingway spanned several periods, writing during the first lull, during the form’s second major period, and into the 1950s when once again there was a lull in its practice” (163). Nevertheless, whatever the reason for its demise, maybe “as a sign of the times” due to the war, and therefore a turning toward a more factual and objective type of journalism (Hartsock 154-155), the form did not peak again until the 30s and 40s, which Connery claims to be the next major period of literary journalism (“Discovering” 19).

### 2.6.3 The “second major period”

The onset of the Great Depression brought about a need for a “reevaluation of journalistic practice.” In the aftermath of the collapse on Wall Street in 1929, President Hoover made a plea to the press “not only pressuring journalists to exercise restraint in their reporting” by downplaying any news on the economic collapse, “but also urging them

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opposite was also true; journalism was repudiating literature” (Hartsock 154).

<sup>30</sup>In a discussion of the Mexican revolution of 1910, Carlos Monsiváis contends that Reed’s *México insurgente* (1914), a “crónica-reportaje” on the Mexican revolution, demonstrates his mastery of complicated techniques in revealing both the epic and the ordinary, while refraining from preaching or compromising explanations. “Su técnica es compleja: incluye con igual perspicacia lo épico y lo cotidiano... y se abstiene de prédicas o concesiones explicativas” (prologue to *A ustedes les consta* 37).



to report only the positive side of government relief efforts,” to allay the public’s fears (Hartsock 167). However, in his 1984 article titled “Publicity for the Great Depression: Newspaper Default and Literary Reportage,” James Boylan notes that some literary journalists felt that it was wrong that the newspapers had kept the truth about the status of the economy from their readers, saying that it caused “an unreal and false economic security” (cited in Hartsock, 168). But for the most part, they were censored from publishing their subjective articles in the daily newspapers. Nevertheless, Hartsock points out that it is “in times of social transformation and crisis” that “a greater need emerges for a rhetoric that attempts to help one understand other subjectivities,” which is what narrative literary journalism does. He also claims that the average American’s negative opinion of the press in the 1930s was due to the newspapers’ “separation of subjectivity from an objectified world” (Hartsock 167-168).<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, it was in the magazine press that narrative literary journalism, often called “literary reportage,” found its voice and flourished in this period. Joseph North defined this type of reportage in 1935 as “three dimensional reporting,” where “[t]he writer not only condenses reality, he helps the reader to feel the fact. The finest writers of reportage are artists in the fullest sense of the term... editorializing through their imagery” (cited in Hartsock, 169). James Boylan holds that this documentary type of reportage during the early 1930s “was meant to upset the status quo,” and many of its practitioners became social advocates (cited in Hartsock, 169). Hartsock maintains that the *New*

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<sup>31</sup>Hartsock cites William Stott, who in his 1973 work *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, claimed: “Public opinion polls in the late thirties suggested that 30 million Americans, nearly one adult in three, doubted the honesty of the American press.” He adds that this renunciation of the mainstream press was revealed in President Roosevelt’s 1936 reelection campaign, since “more than 80% of the press opposed Roosevelt, and he won by the biggest margin ever” (168).

*Yorker*, founded in 1925, was “one of the conspicuous exceptions” regarding social advocacy, yet it was consistently a “champion of a narrative literary journalism.” Some of its most prominent writers were Morris Markey, Joseph Mitchell, James Agee, Ernie Pyle, Lillian Ross, and A.J. Liebling, who continued to be bulwarks of the magazine and the form from the 1930s through the 1960s (Hartsock 169-170). Two of the most famous literary journalists of this time period were John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway. Although they are most widely renowned for their great novels, they made a living from their literary journalism (Frus 68; Howarth 61-62; Weber, “Hemingway’s” 23-24).

Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s theory on what makes the great American novels original are the journalistic backgrounds of their authors, whose experience as “reporters of fact” resulted in their acquiring “a vast range of experience that would ultimately form the core of [their] greatest imaginative works,” which explains the title of her work: *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America*. In other words, they were used to going out into the streets interviewing people and digging for factual information, and that is the essence of reporting. They would also do investigative research to make sure that the details were correct to the best of their knowledge. They would then take those facts and polish them into fiction. Although her study focuses on Whitman, Twain, Dreiser, Hemingway, and Dos Passos, she adds that the pattern “is not unique to America” and includes Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa from South America, as well as George Orwell from England (3-4).<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, she maintains that “[t]hese writers succeeded as writers of fiction only when they returned, in new and creative ways, to material and approaches they had first come to know as documenters of

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<sup>32</sup>Allende should be added to that list as well. Fishkin’s theory coincides perfectly to Allende’s writing, and will be used in the discussion of her novels in chapters three and four.

fact” (7). Yagoda also includes Hickman Powell as one of the greats of the second period, whose *Ninety Times Guilty* (1939) is claimed to be the precursor to the modern true crime novel, by its “dramatic reconstruction of actual events,” and whose narrative was based “on court documents with extensive interviewing” (Kerrane and Yagoda 97).<sup>33</sup> James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), and John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* (1946), are two of the last great works before the decline of this second major period of narrative literary journalism (Hartsock 184-187). Hartsock affirms that although the reasons for the demise are not clear, he postulates that it could be attributed to either the fact that science triumphed in World War II, with the result that “positivist assumptions had all but defeated subjectivity as a legitimate cognitive stance from which to interpret the world,” or that “the critical temper had all but solidified in the New Critical mold,” which pursued “the meaning of a literary work in itself” (187).<sup>34</sup>

#### 2.6.4 The New Journalism and the “new” debate

The next major period, which is the New Journalism “boom” of the 60s and 70s,<sup>35</sup> is the one most widely known today, and of which the most theoretical research has been

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<sup>33</sup>And thus, claims Hartsock, what Truman Capote did in his self-proclaimed “nonfiction novel” was not really “new” (171).

<sup>34</sup>Based on Hartsock’s theorizing, I pose the following question. Could the triumph of science have led to an empirical search for truth that would have associated subjectivity with falsehood --and therefore literary journalism as suspect-- and objectivity with veracity?

<sup>35</sup>Hartsock gives 1965 “as the decisive moment when the new journalism emerged as a response to the perception of a failed journalistic rhetoric” (194).

done.<sup>36</sup> Connery cites George A. Hough, who argues in his 1975 article titled “How New?” that the so-called “new journalism” was “evolutionary,” and not “revolutionary,” like Tom Wolfe and so many others were proclaiming at the time.<sup>37</sup> Hough contends that it is simply “another stage in a long and gradual evolution of journalistic techniques,” and adds that “[it] is an honest journalistic genre –not just a borrowing from writers of fiction– which can be traced backward generation by generation through recognizable journalistic forbears” (cited in Connery, “Discovering” 18). Moreover, Connery cites James Murphy, who proclaimed in 1974 that it was obvious that New Journalism was not new: “What is now billed as a literary genre is the product of gradual development and a reflection of the times more than it is a radical innovation” (“Discovering a Literary Form” 19).<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Hollowell stresses that the “social ferment” of the times –the 60s and 70s– “generated new possibilities” for literature. It began to reveal not only an “increased concern for social issues,” but also “an awareness of the individual’s relationship to an explosive social history”(4). He adds that the New Journalism and the nonfiction novels were a product of the times that “served the function of fiction,” by illuminating the moral problems, and by conveying “the major concerns” of the time as well (11). However, in his 1982 “New Journalism, Metaphor and Culture,” David Eason raises the issues brought

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<sup>36</sup>Connery points out that the new journalism has not only kindled the recent discussion of the form, but it has also sparked “scholarly interest in nonfiction and acknowledgment of the importance of nonfiction writing in contemporary society” (“Discovering” 19).

<sup>37</sup>On the other hand, Latin America *was* experiencing a “revolutionary” period in creative writing around the same time that the U.S. was claiming that its new journalism was “new.” The period was known as the “boom.”

<sup>38</sup>Hartsock concludes that, in essence, “narrative literary journalism is a version of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the novel of the ‘inconclusive present,’ eschewing a narrative framed or prescribed in the ‘distanced image of the past’” (247).

up by the critics who argued that the focal point of “the New Journalism controversy was the relationship of narrative technique to empirical validity.” He adds that although the New Journalists and their supporters claimed “that the reports were faithful to reality,” their critics disputed the veracity of the reports “because they violated the conventions of nonfiction” (142). Lastly, Hartsock highlights how the new journalism of the 60s and 70s coincides with the versions from the turn of the century and the 30s and 40s, claiming that “it developed in response to significant social and cultural transformation and crisis”(192). And anyone who lived through those times in the U.S. would remember the civil rights movement, the assassinations of President John Kennedy, Malcolm X, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the Viet Nam war and its protests, along with the counter-cultural revolution.

#### 2.6.5 The confusion of the “new journalism”

This is also the point where it is seen how the nomenclature for this form --that contains elements of both journalism and fiction-- has as many definitions, characteristics or theories as the scholars who study it. Gay Talese, one of the first writers to be acknowledged as a new journalist, made the following observation in 1970: “The New Journalism, though often reading like fiction, is not fiction. It is, or should be, as reliable as the most reliable reportage although it seeks a larger truth than is possible through the mere compilation of verifiable facts” (cited in Hartsock, 193). Subsequently, in 1977, Hollowell scrutinized the innovative works of the 60s and 70s, and concluded that “the literature of fact” included both the “nonfiction novel,” as well as the “new journalism.” He maintains that they both share the writer’s “passion for documentary form, for eyewitness accounts, and for the affirmation of values,” in their attempt to illustrate the

ethical dilemmas of our time (14).<sup>39</sup> Hellman prefers to call the form a “genre of the new fiction,” that is a combination of the “unique credibility of journalism with the self-reflexive pattern-making of fabulist fiction.” In other words, “it deals with fact through fable, discovering, constructing, and self-consciously exploring meaning beyond our media-constructed ‘reality,’ our ‘news’” (xi). Lounsberry asserts that “literary nonfiction” must possess the qualities of “fine writing,” or what could be called a “literary prose style.” She stresses that it must also demonstrate “verifiable subject matter and exhaustive research,” and that its “narrative form and structure” must reveal “the writer’s artistry.” She therefore concludes that “its polished language” would disclose the fact that “the goal all along has been literature” (“Realtors” xv). In the same mode, Yagoda gives his theory for literary journalism by explaining what makes journalism “literary.” He contends that it must be “thoughtfully, artfully, and valuably innovative.” He stresses “innovative” as being the key element, since “high level literary journalism is a tradition, with each practitioner standing on the shoulders of his or her predecessor” (14).<sup>40</sup> Lastly, Connery’s concise and matter-of-fact definition for literary journalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is “nonfiction printed prose whose verifiable content is shaped and transformed

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<sup>39</sup>Hollowell was also one of the first to delineate the features of the form. See pp. 14-15 for his version of what he calls the “five main elements that characterize the nonfiction novel and its writers.” It should also be noted that he gives examples of other books that “have blurred the distinction between fact and fiction,” and among them includes Oscar Lewis’s *The Children of Sánchez* (1961) set in Mexico, and *La vida* (1967) set in Puerto Rico (11).

<sup>40</sup>Yagoda clarifies this statement by saying that Capote’s *In Cold Blood* was a take off “from the innovations of John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*,” which he claims was the “first serious work to attempt a novelistic factual narrative on a large scale.” He adds that later Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* avoided “Capote’s uninflected and rather stiff narrative voice,” and opted instead “for a wiggled-out hip patois that mirrored his character’s sensibility” (14-15).

into a story or sketch by use of narrative and rhetorical techniques generally associated with fiction.” He also affirms that the themes that appear must “make a statement, or provide an interpretation” that depicts the culture and people presented (preface to *Sourcebook*, xiv).

Although all of the above statements contain different terminology, they all possess elements that reflect their similarities, rather than their differences. Yet another important fact that should be highlighted is the “overlapping characteristics” that literary journalism shares with history writing,<sup>41</sup> as well as with other nonfiction genres like memoir, biography, autobiography, ethnography, sociology and anthropology. Sims claims that literary journalists are border crossers in the same sense as the social scientists. He cites Clifford Geertz from his essay “Blurred Genres,” who holds that a comparable “blending of perspectives” left social scientists to conclude that they were “free to shape their work in terms of its necessities rather than according to received ideas” (“The Art” 19). In other words, they used their creative capacities in their research in a manner similar to the literary journalists in their blending of stylistic devices of fiction with their standard reporting.

#### 2.6.6 The “rules of the game”

The parameters that are used to define literary nonfiction or literary journalism are also almost as numerous as the form’s scholars.<sup>42</sup> However, Sims was the first to establish

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<sup>41</sup>Sims points out two Pulitzer Prize-winning books where history writing is woven into literary journalism: J. Anthony Lukas’ *Common Ground* (1985) and Richard Rhodes’ *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (1986) (“The Art” 112).

<sup>42</sup>Either some or all of these guidelines could be applied to much of the writing in the latter part of the twentieth century, in both the U.S. as well as Latin America, since

a set of rules,<sup>43</sup> which are listed in the introduction to his 1984 anthology called *The Literary Journalists*, and that have been cited and used by academics and critics alike since then. Connery offers a succinct summary of Sims's specifications that include brief explanations where he deems clarification is needed. His list contains: (1) "immersion, or what Wolfe calls 'saturation reporting'; (2) structure (each piece has its own dynamic and structure and does not conform to a journalistic formula); (3) accuracy; (4) voice (noninstitutional, personal); (5) responsibility (to the writers' subjects); (6) underlying meaning or symbolism" ("Discovering" 4-5).<sup>44</sup> At the same time, Lounsberry's four characteristics for what she calls "literary or artistic nonfiction" have also been widely discussed and applied to critical studies of the form since she presented them in 1990. Her list includes: 1) "Documentable subject matter chosen from the real world as opposed to 'invented' from the writer's mind;" 2) "Exhaustive research;" 3) "The scene" (the moment is brought to life); 4) "Fine writing: A literary prose style" ("Realtors" xiii-xv). Furthermore, with Gay Talese, Lounsberry edited an anthology of works called *The Literature of Reality: Writing Creative Nonfiction*. The three sections of the book highlight what they both feel is fundamental to a "literature of reality," and at the same time define its essential features. They are: 1) "Reality Researched;" 2) "Reality Presented

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literary nonfiction and/or literary journalism have become ever more popular since the "New Journalism" era brought this type of writing into vogue.

<sup>43</sup>Sims set up his so-called "rules of the game" after a series of interviews with six of the leading literary journalists at that time: John McPhee, Tracy Kidder, Mark Kramer, Mark Singer, Sara Davidson and Richard Rhodes.

<sup>44</sup>Sims provides a lengthy explanation of each of the components of these six characteristics in pp. 8-25 of his introduction to *The Literary Journalists*. Mark Kramer also renders a detailed study of them in his 1995 essay titled "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists."



–With Style;” 3) “Reality Enlarged” (v-vi). In a similar fashion, Yagoda gives three requirements for literary journalism as 1) “Innovation”; 2) “The reporter at the forefront”; 3) “Style as substance” (preface to *Art* 14-16). However, one more feature should also be added, and it coincides with what Sims and Kramer call “actuality,” or what Yagoda calls “currency.” It is Kerrane’s conclusion that “the best characterization of literary journalism may ultimately be the definition that Ezra Pound gave for literature itself: ‘news that stays news’” (“Making” 20).

At the same time, most of the scholars of the form coincide in naming Truman Capote, Gay Talese, E.L. Doctorow, Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Hunter Thompson, and Joan Didion as the elite of the form since its onset, although many more names are presented in separate studies. The success of these writers and others like them is evident in an observation made by Lounsbury. She points out that the “*New York Times Book Review* reviews nonfiction over fiction almost three to one,” and that people in our times have stopped believing “that the novel is the highest form of the literary imagination” (“Realtors” xi). She lists some of the different kinds of nonfiction narratives: “certain artful memoirs, autobiographies, histories, travelogues, essays, works of journalism, forms of nature and science writing,” as well as creative combinations of them (“Realtors” xi). These correspond to the ones mentioned earlier by Sims and Geertz.

My point in providing this short summary of the history of literary journalism and literary nonfiction in the U.S., along with the rules or characteristics that define them, was meant to orientate readers unfamiliar with this form or genre, and to give a succinct analysis for future reference. I should add that I will be incorporating more definitions, rules and characteristics, as well as clarifications of them, throughout the different chapters of this thesis in the analyses of Allende’s and Loaeza’s works.

## 2.7 Final comments

I have provided this lengthy summary or overview of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in both Latin America and the U.S. for two major reasons. The first was to lay the groundwork for the examination of Allende's and Loaeza's work in the following chapters. In the analysis of Allende's novels, I will demonstrate how different kinds of nonfiction literary writing function in her texts –specifically, testimonial and documentary writing, as well as journalistic influences. Since Loaeza is a literary journalist, I will center the investigation of her work on the contemporary Mexican chronicle. Hence, in order to discuss their texts, it was essential to demonstrate exactly what comprises literary journalism, literary nonfiction, and the Mexican chronicle. However, that in itself is not the focus of this thesis, but rather the foundational starting point. The second reason was to fill the void that I noticed more and more while researching the fields of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in the U.S. and Latin America, causing me to realize that there were no studies that encompassed both of these disciplines at the same time. That led me to the conclusion that I could contribute a thorough yet brief investigation encompassing the areas of nonfiction literary writing in both the U.S. and Latin America, that can at the same time serve as a source of reference for a comparative look at how the genre works on both sides of the border.

## CHAPTER 3

### Literary Nonfiction in Isabel Allende's

#### *La casa de los espíritus* and *De amor y de sombra*

I am thus led to the proposition that there is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative.

E.L. Doctorow, "False Documents" 26

Truth is stranger than Fiction... because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth isn't.

Mark Twain, *Following the Equator* 1897

### 3.1 Introductory remarks and general chapter outline

Although Allende considers herself first and foremost a novelist, she also stresses the relevance of her journalistic background. In most of the forty plus interviews that Allende has given since the publication of her first novel, she first emphasizes the importance of her experience in journalism –a truth genre–, and then the fact that she does not need to invent much since “reality is often richer than the imagination” (Moody 52). She also holds that in a novel, a writer “can register the most extravagant, evil, obscene, incredible or magnificent facts -which in Latin America are not hyperbole,” but simply the dimension of her continent’s reality (Zinsser, “Writing” 45). She asserts that her training as a journalist has helped her to stay focused in her literature, to stick to the facts.

This chapter will center on an examination of her first two novels –*La casa de los espíritus* (1982) (*The House of the Spirits*; 1985), and *De amor y de sombra* (1984) (*Of*

*Love and Shadows*; 1987)— within the framework of literary nonfiction. However, I am not contending that these two novels *are* literary nonfiction, or that Allende intentionally *writes* literary nonfiction, but rather how different elements of this genre appear in her fiction as part of her writing style. As I examine different components of literary nonfiction in these two works, I will include discussions of the testimonial novel, documentary reportage, or of narrative in general. I will use theories, commentaries, explanations and ideas by scholars who have devoted much of their time to the study of this new and developing literary form which has been so greatly influenced by journalism. This same theoretical approach will be the foundation for analyzing *El plan infinito* (1991) (*The Infinite Plan*; 1993) in the following chapter. Accordingly, this comprehensive investigation of the features of literary nonfiction in three of Allende's novels will contribute significantly to the existing research on her writing by 1) demonstrating how *nonfictive* characteristics from what are perceived to be *truth* genres function in her *fiction*; 2) providing a study of not only testimonial elements, but also different aspects of documentary realism and documentary reportage as well; 3) offering new insights into *Plan*—a novel which has been overlooked by the critics— by focusing on its cultural and historical relevance to the post-World War II U.S.

Those who have read Allende's second novel—*De amor y de sombra* (*Of Love and Shadows*)—, might believe that a study of this kind is warranted because of its documentary, testimonial discourse. However, whoever might be skeptical about how Allende's first novel, which has been so widely discussed for its use of magical realism, could possibly be studied within the framework of literary nonfiction, need only remember the testimonial, documentary discourse of the final chapters that are based on research and what Tom Wolfe calls "painstaking reporting." Allende maintains that, all in all, the novel

was “an extensive journalistic job,” and that all of the parts that are set in the country are based on interviews with campesinos, people who actually lived there. Likewise, she says she did the same thing “for the military parts,” interviewing “military men who had left Chile.” She contends that she also had the opportunity to speak with members of her family who remembered life in her grandfather’s time (Piña 187). She adds that she had a large quantity of backup material -journal articles and recordings that she had kept, letters that her mother had written her over the years, and her grandmother’s old diaries and notebooks. She claims that “the last chapters of the book, those that talk about prison, torture, the dictatorship, are recordings and interviews of survivors of exile” that she had made clandestinely before fleeing Chile (Moody 50).<sup>1</sup> Allende’s methods of fact gathering correspond to those laid out by John Warnock in his introduction to *Representing Reality: Readings in Literary Nonfiction*. He claims that since “factuality” cannot always be established “by personal observation,” it is often necessary to depend on others who can be perceived “to be trustworthy and in a position to know the facts.” He therefore asserts that talking to people, researching, seeking out “documents or other evidence” that aid in authenticating the facts, help “writers of literary nonfiction consult something beyond the world of the text they are creating,” by holding themselves accountable “to a world that lies beyond their own imaginations” (xvii-xviii).

These documentary and testimonial last chapters, as well as some of the causes that led up to the events in them, are what I will investigate in *Casa (House)*.

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, other things to keep in mind are History as a protagonist from the very beginning. As her story unfolds, History is not just in the background of this novel that covers over fifty years of Chilean history, but it is also a palpable presence that is at times tragic, at times comic, but constantly evolving, especially to those who know what role it has actually had in Chile in the twentieth century.

Consequently, in the examination of both this novel and *Amor (Love)*, I will demonstrate how her journalistic training is blended into her natural ability as a storyteller to “make the facts dance,”<sup>2</sup> demonstrating José Acosta Montoro’s theory that today, “no hay literato que no tenga algo de periodista, ni periodista que no tenga algo de literato” (“there is no man or woman of letters that does not have something of a journalist, nor a journalist that does not have something of a man or woman of letters”); 56).<sup>3</sup>

### 3.2 Influences of Journalism

Isabel Allende, like many of today’s great Latin American novelists -such as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso, to name just a few- started her career as a journalist. Allende reflects on these beginnings by saying that journalism is good training for writing literature because it teaches you how to control language and refines your “capacity for observation and powers of synthesis” (García

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<sup>2</sup>Ben Yagoda refers to literary journalism as “making facts dance.”

<sup>3</sup>In *Periodismo y literatura*, Acosta gives a long list of British, American, French, and Spanish authors that were both excellent journalists as well as writers, and therefore concludes that there should be no doubt as to the relationship between the writer and journalist. He further adds that it has always been difficult to find that fine line that separates what we call literature from what we define as journalism. “Es difícil, aun hoy, encontrar la línea de demarcación definida entre lo que llamamos literatura y lo que denominamos periodismo” (75). Mario Castro Arenas, whose *El periodismo y la novela contemporánea* predates Acosta’s, claims much the same about the presence of journalism in the novel. His in-depth study of this topic is not limited to the stylistic aspects, but also discusses the “afán documentalista” (“documentary zeal”) as well as the strict adherence to reality that many contemporary novelists attempt, just as the chronicler or the testimonial writer. “La presencia del periodismo en la narrativa actual no se ciñe exclusivamente al aspecto del estilo. Abarca una zona que comprende también el afán documentalista que tipifica a un sector considerable de la novela que persigue la descripción estricta de la realidad, lo mismo que a la experiencia vital que nutre la crónica del periodista-observador directo de los acontecimientos, o del novelista testimonial” (11).

Pinto 25).<sup>4</sup> She has often remarked that the most important trick that journalism has taught her is getting her readers' attention in the first six lines and holding it until the end (Correas 207; Agosín, "Pirate" 42). She also points out that she uses the same techniques for literature as a journalist does: "interviews, reporting, research, working in the streets with the people, participating in a community, talking and listening" (Montenegro 250). At the same time, she thanks journalism for showing her the value of investigative research, to check each detail carefully, to make credible descriptions and dialogues that reflect the community they are describing, and that the clothing corresponds to the times (Bottero 187).<sup>5</sup> Aníbal González, in *Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative*, summarizes all of this very concisely by saying that journalism is "a laboratory" because journalistic discourse teaches writers about writing (41).

Allende contends that truth is another aspect that she learned from journalism and she therefore applies to her writing a piece of advice that she once received long ago from an old colleague: "Di la verdad. Sólo la verdad toca el corazón de tu lector" ("Tell the truth, only the truth touches the heart of your reader"; Coddou, *Los libros* 18). Allende has said that people instinctively know and recognize veracity, and therefore feels that she "can only use the truth" to move her readers, "because tricks don't work" (García Pinto 36). Norman Sims makes a similar point about truth/accuracy issues in his preface to *The*

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<sup>4</sup>Cecilia Viel says that when Allende was still a young girl, she had powers of observation and saw things that other children of her age did not (Correas 42). She was also given a notebook "to jot down life at an age when other girls played with dolls," and when asked what she wrote about, she replied: "fear, sex, injustice, inequality, violence, and loneliness. That's pretty much what I'm still doing in my books" (Gazarian 128).

<sup>5</sup>Tom Wolfe says much the same in his essay "The New Journalism," when he states that literary journalists should include realistic dialogue and meticulous detail for recording everyday gestures, habits, customs, manners, styles of clothing, decoration, and modes of behavior towards others (32-33).

*Literary Journalists*. He notes that not only must literary journalists be accurate and bring their characters to life on paper, just as fiction, but also that “their feelings and dramatic moments contain a special power because we know the stories are **true**” (4, Sims’s emphasis).

In an interview with Alberto Manguel, Allende discusses the coup of September 11, 1973, when her uncle, Salvador Allende, was overthrown by a Pinochet led military with the help of the CIA.<sup>6</sup> She says that after the reign of terror had started, she felt that she could no longer be indifferent to her surroundings, and adds that it was because of her work as a journalist that she was so aware of what was happening in her country, since it allowed her to get closer to the sources of information. She knew people who had been arrested, and after the curfew ended, she and her journalist friends began to record what was happening, obtaining not only the names of those captured by the police, but also the names of their torturers and then getting the information out to Europe and the United States (“Conversation” 622).

In her second novel, *De amor y de sombra (Of Love and Shadows)*, Allende models the male protagonist Francisco after a good friend of hers,<sup>7</sup> a psychologist who was out of work and who earned a living as a photographer for the magazine on which she

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<sup>6</sup>See the chapter titled “The Pig’s Tail” in Tina Rosenberg’s *Children of Cain: Violence and the Violent in Latin America* for a detailed study of all of the events leading up to the coup, the coup itself, and also its effects on Chilean society. See also “Chile (1973-1990)” in Jeffrey Klaiber, S.J.’s *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America*.

<sup>7</sup> Allende told John Rodden that since she wants to be very precise in her writing, *most* of the characters in her work are modeled after people she has known (*Conversations* 438, my emphasis). In a later interview, she says that **all** of her characters are modeled on real people, **except** Ríad Halabí from *Eva Luna* (Cruz et al. 219, Allende’s emphasis).



was collaborating at the time (*Paula* 241).<sup>8</sup> Allende uses the character of Francisco to narrate exactly what she and her friends did before she went into exile:

Francisco no retrocedía en el momento de enfrentar la violencia, era un eslabón de esa larga cadena humana moviéndose en la clandestinidad y conocía los entretelones de la dictadura. Nadie sospechaba su tráfico de asilados, de mensajes, de dinero proveniente de misteriosas fuentes, de nombres, datos, y pruebas acumuladas para enviar al exterior por si algún día alguien decidía escribir la historia. (130)

Francisco had never retreated at the moment of confrontation with violence; he was a link in a long human chain of covert operations, and he knew the inside workings of the dictatorship. No one suspected his connection with political refugees, with money collected from mysterious sources, with names, dates, and information gathered and sent outside the country in case someday *someone* should decide to write the true story. (110, my emphasis)

Allende says that she and several journalists established a sort of pact among themselves to collect all of the information that they could (Alegoría 82) “por si algún día *alguien* decidía escribir la historia” [my emphasis]. She notes the importance of those years of silence, claiming they were necessary because, due to all of the censorship, she could not work in journalism and was therefore able to accumulate stacks of material that she would later use for her first two novels (Alegoría 83). She also remarks how her journalistic

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<sup>8</sup>She continues his description saying that he demonstrated extraordinary courage and often risked his life by helping others. He had contacts with religious groups since his brother was a worker priest who told him about the atrocities committed throughout the country (*Paula* 241). Allende’s flesh-and-blood friend coincides perfectly with the protagonist Francisco. It should be noted that *Paula* started out as a letter to her daughter Paula, as she lay in a coma in a hospital in Madrid, and resembles a memoir or confession. It has been classified as both fiction and nonfiction, depending on the country of translation. I would label it nonfiction. It will be used widely for background reference in this chapter and the following, since it provides so many first-hand explanations by Allende herself about her earlier works. It is where she either substantiates her intentions or insists on the veracity in her novels, at the same time explaining exactly *where* they are fiction, or *how* she fictionalized them.

training had taught her how to look for information, not only by conducting interviews, but also by listening, by being alert to all that was there to be seen. Furthermore, she points out that the last chapters of *La casa de los espíritus* (*The House of the Spirits*) narrate these events. Additionally, she contends that while writing *Casa* (*House*), she remembered the words of her old journalist friend to “tell the truth” (Coddou, *Los libros* 19).

Allende comments to William Zinsser that during the reign of Pinochet, a young woman named Alexandra Joquera told her that she had discovered in her books “the history of Chile that is denied by the official textbooks of the dictatorship, the forbidden and secret history that nevertheless is still alive in the memories of most Chileans.” Allende remarks that she considers this to be the best compliment her work has ever received and adds that, because of this girl she is very careful with her writing, and if and when she is tempted to betray the truth, for whatever reason, she remembers Alexandra who reminds her “that she, and others like her, don’t deserve that” (*Paths* 57). This coincides with what Mark Kramer points out in his essay “Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists.” He maintains that “[l]iterary journalists work out implicit covenants with readers and with sources,” explaining that they “have come to a stodgier understanding with their readers, one so strong that it amounts to a contract.” He adds that writers must get reality as straight as they can manage, without making it up (23-25). Kramer’s contentions in turn, correspond to Wallace Martin’s from his *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Martin says that the “distinguishing characteristic” of the novel is its “truth to reality,” adding that “[i]f we believe (whether or not) that a story might well have happened, we are absorbed in it in a special way” (57). On the other hand, Phyllis Frus points out in her *Poetics and Politics of Journalistic Narrative*, that “our experience of

reading stories about characters and events that we know (from other sources) actually existed or have happened is the same as reading about invented ones” (36).

But then should we conclude that it does not really matter if a narrative is fact or fiction? Darrel Mansell examines this question of how the reader’s mind responds to the premise that events either happened or not in real life, in a discussion about an article by Mary McCarthy. He claims that a “Great Divide between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ does not exist on the literary map at all,” but that “such a Divide does exist nevertheless, in the very constitution of the mind, no matter what the mind is contemplating.” Consequently, he holds that although “[a]ll texts tend to be a conflation of fact and fiction,” it is the mind that must “declare for one or the other in spite of the unimpeachable truth that such a distinction does not ‘exist’ in the texts themselves.” He concludes that it is “in the very constitution of the mind” where “we have the rudiments of genre” (274). What Mansell is explaining here is pertinent to this discussion of Allende. I am studying her *novels*, and that very designation means that I am therefore studying her *fiction*. Yet what I am actually doing in this thesis is examining the elements of her *fiction* that are *nonfictive*, that are based on journalism –supposedly an objective and *factual* genre. One of my assumptions that will be discussed in this chapter is how her novels correspond to what were called “nonfiction novels,” “pseudofactual novels,” “fables of fact” or “factual fiction” in chapter two. However, as E.L. Doctorow has posited: “[t]here is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative” (“False Documents” 26), and that is also Mansell’s premise. It does not matter into what genre a work is categorized. What matters is how it is perceived. Albeit his theorizing is a bit metaphysical, it is no more than an elaboration of the reader’s role for interpreting literature, except that here it is in the *mind’s* eye. When I read Allende, or Doctorow, or

Truman Capote, or García Márquez, do *I* perceive what I am reading as fiction or nonfiction? Is it true in *my* evaluation? Do *I* believe it? This is also one of the main arguments of literary nonfiction, whose works are defined by Warnock as “those that aspire to be both factual and true” (xvii), and thus the reader will supposedly accept the narrative as such. Perhaps if something is labeled as true, it is easier to accept as being so. However, just because something is in a work labeled as fiction, does not mean that it cannot be true as well. This will be discussed in different parts of this chapter, and it will be up to the reader to interpret it as s/he sees fit.

### 3.3 The writer’s role

Celia Correas notes in a conversation with Allende that her “preocupaciones políticas” correspond to other great Latin American writers of her generation, such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar and Carlos Fuentes.<sup>9</sup> Allende reacts by saying that it is impossible for her generation to ignore the political turbulence that has shaken Latin America for several decades, and thus it is inevitable that social and political problems are constant themes in their literature (46). Mario Vargas Llosa seems to coincide with Allende when he asks why Latin American writers “have to be basically politicians, agitators, reformers, social commentators, moralists, instead of creators and artists,” explaining that their literature has for centuries been the only effective means of exposing the social conditions and problems faced by their countries (cited in Earle 544). Likewise, Carlos Fuentes points out that “[L]a gigantesca tarea de

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<sup>9</sup>I am not stating here that all of these authors’ political ideologies are the same, for Vargas Llosa and García Márquez are known to be on different sides of the political spectrum. What I mean is that they all share political concerns due to the chaotic history of Latin America.

la literatura hispanoamericana contemporánea ha consistido en darle voz a los silencios de nuestra historia, en contestar con la verdad a las mentiras...” (“[t]he gigantic task of contemporary Spanish American literature has consisted of giving voices to the silences of history, in answering with the truth to [its] lies”; cited in Coddou, “Ficciones” 12).

Allende says much the same in an interview with John Brosnahan, claiming that Latin American writers have assumed the voice of the people because the situation of their continent is so terrible, due to “the violence, the poverty, the inequality, the misery” (1931). She feels that journalists as writers have a mission to fulfill, a special responsibility in making their reality known, because they have a certain platform from which they can say what others cannot (Rodden, “Responsibility” 115). In the prologue titled, “In Defense of the Word”, in the 25th anniversary edition of *The Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano states that the role of Latin American writers “is linked to the need for profound social transformations.” In essence he is claiming much the same as Allende: “One writes in reality, for the people whose luck or misfortune one identifies with --the hungry, the sleepless, the rebels, and the wretched of this earth- and the majority of them are illiterate” (xiv).<sup>10</sup> Phillip Swanson points out in *The New Novel in Latin America* that Allende has said that it is her aim to tell the stories of those that suffer

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<sup>10</sup> It should be pointed out that the prologue from which this excerpt was selected was taken from Galeano’s novel, *The Days and Nights of Love and War* (1983), translated by Bobby Ortiz. At the same time, we should note that Allende wrote the foreword to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of Galeano’s *Open Veins*. She begins the foreword by affirming that someone had given her a copy of the book a long time ago, and that she “devoured [it] in two days with such emotion” that she had “to read it again a couple more times to absorb all its meaning.” She ends the foreword by saying that when she had to flee Chile after the coup, she took that book with her and that she still has it more than twenty years later. She thanks Galeano “for his contribution to [her] awareness as a writer and as a citizen of Latin America. As he said once: ‘it’s worthwhile to die for things without which it’s not worthwhile to live’” (xiii).

and are silent in Latin America, the marginals who are outside of the mainstream (147).<sup>11</sup> Allende tells Rodden that she considers as marginal all those “who stand unsheltered by the system.” They would naturally include the poor, but she also adds that they can be anyone who defies authority or who defies the stereotypes within which a patriarchal society classifies them --guerrillas, prostitutes, homosexuals, or simply women-- to name just a few (“Responsibility” 229). In the same mode, in “The Borderlands of Culture,” some of what Shelley Fisher Fishkin discusses about Tillie Olsen’s book *Silences* correlate to this discussion of the role of the writer: “Olsen cares passionately about documenting the experiences of those who cannot tell their own stories. Bearing witness to realities that have heretofore eluded the printed page, she wants to issue a cultural report from the realm of the silent and the silenced” (152).<sup>12</sup> I do not claim here that Allende is a “voice for the voiceless,” but rather, paraphrasing Fuentes, she uses her voice to fill the silence of Chile’s history, to answer with the truth to its lies.

### 3.4 Latin American *testimonio*

Ariel Dorfman contends that Latin American *testimonio* could be called the “journalism of the dominated” (189). George Yúdice uses the term *testimonio* to refer to the many types of discourse that seek to give voice to the voiceless (“Testimonio” 207). John Beverley claims that by the early 70s, Latin American literature had “splintered into

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<sup>11</sup>Linda Hutcheon defines marginal as “ex-centric,” in the sense of “class, race, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity” (*A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* 12).

<sup>12</sup>It should be pointed out that Allende insists that she never intends to give any messages in her writing. She simply wants to “touch” her reader and make him/her aware of the facts (Correas 15).

various trends -realist, nationalist, regionalist, historical, testimonial, feminist, ethnic” which in turn led to a split with the “highly individualized subject of modernist culture and a turn toward a new collective subject living through the individual or multiple voices of the text (writer, narrator, witness, character, persona).” Beverley further asserts that the new testimonial forms draw their inspiration from the spread of popular struggles (*Against Literature* 110-111). He points out that a wide variety of texts would fit under the label of *testimonio* and lists as some examples “oral history, memoir, autobiography, chronicle, confession, life history, *novela-testimonio*, documentary novel, nonfiction novel, or ‘literature of fact’,” and claims that *testimonio* cannot be easily classified (*Against* 71).

Beverley also explains that in Spanish, the word *testimonio* itself “suggests the act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense,” and points out that this definition/meaning is important because it distinguishes it from simple recorded participant narratives or oral histories. For Beverley, *testimonio* is what René Jara calls a “narration of urgency”. It is “a story that **needs** to be told -involving a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, exploitation, or simply survival that is implicated in the act itself.” It is not, to begin with, *fiction*, because we are supposed to consider both the speaker and events narrated as real.” At the same time, and perhaps more importantly for it is in keeping within a context of literary nonfiction, Beverley notes that the “legal-religious connotation implicit in its convention implies a pledge of honesty or sincerity on the part of the narrator that the interlocutor/reader is bound to respect” (*Against* 73-74). This reminds us of Kramer’s statement cited previously, that literary journalists should “work out implicit covenants with their readers and their sources,” (23) meaning that the understanding with their readers is so strong that “it amounts to a contract” (25). This brief deliberation of the Latin American *testimonio* was intended to provide a background

in which to discuss testimonial literature in the following section. I make no claim that either of the two novels under examination in this chapter are *testimonios*.

### 3.5 Chile's Testimonial literature

We recall Allende's own words at the beginning of this essay that the ending of *Casa (House)* is testimonial. Carmen Galarce points out that when the horrifying reality of the coup takes over the story, the narration acquires a journalistic and testimonial dimension (148). René Jara posits that in order to render what he feels is an honest and true reconstruction of the bestiality of the traumatic event of the coup and its aftermath, of its wild brutality and screaming barbarity, Allende had to do it in the way in which she did, with testimonial fiction (*Límites* 26-27).<sup>13</sup> Ariel Dorfman makes the distinction that the testimonial literature written about Chile since the coup is for the most part, not *testimonio* -which would mean that the witness him/herself did the actual writing- but rather "testimonial," and therefore written by writers who could be considered "investigators," using journalistic devices to make testimonial composites.<sup>14</sup> These

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<sup>13</sup>It is worth noting that for Jara, testimony is a "substitute" for memory, which in turn is a "recreation" of the events remembered since "memory is not always reliable" and has to be "reinvented" (*Testimonio* 2).

<sup>14</sup>Dorfman explains that the word "testimonio" comes from the Latin "testes", or testicles, since in Rome one could not give testimony if his testicles were not healthy and in their place; and therefore to testify, meaning to tell the truth, was related to virility, or "to speak with the capacity to father children." At the same time, he points out that sadly, at the date of the publication of his essay in 1982, there were no accounts of detention and captivity by women among those who had written testimonials (187). Allende's novel came out later that same year. However, Barbara Loach claims that in the 80s, there was a "a significant development in Chilean narrative" marked by the "emergence of a number of female authors." She says that, according to Mariano Aguirre and Poli Délano, "Chilean women writers produced more and better quality works during those years than their male counterparts" (*Power and Women's Writing in Chile* 117).



writers would do extensive investigation and research, interview and collect tapes and testimonies of dozens of victims, and then compile their experiences, synthesize their points of view, edit by cutting and adding, and finally polish them, and all with the express purpose of accusing the torturers and executioners (133).<sup>15</sup>

Allende points out that this wave of testimonial literature right after the coup was often written by people who had lived in concentration camps, who had been tortured or raped or people whose relatives had disappeared. She says that it took her eight years to internalize all the suffering, to create enough distance to be able to write fiction, turn it into art (Dolz-Blackburn et al. 149). She contends that “you need a lot of time to exorcize the demons” in order to achieve that distance “to be able to write with ambiguity and irony -two elements that are very important in literature,” for otherwise you could only write journalism, testimony, documentaries, or chronicles of what had happened (Elyse Crystall et al. 284).<sup>16</sup> Exile, then, the pain and rage that built up over those years far away from her country (Agosín, “Pirate” 39), is what made Allende a writer. When she left Chile, she was not a writer in the sense of being a novelist, since being a journalist or TV newsperson did not give her the status of being a writer in exile like Antonio Skármeta, Fernando Alegría, José Donoso or Ariel Dorfman, to name just a few.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, unlike them, Allende felt that she could not *be* what she *was*: a journalist. So the silence of those eight

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<sup>15</sup>See Galarce pp. 191-195 for a brief summary of the classifications and characteristics of the novels written in exile by Chilean authors.

<sup>16</sup>Galarce contends that Allende’s *Casa (House)* was the most exemplary of the novels of this time period (195). Likewise, it is unique not only in that it is one of the first written by a female author, but also because of the presence of a feminine subject.

<sup>17</sup>Another idea worth mentioning is that Allende had the opportunity to read many of the testimonies and much of the testimonial literature from that time period (1974-1980), which both Dorfman and Galarce contend was extensive.

years, of not being able to write, erupted into an avalanche of words provoked not only by her grandfather's imminent death, but also by the *need* to write, to communicate, to express her feelings.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.6 Chile's detour into terror

Frederic Jameson points out that “[l]os grandes testimonios son aquéllos en que la vida es necesariamente intersectada por las convulsiones de la historia” (“great testimonies are those in which life is by necessity intersected with historical convulsions”; “De la sustitución” 131). It is clear that in *Casa (House)*, the coup of 1973 was one such historical convulsion. Coddou explains in an essay about *Casa (House)* and history that one should read it as a narrative achievement in which not only the characters, but also the events “adquieren carácter representativo de aspectos muy concreta de la sociedad chilena” (“acquire a representative characteristic of very concrete aspects of Chilean society”), as well as where the meaning of language is raised to a symbolic level in order to establish a means of interpretation of that which gets to the grain of a rather long period of history in that society (*Veinte ensayos* 46). Hayden White contends that what is interesting about what he calls the “fictions of factual representations,” is to what extent the “discourse of the historian and the writer of imaginative fictions overlap, resemble, or correspond with each other” (“Fictions” 21). In the same mode, Fernando Unzueta postulates that, widely speaking, history and fiction are the two greatest narrative means through which people can understand, and therefore explain, experiences both from the past and the present that relate to their world (Introduction to *La imaginación histórica y el romance nacional en*

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<sup>18</sup>These ideas are all alluded to in her interviews. See especially those by William Zinsser, Marjorie Agosín, Michael Moody, Marie-Lise Gazarian Gautier and Jacqueline Cruz et al.

*Hispanoamérica*, 13).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Historian George Macauley Trevor claims that history should *ideally* present past facts “in their full emotional and intellectual value to a wide public by the difficult art of literature” (cited in Foley, xi). Likewise, Allende’s portrait of a shattered society ties in with Thomas Connery’s theories on literary journalism, that it delivers “this felt sense of the quality of life at a particular time and place” at the same time addressing a question raised by cultural historians: “How did it feel to live and act in a particular period of human history?” (cited in Sims, “The Art of Literary Journalism” 13). Allende brings history alive in *Casa (House)*, in a way that is palpable, as the following passages will demonstrate.

In the chapter named “The Terror,” we experience the drama of the coup itself, as well as what must have been the reactions to it by most Chileans:

Entonces oyeron el rugido de los aviones y comenzó el bombardeo. Jaime se tiró al suelo con los demás, sin poder creer lo que estaba viviendo, porque hasta el día anterior estaba convencido que en su país nunca pasaba nada y hasta los militares respetaban la ley. (327)

Then came the roar of the airplanes, and the bombing began. Jaime threw himself to the floor with everyone else, unable to believe what he was seeing; until the day before, he had been convinced that nothing like this would ever happen in his country and that even the military respected the law. (369)

The brutal aftermath of the coup -the disrespect for human rights, the indiscriminate detention, torture and murder of so many innocent people- are recreated with gripping intensity. After beating a group of newly acquired prisoners so badly that they can no longer stand, some soldiers order them to lie down and signal a tank to approach. One of

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<sup>19</sup>“En los términos más amplios, la historia y la ficción son las dos grandes modalidades narrativas mediante las cuales el hombre entiende y explica sus experiencias, vividas o imaginadas, y se relaciona con su mundo, tanto del presente como del pasado” (13).

the soldiers shouts: –“¡Abran paso, que les vamos a pasar con el tanque por encima de estos huevones!” (328) (“Make way, we’re going to run the tank over these bastards!”; 368). The prisoners lie waiting in horror, not knowing they are only providing the soldiers some entertainment: “El tanque pasó resoplando a diez centímetros de sus cabezas entre las carcajadas de los soldados y el aullido de las sirenas de los bomberos” (328) (“The tank snorted past, four inches from their heads, amidst the hard laughter of the soldiers and the howl of the fire engines”; 369-370). These sections reveal what Connery claims is the essence of literary journalism: It is the “attempt to show readers life and human behavior, even if what actually emerges is life’s incomprehensibility and the inexplicability of human behavior” (“Discovering” 12). I am not professing here that this novel *is* literary journalism or literary nonfiction, but rather as I stated earlier, that different elements of this genre appear in her fiction as part of her writing style. In other words, I am *comparing* her narrative to literary nonfiction to demonstrate what they hold in common, to point out different features that coincide. The passages above and many more that follow clearly illustrate “the incomprehensibility and the inexplicability of human behavior,” by showing to what degree of *inhumanity* *human* beings are capable.

### 3.6.1 Narrating atrocities

The scenes that portray most vividly the testimonial accounts acquired by Allende from recordings and interviews, bringing her in touch with “raw evil,” are the torture scenes. Allende says that it was “devastating to learn what people can do to other people.” She adds that there is no justification for torture and that it is beyond her comprehension how the torturers could do what they did and then return to their homes and families and have dinner and watch TV (Benjamin and Engelfried 390). All of the

scenes that describe torture express what Connery professes to be the goal of the literary journalist, and that is the “attempt to ‘freeze’ life” in order to depict reality, and “not by creating, but by attempting to recreate the feel and look of life and experience from a single, subjective point of view” (“Discovering” 11). The following scene, which takes place at the Ministry of Defense, is a continuation of the excerpts cited above and describes the ordeal of Dr. Jaime Trueba, who was with President Allende at the onset of the coup:

Lo obligaron a avanzar agazapado, como si estuviera en una trinchera, lo llevaron a través de una gran sala, llena de hombres desnudos, atados en filas de diez, con las manos amarradas en la espalda, tan golpeados, que algunos no podían tenerse en pie y la sangre corría en hilos sobre el marmol del piso. (328)

They made him walk in a squatting position, as if he were in a trench, and led him into an enormous room filled with naked men who had been tied up in lines of ten, their hands behind their backs, so badly beaten that some could hardly stand. Rivulets of blood were running down onto the marble floor. (370)

However, Jaime soon realizes that, in comparison to the other prisoners, he is being treated with deference. The soldiers know who he is, and consequently make him an offer. If he announces on national television that President Allende was drunk and committed suicide, then they will allow him to go home. The following is a consequence of his refusal: “Lo sujetaron de los brazos. El primer golpe le cayó en el estómago. Después lo levantaron, lo aplastaron sobre una mesa y sintió que le quitaron la ropa. Mucho después lo sacaron inconsciente del Ministerio de Defensa” (329) (“They held him down by the arms. The first blow was to his stomach. After that they picked him up and smashed him down on a table. He felt them remove his clothes. Much later, they carried him unconscious from the Ministry of Defense”; 371). What ensues is an example of how Allende illustrates the wild brutality of the aftermath of the coup:

Había otros prisioneros en tan mal estado como él. Les ataron los pies y las manos con alambres de púas y los tiraron de bruces en las pesebreras. Allí pasaron Jaime y los otros dos días sin agua y sin alimento pudriéndose en su propio excremento, su sangre y su espanto, al cabo de los cuales los transportaron a todos en un camión hasta las cercanías del aeropuerto. En un descampado los fusilaron en el suelo, porque no podían tenerse de pie, y luego dinamitaron los cuerpos. El asombro de la explosión y el hedor de los despojos quedaron flotando en el aire por mucho tiempo. (329)

There were other prisoners in the same condition. They tied their hands and feet with barbed wire and threw them on their faces in the stalls. There Jaime and the others spent two days without food or water, rotting in their own excrement, blood, and fear, until they were all driven by truck to an area near the airport. In an empty lot they were shot on the ground, because they could no longer stand, and then their bodies were dynamited. The shock of the explosion and the stench of the remains floated in the air for a long time. (371)

The scene which immediately follows is in juxtaposition to the previous one, and demonstrates how Allende subtly incorporates irony into the testimonial passages to offset what Dorfman refers to as “the inventory of horrors” (151):

En la gran casa de la esquina, el Senador Trueba abrió una botella de Champán francés para celebrar el derrocamiento del régimen contra el cual había luchado tan ferozmente, sin sospechar que en ese mismo momento a su hijo Jaime estaban quemándole los testículos con un cigarrillo importado. (329)

In the big house on the corner, Senator Trueba opened a bottle of French champagne to celebrate the overthrow of the regime that he had fought against so ferociously, never suspecting that at that very moment his son Jaime’s testicles were being burned with an imported cigarette. (371)

His words, as he raises his glass to toast the coup, are especially ironic: –“Ahora las van a pagar!” (329) (“Now they’re going to pay for everything!”; 371). Not only are the senator’s words ironic, but also the clever way in which Allende narrates the elite’s preference for “imported” articles: the “French” champagne used to celebrate, in contrast to the “imported” cigarette used to burn Jaime’s testicles. At the same time, this passage

illustrates Allende's technique of not narrating the full details all at once, but rather in bits and pieces, not only to offset the horror, but to give her readers a chance to put the whole picture together for themselves.<sup>20</sup> John McPhee contends that "the reader is ninety-some percent of what's creative in creative writing." He adds that writers "simply gets things started" by presenting the material to their readers. He warns that if they dole out too much material, they spoil it, since "[h]ow writers handle the material determines what readers can do with it" (cited in Sims, "The Art of Literary Journalism" 9). On the other hand, Allende claims that the reader's role is to simply witness the reality the author suggests (Gazarian Gautier 132). She also insists that she never writes with any message in mind; she only wants to communicate what she thinks is true and the reader will have to decide what to do with that truth (Rodden, "Responsibility" 230, Montenegro 257).

Additionally, the brief scene above also demonstrates the "componente absurdo, tragicómico" about the whole situation after the coup (Jara, *Testimonio* 3), for as Tina Rosenberg points out in *Children of Cain: Violence and the Violent in Latin America*, the military were only supposed to come in and do "a little light housekeeping," just stay long enough to straighten things up, and then leave (344).<sup>21</sup> She asserts that Chileans believed that their armed forces "were a species of unsullied nobility, above petty partisanship,"

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<sup>20</sup>This coincides with Wolfgang Iser's theory: "The reader's enjoyment begins when he himself becomes productive, i.e. when the text allows him to bring his own faculties into play" (108). In the same mode, E.L Doctorow contends that a reader's experience is another aspect important to discourse: "Complex understandings, indirect, intuitive, and nonverbal, arise from the words of the story, and by a ritual transaction between reader and writer, instructive emotion is generated in the reader from the illusion of suffering an experience not his own. A novel is a printed circuit through which flows the force of a reader's own life" ("False Documents" 16).

<sup>21</sup>Rosenberg has won the Pulitzer Prize and National Book award for her literary nonfiction. She has never written fiction, but only what Kevin Kerrane calls "true stories artfully told" (20).

staunch defenders of the constitution and of their democratic nation,<sup>22</sup> and cites Pinochet as saying right before the coup that “such things aren’t done here” (338), “such things” meaning torture and human rights abuses. But, she adds, those Chileans who supported Pinochet “never foresaw the hell that was to come” (343). Little did they know that military rule would take full control over civil rule, in a country in which the judicial system had always respected the law, and the result in Jara’s terms is that “ofensores y ofendidos se confunden. El monstruo se vuelve sobre el Doctor Frankenstein” (“the offenders and the offended are indistinguishable. The monster turns on Doctor Frankenstein”; *Testimonio* 4).<sup>23</sup>

It should be pointed out that Tina Rosenberg, who is well-known for her exhaustive research and detailed accuracy, is similar to Allende in her matter-of-fact style which is clear and concise, and her subtle use of irony, which never comes across as sarcastic or mean. Furthermore, they coincide in their “personality” as writers, which Kramer claims is the defining mark of writers of literary nonfiction. He affirms that these narrators must “write in *intimate voice*, informal, frank, human, and ironic” (28). He clarifies this by stating that the literary journalist is a whole, candid person with a unique personality, who speaks in an informal, competent and reflective voice with

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<sup>22</sup>Rosenberg maintains that not only did Chile have “the second-oldest democracy in the hemisphere after the United States,” but also that it had always used politics to solve its problems, never violence (335).

<sup>23</sup>It is worth noting that Gaetan Picón’s theories on the novel coincide precisely with what Kramer’s claims. Picón contends that the novel should never be preachy, give any message or render any judgements, and its strength lies in the sincerity of its tone (in José Acosta Montoro, 103). “La novela debe hablar como la vida misma, no como pedagogo ni predicador. Su fuerza depende de su sinceridad: es decir, debe expresarse por medio de sus imágenes y personajes y no tolerar jamás, encima o fuera de sus apariencias concretas, la abstracción de un pensamiento superior que ofuscaría y juzgaría las personas” (103).



knowledgeable assurance about her/his topic. He adds that “the genre’s power is the strength of this voice” (29).<sup>24</sup> What Kramer adduces here corresponds perfectly to Allende. And although *Casa (House)* is not literary nonfiction or journalism *per se*, Allende as narrator coincides exactly to what Kramer claims about the narrator of literary journalism. Yet that does not necessarily make her a literary journalist, but rather that her writing style is often similar to literary journalists or writers of literary nonfiction.

### 3.6.2 Another kind of violence

Allende insists that you cannot discuss Latin American literature without discussing violence in all of its forms, of which the most visible is the extreme poverty of so many in contrast to the extreme wealth of so few (Promis 293).<sup>25</sup> She explains that there are two coexisting worlds on her continent, one with nice neighborhoods and opulence, another of “forgotten villages where people still live and die as they did in the Middle Ages” (Zinsser, “Writing” 47). One of the themes that is woven into *Casa (House)* is that of the racist/classist attitude of the upper and upper-middle class towards the lower class. Allende claims that the “structure of economic, political, and social power in Latin America is very racist,” although they do not use the term of “racist,” but rather

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<sup>25</sup>In an interview with Michael Moody, Allende asks: “Without social justice how can you avoid the increase in violence?” (59).

“classist.” But she says that it is the same thing because “the power is in the hands of the white, the males, the rich, and the military, so the higher you are in the social scale in Latin America the more European-looking you are” (Benjamin and Engelfried 387).

*Casa (House)* not only captures the historical moment of the coup and its aftermath, but also portrays fifty years of Chile’s history,<sup>26</sup> conveying how the attitude of those among the country’s elite who still cling to traditional beliefs of racial and class superiority has remained the same since colonial times.<sup>27</sup> Allende demonstrates this best through the point of view of Esteban Trueba, either using the technique of interior monologue or dialogues.<sup>28</sup> It is also worth noting here that one of the features of Allende’s writing is free indirect discourse, a technique which Frus claims makes point of view narration possible,” its purpose being that of knowing the thought of a third person.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>See Chapter IV of Barbara Loach’s *Power and Women’s Writing in Chile* for a complete study of the links between history and literature in Chilean narrative since its inception beginning with *La Araucana*. However, I am not implying that *Casa (House)* is an *historical novel*, but rather a novel where history is also a protagonist. In Enrique Anderson Imbert’s definition, the historical novel must present a past that is also in the *past* of its author, i.e. before the author’s time. See Anderson Imbert’s essay, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup>It should also be pointed out that the economic injustice and extreme inequality are shown from the beginning of the novel with Clara’s awareness of the contrast between her mother’s friends and the women of the working class (77), and that no works of charity could even begin to “mitigar la monumental injusticia” (78) rampant in society. However, it should also be noted that the other members of Trueba’s family do not share his opinions about racial and class superiority.

<sup>28</sup>Wallace Martin defines point of view as “a set of attitudes, opinions, and personal concerns that constitute someone’s stance in relation to the world” (147). This fits in with Tom Wolfe’s description of what he has done in his literary nonfiction, using point of view by entering directly into peoples’ minds through extended dialogue, as well as interior monologue (19-21).

<sup>29</sup>Frus adds that “[i]t is sometimes impossible to tell where the narration leaves off and the focalization, the speech or thought of the character, begins” (50), and this is often the case in *Casa (House)*.

Esteban Trueba was a character obsessed with the notion that communism might one day take over if he and his co-ideologues of the far right let down their guard. Here is one of the first glimpses into Trueba's mind, after it was suggested to him that he pay his workers with real money and not vouchers, shorten their excessive work load, and treat them with dignity and respect:

Son ideas degeneradas... Ideas bocheviques para soliviantarme a los inquilinos. No se dan cuenta que esta pobre gente no tiene cultura ni educación, no pueden asumir responsabilidades, son niños. ¿Cómo van a saber lo que les conviene? (63)

They're degenerate ideas," he muttered. "Bolshevik ideas designed to turn the tenants against me. What they don't realize is that these poor people are completely ignorant and uneducated. They're like children, they can't handle responsibility. How could *they* know what's best for them?... (64)

Peter G. Earle parallels this statement of Trueba's to one made by U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at a National Security Council meeting soon after Salvador Allende's election: "I don't see why we have to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people" (546).<sup>30</sup>

Trueba's sense of superiority is also shown in many of the dialogues throughout the novel in the juxtaposition of points of view<sup>31</sup> between himself and his family. After he

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<sup>30</sup>Kissinger's statement is a classic example of why today's Latin American cultural intellectuals are irritated with and defensive about subject matters that deal with national sovereignty, which Abril Trigo claims "is still a capital issue in Latin America." He maintains that at the same time that he celebrated the detention of Pinochet by British authorities at the appeal of a Spanish judge, he also felt "humiliated" as a Latin American "by the neocolonial implications of the affair, the paternalistic lesson in civility ('if you don't do it, we'll do it for you'), the new world (dis)order disregard for the modern principles of self-determination and national sovereignty, disguised under the hypocritical defense of human rights" ("Why" 84).

<sup>31</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the importance of dialogues for showing opposing points of view. He says that all languages of heteroglossia "are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each

hears his wife, Clara, tell their daughter that the poor need justice, not charity, Trueba explodes: “--¡Justicia! ¿Es justo que todos tengan lo mismo? ¿Los flojos lo mismo que los trabajadores? ¿Los tontos lo mismo que los inteligentes? ¡Eso no para ni con los animales! No es cuestión de ricos y pobres, sino de fuertes y débiles” (125) (“Justice! Is it justice for everyone to have the same amount? The lazy the same as those who work? The foolish the same as the intelligent? Even animals don’t live like that! It’s not a matter of rich and poor, it’s a matter of strong and weak”; 137). And later on, when he notices his son exerting the same amount of energy in working at the hospital and providing free medical care to the poor in his spare time, as he did amassing his fortune, Trueba cannot contain himself. The following passage illustrates two points of view in conflict, that in turn demonstrate very distinct values between father and son:

–Usted es un perdedor sin remedio, hijo –suspiraba Trueba–. No tiene usted sentido de la realidad. Todavía no se ha dado cuenta de cómo es el mundo. Apuesta a valores utópicos que no existen.  
 –Ayudar al prójimo es un valor que existe, padre.  
 --No, la caridad, igual que su socialismo, es un invento de los débiles para doblegar y utilizar a los fuertes.  
 –No creo en su teoría de los fuertes y los débiles, –replicaba Jaime.  
 –Siempre es así en la naturaleza. Vivimos en una jungla.  
 –Sí, porque los que hacen las reglas son los que piensan como usted, pero no siempre será así.  
 –Lo será, porque somos triunfadores. Sabemos desenvolvernos en el mundo y ejercer el poder... (265-266)

“You’re a hopeless loser son,” Trueba would say, sighing. “You have no sense of reality. You’ve never taken stock of how the world really is. You put your faith in utopian values that don’t even exist.”  
 “Helping one’s neighbor is a value that exists.”  
 “No. Charity, like Socialism, is an invention of the weak to exploit the strong and bring them to their knees.”

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characterized by its own objects, meaning and values. As such, they may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically” (291-292).

“I don’t believe in your theory of the weak and the strong,” Jaime replied.  
“That’s the way it is in nature. We live in a jungle.”  
“Yes, because the people who make up the rules think like you! But it won’t always be that way.”  
“Oh, yes, it will. Because we always win. We know how to move around in the world and how to use power...” (297)

However, both in a way are prophetic. With Salvador Allende’s victory, the poor and those in favor of social justice are ecstatic, if only for a short period of time; for the experiment in socialist democracy does not have a chance, since many of the members of the elite from the conservative party do everything in their power to sabotage the new presidency, and finally achieve it with the coup. Now it is their turn to be ecstatic, and they revel in their regained power after the short detour of socialism. And even though they witness the birth of “una nueva y soberbia clase social” (“a proud new class”), they have not yet learned to fear those who make up this new “casta de militares que ocupó rápidamente los puestos claves” (338) (“caste of military men [who] arose to fill key posts”; 382). But while luxury stores, import businesses and exotic restaurants again thrive, in the midst of financial miracles, the lines of the unemployed seeking jobs at minimum wage get longer: “La mano de obra descendió a niveles de esclavitud y los patrones pudieron, por primera vez desde hacía muchas décadas, despedir a los trabajadores a su antojo, sin pagarles indemnización, y meterlos presos a la menor protesta” (341) (“The labor force was reduced to slavery, and for the first time in many decades management was able to fire people at will without granting any severance pay and to have them thrown in jail for the slightest protest”; 385).

At the same time, the members of the conservative elite are convinced that the military dictatorship will be short-lived and so they joyously take advantage of recuperating their properties and of avenging those who had benefitted from their loss.

However, after waiting for months for democracy to return, it becomes evident that “los militares se habían tomado el poder para quedárselo y no para entregar el gobierno a los políticos de derecha que habían propiciado el golpe” (345) ( “the military had seized power to keep it for themselves and not to hand the country over to the politicians of the right who had made the coup possible”; 389). As the middle class fades away,<sup>32</sup> the contrast between the two Chiles grows ever bleaker, while the denial of those who have the economic power grows ever stronger:

paralelamente a la existencia apacible y ordenada de los que no querían saber, de los que podían tener la ilusión de una vida normal, de los que podían negar que iban a flote en una balsa sobre un mar de lamentos, ignorados, a pesar de todas las evidencias, que a pocas cuadras de su mundo feliz estaban los otros, los que sobreviven o mueren en el lado oscuro. (366-367)

parallel to the peaceful existence of those who did not want to know, who could afford the illusion of a normal life, and of those who could deny that they were on a raft adrift in a sea of sorrow, ignoring, despite all evidence, that only blocks away from their happy world there were others, these others who live or die on the dark side. (414)

Allende’s portrayal of a fractured society illustrates Kramer’s claims that “there is something intrinsically political --and strongly democratic-- about literary journalism, something pluralistic... and anti-elite” (34). In other words, just as Allende’s narrative is anti-*status-quo* and pro-popular classes, so too is that of the literary journalists, who avoid proclaiming the accomplishments of those with fame, wealth or power, choosing instead to feature the lives and plight of those of the common man or woman.

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<sup>32</sup>Rosenberg points out that before Pinochet, Chile had not only the largest middle class in Latin America, but also the highest literacy rate and levels of education (339).

### 3.6.3 Military “values”

It should also be mentioned that *Casa (House)* is not only a story/history covering fifty years of Chilean life, where we are continuously aware that the political<sup>33</sup> is ever-present just below the surface of that history/story,<sup>34</sup> but another story underlies the narrative, and that is the traditional role of women in a patriarchal society where *hers* is the space of the subordinate and *his* is the role/space of the dominant.<sup>35</sup> Whereas this idea has only been insinuated/implicit for most of the narration, it becomes more open/explicit in the aftermath of the coup when the military is in control. María Elena Valenzuela affirms that in patriarchal societies that are also under military rule (and therefore determined by military “values”), these roles are even more stereotyped: “submission and passivity” versus “strength and aggressivity” (166). Allende feels that nothing is more *machista* than the military mentality. She claims that “it is the synthesis, the exaltation, the ultimate exaggeration of machismo,” and that “there is a direct line from machismo to militarism” (Levine and Engelbert 46). Ximena Bunster-Burotto points out that the military state is “the epitome of sexist patriarchal ideology” and has forced women back into their traditional roles as reproducers and nurturers (317). In the same mode, Galarce contends that a woman’s *place* is located in direct opposition to the concept of male

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<sup>33</sup>In *The New Novel in Latin America*, Philip Swanson holds that *Casa (House)* “is a political work written in a popular tone with the ultimate goal of touching an emotional nerve and jolting the reader into a new awareness” (155).

<sup>34</sup>The words “story” and “history” in English are translated the same in Spanish (*historia*), and are often used by Spanish-speaking writers ambiguously and/or ironically.

<sup>35</sup>The situation of women in Chile after the coup corresponds to what Beverley points out about the *testimonio*, that it “cannot affirm a self-identity that is separate from a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle” (*Against* 83).

domination and property, and therefore women tend to be identified with the exploited and thus theirs is a *place* of oppression and exploitation (187, my emphasis).

Allende *powerfully* portrays how the military violated women back into their *place* with Trueba's granddaughter's detention and ordeal:

–¡Quítate la ropa! –ordenó García con otra voz.

Ella no obedeció. La desnudaron con violencia, arrancándole las pantalones a pesar de sus patadas... Dos manos la levantaron, cuatro la acostaron en un catre metálico, helado, duro, lleno de resortes que la herían la espalda, y le ataron los tobillos y las muñecas con correas de cuero...

Alba escuchó otra voz.

–Yo manejo la máquina –dijo.

Y entonces ella sintió aquel dolor atroz que le recorrió el cuerpo y la ocupó completamente y que nunca, en los días de su vida, podría llegar a olvidar. Se hundió en la oscuridad... Un siglo después, Alba despertó mojada y desnuda. No sabía si estaba cubierta de sudor, de agua o de orina, no podía moverse, no recordaba nada, no sabía dónde estaba ni cuál era la causa de ese malestar intenso que la había reducido a una piltrafa. Sintió la sed del Sahara y clamó por agua...(362-363)

“Take off your clothes!” García ordered in another voice. She did not obey. They stripped her violently, pulling off her slacks despite her kicking... Two hands lifted her up, and four laid her on a cold, hard metal cot with springs that hurt her back, and bound her wrists and ankles with leather thongs... Alba heard another voice. “I’ll work the machine” it said. Then she felt the atrocious pain that coursed through her body, filling it completely, and that she would never forget as long as she lived. She sank into darkness... A century later Alba awoke wet and naked. She did not know if she was bathed in sweat, or water, or urine. She could not move, recalled nothing, and had no idea where she was or what had caused the intense pain that had reduced her to a heap of raw meat. She felt the thirst of the Sahara and called out for water. (409-410)

She then hears a cell mate caution her not to drink any water or she could get convulsions and die, and counsels her to sleep so the time will pass more quickly. She tells her: “Poco a poco te volverá la memoria, no te preocupes. Es por la electricidad” (363) (“Your memory will gradually come back. Don’t worry. It’s because of the electricity”; 410).



In the continuation of the scene illustrated above, Alba has been in García's power for a long time, when it suddenly dawns on her that it is not information that he wants, but rather revenge, for all of the injuries and humiliation that he has suffered since birth. One of his boyhood memories is of himself, standing barefoot in the mud and dressed in rags, watching Alba in her nice clothes walking with her grandfather, swearing that "algún día le haría pagar su arrogancia y se vengaría de su maldito destino de bastardo" (366) ("One day he would make her pay for her arrogance and avenge himself for his cursed bastard fate"; 413). García's thirst for revenge is ironically just as strong as his old *patrón's* -his grandfather by rape, Senator Trueba.<sup>36</sup> Remembering that childhood memory triggers a response that fills him with rage and he therefore orders that Alba be thrown into the doghouse: "La perrera era una celda pequeña y hermética como una tumba sin aire, oscura y helada... Al principio, encogida en su sepultura, sin poder sentarse ni estirarse a pesar de su escaso tamaño, Alba se defendió contra la locura" (366) ("The doghouse was a small, sealed cell like a dark, frozen, airless tomb... At first, huddled in her sepulcher, unable to stand up or sit down despite her small size, Alba managed to stave off madness"; 413). Nevertheless, after a time, the solitary confinement and pain become too much to bear:

Se abandonó, decidida a terminar su suplicio de una vez, dejó de comer y sólo cuando le venció su propia flaqueza bebió un poco de agua. Trató de no respirar, de no moverse, y se puso a esperar la muerte con impaciencia. Así estuvo mucho tiempo. Cuando casi había conseguido su propósito,

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<sup>36</sup>It should be noted that the translation of "her" (in the previous published translation of *House*) from the Spanish "su", could very well be translated as "his", for Alba had not treated García with the degree of "arrogance" as her grandfather had on several occasions. Bunster-Burotto points out that in the military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, torturing women was a common practice as a way of "punishing their 'man,' so even to many human rights advocates the 'desecration' of the female is processed as torture to the male" (301). The anguish that Trueba experienced over the disappearance of his granddaughter was psychological torture and therefore a way for García to "avenge himself for his cursed bastard fate."

apareció su abuela Clara, a quién había invocado tantas veces para que la ayudara a morir, con la ocurrencia de que la gracia no era morirse, puesto que eso llegaba de todos modos, sino sobrevivir, que era un milagro...(366)

She gave up, deciding to end this torture once and for all. She stopped eating, and only when her feebleness became too much for her did she take a sip of water. She tried not to breathe or move, and began eagerly to await her death. She stayed like this for a long time. When she had nearly achieved her goal, her Grandmother Clara, whom she had invoked so many times to help her die, appeared with the novel idea that the point was not to die, since death came anyway, but to survive, which would be a miracle..." (413-414)

But even more importantly, Clara saves her by suggesting the idea of writing in her mind, without paper or pencil, to keep her sanity as well as her thoughts occupied, so that when she gets out she can write "un testimonio que algún día podría servir para sacar a la luz el terrible secreto que estaba viviendo para que el mundo se enterara del horror que ocurría..." (366) ("a testimony that might one day call attention to the terrible secret she was living through, so that the world would know about this horror that was taking place..."; 414). Jara notes that not only is the ending of *Casa (House)* an honest reconstruction of the horrors and aftermath of the coup, but it is also a story where the ghosts remain to name, and thereby accuse the guilty (*Límites* 27). This passage also illustrates why Allende says she writes, to register history so that "memories will not be blown away by the wind" (Zinsser, "Writing" 45).

#### 3.6.4 “Unfinished murder”<sup>37</sup>

In his discussion of Chile’s testimonial literature after the coup, Dorfman refers to torture scenes such as the ones illustrated in this chapter as “pure evil” and a “descent into hell” (169). When asked how she had become an expert on torture, Allende responds that as a journalist, it was her job to learn what was going on, and reiterating much of what she has said so many times in so many different ways, she says that all she did for a year and a half was compile information, recordings and *testimonios*, to the point of giving her nightmares. Alba is like so many whose memories provoke nightmares, and whose testimonies Allende is using to write these final chapters.

Alba, representative of so many of the women detained during the nightmare following the coup, is not only repeatedly raped and tortured but is made to endure it for weeks, and then is set *free* to relive that horror for the rest of her life. Allende contends that “rape represents the worst humiliation and the worst transgression against a person” and points out that “it is as if in the collective unconscious the rape of a woman has come to symbolize the rape of all of us as a species, continent, and race (Gazarian Gautier 130). There are those who would argue that Alba’s ordeal was significantly worse than that of Jaime --who represents those that were tortured and then *mercifully* murdered after a few days– and not only in the sense that she suffered so long, but because she was repeatedly raped.<sup>38</sup> However, torture inflicted on *any* human being, man or woman, is a violation of

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<sup>37</sup>James Neff calls his literary nonfiction work about the Cleveland serial rapist Ronny Sheldon *Unfinished Murder*. He claims that rape is unfinished murder because of its lifelong effects on a woman.

<sup>38</sup>See p. 299 of Ximena Bunster-Burotto’s “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America,” in *Women and Change in Latin America*, Eds. June Nash and Helen Safa, 1986.

both the body and the spirit, a degrading and humiliating, as well as a painful experience, and could therefore be considered “unfinished murder.” It is clear then, in the last passage cited above from *Casa*, that Allende is emphasizing the fact that Alba must survive for her testimony will be important, and we, as readers, know that we are sharing the experience of thousands (both men *and* women), who represent those who were tortured and then lived to give their testimony, and thereby accuse the guilty.

### 3.7 Love and violence / Light and darkness

Allende says that love and violence, light and darkness, are two of her obsessions, two recurrent phantoms, that are always present in her life “like two antagonistic forces,” and that there is an invisible border that divides that apparently orderly world in which we live from another world which exists simultaneously. This idea is what made her name her second novel *De amor y de sombra* (*Of Love and Shadows*) (Moody 54). Allende considers it to be “absolutely and unconditionally a political novel” (Piña 193) that captures the essence of the historical moment. It portrays the effects of five years of dictatorship, five years of living in fear. Again, just as in *Casa* (*House*), she does this through contrasts in general background descriptions, as well as in the juxtaposition of points of view, this time not only of the different social classes, but also of the reigning military. Doug Birkhead notes that as journalism has begun to focus more on political affairs, it reflects “an impulse to bring events into a forum so that they may be publicly accounted for,” since the press has traditionally “sought to make itself -and us- bear the responsibility of being witnesses rather than merely onlookers” (cited in Sims, “The Art of Literary Journalism” 13). Allende contends that “Latin American writers are constantly

being accused of being too political,”<sup>39</sup> but feels that they must be so, for if they were not, then they would not be portraying the realities of their countries (Berlin Snell 241).<sup>40</sup>

As an introduction to *Amor (Love)*, here is an example of the background in the story. It is a portrait of the social and political reality of the country in which the privileged class has learned to cope with the fact that the dictatorship is there to stay:

Se comentaba la opulencia, el milagro económico, los capitales extranjeros atraídos a raudales por las bondades del régimen. A los descontentos se les calificaba de antipatriotas, pues la felicidad era obligatoria. Mediante una ley de segregación no escrita, pero conocida por todos, funcionaban dos países enemigos en el mismo territorio nacional, uno de la élite dorada y poderosa y otro de la masa marginada y silenciosa. Es el costo social, determinaban los jóvenes economistas de la nueva escuela y así lo repetían los medios de comunicación. (195)

Everyone was talking of opulence, the economic miracle, the streams of foreign capital attracted by the new regime. Anyone who was discontented was considered anti-patriotic; happiness was obligatory. Through an unwritten but universally known law of segregation, two countries were functioning within the same national boundaries: one for a golden and powerful elite, the other for the excluded and silent masses. Young economists of the new school pronounced that this was the social cost, and their words were repeated in the news media. (168)

Rosenberg sums up Pinochet’s social philosophy in what she says is one of his “memorable phrases”: “The rich must be treated well so they’ll give more money.” She

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<sup>39</sup>Allende has pointed out many times that Americans tend to regard politics as “a mortal sin” and “aren’t even interested in voting” (Piña 193). They are often therefore critical of Latin American authors for this reason. However, John J. Pauley points out that there was a time in the U.S., during the late 60s and early 70s, when the New Journalists seized the political moment to focus on cultural-political issues that provoked opposing viewpoints. Their writing became known as cultural politics. Perhaps that is why they too were so criticized. See Pauley’s essay “The Politics of the New Journalism” for further discussion about this topic.

<sup>40</sup>Likewise, Marcelo Coddou points out that Allende’s preference for an historical context is rooted in her desire to be a voice of alarm with a determined testimonial purpose, to fold the socio-political into her work (“Ficciones” 13).

also points out that “Chile’s attraction for foreign business was based in part on the misery of its people.” She adds that the “economic miracle was evident in Chile’s wealthy neighborhoods, with their manicured parks, new boutiques, chic hairdressing salons, European cars, and few beggars to spoil the scenery” (370). Unlike the rich in countries like Peru or El Salvador, who “see the poor as vaguely human creatures carrying water through their streets or begging with children on their backs,” she says that “in Pinochet’s Chile the rich did not see the poor at all.” Moreover, she notes that unfortunately, “[T]o be born in the slums meant to live and die in the slums, giant settlements of wasted talent where nothing grew and life revolved around scraping together a few pesos to get through the day” (372). I cite Rosenberg so often to show how Allende’s depiction of Chile’s actuality coincides with that of a writer of literary nonfiction, so that the conclusion could then be drawn that both accounts are based on facts, research, reporting and experience.

*Amor (Love)* is a testimonial novel that Wesley Weaver claims is faithful to the events that happened at Lonquén. He contends that even the “declaraciones” (court testimonies) of those declared responsible are found in the novel, adding to the veracity of the account (74).<sup>41</sup> In *Paula*, Allende summarizes these events, saying that in 1978, at a place called Lonquén, about fifty miles from Santiago, the cadavers of fifteen campesinos that had been killed by the military were found in some abandoned lime kilns (310). She says that she found out about the incident while living in exile in Caracas, just as she narrates it in *Amor (Love)*: “Pero en pocos días el anuncio del hallazgo en la mina y las

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<sup>41</sup>Weaver alleges that *Amor (Love)* is a *testimonio* and Ana Adriaola agrees with him. On the other hand, Elias Miguel Muñoz does not feel that *testimonio* is the proper terminology and neither do I. He claims that it not only lacks the predominant first person narration characteristic of the *testimonio*, but that it is also an artistic rewriting of the events, although with a strong testimonial voice (62).

fotografías de los cadáveres circulaban por el mundo a través de los teletipos” (251) (“But within a few days word of the discovery in the mine and the photographs of the cadavers had traveled around the world by teletype”; *Of Love and Shadows* 219). She notes her reactions at that time in *Paula*: “Lo ocurrido en Lonquén fue como un puñetazo en la boca del estómago, el dolor no me abandonó en años. Cinco hombres de la misma familia, los Maureira, murieron asesinados por esos carabineros” (310) (“What happened in Lonquén was like a knife in my belly, I felt the pain for years. Five men from the same family, the Maureiras, had died, murdered by *carabineros*”; 281). She claims that the story haunted her for a long time. She could not stop thinking about all of the mothers, daughters, wives and sisters of the fifteen men, who went around looking for them for five years, inquiring about them in prisons, concentration camps, hospitals and the morgue and never getting any answers. She says she especially thought of the women in the Maureira family in their futile search for the five men that the military had taken away, five from just one family -all four sons and a husband. Consequently, she feels that “somehow they represented the tragedy of the disappeared in Latin America, not only in Chile, everywhere” (Invernizzi and Pope 122).

### 3.7.1 The universality of oppression

Allende has insisted in numerous interviews that she tries not to be exclusive in her works regarding Chile, so that her writing will hold “something that is significant to everyone” (Cruz et al. 214), and especially where oppressive regimes are or have been in control. Again, this is illustrated in *Paula*:

Para entonces desaparecían miles de personas en muchas partes del continente, Chile no era una excepción. En Argentina las madres de la

Plaza de Mayo con las fotografías de sus hijos y sus nietos ausentes, en Uruguay sobran nombres de presos y faltaban cuerpos. (310)

By then, thousands of people had disappeared in many parts of the continent, Chile was not an exception. In Argentina, the mothers of the *desaparecidos* marched in the Plaza de Mayo carrying photographs of their missing children and grandchildren; in Uruguay, the names of prisoners far exceeded physical bodies that could be counted. (281)

Allende contends that the crimes that occurred during Pinochet's Chile could have happened in Greece in the time of the colonels, in Central Europe, in any country of Central America, or in Argentina or Uruguay during their dirty wars (Correas 92). She points out that she does not specifically mention Lonquén nor any of the real names of the people, since "similar cases of violence and impunity have occurred and continue to occur in Latin America," clandestine graves have been discovered in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and many other countries, and "assassinations are daily occurrences in Central America" (Moody 51). This sense of recognizing and portraying what is not just the reality of Chile is demonstrated in the following passage from *Amor (Love)*:

Le tocó ver alguna vez detenerse un automóvil y a varios hombres abalanzarse sobre un peatón introduciéndolo a viva fuerza en el vehículo; de lejos olió el humo de las hogueras quemando libros prohibidos; adivinó las formas de un cuerpo humano flotando en las turbias aguas del canal. Algunas noches oía el paso de las patrullas y el rugido de los helicópteros zumbando en el cielo. Se inclinó para socorrer en la calle a alguien desmayado de hambre. (131)

One day, she had seen a car screech to a stop and several men overpower a pedestrian and force him into their vehicle; from a distance she had smelled the smoke of bonfires burning banned books; she had glimpsed the outlines of a human body floating in the dark waters of the canal. She had heard patrol cars and the roar of helicopters shattering the night skies. She had stopped to help someone who had fainted from hunger. (111-112)



Although this passage illustrates what has become commonplace in the life of Irene Beltrán, the female protagonist of the novel, it is a chilling reality for many who live, or have lived, through such experiences.

In the same mode, Allende narrates another horror common to so many. After days of going around in circles trying to find the body of Evangelina at detention centers, police lockups, and psychiatric hospitals where torture victims are taken in straight jackets, the two protagonists find many others in the same situation, looking for loved ones who have disappeared. Their journey takes them through the morgue, and like Irene, this experience leaves an indelible mark on us as readers: “No acababa de comprender esa visión de infierno y ni siquiera su imaginación desenfrenada podía medir el alcance de tantos espantos” (130) (“She could not absorb this hellish vision, and not even her wildest imagination could have measured the extent of such horrors”; 110). Allende does a masterful job of painting that “hellish vision”:

Se detuvo frente a una enorme cava refrigerada para observar a una joven de pelo claro colgando de un gancho junto a otros. A la distancia se parecía a Evangelina Ranquileo, pero al acercarse no la reconoció. Aterrada, notó profundas huellas en su cuerpo, el rostro, chamuscado, las manos amputadas. (131)

She stopped before a large refrigerated cellar to look at a light-haired girl hanging on a meat hook in a row of bodies. From a distance the corpse resembled Evangelina Ranquileo, but as she walked closer Irene saw it was not she. Horrified, she stared at the extensive marks of beatings on the body, the burned face, the amputated hands. (112).

This experience profoundly affects Irene, who after leaving the morgue, “ya no era la misma, algo se había roto en su alma” (132) (“was no longer the same; something had shattered in her soul”; 112).

Allende was told in an interview that the scene in the morgue is reminiscent of the movie *Missing*, to which she comments that her book coincides with the film simply

because they both narrate a reality.<sup>42</sup> She says she personally experienced the horror of witnessing such scenes, because after the coup she had to accompany a friend to the morgue who was searching for a missing family member (Moody 54). She also claims that *Amor (Love)* portrays her own experience as a reporter in times of terror, and that throughout the novel, Irene does exactly what she did. She, like Irene, belonged to an upper-middle-class, conservative family, and it took her a long time to become aware of what was going on around her and to become involved (Jones and Prillman 64). She points out that she also taped interviews with both the perpetrators of the repression as well as their victims, and then hid the tapes with the idea of saving the truth from being forgotten. Likewise, she helped to hide people until they could obtain sanctuary in an embassy, just like Irene did (Correas 92). She says that at first, she did not realize the danger to which she was exposing herself and her family, but soon she came to understand how the repression worked. She explains that if any of those people had been arrested, “they would have been tortured and made to confess where they had hidden. In that case my family and I would have been detained. I had two small children and had heard of parents whose children had been tortured before their eyes. Can you imagine something like that?” (Moody 56). In *The Literature of Fact*, Ronald Weber contends that the power of nonfiction is “the reader’s sense that it was real.” He cites Tom Wolfe to verify his position: “Nonfiction has the advantage of the reader knowing that it’s real. Now this is a tremendous thing –it sounds like nothing– but it’s a tremendous thing to know that you’re reading something that actually happened” (20). Allende says that each fact that she details in *Amor (Love)* is based on what actually took place (Gazarian Gautier 132),

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<sup>42</sup>Galarce points out that both *Casa (House)* as well as the movie *Missing* were decisive factors in awakening foreign sympathy and solidarity towards the Chilean exiles (136).

and that personal experience of living in a dictatorship is brought to life so vividly that we, as readers, are drawn into that time period and can actually feel the fear.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.7.2 “Journalistic facticity”

Alberto Manguel points out that Allende considers *Amor (Love)* “a long reportage,” because she “researched every detail carefully” (“Conversation” 624). John Hartsock explains that the term “reportage” dates back to the 1930s . He cites Joseph North’s definition of reportage as “three-dimensional reporting” where “the writer not only condenses reality,” but also “helps the reader to feel the fact. The finest writers of reportage are artists in the fullest sense of the term” (169). He also quotes North’s claim that “the writer of reportage must... do more than tell his readers what has happened -he must help the reader experience the event,” and thus “reportage becomes durable literature” (241). Kevin Kerrane makes the point in his essay “Making Facts Dance,” that Tom Wolfe delineated the differences between traditional reportage and the literary nonfiction of his day, what he termed “new journalism” or “creative nonfiction.” He said that these writers combined literary ambition with in-depth reporting, to make the story “shimmer like a novel with the pleasures of detailed realism” (17). Likewise, Acosta

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<sup>43</sup>Tom Wolfe makes the claim that nonfiction writers are “one step closer to the absolute involvement of the reader that Henry James and James Joyce dreamed of and never achieved.” He adds that any writer’s genius, whether it be in fiction or nonfiction, “will be severely handicapped if he cannot master, or if he abandons, the techniques of realism.” Thus, he maintains that the “psychological, moral, philosophical, emotional, poetic, visionary power” of authors such as Dickens, Dostoevsky or Faulkner, among others, is only made possible “by the fact that they first wired their work into the main circuit, which is realism” (*New Journalism* 34).

Montoro calls reportage the epitome of modern journalism and says that it is responsible for giving back to literature its supremacy (127).<sup>44</sup>

Allende says that *Amor (Love)* “is almost word-for-word what happened,” and that although it is fiction, “the facts correspond to what actually happened” (Cruz et al. 217). She says that when she started to write the book, she had been collecting material for four years. She therefore feels that it is much more of a journalistic report, much more journalistic and testimonial than her first novel (Piña 190). She points out that she worked very hard on the book, researching, reading and searching. Allende’s claims coincide with Kramer’s contentions that “[l]iterary journalists immerse themselves in subjects’ worlds and in background research” (22). He adds that they also “take elaborate notes retaining wording of quotes, sequences of events, details that show personality, atmosphere and sensory and emotional content” (23). Again, although the parallels here between Allende’s writing and literary nonfiction are apparent, they are not meant to suggest that this novel is literary nonfiction, but rather to highlight the similar features that they hold in common.

Allende contends that one of the most important sources for *Amor (Love)* was Máximo Pacheco Gómez’s book *Lonquén*,<sup>45</sup> which was a compilation of the documents of the trial, and from which certain parts of the novel are taken almost literally: the declarations of the witnesses and the military. She claims that although she changed his name, the confession of Lieutenant Colonel Ramírez is a true recounting of his words from

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<sup>44</sup>“El reportaje es la esencia fundamental del periodismo moderno, aquello que devuelve a la literatura su hegemonía” (127).

<sup>45</sup>It is worth noting that Máximo Pacheco Gómez is a lawyer who worked for the Vicaría de la Solidaridad in Chile during the Pinochet years (Moody 52).

court documents (Moody 51-52). The following excerpt from *Amor (Love)* is an intriguing look into the psyche of a military officer under Pinochet:

Desde que supo lo del fusilamiento andaba demacrado, le martillaba en la mente una voz antigua proveniente de su infancia, tal vez de algún maestro o de su confesor en el colegio de curas: todos los hombres son hermanos. Pero eso no es verdad, no es hermano quien siembra la violencia y la patria está primero, lo demás son pendejadas y si no los matamos, ellos nos matarán a nosotros, así dicen los coroneles, o matas o mueres, es la guerra, estas cosas hay que hacerlas, amárrate los pantalones y no tiembles, no pienses, no sientas y sobre todo no lo mires a la cara, porque si lo haces estás jodido. (148)

He'd been as pale as a ghost ever since he'd heard about the execution. An old voice from his childhood had been pounding in his brain, the voice of some teacher or his confessor in the school for priests, perhaps: All men are brothers. But that isn't true; any man who goes around spreading violence is no friend of mine, and the nation comes first, everything else isn't worth shit; and if we don't kill them, they'll kill us. Kill or be killed, this is war, these things have to be done, pull up your pants and don't tremble, don't think, don't feel, and above all don't look at the man's face, because if you do, you're fucked good and proper. (126)

The passage continues with the lieutenant colonel ruminating over what he had learned at the Officer's Training School, how he had been trained to defend his country against external attacks, or to wage war against common criminals to protect innocent civilians, but no one had told him that he would have to beat a bound man to a pulp to get information. It is after this passage that a sergeant under his command comments to Irene, his interviewer: “—No era un mal hombre mi teniente, señorita. Cambió después, cuando le dieron poder y no tuvo que rendir cuentas a nadie” (150) (“He wasn't a bad man, the lieutenant, señorita. It was later he changed, after he was put in command and didn't have to account to anyone”; 128). Another scene clarifies this change when the lieutenant colonel congratulates one of his soldiers for following orders without asking questions: “Ranquileo, llegarás muy lejos porque eres tan callado como una tumba. Y

valiente también. Callado y valiente, las mejores virtudes de un soldado” (183)

(“Ranquileo, you’ll go far, because you know how to keep your mouth shut. And you’ve got courage. Tight-lipped and courageous, those are a soldier’s greatest virtues”; 158).

Later, after it has been revealed that he was convicted for ordering the deaths in the mine, he is not only set free almost immediately, but is also promoted to the rank of captain –his reward for always following orders.

Allende admits that she hates the military and is afraid of anyone who wears a uniform. At the same time, she claims that she always tries to be fair with the characters that she portrays. She therefore says that since it was very difficult for her to understand the behavior of the military, she interviewed a soldier for weeks to try to comprehend why they act the way they do and how their brains work. She discovered how they “think of themselves as saviors, as owners of the truth, as righteous people” who are in charge of protecting the *patria*, the fatherland, no matter what the cost. They believe that “the goal justifies the means,” which she considers “perverse in its very soul,” yet she feels there is something even more “terrible about these people: obedience, blind obedience. You have impunity because you are not responsible. Someone else is responsible, someone who is above you” (Montenegro 260-261).

Throughout the final part of the novel, Allende exposes the supposed thoughts of the General, the someone who is responsible, whose orders are the bottom line. Here is how Allende portrays his reaction to a gathering of church officials that was held at the cardinal’s house. His anger stems from the fact that his secret police were unable to find out the purpose of the meeting:

carajo, estos curas malditos se meten donde nadie los manda ¿por qué no se ocupan del alma y nos dejan a nosotros el gobierno? Pero déjenlos, no sea cosa que tengamos otro lío, dijo el general furioso, y averiguen qué

diablos están tramando para ponernos el parche antes de la herida, antes que esos desgraciados empiecen a disparar pastorales desde el púlpito para joder a la patria y no quede más remedio que darles una lección, aunque eso no me haría ninguna gracia, yo soy católico, apostólico, romano y observante. No pienso pelearme con Dios. (241)

Bloody hell! Those damned priests stick their noses in where no one asks them –why don't they attend to the soul and leave the governing to us? But don't interfere with them. We don't want to get into another fracas there, said the General, fuming; but find out what the hell they're plotting so we can put a cork in it before the genie gets loose, before those bastards begin shooting off their mouths from the pulpit, fucking up the whole country, and leave us no choice but to teach them a lesson –though I would certainly not take any great pleasure from that, being an apostolic, Roman, practicing Catholic. I'm not planning any fight with God. (210)

It should be noted that an agency of the Catholic Church in Chile, called the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, was responsible for releasing the information to the world press about the discovery in the mine, just as it is documented in the book. Allende points out that she began to work with the church, even though she is not a practicing Catholic (like Pinochet is), because it was “the only organization that remained on its feet” after the coup, and “became the channel through which help was given to the most needy, the ones in prison, families of the disappeared, the widows and the orphans, especially in marginal areas where unemployment reached eighty percent” (Moody 55-56).

The next passage shows the General's reaction to some press releases as he brushes off some reporters' questions with a contemptuous gesture:

Quince cadáveres en una mina no justificaban tanta bulla y cuando surgieron otras denuncias y aparecieron nuevas tumbas, fosas comunes en los cementerios, bolsas en la costa arrastradas por las olas, cenizas, esqueletos, trozos humanos y hasta cuerpos de niños con una bala entre los ojos acusados de mamar en el pecho materno doctrinas exóticas, lesivas a la soberanía nacional y a los más altos valores de la familia, la propiedad, y la tradición, se encogió de hombros tranquilamente, porque lo primero es la patria y a mí que me juzgue la historia. (284)

Fifteen bodies in a mine did not merit such an uproar, and when other allegations began to surface and new horrors were discovered –common graves in cemeteries, in ditches along the roads, bodies in bags washed up on the coast, ashes, skeletons, human remains, even bodies of infants with a bullet between their eyes, guilty of having suckled at their mothers’ breast exotic doctrines harmful to national sovereignty and to the supreme values of family, property, and tradition– he shrugged his shoulders calmly, because the Nation comes first, and let History be my judge. (247-248)

These excerpts are examples of Allende’s matter-of-fact style and subtle use of irony, in this case meaning that we cannot take the General’s words at face value, but rather the opposite of what he is saying. Kramer points out that successful literary journalists “never forget to be entertaining,” to keep their readers engaged, especially when narrating serious stories requiring analysis (33). These passages are not only “entertaining” –in a way that “black humor” is– but remembering the context within which the General’s words are spoken, and the fact that he is dismissing fifteen lives as insignificant, we are required to do what Kramer calls some serious analysis.

However, of the many passages where Allende attempts to take us into the mind of the military, one more should be illustrated, in order to demonstrate the mentality of one of the lower ranks of officers –a sergeant. It is important because Irene tapes this interview and is subsequently shot for doing so. And, recalling how Allende pointed out earlier that she also taped interviews with both the perpetrators of the repression as well as their victims, and then hid the tapes with the idea of saving the truth from being forgotten, we can assume that this taped testimony is based on fact:

–A los revoltosos hay que joderlos, con perdón de la palabra señorita. Esa misión nos corresponde a nosotros y es un alto honor cumplirla. Los civiles se sublevan con cualquier pretexto, hay que desconfiar de ellos y aplicarles mano dura, como dice mi teniente Ramírez. Pero tampoco se trata de matar sin legalidad, porque sería una masacre.  
–¿Y no lo ha sido, sargento?



No, él no está de acuerdo, son calumnias de los traidores a la patria, infamias de los soviéticos para desprestigiar al gobierno de mi general, es el colmo prestar atención a esos rumores; unos pocos cadáveres hallados en el fondo de una mina no significa que todos los uniformados sean asesinos; él no niega la existencia de algunos fanáticos, pero no es justo echar la culpa a todos y, además, es preferible algunos abusos a que las Fuerzas Armadas vuelvan a los cuarteles, abandonando al país en manos de los políticos.

—¿Sabe lo que pasaría si mi general cayera, ni Dios lo permita? Se levantarían los marxistas y pasarían a cuchillo a todos los soldados con sus mujeres y niños. Nos tienen señalados. A todos nos matarían. Ese es el pago con [sic]cumplir con nuestro deber. (258-259)

“Anyone who stirs up trouble is asking to get it right in the fucking ass, begging your pardon, *señorita*. That’s our mission, and we’re proud to carry it out. Civilians get out of hand at the slightest excuse. You can’t trust them for a minute, and when you deal with them you have to come down with a heavy hand, as Lieutenant Ramírez always says. On the other hand, the killing should be legal –otherwise, it’s nothing less than slaughter.”

“And wasn’t it just that, Sergeant?”

No, he didn’t agree; that’s what traitors to the nation were calling it; those were Soviet lies to discredit the General’s government. The worst thing you could do was pay attention to those rumors; a few bodies in some mine doesn’t mean that every man who wears a uniform is a murderer. He couldn’t deny that there were fanatics around, but it wasn’t fair to put the blame on everyone, and besides, it’s better to have a little abuse than to push the armed forces back in their barracks and leave the country in the hands of the politicians.

“Do you know what would happen the minute the General fell from power, God forbid? The Marxists would rise up and slit the throats of every soldier, along with their wives and children. We’re marked men. They would kill us all. That’s the thanks we get for doing our duty.” (226-227)

The above passages illustrate something that Rosenberg contends about Pinochet: he liked to refer to his system as “protected democracy”, which included the control of the press and the judiciary, as well as defense against “terrorism.” However, she adds that *this* terrorism was “not the disappearances, kidnappings, bombings, torture, rape, threats, and murders committed by the state, but rather all forms of opposition to Pinochet, who, after

all, was only trying to protect democracy” (346, my emphasis).<sup>46</sup> She also maintains that torture or death awaited those who dared oppose this democracy: “Pinochet used fear surgically, applying it in just the degree required for the task at hand, taking care not to rouse from their sleep those Chileans who preferred not to know what was going on” (346-347).

Allende insists that she never tries to give any message in her writing, that she just tells the story and each reader will interpret it in his or her own manner. However, in her narrations, she not only tells *what* happened, but also *why*. And this is the essence of literary nonfiction, being able to interpret, and as Tom Wolfe says, to excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally (“The New Journalism” 15). In addition, Allende never does this in a direct manner, but rather indirectly, subtly. The whole premise of *Amor* (*Love*) was to tell the world what had happened at Lonquén, to denounce the “repression and the impunity of the murderers” (Zinsser, “Writing” 50). Nevertheless, through passages such as the ones above, Allende lets her readers understand *why* it happened, in this case through the perspective of the military, seen not only through the metamorphosis of one lieutenant colonel and one of his subordinates who “were only following orders,” but also through the thoughts of the man giving them. Here again, it is worth noting Allende’s theory at the beginning of this chapter, that in a novel, a writer “can register the most extravagant, evil, obscene,” or inconceivable facts (Zinsser, “Writing” 45), since

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<sup>46</sup>In “Justice, Memory, and a Professor’s Accusation,” Bryon MacWilliams points out that according to two human rights commissions that convened after Pinochet stepped down after a seventeen year reign, the armed forces were responsible for more than three thousand deaths, of whom 1,158 were still unaccountable after the end of the dictatorship. He also cites Veronica Reyna’s estimate that “some 400,000 people were tortured” (37). Rosenberg’s numbers are much more conservative. She claims that two thousand people were killed in the first few years, thousands more were tortured, and close to a thousand more disappeared (347).

*Amor (Love)* certainly does that at the same time that it challenges the reader to interpret the content. This in turn coincides with Dominick LaCapra's perspective regarding the specific "contexts of writing and reading," in his introduction to *History, Politics, and the Novel*. He contends that "particularly significant texts" tend "to be transformative -at least with reference to social and political contexts." Furthermore, he states that a novel "may have transformative effects more through its style or mode of narration" than in the way in which it represents "any desirable alternative society or polity" (4). This is pertinent to Allende's first two novels, since her narrative style engrosses her readers to witness the reality presented and then to construe it in their own way.

### 3.7.3 Complicity

Likewise, readers can interpret and thereby understand much about not only *why* the situation in Chile was the way that it was, but also *how* it remained that way for so long. Connery points out that literary journalists depict moments in time by exploring the how and why, and by incorporating fiction into reportage ("Discovering" 5). Allende demonstrates this not only through the background described at the beginning of this section on *Amor (Love)*, "two countries that were functioning within the same national boundaries," but also in the juxtaposing points of view of the "golden and powerful elite" with the "excluded and silent masses."<sup>47</sup> In the following excerpt, Beatriz is driving down the street, enjoying the beautiful city in springtime. It not only displays Allende's style of

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<sup>47</sup>Again, Allende avoids any reference to "Chile" or "Chileans" anywhere in the previously cited passage. She contends that she has the "responsibility to care for everything that happens on that continent to everyone, not only to Chileans," claiming that their circumstances are comparable: "five hundred years of exploitation and colonization in common" (Montenegro 267).

incorporating the perspective of the elite into a background description of stark contrasts, but it also illustrates a comment by Kramer, that successful literary journalists “knit story and idea alluringly,” and that “style and structure count” (33):

...las calles limpias, las paredes recién pintadas, la gente cortés y disciplinada, eso había que agradecer a las autoridades, todo bajo control y muy bien vigilado. Observó los escaparates de las tiendas atiborradas de mercaderías exóticas nunca antes consumidas en el país, los lujosos edificios con piscinas rodeadas de palmeras enanas en las azoteas... y altas murallas ocultando la región de la pobreza, donde la vida transcurría fuera del orden del tiempo y las leyes de Dios. Ante la imposibilidad de eliminar la miseria, se prohibió mencionarla. Las noticias de la prensa eran tranquilizadoras, vivían en un reino encantado. Eran completamente falsos los rumores de mujeres y niños asaltando panaderías impulsados por el hambre. (194-195)

The clean streets, the freshly painted walls, the courteous and well-behaved people -you could thank the government for that, everything orderly and neat. She looked at shop windows filled with exotic merchandise that once had been unknown in this country; high-rent apartments with penthouse swimming pools ringed by dwarf palms... and high walls hiding the slums of the city, where life did not follow the order of time and the laws of God. Since it was impossible to eliminate poverty, it had been forbidden to mention it. The news in the press was soothing; they were living in a fairyland. Rumors of hungry women and children storming bakeries were completely false. (167-168)

The allusion to the complicity of the press in this passage corresponds to Eduardo Galeano’s insightful observations about Latin America’s mass media. He claims that they almost all “promote a colonialistic culture, which justifies the unjust organization of the world as a result of the legitimate victory of the best -that is, the strongest.” Moreover, he adds that they not only “lie about the past and about reality,” but that they also “propose a lifestyle which postulates consumerism as an alternative to communism, which exalts crime as achievement, lack of scruples as virtue, and selfishness as a natural requirement” (cited in Zinsser, “Writing” 58).

Galeano's statements also correlate to a passage from *Amor (Love)* that is cited directly from a newspaper article from that time period, which demonstrates how the political machine operated through the control of the press. In his work *Fact into Fiction: Documentary Realism in the Contemporary Novel*, Lars Sauerberg asserts that what he calls "nonfiction fiction," or any of the narrative forms similar to literary nonfiction, conceivably turns unadulterated documentable reality into narrative (2). Furthermore, he claims that documentary realism "implicitly acknowledges borrowing *directly* from reality," from those types "of discourse intended for nonliterary purposes" (3), examples of which could be a newspaper article, a court document, a letter. James E. Young claims that "the more realistic a presentation, the more adequate it becomes as testimonial evidence of outrageous events," and thus "documentary realism has become the style by which to persuade readers of a work's testamentary character" (cited in Sauerberg 193). In other words, readers would want to see a convincing piece of documentation that would attest to the validity of the information being presented. It should be pointed out that in *Amor (Love)*, all of the direct citations, or those cited *verbatim* from their original sources –one a pamphlet or flyer denouncing the military that quoted Bakunin (224, 195), another a letter to the president of Chile's Supreme Court by the auxiliary bishop (245, 221), as well as the following citation– are printed in the text in italics. In the following passage, Beatriz is reading out loud from the daily newspaper to her daughter, Irene, and her servant, Rosa:

*Lo importante es avanzar en el camino del progreso, procurando cicatrizar las heridas y superar animosidades, para lo cual no ayuda la rebusca de cadáveres. Gracias a las acciones emprendidas por las Fuerzas Armadas, fue posible programar la nueva etapa que vive la nación. El período de emergencia felizmente superado se caracterizó por el ejercicio de amplísimas facultades de la autoridad establecida, que*

*actuaba en diversos niveles con todo el poder necesario para imponer el orden y restablecer la convivencia cívica. (253)*

What is important is to continue our march down the road of progress, striving to heal our wounds and overcome animosities; dwelling upon cadavers merely hinders that endeavor. We owe to the Armed Forces the fact that we have reached the present stage in our programs. The period of emergency so happily surmounted was characterized by the exercise of the broad powers of established authority, which acted with all necessary strength to impose order and restore civic pride. (221)

After reading the piece, Beatriz comments that she totally agrees with the content, saying there is no point to identify the bodies nor to bring the guilty to justice, since it happened several years ago. Allende immediately gives an explanation for Beatriz's way of thinking, which exemplifies the elitist views of her class:

Por fin gozaban de bienestar, podían comprar a su regalado antojo, no como antes que debían hacer cola hasta para un miserable pollo, ahora resultaba fácil conseguir servicio doméstico y se acabó la efervencia socialista, tan perjudicial en el pasado. El pueblo debiera trabajar más y hablar menos de política. (254)

Finally things were going well; they could buy whatever suited their fancy; it was not the way it used to be when they had to stand in line to buy a miserable chicken. Now it was easy to get domestic servants, and the Socialist agitation that had caused so much trouble had all fizzled out. People should work a little more and talk a little less about politics. (221)

Rosenberg notes that “a shrewd dictatorship does not crush everyone,” and Pinochet knew that it was better to simply seduce those he could with “quiet streets, imported autos, or the luxury of having someone else do their thinking for them, in exchange for their silence and subservience.” She adds that many Chileans were not just coerced, but they were also corrupted by the dictatorship, and claims: “A civilized people in a civilized country stripped themselves of their civilization for the opportunity to buy a TV set on credit” (335-336). She points out that, during a discussion of Chile's being the second-oldest

democracy in the hemisphere after the United States, a radio station director remarked to her that Chileans were wearing ties when Americans “were shooting Indians,” that they “had streetlights before New York,” and “opera before the U.S.” He concludes: “That a Pinochet could exist, even kill thousands of people, and could last for sixteen years was impossible. And that Chile would not struggle against him was too terrible even to contemplate” (335).<sup>48</sup>

Allende asserts that most of the people in her social strata were like Beatriz Alcántara. She says that “they had supported the coup and celebrated the death of Salvador Allende and many others.” Furthermore, she contends “[t]hat was the reason that afterwards they did not want to see the consequences, because they could not have borne the guilt. All the proof stood before their eyes, but they refused to look” (Moody 55). In *Amor (Love)*, Allende has brought the historical moment alive. According to Erich Auerbach, what should most be of interest to readers of historical narratives is not only an awareness of the historical moment, but also of the contemporary historical circumstances, such as the political situation, social stratification and economical issues (*Mimesis* 455-457). Auerbach also contends that these elements exist simply because the historical situation appears as an all-encompassing ambience that is incorporated into the whole spatial temporal reality (473).

Allende not only uses passages such as the ones above to illustrate the reality of the time period, she also uses dialogue to show the dichotomy in points of view between

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<sup>48</sup>Rosenberg also points out that “[i]t is History’s cruel joke that Latin America’s last right wing dictatorship in 1989 was also its oldest democracy.” She adds that a sociologist named Kenneth Bollen “ranked Chile in 1965 as more democratic than the United States, France, Italy, or West Germany, taking into account such factors as political competition, freedom of expression, and voter turnout” (336-337).

Beatriz and her daughter Irene, just as she did in *Casa* (*House*) with Trueba and his son Jaime. The following scene takes place when their car stops at a red light and they are accosted by people selling things, children cleaning windshields, and beggars:

–Cada día hay más pobres –dijo Irene.

–¿Vas a comenzar también con esa cantilena? En todos lados hay mendigos. Lo que pasa es que aquí la gente no quiere trabajar, este es un país de flojos –refutó Beatriz.

No hay trabajo para todos, mamá.

–¿Qué quieres? ¿Que no haya diferencia entre los pobres y la gente decente?

Irene se sonrojó sin atreverse a mirar a Francisco, pero su madre continuó imperturbable.

--Esta es una etapa de transición, pronto vendrán tiempos mejores. Al menos tenemos orden ¿no? Por lo demás, la democracia conduce al caos, así lo ha dicho mil veces el General. (195-196)

“There are more poor everyday,” said Irene.

“Are *you* going to sing that tune too?” complained Beatriz. “There are beggars everywhere. The fact is that people don’t want to work. This is a nation of loafers.”

Irene smiled, not daring to look at Francisco, but her mother continued, imperturbable.

“This is just a period of transition. Soon we’ll be seeing better times. At least we have law and order. And don’t you know that democracy leads to chaos? How many times has the General made that clear!” (168)

Rosenberg points out that “the more cultured Chileans were, the more willing they appeared to blind themselves to what was going on around them.” And she adds that many of those same Chileans could not understand what they viewed as foreigners’ obsession with human rights. In an interview that she conducted in Chile in 1987 with Sergio Reiss, a wealthy lawyer, Rosenberg cites his reaction about human rights violations: “Well, people here don’t really care. They care about the economy. When things are good, they like Pinochet. When they are bad, they don’t. I’ve seen surveys that show that people’s first concern is a job, next is a good salary, and then, third, human rights.” However,



Rosenberg asserts that Reiss was too generous in his evaluation. She says that a poll conducted in 1985 by the research group FLACSO had Chileans rank their country's problems in what they determined to be their importance. She points out that "Economic problems" ranked first, followed by "Lack of work," but that "Human rights, torture" did not come in third, but rather "eleventh of the twelve possible responses, cited by a mere two per cent of those polled" (380).<sup>49</sup>

In all of the excerpts cited from *Amor (Love)*, Allende shows that it is no mystery *how* the military stayed in power for so many years, through the complicity of the "gente decente." In an interview in 1999, Allende comments that although Pinochet had made improvements in the economy, they had come at a tremendous cost. In Pinochet's Chile, the poor got poorer and the rich got richer, and she points out that "greed became religion." Furthermore, she adds that those who say that Pinochet was good because of his wonderful economic legacy "is like saying that Mussolini was a good leader because the trains were on time" (Skafidas 26).<sup>50</sup> Therefore, recalling that the coup could be considered Chile's historical convulsion is not quite correct. It would need to be expanded to include not only the coup, but also the entire Pinochet era, which lasted for 16 years.

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<sup>49</sup>Rosenberg's study has been used extensively for elaboration of topics about the Pinochet era that parallel Allende's two works in this chapter, because of her strict adherence to the principles of her profession as a writer of literary nonfiction. She lived in Santiago for three years beginning in 1985, and immersed herself into studying everything she could in order to understand not only *what* was going on in Chile, but also *why* and *how* a country with such a large middle class and history of democracy could put up with a sixteen year dictatorship.

<sup>50</sup>This coincides with John J. Pauly's views about the new journalism as a politics of cultural style. In "The Politics of the New Journalism," he emphasizes that new journalism was a social discourse, a "*social act*" that was meant to provoke "*commentaries* that symbolically positioned opposing groups" (116).

Thus, bringing to mind what was discussed earlier about Latin American writers and their fixation with social and political themes, it is clear what Allende means when she asks: “What else can they write about?” She adds that you have to find in literature the “real history” that you cannot find in the official textbooks, and claims that “where the situation is dramatic, writers become very important because they say what the press can’t say” (Brosnahan 1931). Aníbal González concludes that it is because of the weakness of journalism in Latin America, due to “political repression and racial and class antagonisms,” that literature has so often been forced to assume such great “documentary and political burdens.” But at the same time, he claims that most Latin American writers have developed their social conscience because of journalism, and therefore the relationship between the two (literature and journalism) has “always been particularly close and intense” (*Journalism* 13-14).

#### 3.7.4 Filling in the gaps

In discussing *Amor (Love)*, Allende admits that “while the story was there... many details were, of course, unavailable” (Manguel, “Conversation” 624).<sup>51</sup> She explains why in *Paula*. She says that the large gaps in the story were due to the fact that so many of the military trials were conducted in secret and what was published was distorted by censorship. She was also at the disadvantage of being in exile in Caracas and was not able to go to Chile to interview those involved, and so she explains how she had to call on her

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<sup>51</sup>One example regards important background information. Allende says that she needed to be very accurate for the last part of the book where Irene and Francisco need to escape through the mountains. So since she could not go back to Chile, she sent her mother to write down how people talk and feel, the names of the plants and how the earth smelled and the sky looked. She claims that with her mother’s “incredible notebook,” she “wrote the last part of the book through her eyes”(Invernizzi and Pope 122).

imagination to fill in the gaps (310). Manguel points out that although Allende knew most of the details of the event, she still lacked any about the actual discovery of the bodies. She therefore made up “the character of a priest who, after hearing of the murders in confession, sets off on his motorcycle, enters the mine, photographs the bodies, and then delivers the photographs to the bishop.” Even though Allende’s mother thought this detail unrealistic, she left it as it was. Allende remarks to Manguel that in 1981, during a visit to Chile, a priest came to visit her at her mother’s house. He said that it was he “who had gone on his motorcycle, photographed the bodies, and delivered the photos to the bishop. Only the bishop and this priest knew what had happened. How, he wanted to know, had I been able to find out the truth?” Allende said that since she had invented all of the details, she was not able to tell him. She continues: “I thought that writing creates reality. It’s the other way around: reality dictates your writing” (“Conversation” 624-625). Additionally, in another interview, she claims: “[S]ometimes I write things that I think are just my imagination, and I find that they happened that way, and I didn’t have any way of knowing that it was that way.” She adds that *Amor (Love)* “was a very premonitory book” (Benjamin and Engelfried 396).

Michael Skafidas points out in an interview with Allende that she has said that she only expresses “what exists” and that she does not “invent anything”. At the same time he cites Carlos Fuentes: “The novelist is not someone who reflects the truth, but is the one who creates reality – and in order to create reality you must tell lies.” He asks Allende if there is any common ground between her viewpoint and the comment by Fuentes. She responds that they are both saying the same thing but with different words, because when “you choose what to tell and how to tell it is a form of lying. When you decide what to omit you are twisting reality. However, with these lies you present something that is

basically true” (24). Is there then a contradiction in Allende’s assertion that she does not “invent anything” and only tells “what exists,” with this last statement? Or is that not what most writers of fiction or *literary* nonfiction do?<sup>52</sup> Warnock holds that truth is “always arguable” since it is obtainable “only through the work of interpretation” (xviii). He also warns that “we should be aware of assuming that we will find actual literary works that are either pure fiction or pure fact, purely literary or purely nonliterary,” since both “literary nonfiction and factual statements themselves are representations of reality, not reality itself” (xix). Likewise, Tzvetan Todorov maintains that literature is a discourse that cannot be subjected to the test of truth because “it is neither true nor false.” He also claims that “to extremely diverse degrees, novels evoke ‘life,’ as it has actually unfolded. It is therefore possible, when we study a society, to make use of literary texts, among other documents” (*Poetics* 18). Furthermore, in *The Rhetoric of the “Other” Literature*, W. Ross Winterowd asserts that “since Aristotle, we have known that fiction is more veracious than history” ( 71). Winterowd later cites Norman Mailer from his book *Marilyn*: “A false truth can offer more reality than the truth that was altered” (74). The point of all of these assumptions or theories is that Allende is like most creative writers who narrate their stories without worrying that absolutely everything they are saying can be backed up with verifiable data or documentation. The following passage should help to clarify this speculation.

Kramer points out in his discussion of the writer’s relationship to readers that a few distinguished literary journalists also “combined or improved upon scenes, aggregated characters, refurbished quotations, and otherwise altered what they knew to be the nature

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<sup>52</sup>I am highlighting *literary* nonfiction here, in order to exclude what Barbara Lounsberry calls “the often artless and droning expository prose that floods the category of ‘nonfiction’” (“Realtors” xi).

of their material” and says that “what distinguished them from fiction writers may have been merely intention -presumably to convey to readers the *sense* of an actuality.” He cites Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* as an example, and notes that he did not violate his readers’ expectations for the genre (nonfiction), due to his supposed lack of intention to deceive (23-24). In the same mode, Ben Yagoda holds that Capote’s recreation of events that he had not witnessed required “a prodigious amount of reporting,” although it raised issues of accuracy at that time. He contends that nowadays recreating events is a “journalistic convention, sometimes practiced very honorably, sometimes less so.” He also says that even though there are still questions surrounding the technique, it cannot be denied “that Capote, with his novelist’s ear, heard what his characters *could* have said and transcribed it more faithfully than any journalist before or since” (Kerrane and Yagoda 161). In “False Documents,” E.L. Doctorow concludes much the same with his claim that novelists compose “false documents” that are even more real, more truthful and more valid than the “*true* documents” of the literary nonfiction writers because they, like novelists, know very well “that the world in which we live is still to be formed and that reality is amenable to any construction that is placed upon it. It is a world made for liars and we are born liars” (26). Doctorow’s statement compares to those by both Fuentes and Allende in the preceding passage, thereby leading to the deduction that there is no set rule or guideline for determining what is fictive or nonfictive, and would it matter anyway? Is it not like Mansell’s claim cited earlier that it is “in the very constitution of the mind” where “we have the rudiments of genre?” (274). Another of Doctorow’s suppositions referred to previously corresponds to my conclusion here: “[t]here is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative” (“False

Documents” 26). I will continue with a discussion of fact-fiction issues before I present my final conclusions about Allende’s novels.

### 3.7.5 Crossing borders

Linda Hutcheon points out that “[T]he borders between literary genres have become fluid” and that “the most radical boundaries being crossed” are “those between fiction and non-fiction” or within what could be called “the conventions of both literary realism and journalistic facticity” (*Poetics* 9-10). Daniel Lehman’s assumptions correspond with Hutcheon. In his book titled *Matters of Fact: Reading Nonfiction Over the Edge*, he explains that “any literary text, whether fiction or nonfiction, even one’s own memory of events, is arbitrated or ‘crafted’ in different ways, rendering impossible the simple equation of ‘actuality’ with nonfiction,” since narratives “operate in an intertextual milieu wherein actuality and its reproduction in story often are virtually indistinguishable” (7). Moreover, González attests that albeit their goals are actually opposite, “journalism seeks to communicate verifiable facts,” while “narrative fiction” attempts to arrange those “facts into aesthetically coherent wholes.” He concludes that either at a “purely rhetorical” or “linguistic level,” they are virtually indistinguishable from each other (*Journalism* 12).

Allende was asked in an interview if she had a clear idea about what is fact and what is fiction, to which she responded: “As a writer it is very difficult to know how much reality and how much fiction there is. The thin line that divides both is ephemeral and can disappear with only a breath“ (Moody 52). According to Paul de Man, the “binary opposition between fact and fiction is no longer relevant: in any differential system, it is the assertion of the space between the entities that matters” (cited in Hutcheon’s *Poetics*,

113). Likewise, Sims notes that literary journalists in the twentieth century have reshaped literary styles to allow passage “across borders between fact and fiction, journalism and autobiography, and reporting and sociology” in a manner that would not violate their readers’ expectations and confidences (*Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* vi). And lastly, González sustains that both journalism and narrative fiction “thrive in a murky rhetorical frontier, an ill-defined territory of mutual borrowings where nothing is quite what it seems” (*Journalism* 10).<sup>53</sup>

### 3.8 Concluding remarks

Thus we have seen how Allende’s writing in *Casa (House)* and *Amor (Love)* parallels what scholars affirm about some of the stylistics or characteristics of literary nonfiction. At the same time it has been demonstrated how it is not only “hybrid” writing, in the sense that it lies somewhere in that “murky rhetorical frontier” between fact and fiction, but also how it tells the stories of those who cannot give it a distinctive testimonial purpose. If we were to choose an appropriate nomenclature for each novel, *Casa (House)* would seem to fit perfectly within the category of what Tom Wolfe calls the “journalistic novel” or what others simply refer to as “journalistic literature.” On the other hand, while those terms would also hold true for *Amor (Love)*, a better terminology for it might be Arthur Haley’s “faction,” or Barbara Foley’s “the *pseudofactual* novel,” which although not widely used, are more appropriate since it does not quite fit the label of *testimonio*, but neither can it profess to be what Capote calls the nonfiction novel. For

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<sup>53</sup>He adds that both journalism and narrative fiction “transfer into their respective spheres elements from each other’s domain,” and that “the domains themselves are not difficult to differentiate, but the textual products of their interaction are harder to separate” (*Journalism* 10).

although Allende insists that she “was very respectful of truth” and that it “is a real story, a terrible, real story,” she also admits that she “did not have to *make up* much of it because the story itself was so truculent and macabre that the final product was incredible” (Invernizzi and Pope 116, my emphasis). And therefore, she *is* admitting that she *did* make up *some* things. Nevertheless, Kramer explains that “literary journalism has established an encampment ringed by overlapping cousin genres” that even include “some fiction and even ambiguous semifiction stemming from real events –all tempting fields just beyond rickety fences” (22).

Thus, naming or classifying either of Allende’s first two novels would seem to be futile. Yet the fact remains that journalism has always been fundamental in her work. In *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America*, Shelley Fisher Fishkin tracks the early journalistic careers of great American writers such as Twain, Whitman, Dos Passos, Dreiser and Hemingway. She claims that their impatience with the limits imposed by conventional journalism led them to transcend “those limitations, writing texts designed to engage the reader’s mind and emotions in ways their journalism never could” (8). She notes that Tom Wolfe experienced the same frustrations with conventional journalism in the 1960s, but “saw no need to turn away from the world of fact” as earlier writers of nonfiction had. Instead, she says, he opted to write what he called “accurate nonfiction,” using “techniques usually associated with writers of novels and short stories,” in order to “excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally” (9). On the same note, while reflecting on her own beginnings, Allende claims that she was once told by Pablo Neruda that she was probably the worst journalist in the country, because of her inability for being objective since she always wanted to embellish the facts. He therefore asked her: “¿Por qué no se dedica a escribir novelas mejor? En la literatura



esos defectos son virtudes” (*Paula* 202) (“Why don’t you write novels instead? In literature, those defects are virtues”; 182).

My purpose for writing about Allende’s first two novels has been to contribute to the existing research of her writing using a fresh approach by studying the elements of her *fiction* that are *nonfictive*, that are based on literary nonfiction –considered to be an objective and *factual* genre. The following chapter will continue this discussion.

## CHAPTER 4

### Crossing Borders in A New Kind of Story/History: *El plan infinito*

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of the two worlds merging to form a third country –a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera* 3

I think there is a tremendous future for a sort of novel that will be called the journalistic novel or perhaps the documentary novel, novels of intense social realism based upon the same painstaking reporting that goes into the New Journalism.

Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* 35

#### 4.1 A different kind of story

Unlike her first four books, which project a Latin American reality from the perspective of female protagonists with strong feminine voices, *El plan infinito* (1991) (*The Infinite Plan*; 1993) crosses the border by portraying a North American reality from a male perspective.<sup>1</sup> The story is based on the life of Allende's husband William Gordon,

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<sup>1</sup>Allende's first two books were discussed in chapter three. The next was *Eva Luna* (1987), a novel set in Venezuela and much less serious than her first novels, and is the first book that she wrote where she considered herself a "professional writer." It is also where Allende claims that she "embraced [her] own femininity and the feminist struggle" (Piña 194). Allende claims that it is autobiographical in parts (Correas 96). The

who in the novel is the narrator protagonist Gregory Reeves. Allende says that he was introduced to her as “the last heterosexual male in San Francisco” (Rodden, “Writer” 436), and admits that she was instantly interested in the distinguished-looking North American lawyer who spoke Spanish like a “bandido mexicano.” At the same time, she was drawn by “su mezcla de refinamiento y rudeza, su fuerza de carácter y una íntima suavidad” (“his blend of refinement and roughness, strength of character, and an intimate gentleness”), that she instinctively felt, thanks to her “manía de *observar* a la gente para utilizarla más tarde en la escritura” (*Paula* 330, mi énfasis) (“mania for *observing* people to use later in [her] writing”; *Paula* 299, my emphasis). So she asked him to tell her the story of his life, a technique she says she uses to save herself from the effort of having to make conversation. But this time she says it was different, because as soon as he started to speak, she realized that she had by chance come into contact with “una de esas raras gemas tan apreciadas por los narradores: la vida de ese hombre era una novela” (330) (“one of those rare gems treasured by storytellers: this man’s life was a novel”; 299). His words are voiced by the protagonist’s at the very end of the novel: “La noche que nos

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fourth was *Los Cuentos de Eva Luna* (1989) (*The Stories of Eva Luna*, 1991), a collection of short stories that Allende says are taken from real events that actually happened (Iftekharrudin 356), and points out that some came directly from newspaper articles that she had been collecting over the years (Correas 110). Her later works include two nonfiction works. The first of these is *Afrodita: Cuentos, recetas y otros afrodisiacos* (1997) (*Aphrodite: Stories, Recipes and Other Aphrodisiacs*; 1998), and the other is called *Paula* (1994) mentioned in chapter three. Her fifth novel is a sweeping epic with a female protagonist set mainly in California in the time of the gold rush titled *Hija de la fortuna* (1999) (*Daughter of Fortune*; 2000), and is written from a “non-white male perspective,” –unlike the history textbooks on the gold rush-- from the point of view of “immigrants and people of color” (Richards 5). *Retrato en sepia* (2000) (*Portrait in Sepia*; 2001) follows, and is a continuation of the story in *Hija*, except that this time the setting is mainly Chile, and is again historical in scope covering a large portion of nineteenth century Chilean history.

conocimos me pediste que te contara mi vida. Es larga, te advertí. No importa, tengo mucho tiempo, dijiste, sin saber el lío en que te metías con este plan infinito” (359) (“The night we met, you asked me to tell you my story. It’s very long, I warned you. That’s all right, I have a lot of time, you said, not suspecting what you were getting into when you walked into this infinite plan”; 382). Allende contends that she made it clear to “Willie” –the name she always uses to refer to her husband– at the very beginning of their relationship that she intended to write his story.<sup>2</sup> She points out that after he had read it, he was very excited and exclaimed: “[E]s un mapa de mi vida, ahora entiendo los caminos que he recorrido” (“It’s a map of my life; I now understand the roads that I’ve traveled”; Correas 114).

Regarding the journalistic techniques used to write *Plan*, Patricia Hart points out that it shows “evidence of months of hard work in the periodical library” (335). Allende says that when she decided to write a book about her husband’s life, she had to do a lot of reading and research about California because she knew nothing about it when she moved there (Richards 6). Although she does contend that Willie helped her: “I was just overwhelmed by the research. I could not separate what was important and what wasn’t in his fifty years in California. He helped me with that. He lent me his life” (Goggins 332). In addition, Allende asserts that it took her four years to write *Plan* because she needed to give herself enough time “para sentir a California en la piel” (“to get the feel of California under her skin”; Correas 212). Consequently, Allende points out in an interview in 1994 that if at first she felt in a state of shock about living in California, she later found it a

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<sup>2</sup>Allende says that since her stories “are always based on real people or real life,” she is very careful when she takes her friends’ stories so that she does not betray them. She therefore claims: “For me, a person is always more important than a character. I never use another person’s story unless I’ve been authorized to do so” (Toms 345).

magical place. Moreover, she affirms that “being an outsider is the best position for a writer,” because “if you’re in the middle of a hurricane you can’t write about the hurricane because you can’t see it. You need to get out of it in order to watch it from a certain distance and have enough irony and ambiguity to write about it” (Benjamin and Engelfield 392).<sup>3</sup>

Allende also contends that she took careful notes of everything that Willie had told her in bits and pieces over that four year time span (Munroe-Clark 20), and maintains that she spent those years verifying details, asking questions, and interviewing dozens of people (Correas 114). John Rodden points out in his introduction to *Conversations with Isabel Allende*, that Allende not only “interviewed her husband formally and informally,” but she also interviewed others whose stories she felt would “enrich her narrative,” particularly a Viet Nam veteran for the part on the Viet Nam war. He adds that she relied heavily on these interviews not only to create characters,<sup>4</sup> but also to “gain cultural literacy about American history, and to fill in large knowledge gaps... about topics such as the California counterculture and the antiwar protests of the 1960s” (31). To Farhat Iftekharrudin, Allende insists “that it is much better to research with interviews of real people who have experienced the event, whatever that event may be, than going to a library and looking at books.” She adds that journalists need to be “in the streets hand in

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<sup>3</sup> In another interview in 1995, she claims that not only distance helps, but also “a cultural gap as in *The Infinite Plan*.” She adds that although Willie himself “tried to write a book about much of the content of the novel,” he was unsuccessful. She feels that it was most likely due to the cultural gap and lack of distance (Rodden, “Writer” 436).

<sup>4</sup>In a 1905 *Bookman* article, Hutchins Hapgood insisted that “literature could be transfused with new life if it borrowed an essential tool of the daily newspaper reporter: the interview.” He maintained that if writers could simply reconstruct or create “a real personality” instead of just “imagining a character,” then “a section of life would be thus portrayed and a human story told” (cited in Connery, “Third Way” 16).

hand with people talking, participating, and sharing” (363). Mark Twain held this same perspective: “Reporting is the best school in the world to get a knowledge of human beings, human nature, and human ways. Just think of the wide range of [a reporter’s] acquaintanceship, his experience of life and society” (cited in Fishkin, *From Fact to Fiction* 60).

These aspects coincide with two of the guidelines stipulated by Gay Talese and Barbara Lounsberry for what they call “literature of reality,” presented in their book titled *The Literature of Reality: Writing Creative Nonfiction*. The first is to “[r]esearch deeply.” The second is to “[c]ultivate close relationships with your subjects over extended periods of time, in order to: a) establish trust; b) absorb information; c) observe change; and d) know individuals so well you can describe their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes with confidence” (30). It is clear that Allende got to know her protagonist Gregory Reeves very well since her husband is the model: “For four years we talked and talked about the story. He told me his life. I automatically became his voice because I was listening to his voice in my ear all the time.” She adds that they would talk everywhere, in the car, in bed, and that “anything could trigger a conversation about the book. We would see some event in the street or somebody, and then he would remember something that I could later use for the book. It was always his voice talking. And it became very easy” (Goggans 332).

At the same time, Allende contends that she has visited all of the places mentioned in *Plan*, except Viet Nam, in order to *observe*. She feels that a writer’s task is to “listen very, very closely and to observe -very, very precisely” in order “to notice all that there is going on” (Rodden, “Writer” 438). We could make the same comment about Allende that Bill Moyers makes in 1988 about Tom Wolfe: He “has eyes like blotters, soaking up what

others look at, but do not see,” and that “like the 19<sup>th</sup> century novelists who are his heroes, he is first and foremost a reporter of the life around him” (273).<sup>5</sup> Likewise, in an interview with Bonnie Angelo for *Time* magazine in 1989, Wolfe says that Dickens, Balzac and Zola were his models, and that Zola, in particular, gave him “the idea of the novelist putting the individual in the setting of society at large and realizing the pressure that society exerts on the individual” (288-289). What Wolfe claims about the influence of his literary heroes, is in essence what Joaquín Roy concludes from an article by Ulysis Petit de Murat in a discussion about journalism and poetics in his work *Periodismo y literatura*. Roy explains that de Murat holds that a writer needs to have a “reader’s soul” in order to “communicate with his/her readers” (121).<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that Allende claims that she was “greatly influenced by the books” she read as a child, which gave her “the love for strong characters and deep emotions,” as well as “rich plots, something happening all the time” (Ross 97). She says she read everything she could lay her hands on, including the complete works of Shakespeare, detective novels, “historical novels” about the Roman empire, both Salgari brothers, Verne, Dickens, London, Stevenson, Defoe,<sup>7</sup> Wilde, Shaw,

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<sup>5</sup>Moyers also credits Nat Hentoff as saying that “reporting is the highest form of journalism,” but he (Moyers) thinks that “it’s become the highest form of fiction, as well” (281).

<sup>6</sup>Roy maintains that de Murat “consideraba que poseer una excepcional inteligencia semejante a los mencionados [Dickens, Gide, Poe, Malreaux] no es requisito esencial, pero sí tener alma de lector: difícilmente se comunicará con lectores el que no lee constantemente” (“considered that possessing an exceptional intelligence like those mentioned [...] is not an essential requirement, but to have a reader’s soul is indeed required: one who does not read constantly will not easily communicate with his/her readers”; 121).

<sup>7</sup>Kevin Kerrane points out that Defoe also read extensively, and what he says about him and his writing coincides perfectly with Allende: He “built a writing career in the zone between fiction and fact. His novels, rich in realistic detail, read like documentary reports, while his journalism shines with literary quality” (23).

Twain, and many others (Gazarian Gautier 126; Correas 169). She also recognizes that she belongs to the first generation of Latin American authors who were brought up reading the great writers from the Boom, such as Rulfo, García Márquez, Donoso, Cortázar, Borges, Paz, and Fuentes (Iftekharruddin 352; Correas 169). Juan Andrés Piña therefore concludes that she uses her experience as a reader to write (195).

Like the other two novels discussed in chapter three, *El plan infinito* is also testimonial. However, it is not only “intersected by historical convulsions,” (Jameson, “De la sustitución” 131), but also by cultural convulsions as well. It deals with several which could be considered as such. The biggest one, of course, is the Viet Nam war, while the others are the civil rights movement and the counter-cultural revolution of the 60s and 70s, as well as the moral bankruptcy and the greed of the 80s. Nevertheless, in keeping with Beverley’s theory linking *testimonio* to “a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle” (80), the story/history of the Mexicans/Chicanos that underlies the narration and that entwines itself with the protagonist should also be pointed out. This chapter, then, will focus on these topics and issues, again within the framework of literary journalism and literary nonfiction/fiction studies, just as in chapter three. It should also be pointed out that this novel has been overlooked by critics, maybe due to its male protagonist and North American setting, instead of Allende’s usual employment of female protagonists in a Latin American location.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this investigation will not only provide new insights into *Plan*, but it will also offer another discussion of how characteristics of literary nonfiction and literary journalism can be applied to Allende’s fiction.

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<sup>8</sup>Most of my colleagues in the English department were unaware that Allende wrote about anything other than women’s issues or Latin America. They were surprised to learn that she had written anything about the U.S.



## 4.2 Setting the stage

Allende establishes the fact that the narration is based on the life of the narrator protagonist Gregory Reeves on the first page of the novel:

Cuarenta y tantos años más tarde, durante una larga confesión en la que pasó revista a su existencia y sacó la cuenta de sus errores y sus aciertos, Gregory Reeves me describió su recuerdo más antiguo: un niño de cuatro años, él mismo, orinando sobre una colina al atardecer, el horizonte teñido de rojo y ámbar por los últimos rayos del sol,...

Forty-some years later, during a long confession in which he reviewed his life and drew up an accounting of his errors and achievements, Gregory Reeves told me of his earliest memory: a boy of four, himself, urinating on a hilltop at sunset, the horizon stained red and amber by the last rays of the sun,...

Two things should be pointed out from this passage: first, the fact that it is a “confesión,” of a person called Gregory Reeves; second, that the testimonial voice narrates his experiences at the moment in his life when he is repentant for his past actions. His story is told in an episodic structure and begins with his first memories of his early childhood, traveling gypsy-style around the western part of the U.S. in an old truck with his itinerant, preacher father and the rest of his family. It continues with his later childhood and adolescence in a Mexican/Chicano *barrio* (neighborhood) in Los Angeles during the fifties, his life in Berkeley in the 60s, his experience in Viet Nam at the beginning of the 70s, and later his life as a lawyer. All of the protagonist’s experiences at Berkeley, along with those of his childhood and adolescence, his military sojourn in Viet Nam, and “sus viajes atolondrados, fiestas descomunales, un horario de loco y su rosario de mujeres” (*Plan* 271) (“whirlwind trips, outrageous partying, an insane schedule, and a stable of women”; 286), demonstrate how he came to be the person that we meet at the end of the

novel, repentant of everything.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, throughout the novel we are presented to a large variety of human types. Some of the many that stand out are: Charles, Nora and Judy Reeves, Olga (a carnivalesque type), all of the Morales family (especially Carmen), Martínez (his childhood nemesis), old Cyrus (his mentor during his adolescence), his college buddy Timothy Duane, the feminist vegetarians Susan and Joan, the hippies in Berkeley, Leo Galupi in Viet Nam, his two wives Samantha and Shannon, Ernestina Pereda/Tina Faiblich, Mike Tong, Ming O'Brien, Bel and King Benedict. Allende brings all of these characters to life and they add much to the protagonist's experiences in the different periods of his life.

Allende contends that she was told by a newspaper critic in San Francisco that “era inverosímil que sucedieran tantas cosas en una sola vida.” (“it was unlikely that so much could have occurred in only one person's life”). However, she claims: “la verdad es que tuve que eliminar partes, porque la realidad me parecía exagerada” (“the truth is that I had to eliminate parts, because the reality seemed exaggerated”; Correas 114). Nothing was included, she says, about Willie's delinquent son Harleigh, because she felt that the tragedy about his drug-addicted daughter seemed enough,<sup>10</sup> as the following scene from *Plan* graphically illustrates:

... el organismo de Margaret correspondía al de una anciana, sus órganos internos estaban dañados por las drogas, las venas colapsadas por los

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<sup>9</sup>There are many social critiques incorporated into the protagonist's life but they seem to appear casually most of the time, in the course of narrating personal events. These critiques are of the United States in general (including “gringo” values and work conditions), of racism, of the wealthy and the bourgeoisie, of lawyers and the law, of greed, of the educational system, and of arrogance, among others.

<sup>10</sup>Willie's daughter Jennifer gave birth to an HIV positive daughter in the same room where Allende's daughter Paula had died seven months before. Jennifer later died of a drug overdose (Rodden, “After Paula” 416).

pinchazos, los dientes sueltos, la piel en escamas, y perdía el pelo en mechones. Goteaba sangre a causa de incontables abortos y enfermedades venéreas. (331)

... Margaret's body was that of an old woman: her internal organs were wasted from drugs, her veins were collapsed from shooting up, her teeth were loose in her gums, her skin was like scales, and her hair was falling out by the handful. She was bleeding badly because of excessive abortions and venereal infections. (351)

Neither did Allende add anything about Willie's adopted son (Jason), whose life, she maintains, is another book. She also omitted "muchas anécdotas violentas del padre, así como el hecho de que la madre trató de deshacerse de Willie poniéndolo en orfanatos o dándolo en adopción" ("many violent anecdotes about his father, as well as the fact that his mother tried to get rid of Willie by putting him in orphanages or giving him up for adoption"; Correas 114). When reminded by Celia Correas that she did mention parts about his mother in the novel that *were* true, Allende responds: "No como verdaderamente ocurrió, que fue mucho peor de lo que yo puse en el libro. La única parte que aumenté en lugar de cortar fue el capítulo de Viet Nam" ("Not like it really happened, since it was much worse than I put in the book. The only part on which I elaborated instead of editing down was the part on Viet Nam"; Correas 114). Allende's implicit admission that she did not tell the *whole* truth here correlates to her claim cited in the last chapter: When "you choose what to tell and how to tell it is a form of lying. When you decide what to omit you are twisting reality. However, with these lies you present something that is basically *true*" (24, my emphasis). The point that stands out here is that just because she did not narrate the *complete* story of Willie's family, does not mean that she did not provide an accurate picture of what she *did* relate. It would stand to reason that any writer would

have to choose the content of his/her story, especially in a novel of such magnitude covering a forty year time span.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, by basing her narration on actual events and characters from real life, what Allende says she does in *Plan* coincides with a comment by Gabriel García Márquez: “[A]fter thirty years, I discovered something we novelists often forget: that truth is always the best literary formula” (cited in González, “The Ends of the Text” 67). In the same mode, Roberto Hernández Montoya affirms that after writing *Noticias de un secuestro* (*News of a Kidnaping*), García Márquez said that he is going to stop writing fiction because reality has surpassed his imagination (in Noortwijk and Haastrecht, 11). Both Allende’s and García Márquez’s views on their writing correspond to what is fundamental to literary journalism and nonfiction. Tom Connery holds that “verifiable detail is essential to the literary journalist” (“Discovering” 6). Likewise, John McPhee makes the claim in the epigraph to chapter two that the power of nonfiction is the fact that it is *true*, at the same time that it is presented and arranged by the writer with artistry (Sims, “The Literary Journalists,” 3). It was noted in chapter three that Allende has said that she only expresses “what exists” and that she does not “invent anything” (Skafidas 24). Therefore, in a similar fashion to the literary journalists, she makes sure that she chooses her facts carefully, and then arranges them artistically, in turn giving her narrations “the power of nonfiction,” illustrating Kevin Kerrane’s theory that literary journalism is “true stories artfully told,” or what Ben Yagoda calls “making facts dance” (Kerrane and Yagoda 20). Again, as I have pointed out at various times in this thesis, I am not saying here that Allende’s novels *are* literary journalism or literary nonfiction, but that her writing parallels

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<sup>11</sup>Allende says that she tells her students in her writing workshop that the best advice she ever received was : “‘Cut, cut, cut.’ You do that in journalism all the time” (Toms 346).

this form or genre, just as she herself uses the techniques of the literary journalist to write novels of “journalistic facticity.”

#### 4.3 Narrating a clash of cultures

Although the term *testimonio*, according to George Yúdice, refers to many kinds of discourse, from oral and popular history that attempt to give voice to the voiceless, he also points out that it includes literary texts such as the novels of Miguel Barnet and even documentary works of complex structure like Roa Bastos' *Yo el supremo* (“Testimonio” 207). Beverley explains that *testimonio* involves a first-person narration “by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of events he or she recounts,” and “not a professional writer” (*Against* 70). This is illustrated in the dedicatory epigraph to *El plan infinito*: “A mi compañero, William C. Gordon, y a las otras personas que me confiaron los secretos de sus vidas” (“To my husband, William C. Gordon, and to the other people who entrusted me with the secrets of their lives”).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, in this presentation of the testimonial events, we should remember that Allende is also including the stories of those others characters, as she relates the story of the narrator protagonist Gregory Reeves.

Calling to mind Beverley’s statement linking *testimonio* to a “group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle,” we point out the story/history of the Mexicans/Chicanos that underlies this novel and that entwines itself with the protagonist and the other characters. In an interview with Pilar Alvarez-Rubio, Allende claims that one of the purposes for writing *Plan* was to write about California and to show the clash between the Latino and Anglo worlds. When asked how she was able

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<sup>12</sup>It should be noted that this dedicatory epigraph was not included in the English translation published in 1993, two years after the novel’s original publication in Spanish.

to represent this so effectively, she says she was able to add her own personal experience to the many interviews obtained and places visited. In *Paula*, she maintains that when she arrived to this country, she “felt very marginal, very foreign,” since she “didn’t know the rules” and also “spoke the language badly.” Furthermore, she claims that she “couldn’t even go to the movies because [she] didn’t understand what the actors were saying.” All of this led to her feeling very isolated until she came to realize “that there were millions of Latinos in the same situation and that there was a sort of subculture, or parallel culture” that was uniquely theirs, and to which she had not integrated herself. She was intrigued with that love/hate relationship that has existed between Latinos and Anglo-Saxons for two hundred years in this part of the world, explaining that it is a “story laden with greed, violence, excess and hope” that has at its inevitable end integration (370-371).<sup>13</sup> Sims points out that Kramer cautions that readers can tell if a writer is not conveying a realistic world, and thus personal involvement with the subject matter is important. In addition, Sims adds that the combination of this “personal engagement” with outlooks from sociology and anthropology, history and standard reporting, all give literary journalism its “liveliness,” and hence its resemblance to fiction (“The Art” 17). Ted Conover asserts that “personal reaction is as powerful a storyteller as the best ethnographic research,” and that “shared experience” or “participant observation” as exercised by anthropologists, is the best way to practice literary journalism (cited in Sims, “The Art” 13). Consequently, it is Allende’s own personal engagement or experience as a Latino in the U.S., that lends credibility to the narration of the Mexicans/Chicanos’ reality.

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<sup>13</sup>See Rodolfo Acuña’s *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, for a comprehensive history of this topic. See also Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

#### 4.3.1 A different kind of testimonial

Allende felt that telling the story from the perspective of a white boy in the Latino ghetto, instead of using the point of view of an immigrant, would “make an extremely original tale.” She contends that “Willie’s experience in the ghetto when he was a child was very helpful” to her, and that “[f]amilies that Willie had met at that time were also cooperative, and served as a model for the Morales family.” So although the American side of the story was much more difficult for her because she had not yet adapted to her new country, she claims that it was very easy to write the Latino part because there was so much material and she could write from the heart. However, unlike the majority of Latino immigrants, she comments that she is privileged because she has people who want to publish and read her books (Alvarez-Rubio 371-372).

Moreover, Allende’s tone has changed greatly since her first two books that dealt with the dictatorship, and even more so since the second, *De amor y de sombra*. In *Plan*, her tone is much more jocular. We recall from chapter three how Kramer claims that literary journalists express themselves in an “intimate voice,” that is “informal, frank, humorous, and ironic.” In addition, he adds that this voice is “informal, competent, [and] reflective” and speaks with “knowledgeable assurance about topics, issues and personal subjects” from the writer’s own personal experience and conscience. In addition, it is the voice of someone who does not exclude “emotional realities,” such as “sadness, glee, excitement, fury, love.” Therefore, he explains that “what emerges is a sociable, humorously self-aware, but authoritative voice,” and that “reading it feels companionable” (“Breakable Rules” 28-29). From the very beginning of *Plan*, we hear this voice: “Los inmigrantes asumían su papel de marginales con una dosis de soberbia: doblados sí, pero partidos nunca, hermano” (42) (“The immigrants assumed their marginal role in the

society with a measure of pride: bowed, yes, but never broken *hermano*”; 35). It is also heard as it narrates the immigrants’ expectations:

Venían de todos los pueblos al sur de la frontera en busca de trabajo, sin más bienes que la ropa puesta, un atado a la espalda y las mejores intenciones de salir adelante en esa Tierra Prometida, donde les habían dicho que el dinero crecía en los árboles y cualquiera bien listo podía convertirse en empresario, con un Cadillac propio y una rubia colgada del brazo. (47)

They streamed in from towns south of the border, looking for work, with nothing to their names but the clothes on their backs, a bundle over their shoulders, and the will to get ahead in the Promised land where, they had been told, money grew on trees and a clever man could become an impresario with his own Cadillac and a blonde on his arm. (41)

However, Allende points out that they never imagined the many hardships of exile, how they would have to put up with so much abuse heaped upon them by their employers, who paid less than they had promised and went to the police at the slightest complaint, nor how they feared “Migra” (migration officials) would pursue them, and if they caught them, send them back to Mexico in chains after booking them as criminals. But most of all, they had no warning that “serían los más humildes entre los humildes” (47) (“they would be the lowest of the low”; 41).

In an essay written for *NACLA* called “Dreaming of Utopia,” Carlos Monsiváis writes that immigration from Mexico (as well as Central America) increases significantly every year, and those leaving behind their homelands “set out in search of their obsessive goal: a modernity which starts with a job in the land of prosperity.” He adds that they gallantly aspire to resist the many impediments that confront them, that range “from police brutality to the web of hoaxes and tricks of the *polleros* (the ‘guides’ of the undocumented), from the scourges of a racist society to their own feelings of insufficiency, be they cultural, linguistic or technological.” Furthermore, he says that their struggle to



succeed is so passionate, “and the obstacles so tremendous,” that from the immigrant’s perspective, the chance “to live in the United States becomes literally a utopia.” Although, he adds, besides the harassment and “the social exclusion,” they are ever “aware of the persecution and the abuse in the workplace.” However, from their point of view, coming to the United States “means their condition has changed: they may remain third-class citizens, but they are no longer anachronisms; by arriving in the United States, they have joined the future” (39-40).

Nevertheless, it is not Allende’s intention to focus on the tragic lot of the Mexican immigrants. She therefore immediately undercuts the seriousness of any passages such as the ones mentioned above, by saying that even if they had known about all of the difficulties they would have to face, in all likelihood they would still have made the trip north.

Inmaculada y Pedro Morales se llamaban a sí mismos ‘alambristas mojados’, combinación de ‘alambre’ y ‘lomo mojado’, como se designaba a los inmigrantes ilegales, y contaban, muertos de la risa, cómo cruzaron la frontera muchas veces, algunas atravesando a nado el Río Grande y otras cortando las alambres del cerco. (47)

Inmaculada and Pedro Morales called themselves ‘wire-cuttin wetbacks’ and, rocking with laughter, liked to tell how many times they had crossed the border, sometimes swimming the Río Grande and other times cutting wire fences. (41)

Consequently, we are shown the immigrants’ perspective: “En la época en que Pedro Morales hizo el primer viaje todavía existía entre los latinos el sentimiento de recuperar un territorio que siempre fue suyo. Para ellos, violar la frontera no constituía un delito sino una aventura de justicia” (48) (“At the time Pedro Morales made his first trip, Latinos still had the feeling they were reclaiming territory that had always been theirs. For them, slipping across the border was not a crime but a righteous adventure”; 42). Gloria

Anzaldúa illustrates this same point in a short poem in *Borderlands / La Frontera*: “This land was Mexican once, / was Indian always / and is. / And will be again” (3).

Throughout the rest of the novel, we are presented with detailed stories of the Morales family, that illustrate the customs and the values of the Mexican/Chicano subculture for which they are the model: “Los Morales eran gente ordenada y sin vicios, estiraban el dinero y aprendieron a utilizar los beneficios de ese país donde ellos siempre serían extranjeros, pero en el cual sus hijos tendrían un lugar” (50) (“The Moraleses were orderly people, without vices; they saved their money and learned to take advantage of the benefits of the country where they would always be foreigners but where their children would belong”; 43-44). And they were always willing to lend a hand to anyone in need: “Hoy por ti, mañana por mí, a veces toca dar y otras recibir, es la ley natural de la vida, decía Inmaculada” (50) (“Today, you; tomorrow, me, Inmaculada always said. There’s a time to give and a time to receive, that’s the natural law of life”; 44). Furthermore, it is worth noting that Gregory Nava’s production of the movie *Mi familia / My Family*, coincides in many ways to these sections of the novel that deal with immigrants and the Morales family. It depicts with vivid imagery their values, struggles, strife and achievements with both jocularly and seriousness, just as Allende does in *Plan*.

Nevertheless, because of their “otherness”, the North Americans considered the Morales family and immigrants in general as “gente malévola, impredecible, peligrosa y muchos reclamaban que cómo diablos no era posible atajarlos en la frontera, para qué sirve la maldita policía, carajo, pero los empleaban como mano de obra barata, aunque siempre vigilados” (42) (“undesirable people, unpredictable and dangerous, and many protested –Why the hell can’t they stop them from crossing the border? What are the police for?-- but they hired them as cheap labor and kept a sharp eye on them”; 35). In

*Borderlands*, Anzaldúa claims that “[t]hose who make it past the checking points of the Border Patrol find themselves in the midst of 150 years of racism in Chicano *barrios* in the Southwest and in big northern cities.” They are therefore reduced to “[l]iving in a no-man’s-borderland, caught between being treated as criminals and being able to eat, between resistance and deportation, [these] illegal refugees are some of the poorest and most exploited of any people in the U.S. (12). Likewise, in an interview with Bob Baldock and Dennis Bernstein, Allende points out that she lives in Marin County (in California), where part of the community is fighting against the Latin American immigrants. She says that people feel threatened and are afraid of them, because they “see these dark men standing in groups waiting for someone to offer a job,” and perceive them as criminals and freeloaders ( 381). She also comments in a conversation with Jorge Ramos that this perception is not exclusive to her area, nor to just California, but rather it is a problem all over the country. Immigrants everywhere, she says, and not just Latinos, have become the object of rancor and hatred in this country, either because of their race, or simply because they are poor (319). Therefore, what Allende does in *Plan* is what Thomas Connery points out about the significance of literary journalism: “[It] depicts and conveys moments in time, behavior and society and culture,” by broadly exploring the how and why, in order to render a “felt detail” of life. In other words, literary journalism *informs* us, meaning that “it conveys impressions, ideas, and emotions,” either as the writer communicates details of an event or reveals people’s actions, manners, or morals (“Discovering” 5-6).

Yet it is under the protection of the Morales family that Gregory Reeves grows up amidst the immigrants, where, from the time he was only seven, they had helped his family to rebuild the first home he had ever known, and from then on, “la música y la comida

latinas quedarían para siempre unidas en su mente con la idea de amistad” (51) (“Latin food and music would be forever linked with the concept of friendship”; 45). Moreover, he would retain that identity throughout his life. After graduating from Berkeley, he hoped to have a wife who would stay at home, make pies and take care of the kids, “todo correcto y decente.” But the following excerpt reveals one of his biggest dreams:

sentarse a la cabecera de una larga mesa con sus hijos y amigos, como había visto tantas veces a los Morales. Pensaba en ellos a menudo, porque a pesar de la pobreza y limitaciones del medio donde tuvieron que vivir, eran el mejor ejemplo a su alcance. (147)

sitting at the head of a long table, with his children and friends, a scene he had witnessed so many times at the Moraleses’ home. He thought about them often, because despite poverty and the limitations of the barrio where they lived, they were the best example of family in his experience. (149)

However, at the same time that he was treated like one of the family at the Morales’s home, where his favorite spot was Inmaculada’s kitchen “entre las fragancias de las ollas y los afanes de la familia” (59) (“surrounded by family activity and the smell of cooking”; 53), it was a battle from day one living in the barrio. There, he and his sister Judy were the only two children with blonde hair and blue eyes, and the rule of survival was to speak Spanish and run like a deer. Here is an example of Gregory’s testimony recalling his childhood:

[E]n el *ghetto* experimenté la desazón de ser diferente, no me integraba, deseaba ser como los otros, diluirme en la multitud, volverme invisible y así moverme tranquilo por las calles o jugar en el patio de la escuela, libre de las pandillas de muchachos morenos que descargaban en mí las agresiones que ellos mismos recibían de los blancos apenas asomaban las narices fuera de su barrio. (59)

In that Latin ghetto, I experienced the unpleasantness of being different, I did not fit in; I wanted to be like everyone else, to blend into the crowd, to be invisible, so I could walk through the streets or play in the schoolyard unharmed by the gangs of dark-skinned boys who vented on me the

aggression they themselves received from whites the minute they stepped outside the barrio. (54)

Thus he continues to live between two worlds, as he notes to a high school friend after being told he should run for class president: “No soy ni gringo ni latino, no represento a nadie” (111) (“I’m not a gringo and not a Latino; I don’t represent anyone”; 109). For eleven years, he had tried hard to be accepted, and despite his color, he almost achieved it. At the same time, he has accepted his place of marginality, and therefore finds it difficult to imagine a college education: “Aunque no pudo ponerlo en palabras, tal vez la verdadera razón para convertirse en obrero fue su deseo de pertenecer al ambiente donde le tocó crecer, la idea de elevarse por encima de los demás a través del estudio le pareció una traición” (116) (“Although he could not have put it into words, the real reason he became a laborer may have been his desire to remain part of the world in which he had grown up: the idea of using education to rise above the others seemed a betrayal”; 115). However, after only a few weeks of working as a “wet back”, returning to his room at night exhausted, staring at the ceiling in despair, and feeling like he was trapped in a bottomless pit, he began to understand that “el sueño americano no alcanzaba para todos” (116) (“the American dream was not within everyone’s reach”; 115). Again he feels caught between two worlds: “Nada tenía en común con los demás, los mexicanos desconfiaban de él tal como hacían de todos los gringos” (121) (“He had nothing in common with the men he worked with; they distrusted him as much as any other gringo”; 120). And later on in his early adulthood, he continues to feel the same way: “No me sentía cómodo en ninguna parte, el barrio donde crecí pertenecía al pasado y no había logrado plantar raíces en otro lado” (168) (“I did not feel at home anywhere; the barrio where I had grown up belonged to the past, and I had never put down roots anywhere else”; 172). In an interview with

Linda Richards, Allende maintains that her protagonists, as well as most of the characters in her novels “are always marginals,” which she defines as those who “are exiled from the big umbrella of the establishment.” She adds that her preference for this type of characters is because she likes “people who stand on the edge and are not sheltered” (“*January Interview*” 7).<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the social and cultural clashes and realities that Allende’s protagonist Gregory Reeves narrates in *Plan*, correspond to what Fishkin points out about the narrations of W.E.B. Du Bois, James Agee, Tillie Olsen and Gloria Anzaldúa: It is “writing rooted in fact that is shot through with the poetry and passion of fiction, cultural reports bursting with the energy of felt life and with the power to convey important truths about that life.” She adds that their writings, along with a few others, such as John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, Penny Lerneoux’s *Cry of the People*, as well as Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*, “leave a legacy of conscience, clarity, responsible research, rhetorical power.” At the same time they demonstrate “artistic excellence -a towering standard against which literary nonfiction in the twenty-first century will undoubtedly be judged” (“*Borderlands*” 172).

#### 4.3.2 Racial issues

Beverley points out that *testimonio* “always signifies a need for a general social change in which the stability of the reader’s world must be brought into question”

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<sup>14</sup>When asked by Richards to explain “marginal”, Allende says that her protagonists “are either foreigners, immigrants, exiles, homosexuals, thieves, uneducated and poor women, orphans: people who are not born in privilege.” She concedes that “if they are born in privilege like in *The House of the Spirits* there is something in their lives that makes them marginals. They don’t fit in. People who don’t fit in” (“*January Interview*” 7).

(*Against* 84). A theme that permeates the narration is racism, and there is hardly a passage or episode that does not display at least a slight prejudice, implicit in one way or another.<sup>15</sup> There are thirty explicit cases in the novel, that include racism or discrimination against other races or simply the perspective of one race towards another that demonstrate prejudice. They can be classified in the following way: whites against Mexicans, blacks, Japanese and Asians in general; Mexicans against “gringos”, Asians and blacks; blacks against whites (which are presented as the most justified); Asians (especially Vietnamese) against Americans.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most blatant examples of whites against Mexicans is depicted in a dialogue between Gregory and his foreman (who is also his future brother-in-law), at one of his first jobs after high school:

–Esos indios pulguientos son mala gente, Reeves. Pelean, roban, no se puede confiar en ellos. Además son tontos, no entienden nada, no aprenden inglés, son flojos.

–No sabes lo que dices. Tienen más habilidad y sentido del honor que tú y yo. Has vivido en este barrio toda tu vida y no sabes una palabra de español, en cambio cualquiera de ellos aprende inglés en pocas semanas. Tampoco son flojos, trabajan más que cualquier blanco por la mitad del pago.

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<sup>15</sup>Carlos Monsiváis defines racism as hatred towards the *other*, at the same time affirming that it is also the daily practice of maintaining stereotypical images and interpretations of a community’s different groups by all sectors of the media, as well as the film industry (“El acceso” 13). “El racismo es el odio al *otro* y es la práctica cotidiana que rige la interpretación de las noticias y se vierten en los comentarios periodísticos, las representaciones de la cultura popular, las visiones que se transmiten de una comunidad nacional a otra.”

<sup>16</sup>Allende was asked in an interview to compare racism in Latin America to the racism in the U.S. She thinks “that racism has the same awful face everywhere. It looks and acts the same everywhere.” But, she contends that although people are educated not to be racist, many are. She adds that in Latin America, some do not “even think that it’s bad to be a racist” (Benjamin and Engelfried 387) .

–¿Qué te importa esa gentuza? No tienes nada que ver con ellos, eres diferente... Por otra parte estos indios no se quejan de nada, están de lo más contentos.

–Pregúnteles, a ver cuán contentos están...

–Si no les gusta que se vayan a su país, nadie les pidió que se vinieran aquí.  
(122)

“Those lousy *indios* are no good, Reeves. They fight and steal; you can’t trust them. They’re stupid, besides; they can’t understand anything, and they’re too lazy even to learn English.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. They have more ability and sense of honor than either of us. You’ve lived in this barrio all your life and you don’t know a single word of Spanish, but any one of them learns English in a few weeks. And they’re not lazy either; they work harder than any white, for half the pay.”

“What do you care about a few stupid Mexicans? They’re nothing to you; you’re different... Besides, these Mexicans never complain; they’re perfectly happy.”

“Ask them and see what they say...”

“If they don’t like it, let them go back home; no one asked them to come here.” (122)

However, the binary opposition shown here is not the only one regarding racial issues, since white “gringos” against Mexicans are not the only examples. Another that clearly shows that racism is not exclusive to whites is shown from Gregory’s perspective:

Me había tocado ver de cerca varios rostros del racismo, soy de los pocos blancos que lo ha sufrido en carne propia. Cuando la hija mayor de los Morales se lamentó de sus pómulos indígenas y su color canela, su padre la cogió por un brazo, la arrastró ante un espejo y le ordenó que se mirara bien mirada y agradeciera a la Santísima Virgen de Guadalupe no ser una “negra cochina”. En esa ocasión pensé que a don Pedro Morales le había servido de muy poco el diploma del “Plan Infinito” colgado en la pared certificando la superioridad de su alma, en el fondo tenía los mismos prejuicios de otros latinos que detestan a negros y asiáticos. (127)

I had seen at close hand the several faces of racism; I am one of a few whites who has lived it. When the older daughter of the Moraleses was lamenting her Indian cheekbones and cinnamon skin, her father seized her by the arm, dragged her to a mirror, and commanded her to take a look and thank the blessed Virgin of Guadalupe that she was not a “filthy black.” On that occasion, I could only think how little good had resulted from the



diploma of *The Infinite Plan* hanging on the wall as evidence of the superiority of Morales's soul; at heart, he shared the prejudices of other Latins who despised blacks and Asians. (126-127)

In the same vein, other facts pointed out by the narrator protagonist concern university enrollment: there were no Hispanics attending the university in those days (the 60s), only a few descendants of Chinese, and blacks were only seen on the sports teams, never in the classroom. Regarding other facets of life, he explains that although there were almost no people of color employed in offices, stores or restaurants, the hospitals and jails were filled with them. Nevertheless, he adds that even though segregation existed, blacks were walking on their own soil, unlike the immigrants (*Plan* 127).

However, if some of the passages or examples illustrating racism are explicit, there are also many subtle ones where the perspective of one race towards another provokes laughter. A good example of this is seen in the words of Pedro Morales at the beginning of the novel. After succeeding in overcoming all of the hardships and adapts to his new land, he dares to go back to his village to get his childhood sweetheart. He tells her:

Los gringos están todos chiflados, le ponen duraznos a la carne y mermelada a los huevos fritos, mandan a los perros a la peluquería, no creen en la Virgen María, los hombres friegan los platos en casa y las mujeres lavan los automóviles en la calle, con sostén y calzones cortos, se les ve todito, pero si no nos metemos con ellos, se puede vivir de lo mejor. (49)

The gringos are all crazy: they put peaches on meat and jam on fried eggs; they take their dogs to the beauty parlor and don't believe in the Virgin Mary; men wash the dishes inside the house and women wash the cars outside on the street, wearing a bra and short shorts that show everything. But if we don't have anything to do with them, we can live the good life. (43)

Another example that at the same time shows a juxtaposition in points of view is when Carmen and Samantha meet for the first time: "cómo será dentro de unos años, las gringas

se envejecen mal, se dijo.” / “pronto sería una matrona rolliza, las latinas se envejecen mal, pensó con satisfacción” (220) (“Imagine how she’ll look in a few years; gringas age badly, Carmen said to herself.” / “[S]he would soon be a middle-aged roll of fat. Latinas age badly, Samantha thought with satisfaction”; 230). Thus, whether racial references are related in a serious manner or in a light and comical tone, they are ever-present in this novel just as racial issues have been and continue to be a social problem throughout the history of the United States.

#### 4.4 Historical and cultural upheavals

Regarding the historical and cultural convulsions pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the ones that set the stage for the others are the cultural upheavals of the 60s: “Eran dos las revoluciones en marcha, una de los hippies que intentaban cambiar las leyes del universo con oraciones en sánscrito, flores y besos, y otra de los iconoclastas que pretendían cambiar las leyes del país con protestas, gritos y piedras” (150-151) (“There were two revolutions in progress: one of hippies, who wanted to change the laws of the universe with Sanskrit prayers, flowers, and kisses, and a second of iconoclasts who meant to change the laws of the nation with protests, yelling, and rocks”; 154). The following scene demonstrates how irony highlights the juxtaposition of the opposing values of the time:

Cuando no había manifestaciones en apoyo de los derechos civiles, las había contra la guerra de Viet Nam, rara vez pasaba un día sin un altercado público. La policía usaba tácticas y equipos de combate para mantener un simulacro de orden. Se organizó una contraofensiva destinada a preservar los valores de los Padres de la Patria entre aquellos horrorizados con la promiscuidad, la revoltura, y el desprecio por la propiedad privada. Se elevó un coro de voces en defensa del sagrado “American Way of life”. ¡Están demoliendo los fundamentos de la civilización cristiana occidental! ¡Este país acabará convertido en una sodoma comunista y psicodélica, es lo

que quieren estos desgraciados! ¡Los negros y los hippies mandarán el sistema al carajo!, parodiaba Timothy Duane a su padre y otros señores del Club. (152)

When there were no civil rights protests, there were marches against the war in Viet Nam; it was a rare day without some public altercation. The police used military tactics and combat units to maintain an illusion of order. Among those horrified by the promiscuity, chaos, and contempt for private property, a counteroffensive was organized to preserve the values of the Founding Fathers. A chorus of voices rose up in defense of the sacred American Way of Life: They are tearing down the pillars of Western Christian civilization! This nation will end up a Communist and psychedelic Sodom and Gomorrah, that's all these misfits want! Blacks and hippies are ripping the guts out of our system! Timothy Duane parodied perfectly his father and other gentlemen at the club. (155)

These passages, as well as all of the following cultural historical ones that will be seen throughout the rest of this chapter, parallel what was discussed in chapter three about reportage.<sup>17</sup> One of Joseph North's contentions is of particular relevance here. He maintains that "the writer of reportage must... do more than tell his readers what has happened -he must help the reader experience the event," and thus "reportage becomes durable literature" (cited in Hartsock, 241). Allende is not the leading female writer in the world by chance. She has achieved that status through her ability to draw her readers into her stories so they can "experience" the social, political and cultural events of the countries in which the narrations are set, and she accomplishes this through extensive

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<sup>17</sup>Summarizing from chapter three, John Hartsock dates the term "reportage" back to the 1930s, and he cites Joseph North's definition as "three-dimensional reporting" where "the writer not only condenses reality," but also "helps the reader to feel the fact. The finest writers of reportage are artists in the fullest sense of the term" (169). Kevin Kerrane claims in "Making Facts Dance," that Tom Wolfe defined the differences between traditional reportage and the literary journalism of his day, what he termed "new journalism" or "creative nonfiction." He said that these "new journalists" combined literary ambition with in-depth reporting, to make the story "shimmer like a novel with the pleasures of detailed realism" (Kerrane and Yagoda 17).

research and reporting. Thus *Plan* can be considered an important social document, or using North's term – “durable literature.”

Lars Sauerberg points out that Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night: History as a Novel: The Novel as History* is an important “historical source document for appreciating the political climate of an especially fateful period in recent American history.” Sauerberg also asserts that the complete title of Mailer's novel shows how he chose “to combine the novelist's and the historian's approaches by writing a novel with the traditional personal emphasis, followed by a history based on the ‘facts’ and with the conventional focus of the historian on central figures, key events, etc.” (65). At the same time, Mailer's own views on why he selected that particular title might also be worth mentioning. He explains the ambiguities of his title in *Armies*, by saying that “the first book [*History as a Novel*] can be, in the formal sense, nothing but a personal history which while written as a novel was to the best of the author's memory scrupulous to facts, and therefore a document.” On the other hand, he clarifies that “the second [*The Novel as History*], while dutiful to all newspaper accounts, eyewitness reports, and historic inductions available,” at the same time compliant with a style consistent up to this point with “historical writing,” by “pretending to be a history (on the basis of its introduction) is finally now to be disclosed as some sort of condensation of a collective novel –which is to admit that an explanation of the mystery of events at the Pentagon cannot be developed by the methods of history– only by the instincts of the novelist” (284). I have cited these observations by Sauerberg and Mailer for two reasons: a) Allende's methods for gaining information are similar to Mailer's, as are her “instincts” as a “novelist”; b) I hold the contention that she possibly gained cultural and historical background information from his writing, along with Wolfe and other literary journalists who documented or reported the U.S. cultural and historical

events of the times.<sup>18</sup> Her recounting of public events of the turbulent period of the 60s and 70s in the U.S. retells many of the same stories that the New Journalists like Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer did with their discourse of popular culture, social practices and social history of the same time period. What is so amazing about *Plan*, is that Allende herself did not personally experience these two decades like Wolfe and Mailer et al, yet she brings them to life as if she did.

The following excerpt shows how Allende portrays the days of black pride and the Black Panthers,<sup>19</sup> who elicited both fear and fascination with their fiery rhetoric and militancy:

Negros de arrogante negritud, negros vestidos de negro con negros lentes y una expresión provocadora ocupaban el ancho de la acera al pasar... ya no cedían el paso a los blancos, ya no miraban al suelo ni bajaban la voz. Los tímidos y humillados de antes ahora desafiaban. (148)

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<sup>18</sup>Wolfe and Mailer, along with other literary journalists who documented or reported the U.S. cultural and historical events of the times, are likely sources which Allende may have used for the historical and cultural framework in *Plan*. I draw this conclusion from an interview of Allende by Pilar Alvarez-Rubio in 1994, where she mentions that since she moved to the U.S. in December of 1987, she has been reading contemporary American authors “from Norman Mailer to Toni Morrison” (377-378).

<sup>19</sup>In a statement delivered on May 1, 1971, Huey P. Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party points out that the Party was formed in “a period of stress when Black people were moving away from the philosophy and strategy of non-violent action toward sterner actions.” Thus he explains their rationale: “We dared to believe that we could offer the community a permanent political vehicle which would serve their needs and advocate their interests. We have met many foes; we have seen many enemies. We have been gagged, jailed and murdered. We know now, more than ever before, that the will of the people is greater than the technology and repression of those who are against the interests of the people” (*To Die for the People* 59). The black reality in Huey’s statement coincides very closely to Acuña’s description of U.S. treatment towards Chicanos during the same time period in his Chicano history *Occupied America*. However, Acuña points out that the Chicano “*barrios* did not explode with the same fervor as Black ghettos” (310).

Blacks arrogant about their blackness, blacks dressed in black, with black sunglasses and I-dare-you expressions, occupied the width of the sidewalk... they no longer stepped aside for white pedestrians, no longer cast their eyes to the ground, no longer lowered their voices. Defiance had replaced timidity and humility. (150)

Here again, Allende is authentically documenting the culture of the times. Sauerberg claims that documentary realism draws on “verifiable reality” by relating “verifiable events” (*Fact 6*). This is essentially what Allende does in her novels. She narrates “verifiable events,” stories of real people, based on exhaustive research and reporting to bring the historical moments alive, just as the best writers of literary nonfiction, so that her readers can relive those moments, and feel their emotions.

#### 4.4.1 The Viet Nam War

At the same time, the testimonial account of the narrator protagonist about the war in Viet Nam portrays one of the most turbulent times in the history of the United States. In the following passages, as a consequence of the anguish, the fear and the rage experienced by the soldiers, we are struck by the abundance of ironic comments, amidst sickening details that bring the horrors alive to us as readers. The result is a cathartic experience for those of us who lost loved ones in that war:

Aquí todo es blanco o negro, no hay medias tintas ni ambigüedades, se acabó la manipulación, la hipocresía, el engaño. Vida o muerte, matas o mueres. No somos individuos, en este trágico teatro de la violencia, somos máquinas al servicio de la chingada patria. [...] No pensar, para no confundirse y vacilar; si lo haces mueres, es la ley inequívoca de la guerra. (177)

Los cuerpos debieron estar en bolsas con su nombre en una etiqueta, pero no siempre se cumplen las formalidades, falta tiempo o faltan bolsas, los cogen de las muñecas y los tobillos y los tiran dentro de los helicópteros, o los amarran como paquetes, envueltos en sus ponchos, cubiertos de moscas; en unas cuantas horas los cadáveres están hinchados, deformes, comidos por las larvas, hirviendo en el caldo de la descomposición. [...]

Lavan los helicópteros con manguera, pero el olor no desaparece. Tampoco el eco de los gritos, los muertos jamás se van del todo. No estoy llorando, es la maldita alergia o el humo, vaya uno a saber... (181-182)

Here everything is black and white; there are no halftones or ambiguities; the manipulation is behind us, the hypocrisy, the deceit. Life or death. Kill or be killed. We're not individuals, in this tragic theater of violence we're machines at the service of the motherfucking nation. [...] Don't think, or you'll get confused and hesitate. If you think, you're dead –that is the one unequivocal law of war. (184)

Bodies were supposed to be placed in bags, with the names neatly on tags, but there wasn't always time for formalities –not enough time or not enough bags. You pick them up by the wrists and ankles and throw them into the helicopters, or tie them up like packages in their own ponchos, swarming with flies. In a few hours the corpses are swollen, bloated, infested with maggots, a bubbling broth of putrefaction. [...] They wash down the choppers with a hose, but they can't get rid of the stench. Or the echos of the screams; the dead aren't really gone. I'm not crying, it's the damned allergies or the smoke, who knows... (188)

And the following statement reflects the degree to which Reeves has been forced to fight to maintain his sanity: “Me he acostumbrado tanto a la infamia que no puedo imaginar la realidad sin ella” (187) (“I'm so used to atrocity that I can't imagine life without it”; 194).

In “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” Paul Ricoeur maintains that the significance of a story arises from “*the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*” [Ricoeur's emphasis]. Thus he claims that the act of reading is crucial, for “[o]n this act rests the ability of the story to transfigure the experience of the reader” (120). It should be pointed out that since the 60's and the Viet Nam war are recent history, readers who know or are aware of this history can easily identify the reality into which the fiction is incorporated. This coincides with Sauerberg who explains that the “appreciation of the documentary element in the fictional text requires a reader” that is both cognizant of the text's cultural convention, as well as of the “factual state of affairs to which the text belongs both as a physical artifact (a book) and as an expression of the

ideas and attitudes it contains (a cultural document)” (*Fact 5*). Likewise, in *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction*, Barbara Foley maintains that “the documentary novel is distinguished by its insistence that it contains some kind of specific and verifiable link to the historical world,” that depends on the cognitive powers of the reader in his/her function to comprehend historical details (26). Consequently, the reader’s role is important in *Plan*, because those without knowledge of this time period in U.S. history would not recognize the verisimilitude as much as a reader who experienced it. Sauerberg also points out that while “[c]onventional realistic fiction foregrounds a story which is fictitious but plausible against a background compatible with the story as history,” the factual background in documentary realism “partly replaces the fictitious element.” He therefore alleges that the real “difference between documentary realism and documentarism/history is a matter of the degree to which the conventions of narrative are allowed to shape the text in its totality” (18).<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, it is worth noting that this long section of the book that recounts the narrator protagonist’s experiences in Viet Nam, is in its structure almost exclusively a long monologue. The next passage illustrates Gregory’s near inability to function after he is released from a hospital -with only twenty-five days remaining of his tour of duty. He is in disbelief that they are sending him back to the front lines after he had experienced a total collapse in his health, so bad that they had to ship him to Hawaii for medical treatment. He is terrified that he will die when he is sent back to what he calls hell:

Miedo. Terror. Me estoy asfixiando de miedo, algo que no sentí en los meses anteriores, esto es nuevo. Antes estaba programado para esta

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<sup>20</sup>Barbara Lounsberry’s claim about nonfiction corresponds to the above theories. She explains that nonfiction is “documentable subject matter chosen from the real world as opposed to ‘invented’ from the writer’s mind” (cited in Lehman, 17).



chingadera, sabía qué hacer, no me fallaba el cuerpo, estaba siempre alerta, tenso, un verdadero soldado. Ahora soy un pobre tipo enfermo, crispado de impotencia, una bolsa de trapos... Tengo miedo de morir en un instante, sin tiempo de despedirme de la luz, y otro miedo peor, de morir lentamente. Miedo de la sangre, de mi propia sangre escapando en un manantial; del dolor, de sobrevivir mutilado, de volverme loco... (200)

Fear. Terror. I'm suffocating with fear. It's not like anything I've felt before; this is new. Before, I was programmed for this shit, I knew what to do, my body obeyed me; I was always alert, on edge, a dyed-in-the-wool grunt. Now I'm a weakling, twitching with ineffectiveness, a bag of rags... I'm afraid of dying in an instant, without time to say good-bye to the light, and even more afraid of dying slowly. I'm afraid of blood, of my own blood pouring from me, of pain, of living as a paraplegic, of going crazy... (208)

Allende stresses that sometimes, when she would move into Gregory Reeves's voice, she felt as if she had been possessed by him. She would try "to convey the chaos in his mind and in his life," as well as the "confusion, the terrible confusion, and the many choices -the wrong choices." She explains that she tried to illustrate this "even with the writing, so the writing is very chaotic in certain parts" (Goggans 325). Thus, form in these passages resembles content. This idea of an author's creativity in expression is conveyed in the following statement by R.G. Davis in his essay "The Sense of Real in English Fiction": "What is interesting is not so much the faithful reproduction of actuality as such, but the meaning given it by the formal, imaginative pattern of the work of art" (cited in Sauerberg, 16).

Additionally, Allende's descriptive power and narrative techniques for the Viet Nam war scenes correspond to what Ben Yagoda points out about Walt Whitman. In his testimonial account of the 1863 battle at Chancellorsville during the Civil War, recorded in his book *Specimen Days*, Walt Whitman "shifts tenses, sputters out sentence fragments, tries out metaphors and similes, and unpacks a series of rhetorical questions, all to serve a

central conceit -the difficulty of doing descriptive justice to reality's horror." Yagoda explains that what makes the piece even more historically significant, is the fact that Whitman was not there. He had gotten all of his facts from interviews with wounded soldiers who had survived the battle. Yagoda also claims that Whitman deserves recognition as one of literary journalism's "true pioneers" of the art of journalistic re-creation (Kerrane and Yagoda 46). Likewise, Kevin Kerrane points out that John Hersey used extensive interviews to reconstruct scenes and to explore "the survivors' thoughts and feelings in novelistic fashion" in his literary journalistic work *Hiroshima*. He also cites Hersey as saying that "literary journalism must be factually authentic and absolutely reliable" (Kerrane and Yagoda 111). Allende points out that she also resorted to the interview in order to re-create the chapter on the war. She claims that her years as a journalist had taught her that personal interviews are essential in order to obtain "las claves, los motivos y las emociones de la historia" because "ninguna investigación de biblioteca puede reemplazar los datos de primera mano conseguidos en una conversación cara a cara" (*Paula* 313) ("keys, motives, and emotions of a story" because "no research in a library can replace the firsthand information derived from a face-to-face conversation"; 284). She says that she had written the chapter on Viet Nam twice and was about ready to eliminate it from the book because, although all the information was there, there was no real feeling. She explains that she has never been able to understand or to relate to war because she is "so anti-militaristic." However, she adds that she was lucky, because just as she was ready to remove the chapter, "a Viet Nam veteran walked into [her] life and gave [her] the wonderful gift of his experience" (Toms 344). She interviewed him "for hours, days, with a tape recorder" in order to write that chapter (Alvarez-Rubio 368). In a conversation with Alvaro Vargas Llosa, Allende contends that

she has learned to conduct interviews that get people to tell things that they do not always want to say (160). Readers of *Plan* can deduce and appreciate the grueling experience of both interviewer and interviewee that resulted in the gripping and horrific portrait of the Viet Nam war.

Nevertheless, it is when the narrator protagonist voices the motives of the war, that we notice how he has become cynical. His views stand out as a universal denunciation of modern warfare:

Y rabia. [...] Rabia contra cada uno de los corruptos bastardos que se hacen ricos con esta guerra, contra los políticos y los generales, sus mapas y sus computadoras, su café caliente, sus mortíferos errores y su infinita soberbia; contra los burócratas y sus listas de bajas, números en largas columnas, bolsas de plástico en interminables hileras... (200-201)

And rage. [...] Rage against every single one of the corrupt bastards getting rich on this war, against the politicians and generals with their maps and computers, their hot coffee, their deadly mistakes and infinite arrogance, against the bureaucrats and their casualty lists, their long columns of numbers, their body bags in endless rows... (209)

It is worth noting that the word “rage” appears as a leitmotif in the novel, in the majority of the cases during strong social indictments to express emotions, or in the cursing of personal misfortunes. Here it serves to project the narrator protagonist’s pronounced sentiments against war.

Likewise, we should point out society’s reaction after the war has ended:

“Para entonces la guerra, que al comienzo contaba con el apoyo eufórico de la opinión pública, se había convertido en una pesadilla nacional...” (240) (“By then the war, which in the beginning had received euphoric support from the public, had become a national nightmare...”; 252). The reason for which is given in the following explanation:

–Este es un país de triunfadores, Greg, lo único que nadie perdona es el fracaso –le dijo Timothy Duane–. No es la moral o la justicia de esta

guerra la que cuestionamos, nadie quiere saber de los muertos propios y mucho menos de los ajenos, lo que nos tiene jodidos es que no hemos ganado y vamos a salir con la cola entre las piernas. (240)

This is a country of winners, Greg; the one thing no one can forgive is failure,” Timothy Duane told him. “It isn’t the morality or the justice of this war we question, and no one wants to know about our own dead, much less that of the enemy; what royally ticks us off is that we’re not winning and are going to have to slink out of there with our tail between our legs. (252)

This reaction can be compared and contrasted with the one given after World War II that is found at the beginning of the novel, in the juxtaposition of points of view between Nora and Charles Reeves. In contrast to his wife, who has lost her faith in humanity after hearing about the destruction of the atomic bomb and its cost in human lives, Charles Reeves manifests the opinion of many Americans at that time, in his response to her reaction: “No digas tonterías. Debemos aplaudir los progresos de la ciencia. Menos mal las bombas no están en manos enemigas, sino en las nuestras. Ahora nadie se atreverá a hacernos frente” (38) (“Don’t be silly. We should applaud the progress of science. It’s a good thing the bomb is in our hands, not the enemy’s. No one can stand up to us now”; 30-31).<sup>21</sup> Ironically, Charles Reeves, a preacher who professes the superiority of the human spirit, is also the one to demonstrate the public’s euphoria for having won the war, without taking into account the hundreds of thousands of people who were killed by the bomb. He laughs when he comments that those casualties “no cuentan, eran todos japoneses” (38) (“They don’t count; they were all Japs”; 31). This statement emphasizes the “we won” mentality so important to the United States.

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<sup>21</sup>Again, just as in chapter three, where contrasting points of view were shown in the dialogues between Trueba and his wife Clara, or between Trueba and his son Jaime, the juxtaposition of points of view between Nora and Charles Reeves demonstrate very distinct values.

#### 4.5 The decade of greed

Another theme that stands out as a social critique is the greed that prevails during the 80s.<sup>22</sup> For Gregory, money meant success. We recall his words in the hospital at the end of his tour in Viet Nam: “[L]o que quiero es ser rico, tener poder... Yo tendré el verdadero poder del dinero y del prestigio, ese que nunca vi en mi barrio, nadie me mirará para abajo ni me levantará la voz... Seré rico, carajo” (197-198) (“[A]ll I want is to be rich and powerful... I’m going to have true power -money and prestige- something I never saw in the barrio; then no one can look down on me or raise his voice to me... Damn it to hell, I’m going to be rich!”; 205-206). After a life that has been all hard work with little to show for it, he earns a degree in law and moves out of his life of poverty. He is perceived by all as a victor for the achievements he gains due to his tenacity and inexhaustible drive: “Nadie podía reprocharle su ambición porque en el país ya se gestaba la época de la codicia desenfrenada que habría de venir muy pronto” (265) (“No one could censure his ambition, because an impending era of unbridled greed was already gestating throughout the nation”; 279-280). However, in spite of all of his success, he begins to live far beyond his means, “adelantándose al estallido de materialismo que marcaría la década de los ochenta” (265) (“he had thrown himself into his wild pursuit of the good life well in advance of the explosion of materialism that would mark the decade of the eighties; 280). As he boasts about his triumphs, his colleagues wonder how he gets all of the best cases

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<sup>22</sup>Ellen Goodman dedicated many of her bi-weekly syndicated columns to a critique of this time period. In the section called “Surviving the Eighties,” from her collection of columns titled *Making Sense*, she chronicles what she calls the “extremism” of the Reagan era, where “for six years, the gap grew between rich and poor” and where the popular phrase “you can never be too rich or too thin” turned into a cliché. She succinctly concludes that: “words that had become archaic, words like *greed*, have apparently returned to vogue. If there is greed, can avarice be far behind? Life-styles of the rich and famous may yet become exposés of the rich and avaricious” (368).

and where he finds the money for his unrestrained lifestyle: “Nada sabían de los exorbitantes préstamos de los bancos ni las maniobras atrevidas de sus tarjetas de crédito” (266) (“No one knew about the exorbitant bank loans or the bold juggling of credit cards”; 280). Again, Allende documents the times as if she had lived them, as this and the following passages demonstrate.

Reeves learns all of the vices and tools necessary for becoming a successful attorney in just seven years, since his boss at a large law firm personally teaches him all of the tricks of his trade. The description of his boss is the key to understanding the narrator protagonist’s ambition: “Era una de esas personas meticulosas y obsesivas que necesitan controlar hasta el menor detalle, un hombre insoportable, pero un espléndido abogado, nada escapaba a su escrutinio” (267) (“He was one of those meticulous and obsessive persons who need to control every last detail, an unbearable man but a magnificent lawyer. Nothing escaped his scrutiny”; 281-282). He converts Reeves into a man who is “tenaz, incansable, difícil de doblegar, imposible de quebrar y feroz en los enfrentamientos” (267-268) (“tenacious, untiring, difficult to bend, impossible to break, and ferocious in confrontations”; 282). Additionally, he is sure that he can keep Reeves under his thumb and “explotarlo en su beneficio por tiempo indefinido” (268) (“exploit him for his own benefit for an indefinite period”; 282). However, at the same time that he is proud of turning Reeves into what he perceives as almost a replica of himself, he is shrewd enough not to relinquish any of his power to him: “El largo hábito del egoísmo y la invencible coraza de su mezquindad eran más fuertes que cualquier atisbo de simpatía. Era el maestro perfecto para el laborioso aprendizaje de la codicia” (268) (“The long habit of selfishness and the invincible armor of his avarice were strong enough to quell any glimmer of sympathy. He was the perfect master for a laborious apprenticeship in greed”; 283).

Nevertheless, Reeves's life takes an abrupt turn when he is asked to take on a case of insurance fraud, and his boss tells him it is a waste of time. He does what his boss never thought he would do: he quits. However, after Reeves leaves that law firm with its rich clients, he continues to live beyond his means, claiming that Americans always come out ahead because "esta tierra es de los atrevidos, no los prudentes" (303) ("[T]his is the land of the bold, not the prudent"; 320). Besides, he notices that he is not the only one in his financial predicament: "[L]a nación entera sucumbía al aturdimiento del despilfarro, lanzada en una bacanal de gastos y una estrepitosa propaganda patriótica, dirigida a recuperar el orgullo humillado por la derrota de la guerra. Marchaba al tambor de su época" (303) ("[T]he entire nation was on a spending binge, deep in a bacchanal of conspicuous consumption and noisy patriotism directed at recovering the pride lost in the humiliating defeat of Viet Nam"; 320). His friend Timothy Duane sums it up best: "No se ha visto tanto egoísmo, corrupción y arrogancia desde el imperio Romano" (303) ("The world hasn't seen such selfishness, corruption, and arrogance since the fall of the Roman Empire"; 320).

All of the above examples are meant to clarify the social realities and the mind set of many Americans during the decade of greed, that is a part of the reality of U.S. history. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Tom Wolfe discusses his *Bonfire of the Vanities*, that portrays the decade of greed, or rather the 1980s, as "a period of money fever." Although Wolfe's book focuses on New York city, since that is where he did all of his research, many themes coincide with the rest of U.S. society in many other geographic areas as well. Moyers comments that what Wolfe says is an obsession with wealth, and thus vanity, is something else: "But it's more than vanity, and it's more than money. It's utter amorality that pervades the picture of New York" ("Master" 275). The portrait that Allende paints

of California in that time period is also one of “utter amorality.” In “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” Hayden White feels that any historical narrative would seem to at least inherently “*moralize* the events of which it treats” [White’s emphasis]. He contends that “narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize a reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine” (18). Likewise, John Hollowell also holds that “[t]he best nonfiction novels reveal a moral vision that may serve as a guide to the persistent human dilemmas common to all men in all eras” (16). Although Allende insists that she never tries to give any message in her writing, that she just presents reality and lets her readers formulate their own opinions, it would be almost impossible for readers not to detect a slight hint of moralization in this section.

Ironically, Gregory opens up his own private law office in an inner-city neighborhood where his clientele are poor minorities, mainly immigrants. His friend Timothy Duane tells him that what he is doing does not make sense: “*Hablas de hacer plata, pero por tu oficina desfilan sólo los pobres*” (303) (“You talk about making money, but only poor people troop through your office”; 320). His response is simply that Latino immigrants are usually poor, and they both know it. Celia Correas points out to Allende that although her narrator protagonist has managed to escape from the poverty and oppression of his childhood, he continues to remain in contact with the Hispanic culture. Allende responds that “*Willie no es el norteamericano típico,*” because even though the United States is a racist country where there is a real xenophobia against people with dark skin, he welcomes with open arms anybody from Latin America. She adds that to this



day: “Noventa por ciento de sus clientes son inmigrantes latinos pobres, a menudo ilegales” (“Ninety percent of his clients are poor Latin immigrants, often illegal”; 120).

Yet Reeves is determined that if he cannot be rich, at least he is going to continue living as if he were, thus leading to his inevitable downfall resulting in a crippling anxiety attack. Allende, as author narrator, relates this scene with intense emotion: “Cuando todos partieron y quedó sólo, algo estalló en su alma, un dolor terrible clavado en el pecho y repartiéndose desde allí en ondas por el resto de su cuerpo, quemándolo, partiéndolo, rompiéndole los huesos y arrancándole la piel... se abandonó a la tentación de no ser” (316) (“When he was again alone, something burst in his heart, a terrible pain deep in his chest, spreading into waves through the rest of his body, scalding, slicing, separating flesh from bone... he yielded to the temptation to let go and die”; 334). But after a time he realizes that he is still breathing and completely breaks down, sobbing like he did during the war:

Lloró por el abandono de la infancia, las luchas y derrotas que en vano intentaba transformar en victorias, las deudas impagas y las traiciones soportadas a lo larga de su existencia,... Lloró por la suma de sus errores y ese amor perfecto con el cual soñaba y creía imposible de alcanzar,... y tantos infelices, negros, latinos ilegales, en esa Corte de Milagros en que se había convertido su oficina, y siguió sollozando, ahora por los recuerdos de la guerra, los compañeros en bolsas de plástico, Juan José Morales, las muchachas de doce años que se vendían a los soldados, los cien muertos de la montaña. (316-317)

He wept for neglect in his childhood, for battles and defeats he had vainly hoped to transform into victories, for unpaid debts and the betrayals of a lifetime,... He wept for the sum of his errors and for the perfect love he dreamed of but believed impossible to find,... and his many unfortunate brethren, the blacks, Latinos, and illegal immigrants, poor, deprived, and humble, who came to seek help in the Court of Miracles his office had become, and the tears still poured, now for memories of the war, his brothers in body bags, Juan José Morales, the twelve-year-old girls sold to soldiers, the hundreds dead on the mountain. (335)

However, he musters up the strength to go on, takes stock of his mistakes, and takes control of his destiny: “Comprendí que lo más importante no había sido sobrevivir o tener éxito, como imaginaba antes, sino la búsqueda de mi alma rezagada en los arenales de la infancia” (358) (“I realized that the most important thing was not, as I had imagined, to survive or be successful; the most important thing was the search for my soul, which I had left behind in the quicksand of my childhood”; 381). It is worth noting the importance of the word “alma” (“soul”) in the above passages. It is one of the leitmotifs of the book, not only for its repetition -more than thirty times- but also for the way in which it appears so often in diverse contexts. Another example is found in a passage in the middle of the book that is also a foreshadowing of Reeves’ epiphany illustrated above. Like other testimonial passages in the novel, this excerpt lends verisimilitude to the narrative, and underlines our trust in the narrator protagonist: “Mi vida ha sido una suma de tropiezos, pero ahora, a los cincuenta años, cuando miro hacia atrás y saco la cuenta de los esfuerzos y las desgracias, creo que ese período fue el peor porque algo fundamental se me torció en mi alma y ya no volví a ser el mismo” (172) (“My life has been a series of stumbling blocks, but now, at fifty, when I look back and weigh various struggles and mishaps, I believe that period was the worst; something fundamental in my soul was forever twisted, and I was never again the same”; 177). In an interview with Michael Toms, Allende points out that her protagonist “goes through life running after the materialistic American Dream,” claiming that the “80s betray him, and he ends up on his knees.”<sup>23</sup> She believes that life is simply “a

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<sup>23</sup>Allende points out that her protagonist “is a survivor,” just as her real-life husband Willie is: “He’s a survivor, and the people who bend but never break are always fascinating to me. They can be on their knees today, and tomorrow they get up” (Goggins 325). Likewise, she says that deep down inside, both her husband and protagonist are like corks who once in a while sink below the surface, but always manage to stay afloat like true survivors. She adds that they are strong men who are full of defects, but at the same

very short passage in the long journey of the soul.” Furthermore, she adds that the same thing that Reeves has to do, i.e. starting all over again, finding his roots and going back to the basics, is what U.S. society must do. She feels that life is an experience that everyone must go through, because the body endures “certain things that are important for the soul.” But, at the same time, she maintains that people should not cling to life and the material aspects of the world so much “because you can’t take them with you,” since “you will lose them no matter what.” Moreover, she contends: “We’ve reached a point where violence, crime, loneliness and despair are so terrible that people are looking for answers in other places now”(348).

It should be pointed out that, unlike *testimonios* where an author narrator is not present, these passages in the first person narrated by the narrator protagonist are interlaced with others of the omniscient author narrator. The following citation is also an example of a foreshadowing of the ending:

Gregory jamás se conformó con esas premisas y en los treinta años siguientes persiguió la quimera del amor perfecto, tropezando incontables veces, cayendo y volviendo a levantarse, en una interminable carrera de obstáculos, hasta que renunció la búsqueda y aprendió a vivir en soledad. Y entonces, por una de esas irónicas sorpresas de la existencia, encontró el amor cuando ya no pensaba hallarlo. (114)

Gregory never accepted those standards and for the next thirty years relentlessly pursued the chimera of perfect love, stumbling more times than he could count, falling and picking himself up, running an interminable obstacle course, until he gave up the search and learned to live in solitude. Then, in one of life’s ironic surprises, he found love when he least expected it. (113)

From that point on we suspect that Reeves will find the perfect love, but it is an “ironic surprise” to us as readers, when we realize at the end of the novel that the author narrator

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time, are generous and passionate (Correas 115).

is that love: “Y justo ahora, cuando dejé de buscar una compañera, apareciste tú y me obligaste a plantar los rosales en tierra firme” (358) (“And now, just when I had stopped looking for a companion, you appeared and compelled me to plant the rosebushes in solid ground”; 381). This “tú” (“you”) had been identified on the first page of the novel, on the same page where Reeves tells of his first happiest moment. Here again, at the end of the narrative, we see how the story, as well as his life, has come full circle: “Regresó esa primera imagen de felicidad, yo mismo a los cuatro años orinando sobre una colina bajo la bóveda anaranjada de un cielo soberbio al atardecer” (356) (“I regressed to my first memory of happiness, myself at four, urination on a hilltop beneath the orange-streaked dome of a magnificent sky at dusk”; 378-379). At the same time, coincidentally or again ironically, while on that camping trip with his son, he *discovers* the author: “¿Sabes que en ese lugar salvaje supe de ti? Carmen me había regalado tu segunda novela y la leí durante esas vacaciones, sin imaginar que llegaría a conocerte y que te haría esta larga confesión” (356) (“Did you know that it was in that wild country that I learned about you? Carmen had given me your second novel, and I read it during that vacation, never imagining that one day I would meet you and make this long confession”; 379). Thus we notice not only the circular form of the book, but also the insistence on verisimilitude that is illustrated in the similarity of the images and words.

#### 4.6 The meanings of *El plan infinito*

*El plan infinito* is not only the title of the book, it is also another of the leitmotifs. It appears thirty times, almost as many as the word “alma” (“soul”). It is used in one sense to refer to what could be called the *business* of Charles Reeves: “Los Reeves interrumpían su errático peregrinaje donde les sorprendiera el cansancio o encontrarán a

alguien dispuesto a comprar su intangible mercadería. Vendían esperanza” (15) (“The Reeves interrupted their erratic pilgrimage wherever they were overcome by weariness or wherever they found someone disposed to buy their intangible merchandise. They sold hope”; 6). The name of that business is clear: “De pie ante su auditorio,... Reeves explicaba la posición del hombre en el universo y en *El Plan Infinito*” (29) (“Standing before his audience,... Reeves explained man’s place in the universe according to *The Infinite Plan*”; 21). However, his *business* is not always clear to his audience: “Muy pocos asistían a sus prédicas por fe, la mayoría iba por simple curiosidad, por esos lados eran pocas las diversiones y la llegada del *Plan Infinito* no pasaba inadvertida” (33) (“Very few attended his services for reasons of faith. Most came out of simple curiosity; there were few diversions in those parts, and the arrival of *The Infinite Plan* did not pass unnoticed”; 25). Those words (the infinite plan) also correlate to Charles Reeves’s philosophy, that there was no one particular religion:

En ese barrio *El Plan Infinito* competía con los oropeles del ceremonial católico, los bombos y platillos del Ejército de Salvación, la novedosa poligamia de los mormones, y los ritos de las siete iglesias protestantes del vecindario, [...] no era necesario renunciar a la propia religión, porque en el curso de Charles Reeves se acomodaban todas las doctrinas. (53)

In that barrio, *The Infinite Plan* had to compete with the pageantry of the Catholic ceremony, the drums and tambourines of the Salvation Army, the novel polygamy of the Mormons, and the rites of seven Protestant churches, [...] Charles Reeves’s course accommodated all doctrines and it was not necessary for followers to renounce their own religion. (47)

It should be pointed out that Allende insists in an interview that she did not invent this part of the story, that the “man who invented a religion called ‘The Infinite Plan’” did indeed exist (Rodden, “Writer” 436). He was her husband’s “itinerant, Bible Belt preacher-father, from whose breast-beating religious tract of the 1930s Allende takes her title” (Rodden, “Writer” 428-429).

However, *The Infinite Plan* is not only the title, it also has another meaning that illustrates one of Sims' "essential forces" of literary journalism –symbolism ("The Literary Journalists" 4). This symbolic meaning for the title is shown in the following citation when Gregory Reeves again directs himself to the author narrator at the end of the book: "Mira cuánto he andado para llegar hasta aquí y comprobar que no hay un plan infinito, sólo la pelotera de la vida, te dije. Tal vez cada uno lleva su plan dentro, pero es un mapa borroso y cuesta decifrarlo, por eso damos tantas vueltas y a veces nos perdemos, replicaste" (357) ("Look how far I've come to reach this point and find there is no infinite plan, just the strife of living, I told you that day. Maybe, you answered, maybe everyone carries a plan inside, but it's a faded map that's hard to read and that's why we wander around so and sometimes get lost"; 379). This meaning is the one that coincides most closely with my point of view. Due to the many times that these words appear, together with the word "alma", my hypothesis is this: the infinite plan means the struggle of one's soul to find the *meaning* of life.

#### 4.7 Concluding remarks

While addressing a group of writers in Cuba in 1975, Alejo Carpentier claimed that "el periodista es el novelista del futuro" ("the journalist is the novelist of the future"; "El periodista: un cronista de su tiempo" 10). His statement coincides with Tom Wolfe, who calls himself "a journalist at heart," saying that "even as a novelist," he is "first of all a journalist." At the same time, Wolfe thinks that "all novels should be journalism to start, and if you can ascend to that plateau to some marvelous altitude, terrific." However, he adds that he doesn't believe that "it's possible to understand the individual without understanding society" (Angelo 287). Likewise, Allende would not have been able to

portray an understanding of the protagonist Gregory Reeves without understanding the society in which he has lived. Yet, the reverse of Wolfe's statement also holds true for Allende: it would not be possible to understand the society without first understanding the individual. For in her case, the individual, i.e. the protagonist Gregory Reeves, or her husband Willie, has been her guide to understanding all of the chaotic moments in the history of California (and the United States in many cases) over a forty year time span.

Therefore, the fictional world of Gregory Reeves would not exist if it were not for Allende's intimate and very personal connection with her husband, because it was he who had introduced her into that society, or a particular vision/version of it. Accordingly, she claims that her understanding of America has deepened but not altogether changed, and that even though she now lives here in the U.S.A. with her new family, her views toward social justice, immigration and "America's responsibilities in the world" have not changed. She contends: "I'm still angry about many aspects of American foreign policy and the U.S. role in the world. I've simply come to know America better -and so I understand why American politicians and many American people believe what they do" (Rodden, "After Paula" 420). Allende's apparent comprehension of our history is one of the things that strikes the Anglo reader from the U.S. about *Plan*. Joaquín J. Fraxedas sums this up succinctly when he points out that this novel is "not only an important contribution to the literature of the world but also a great American novel, a novel we may claim as our own" ("*Plan*" 10).

In *Performing the Literary Interview: How Writers Craft Their Public Selves*, John Rodden calls Allende "the Chilean Scheherazade," for her talent as a natural storyteller (16). Notwithstanding, we must remember her insistence that she does not make things up, but rather bases all of her stories on events "that have really happened or

from lives of people [she's] known." She maintains: "And so I feel as if my life has furnished the material, in a very direct way, out of which my fictional worlds have come. If I hadn't lived this life, I wouldn't be able to create these fictional worlds. Perhaps I wouldn't be a writer at all" (Rodden, "Writer" 438). So we can conclude that since Willie's life had become a part of her own, his fictional world, or the narration of his *story*, resulted in what Mary Mackey calls a "fascinating portrait of America" ("Adrift" 1). Santiago Colás points out that, according to Frederic Jameson, the First World has forgotten how to think historically. Therefore, Jameson feels that it is up to the Third World "to serve as the cultural source for historical thinking, a source to be mined by us in the First World in order to regain our own debilitated historicizing faculties" ("Resisting Postmodernity" 6-7). Allende is doing this in *Plan*, by giving us a "fascinating portrait" of the U.S., with an Anglo-Hispanic point of view incorporated into the narration of a story/history that is not *her* own, but one with which Anglo First World readers might identify and claim as *their* own.



## CHAPTER 5

### Literary Journalism and Social Political Satire:

#### Guadalupe Loaeza's Contemporary Mexican Chronicle

What blindness, what deafness, what awful weight of ideology have to prey on me to forbid my concern on what's probably the most important issue in our existence, that is, the society in which we live, its economic structure and the power system that defines norms, attitudes and prohibitions in our culture? After all, the essence of our life has to do primarily with the political function of society.

Michele Foucault, (Cited in Carlos Monsiváis, "Will Nationalism Be Bilingual?" 136-137)

#### 5.1 Background observations about an outspoken chronicler and general chapter outline

Much of Guadalupe Loaeza's work is political, and one of her most recurrent obsessions has been the Mexican political scene, with a steady focus during the 1990s on the defeat of the seventy-one year "reign" of the powerful political party --the PRI.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it could be said that much of Loaeza's writing encompasses what Ellen Goodman terms "value judgments," that she explains are not "values" as in bargains while shopping, "but, rather, ethics and standards, the qualities in life that mean the most to us.

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<sup>1</sup>Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party), known simply as the PRI, had been in power for 71 years when it finally "officially" lost in the Presidential election of 2000.

The things that matter” (Introduction to *Value Judgments*, 3).<sup>2</sup> This is particularly evident in Loaeza’s social critiques of Mexico’s upper class, that she claims in the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen II (Manual of the Well-to-do: Volume II; 1996)*<sup>3</sup> is “profundamente racista y clasista” (“profoundly racist and classist”); 45).<sup>4</sup>

These “things that matter” are also apparent in what has been one of her primary obsessions: politics and power. Lorenzo Meyer points out that Loaeza understands how the exercise of power affects everyone --every citizen no matter what his/her social class-- and in every aspect of daily life. She continuously shows us what is probably “lo más importante: la calidad de la política es expresión de lo moral, de la ética colectiva” (“the most important thing: the quality of politics is the expression of what is moral, of common ethics”; Prologue to *Sin cuenta*, 11). He adds that she is aware that due to her privileged social position in an underdeveloped society where the majority is poor, she has the responsibility to speak out in the national interest to demand change in a political system

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<sup>2</sup>Goodman’s *Value Judgments* is a compilation of her syndicated columns from 1989-1994. Her literary journalism corresponds in many ways to Loaeza’s, in both content and form, and consequently they are not just contemporaries writing mainly editorial page columns on opposite sides of the border. Although Goodman’s columns appear bi-weekly in over four hundred U.S. newspapers, Loaeza’s appear in less than a dozen. Loaeza also writes stories for magazines and Sunday cultural supplements.

<sup>3</sup>This is part two of a sort of encyclopedia on manners in two volumes, the first of which is titled *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen I (Manual of the Well-to-do; Volume I; 1995)*. Loaeza’s introductions to both works are important for their historical appraisals of Mexico’s elite in the twentieth century. Additionally, the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien II* is a cultural tour through Mexico from 1968 through 1995, encompassing all of the important events that effected the country both socially and politically. It will therefore be used extensively as a point of reference for discussing Loaeza’s obsessions in chapter six.

<sup>4</sup>All translations of Loaeza’s work will be mine since no published ones exist.

that has been “selfish, irresponsible and corrupt” for so long (12).<sup>5</sup> In the same mode, Denise Dresser alleges that Loaeza’s only agenda is to portray what she sees and disclose what she feels, interpreting the political scene from the close range of someone who “rubs elbows with those in power,” yet at the same time criticizing them for not knowing how to use it (Prologue to *La factura*, 15). Consequently, it will be shown how Loaeza’s work exposes her moral and ethical insights as she addresses primary issues affecting Mexican society.<sup>6</sup>

Loaeza started her career as a literary journalist by writing about the “lifestyles of the rich and avaricious.”<sup>7</sup> In the introductory segment of her published interview with Cristina Pacheco --one of Mexico’s better-known chroniclers of the “down and out”-- in *Detrás del espejo* (*Behind the Mirror*; 1999),<sup>8</sup> Loaeza claims that she got the idea of

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<sup>5</sup>“Por la forma de abordar tus temas –desde la perspectiva de una mujer de clase media consciente de su posición y de su responsabilidad en una sociedad de mayoría pobre, subdesarrollada.... para asumir la responsabilidad a que le obliga el privilegio de su condición social: convertirse en elementos socialmente activos, demandantes del cambio que requiere un país conducido desde hace tiempo de manera egoísta, irresponsable y corrupta, al punto de haber trastocado eso que se conoce como interés nacional” (12).

<sup>6</sup>Linda Egan affirms that the contemporary Mexican chronicle’s goals are professed to be “moral, political and cultural” (*Carlos Monsiváis: Culture and Chronicle in Contemporary Mexico* 89).

<sup>7</sup>I take this from Goodman’s critique of the decade of greed of the 80s from one of her columns collected in *Making Sense*, cited in footnote 22 of chapter four of this study. I will repeat part of it again for its pertinence to Loaeza’s writing: “Life-styles of the rich and famous may yet become exposés of the rich and avaricious” (368).

<sup>8</sup>This book is composed of seventeen (of over two hundred) televised interviews from her program *A través del espejo* (“Beyond the Mirror”), broadcast on Mexico’s Channel 40 between the early part of 1997 through the early autumn of 1999. It concludes with one imaginary interview between herself and her deceased father. In the prologue to *Detrás*, Loaeza says that she got the idea to compile these interviews on her way home from the TV studio after being told that her show was being canceled for low ratings: “¿Por qué no reunir algunas de estas entrevistas que nadie, nadie, nadie vio, para

becoming the “cronista de los ricos” (“chronicler of the rich”; 290) after reading one of Pacheco’s articles. She relates how she walked into the offices of the daily newspaper *Unomásuno*, and addressed the manager of the editorial page to see if he would consider hiring her: “Justamente, ayer que leía a Cristina Pacheco, me dije que yo podría hacer lo mismo pero hablando de los ricos. ¿Qué le parece?” (“Just yesterday, as I was reading Cristina Pacheco, I told myself that I could do the same thing, except that I would be talking about the rich. What do you think?”; 291).<sup>9</sup> She states that three days later, on August 25, 1982, the paper launched her career as a literary journalist by publishing her first article titled “Con el alma en un hilo” (“With my soul on a string”; 292).<sup>10</sup> However,

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que mucha, mucha, mucha gente pueda leerlas?” (“Why not collect some of these interviews that nobody, nobody, nobody watched, so that lots and lots and lots of people can read them”; 19)? It should also be noted that “Detrás del espejo” was the name of her radio show on Radio Red broadcast in the early 90s.

<sup>9</sup>She also told him in her tongue-in-cheek manner that she wanted to use a pseudonym: “Además, déjeme decirle que no quiero firmar con mi nombre, ya que seguramente pasaría como la típica traidora de clase. De ahí que utilizaría otro, para que nadie me reconociera y siguieran invitándome a las fiestas. ¿Me entiende” (Besides, let me tell you that I don’t want to sign with my own name, since I would most certainly come across as a class traitor. Therefore I’ll be using another name, so that nobody recognizes me and so they keep inviting me to parties. Do you get my drift”; 291)? The answer was totally the opposite of what she expected: “Aquí uno se responsabiliza de lo que escribe” (“Here one takes responsibility for one’s writing”; 292). Yet Miguel Angel Granados Chapa indicates that the editor relented and allowed her to use the pseudonym of Clara Garay –a composite of the saint that corresponded to her date of birth along with one of her paternal surnames-- for that and a few other of her first chronicles. He adds that shortly after, she began to use her married name of Guadalupe Antoni, and the following year (1984) signed with Guadalupe Antoni Loaeza (Prologue to *Obsesiones*, 15-16).

<sup>10</sup>This chronicle is a sarcastic look at the “plight” of the upper middle class after the nationalization of Mexico’s banking system by President José López Portillo in 1982. It is included in her first book titled *Las niñas bien* (*The Well-to-do Girls*; 1987), a compilation of satirical chronicles of social and cultural critiques written for *Unomásuno* and *La Jornada* between 1982-1986. It sold fifty thousand copies in less than a year, and she has been Mexico’s leading voice on the customs and “values” of its high society since

there is a considerable difference between Pacheco's and Loeza's writing. Pacheco writes favorably and compassionately about Mexico's poor and marginalized --"los excluidos" ("the excluded")-- mainly from the perspective of women from the lower rungs of society. On the other hand, Loeza writes with humor and irony, often sarcastically, about those who exclude them --"la gente bien" ("the well-to-do")-- principally from the point of view of its women.<sup>11</sup> Examples of not only the exclusion of the lower classes by the rich, but also of their scorn and racism for those below them abound in Loeza's texts and will be discussed in chapter six.

In a conversation with Bill Moyers about his novel *Bonfire of the Vanities*, Tom Wolfe points out that "depicting the acts of the rich" is what he calls "plutography" ("Master" 287). Hence, Loeza could be considered a "plutographer," yet not like those who write favorably about the rich for the society pages. On the back cover of Loeza's second collection of articles titled *Las reinas de Polanco (The Queens of Polanco; 1988)*, Elena Poniatowska claims that Loeza "[n]os brinda la crónica de los ricos, pero una crónica que nada tiene que ver con la que durante muchísimos años se hizo en los periódicos" ("the chronicle of the rich, but a chronicle that has nothing to do with the kind that has been seen in newspapers for so many years"). On the contrary, Poniatowska says

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then.

<sup>11</sup>In a play on words of the title of her first book, Loeza relates how her first chronicles were perceived by some of her readers. She first explains how many of the women in the affluent sectors were beginning to read the new "leftist" newspaper *Unomásuno*, whereupon they discovered that one of their own, a "well-to-do girl" who had turned into a rebel of sorts, began reflecting their everyday "customs and aspirations" in a mocking and ironic manner in her chronicles (Introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen II* 40). "Muchas de ellas, incluso leían el nuevo periódico 'de izquierda', *Unomásuno*, donde un buen día empezaron a encontrar en las crónicas de una niña bien rebelde que había crecido entre ellas, un espejo burlón, irónico, de sus costumbres y aspiraciones" (40).

that we were never shown a world portrayed “con la ferocidad con la que Guadalupe Loeza ataca a una sociedad mucho más fragmentada, muchísimo más dispersa y más fácil de encajonar, que es la sociedad de hoy” (“with the ferocity with which Guadalupe Loeza attacks a society [that is] much more fragmented, extremely more dispersed and much easier to box up, that is today’s society”).

In a similar mode, Julia VanLoan Aguilar comments in “Humor in Crisis: Guadalupe Loeza’s Caricature of the Mexican Bourgeoisie,” that Loeza’s humor has also had such wide acclaim with the Mexican public because not only does she satirize its social elite, but she also “aptly caricaturizes the fortunes and calamities” of the politicians and their families, especially the PRI’s “rich and famous,” who were so irritating “with their exaggerated pretense and ambition.” She adds that since “the country’s Who’s Who on the political scene” are also among the bourgeoisie’s international jet set, Loeza smacks them “on both sides with her satire,” ridiculing their extreme materialistic “values” along with “their charade of democratic government” (154). Loeza is often merciless with corrupt politicians, and some of her cleverest chronicles are sarcastic indictments of Carlos Salinas, which will be demonstrated in chapter six.

Loeza has said that all of her texts are autobiographical (Videocharla), and oftentimes through the voice and thoughts of Sofia --her alter-ego of sorts-- Loeza transmits many of her own personal stories.<sup>12</sup> She describes Sofia as “esta señora que durante mucho tiempo estuvo dormida en sus laureles y poco a poco ha ido tomando

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<sup>12</sup>In the prologue to *Las obsesiones de Sofia*, Luz Aguilar Zínser claims that of all of Loeza’s narrative devices “el más recurrente es Sofia, *alter ego* de la autora, desdoblamiento de sí... que permite a Loeza el diálogo entre mundos, modos de ver, voces internas” (“the most recurrent is Sofia, the author’s *altar ego*, a breakdown of herself... that permits Loeza to engage in a dialogue between worlds, points of view, internal voices”; 15-16).

consciencia. Sofia es la voz de muchas mujeres” (“this woman that for so long was asleep on her laurels and little by little has begun to wake up. Sofia is the voice of many women”; Juandiego 1). She adds that in the past few years “[l]a consciencia de Sofia se ha intensificado, ha evolucionado como la de muchas mujeres mexicanas. Así que Sofia ya opina, Sofia va y vota” (“Sofia’s conscience has intensified, has evolved like that of many Mexican women. Thus Sofia speaks her mind, Sofia goes and votes”; Juandiego 2).<sup>13</sup> Luz Aguilar Zínser points out that there are many similarities between Sofia and Loaeza. They are both aware of what is going on around them, are fiercely loyal to what they believe, and are genuine rebels who act out of impulsive kindness, passionately engaged in communication with “the collective” (Prologue to *Las obsesiones de Sofia* 16).<sup>14</sup> I have found this statement by Aguilar Zínser to be true in Loaeza’s work, for even what at first may appear to be tongue-in-cheek stories or accounts of something trivial, they must be interpreted in order to discover the underlying “value judgment.” Loaeza writes about what she knows best, and like a competent literary journalist, she researches the details. Some readers may be “turned off” from her style –sometimes excessive use of punctuation, hyperbole, sarcasm, anaphoric repetition, Anglicisms, Mexican slang,

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<sup>13</sup>In “Embedded Agendas: The Literary Journalism of Cristina Pacheco and Guadalupe Loaeza,” Claudia Schaefer-Rodríguez contends that “Loaeza returns repeatedly to the Mexican bourgeoisie not only to revel in their fears and desires... but also to point to her own love-hate relationship with those very same values” in her own personal evolution as a human being (67). Loaeza frequently mocks herself for her weaknesses in her texts, and it is usually through her *altar ego* –Sofia.

<sup>14</sup>“Pero en Sofia también hay mucho de lo que Guadalupe Loaeza es sin remedio: una mujer perceptiva, de vehementes lealtades hacia lo que cree; rebelde candorosa, de impulsiva bondad, en apasionada correspondencia con lo colectivo” (16).

hypothetical situations, irreverence toward the *status quo*, use of real names,<sup>15</sup> yet most of these are characteristic of the contemporary Mexican chronicle as well. Nevertheless, her writing also coincides with what Linda Egan calls the “double job description” of the “effective chronicler”: “[H]e or she must appear to be a conscientious fact-gatherer, articulate reporter, and judicious commentator.” She adds that the chroniclers, “as masters of narrative art,” should appear trustworthy to their readers, demonstrating not only their expertise but also their “talent” (*Carlos Monsiváis: Culture and Chronicle in Contemporary Mexico* 103).

This chapter, as well as chapter six, will follow her twenty year writing career as a chronicler, showing her metamorphosis as a writer from a rebellious “niña bien” whose gradually developing social and political conscience can be traced in her first compilations of chronicles of upper class women, through her fixations with the racism and classism of society’s upper echelons, the economic crisis, the corruption in politics, Televisa’s collusion with the PRI, and finally Chiapas, all culminating in her present day political activism. Additionally, I hope to counter the assertions of Corona and Jörgensen, who list Loaeza among those *cronistas* who “do not necessarily understand the chronicle as an

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<sup>15</sup>This has gotten her into trouble on many occasions, one of them being in May 24, 1994, where she criticizes the misogynism of the PAN’s candidate for the presidency –Diego Fernández de Cevallos– in an article called “¡Espíritu Santo, Fuente de Luz, ilumínalo!” (“Holy Spirit, Fountain of Light, Enlighten Him”). The article appears for the first time in *Obsesiones* (1994), pp. 154-157. It is also included in *La factura*, pp. 145-148. Two days later, she chronicles a personal telephone call by the candidate himself, who reproaches her unfairness. She receives his permission to record his rebuttal in her next chronicle, titled “La llamada de Diego” (“Diego’s Phone Call”; *Obsesiones* 158-161, *La factura* 148-152). Although she gives him his so-called “day in court” by quoting him *verbatim*, she also undermines his defense with ironic commentary. In a chronicle in *Reforma* on March 26, 2002, titled “La intolerancia de Diego,” Loaeza reproaches him again, except this time not only for his misogynism, but also his homophobia. It should also be added that on this date he is the president of the PAN.



expression of, or an instrument for social justice *per se*, nor do they see it as a mere repository of information, but as an ideal form to display skillful narrative, perspicacity and ironic humor,” and that a wide “thematic variety, language games and playfulness, characterize their writing” ( 18).<sup>16</sup> Although the latter part of that statement is correct, for Loaeza’s writing *does* “display skillful narrative, perspicacity and ironic humor,” as well as a broad “thematic variety, language games and playfulness,” I do not agree with the first part. I will thus demonstrate how the *body* of Loaeza’s writing --composed of seventeen books-- *does* demonstrate a marked awareness of the injustices rampant in Mexican society today, and is purposefully denunciatory of them and the reasons for them. Albeit countless examples could be presented from her texts to illustrate this point, I will show only one here from *Debo, luego existo (I Owe, Therefore I Am; 2000)*.<sup>17</sup> Loaeza, through her altar ego Sofia, is lamenting the fact that she lives:

en un país donde existe tanta injusticia, tantos contrastes sociales y económicos. ¡Cuarenta millones de mexicanos viven en la pobreza extrema! ¿A cuánto asciende el salario mínimo?... Mil ciento cincuenta pesos mensuales. ¡Ciento veinte dólares!... Por eso mejor se van a trabajar al otro lado; aunque expongan no nada más su vida, sino su dignidad como seres humanos. (28)

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<sup>16</sup>Corona and Jörgensen’s *The Contemporary Mexican Chronicle: Theoretical Perspectives on the Liminal Genre* is forthcoming, with a projected publication date of July, 2002.

<sup>17</sup>This book is one of two works of fiction about four different upper-class women and how they deal with the economic crisis. The first is *Compro, luego existo (I Shop, Therefore I Am; 1992)*, which has been used as a textbook in several universities (Conferencia). *Debo, luego existo* is not only an updated continuation of the women’s accounts from the first work, but this time around includes stories about their husbands --both exes and current-- and their sons, and how they confront the economical hardships caused by Mexico’s continuing economic problems. It should be noted that this book also demonstrates Loaeza’s mastery at revealing the male psyche.

in a country where there is so much injustice, and so many social and economic contrasts. Forty million Mexicans live in extreme poverty! How much is the minimum wage? One thousand fifty pesos a month. One hundred twenty dollars! That's why it's better for them to go work on the other side; even though they not only jeopardize their lives, but also their dignity as human beings.

*That* is the real Guadalupe Loaeza, ever-aware of the extreme contrasts in a country which still has a long way to go to achieve a more democratic society, and that the problems of Mexico's ungovernability cannot be resolved until sufficient social, political and economic changes occur.

On the other hand, I also understand why she might be classified as a simple entertainer of sorts, since that is how she is perceived by much of the Mexican public, and rightly so in many instances. When asked in an on-line video chat if it bothers her to be considered a "light" writer, she responds: "No, de ninguna manera, porque lo que más me importa es que me lean, qué bueno porque me digieren de una forma más rápida y es mejor ser light que heavy" ("No, not at all, because what most matters to me is that people read me, how nice because they digest me more quickly and it's better to be light than heavy"; Videocharla). And, as Granados Chapa points out, people do read her, and have been doing so since the appearance of her first chronicles, which he calls "un éxito fulgurante" ("a shining success").<sup>18</sup> He adds that the publication of sixty-two of her texts in *Las niñas bien* "instaló de un golpe a Guadalupe Loaeza como protagonista de un caso singular en el mundo de los medios y la industria editorial" ("instantly established Guadalupe Loaeza as the protagonist of a unique case in the world of the media and the

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<sup>18</sup>Alberto Dallal contends that Mexican literary journalists "buscan, antes que nada, 'hacerse de lectores'" ("seek, before anything else, 'to create a readership'"; 157), and Loaeza has achieved this, much to the envy of many of her fellow *heavyweight* chroniclers, Granados Chapa included.

editorial industry”).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he attests that her accounts began to appear in more and more dailies and magazines, her books –mainly more collections of chronicles-- achieved multiple editions, she was sought out to speak at more conferences than she could possibly handle, and she has become a popular radio show host with a faithful audience (Prologue to *Obsesiones*, 16).<sup>20</sup> In addition, it should be added that she has written other works that are not collections of chronicles and demonstrate her natural talent as a storyteller and writer.<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of this chapter and the following is to show how Guadalupe Loeza has contributed much to the development over the past twenty years of Mexico’s singular form of literary journalism --the *nueva crónica*. It will also be illustrated how her

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<sup>19</sup>Loeza’s only instruction in the discipline was obtained through her attendance at Elena Poniatowska’s writing workshop for a six month period in 1981, after which she won a prize for a short story titled “El discreto encanto de la burguesía de las Lomas” (“The Discreet Enchantment of the Bourgeoisie from the Hills”). The title is obviously a play on words of Luis Buñuel’s film of the same name, except of course, without the addition of “de las Lomas.” Las Lomas is an exclusive area of the upper class in Mexico City where Loeza resides.

<sup>20</sup>In 1982, she began her journalistic career writing chronicles for the newspaper *Unomásuno*, and later for the dailies *La Jornada* and *El Financiero*, and the magazines *Mira*, *Karma*, and *Obelisco*. She currently contributes three articles weekly to the daily newspapers *Reforma* and *El Norte*, as well as to the magazines *Paula* and *Kena*. She also directs radio and TV programs in Mexico City (Conferencia).

<sup>21</sup>These include a collection of short stories with feminist themes called *Primero las damas* (*Ladies First*; 1995). One of the stories, “Besos satánicos” (“Satanic Kisses”), is of particular interest, not only for its narrative artistry, but also for its unsettling ambiguity in recounting a date rape. Two collections of biographical pieces written about women and that confront women’s issues are *Mujeres maravillosas* (*Wonderful Women*; 1997), and *Ellas y nosotras* (*Them and Us*; 1998). With Carlos Martínez Assad, Loeza also co-authored a historical fictional work about Mexico City as seen from its most famous landmark (the golden angel of independence), titled *El Angel de nuestras nostalgias* (*The Angel of our Nostalgias*; 1998). A biographical novella called *Miroslava* (1992) was later made into a film. Her other works have either been introduced earlier or will be presented later as they are used in the examination of Loeza’s texts.

seventeen books cover what Corona points out as being some of the most consequential issues of the *crónica* in the recent past: NAFTA and the problems it generated; Chiapas and the awakening of Mexico's national conscience toward indigenous rights and "the meaning of the Mexican revolution"; the corruption in politics and the abuse of governmental power resulting in the repression of human rights and the mockery of democracy; Mexico City and its social problems resulting in violence and ungovernability, as well as women's rights ("Contesting the Lettered City: Cultural Mediation and Communicative Strategies in the Contemporary Chronicle in Mexico"; 197). In my investigation of Loaeza and the chronicle over the past few years, I have come across the same well-known names over and over again, mostly the ones that have been practicing the *crónica* since 1968 or before: Carlos Monsiváis, Elena Poniatowska, José Joaquín Blanco, Cristina Pacheco, et al. I therefore completely agree with Corona's claim that there is a need for further study of the urban chronicle of the twentieth century, since it has been relatively ignored by the literary academy, and "el panorama bibliográfico, tanto teórico como crítico, es todavía muy limitado" ("the bibliographic panorama, both theoretical and critical, is still very limited"; "Cuadrando el círculo" 12). Consequently, I contend that until more study has been done on more *cronistas*, considering the totality of their work and not on just one or a handful of articles, or citing from other sources without having read much on the chroniclers in question, the process in the study of the form will become stagnant. For only in-depth studies can truly determine the so-called value of an individual writer's work. I will continue with an examination of the contemporary Mexican chronicle in order to set up the theoretical framework through which I will be discussing Loaeza's "obsessions" in chapter six, which emerge in all of her

texts in one way or another, and demonstrate that her work does have a definite purpose –to show what is wrong in Mexican society and politics, and to be an advocate for change.

## 5.2 Mexico's contemporary literary journalism and its unique type of *crónica*

### 5.2.1 Mexico's *New Journalism*: Its *Nueva Crónica*<sup>22</sup>

I will begin here by elaborating on the discussion presented in chapter two about the Mexican chronicle, specifically where the examination of the form ended in 1968. The reason for that seemingly abrupt end is that the contemporary Mexican chronicle came into being so to speak, in that decisive year in Mexico's history.<sup>23</sup> It is when the social and political direction of the chronicle began to have as its objective what Corona and Jörgensen call "social denunciation and democratization" (16). In "El fin de la nostalgia" ("The End of Nostalgia"), Monsiváis reminds us that *Excélsior*, under the directorship of Julio Scherer, was the only daily newspaper at that time to print a "non-official" (meaning non-government sanctioned) interpretation of the events of the day, giving its readers "puntos de vista disidentes y versiones más libres y objetivas de los hechos" ("dissident points of view and freer and more objective versions of the facts"; 22).<sup>24</sup> Likewise, in

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<sup>22</sup>I will be using *nueva crónica* ("new chronicle") interchangeably with the "contemporary Mexican chronicle," mainly to avoid repetition of the same term since it is the focus of this chapter.

<sup>23</sup>Egan calls 1968 one of those years in Mexican history "like exclamation points," the others being 1521 (the conquest of the ancient Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan), 1810 (the declaratory shout of Mexico's independence from Spain), and 1910 (the beginning of the Mexican Revolution) (88).

<sup>24</sup>Héctor Aguilar Camín's epic novel *La guerra de Galio* (*Galio's War*; 1993), traces Julio Scherer's life –through that of the fictional protagonist Carlos García Vigil-- as an honest publisher and reporter who was tired of all of the "temas intocables" ("untouchable topics") and misinformation in the newspapers. Hence, he founded the newspaper *La república*, which corresponds to Scherer's *Excélsior*. He touches many

*Periodismo y literatura*, Alberto Dallal's study which predates Monsiváis's previously cited article by four years, says much the same. He affirms that Scherer's "opening up" of the editorial pages of *Excélsior* in that turbulent year consisted in attracting writers who possessed expertise in either literature or the social sciences into the field of journalism. He says that *Excélsior*'s readers were introduced to the fresh points of view of writers such as "Daniel Cosío Villegas, Marcos Moshinsky, Rafael Segovia, Salvador Elizondo, etc." (161).<sup>25</sup> This "clase media ilustrada" ("enlightened middle class") urged the integration of reflective interpretations into their struggle to better comprehend Mexico's social reality which was in the process of total transformation (161).<sup>26</sup> *Excélsior*'s readers were thus given an interpretive view of the news of the day.

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topics, primarily the role of the journalist's intervention between the military and the people (159), and extensively covers what he calls Mexico's "guerra sucia" ("dirty war"; 268), the pursuit of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro García and their followers in the state of Guerrero in the late 60s and the greater part of the 70s.

<sup>25</sup>However I find one major literary figure of the time missing –Rosario Castellanos. In what she calls a "Prólogo involuntario" ("Involuntary Prologue") subtitled "El escritor como periodista" ("The writer as journalist") to her compilation of articles in *El uso de la palabra (The use of the word)*, she narrates the story of how Julio Scherer approached her to be a collaborator for the editorial pages for *Excélsior*. Before that she explains that she was used to saying whatever she pleased in her poetry, plays, novels or short stories. Nonetheless, she claims that when she chose to be affiliated with Scherer's newspaper she was determined to write in a way that would get people to read her, claiming that "[e]l don del periodista es tan grande como el del escritor" ("the journalist's talent is as great as that of the writer"), and thus calls the editorial opinion articles the "tierra de nadie" ("no-man's land"; 12). I mention Castellanos specifically because not only is her style in her op-ed page writing similar to Loaeza's with respect to the use of irony, satire and humor, but also in her view that she writes in order to be read, not fearing to be called a "light" writer as long as people read her.

<sup>26</sup>"La clase media ilustrada exigía la unificación de fuerzas y reflexiones para entender de mejor manera y con mejores datos e instrumentos una realidad social en plena transición" (161).

Monsiváis also points out that the role of the chronicler consequently came to be that of becoming the voice for the voiceless, which drew the chroniclers to popular movements, demonstrations, strikes, the marginalized sectors of society, and in turn those marginalized became interested in having their history sketched and their involvement recorded (23).<sup>27</sup> These chroniclers belonged to a new generation, Monsiváis claims, standing on the shoulders of their predecessors in a dynamic national tradition, sparked by their fascination with the New Journalism from the U.S., the rise in schools offering courses in the communication sciences and the escalation in the numbers of publications, along with the crumbling of many of the “moral prohibitions” and the growth of a civil society. Journalism became the “oficio de moda” (“job of the times”; “El fin” 23-24).<sup>28</sup> However, Monsiváis maintains that whereas political censorship was still in vigor, there began to be more freedom to use graphic and off-color language, and the “critical reader” was gradually replaced by the “scandalized reader.” The new chroniclers, according to Monsiváis, started to document the societies in which they lived, mostly Mexico City (“El fin” 24). And, he adds, their jobs mattered to them, and they knew that their readers were mindful of details, partial to critiques, and sick of the TV programs that they still watched anyway. He contends that it was “un público que ha canjeado la nostalgia (‘Todo tiempo pasado fue mejor’) por el descubrimiento del pasado (‘Los antiguos no supieron valorar

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<sup>27</sup>“Pero ‘el darle voz a los que no la tienen’ es, sin duda, el estímulo que acerca a los cronistas a movimientos populares, huelgas, estilos de vida. Y en los sectores tradicionalmente marginados surge el interés por historiar y cronicar su desenvolvimiento” (23).

<sup>28</sup>“A la vigorosa tradición nacional, a la fascinación por el *new journalism*, y a la relativa abundancia de publicaciones, se añaden otros hechos, fundamentales en el surgimiento de la nueva generación de cronistas: el auge de las escuelas de ciencias de comunicación, la gran cantidad de publicaciones, el derrumbe de la mayoría de las prohibiciones moralistas y la emergencia de la sociedad civil” (“El fin” 23-24).

sus canciones, sus cómicos, su arte popular’)” (“a public that exchanged its nostalgia for the past (‘Those were the good old days’) for the discovery of the past (‘In the olden days they didn’t know how to value their songs, their comedians, their popular art’).” He concludes that the new chroniclers began to do just that, with humor and enthusiasm (“El fin” 25). What Monsiváis was alluding to all along in this prologue was that the turbulence of 1968 woke Mexico up, therefore bringing about “the end of [its] nostalgia.”

Corona and Jörgensen assert that the chronicle since 1968 has embraced a more discriminating outlook toward “the dominant groups, and a more sympathetic stance in favor of the causes of the popular sectors” (15). They also hold that the chronicle is situated “at the intersection of cultural and political criticism with history, or more correctly put, with multiple histories” (16). So although it could be said that the *nueva crónica* was Mexico’s version of the *New Journalism* that was being practiced contemporaneously north of the border, it developed its own unique style that is distinctively Mexican. Hence the contemporary Mexican chronicle should not be confused or equated with the term of *New Journalism*, but should be appraised and regarded for what it is: a creative and ingenious form of not only literary journalism, but also social criticism, which enjoys a long tradition in Mexico, because it began as a cultural practice in pre-Columbian times.<sup>29</sup> In chapter two, Monsiváis presented Manuel Guitiérrez Nájera

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<sup>29</sup>Dallal explains that journalism was practiced in pre-Hispanic Mexico as a “social and socialized form of communication,” and that they communicated with each other (especially the Aztec emperors to the different tribes in their realm), by means of “writing” in the form of pictures, symbols or hieroglyphs. He adds that it is a well-known fact that the ancient Mexican cultures flourished in literature and poetry, and hence it can be presumed that they also transmitted important daily news about “their social reality” to a wide variety of “receptors” (151). “El periodismo, como forma social y socializada de comunicación, nace en el México prehispánico. Conocidas son las figuras de aquellos enviados de los emperadores aztecas para informar, exhortar, anunciar y hasta amenazar a los miembros y gobiernos de las distintas tribus. Los habitantes del México prehispánico



as not only being one of the crónicas' most celebrated practitioners from the nineteenth century, but also as one whose proclivity towards mild social critique would become one of the form's trademarks. I cite again Nájera's full statement: "La pluma del cronista debe tener dientes que muerden de cuando en cuando, pero sin hacer sangre. Debía haber dicho con mayor verdad: es fuerza que la pluma del cronista pellizque con los labios. De otro modo, la crónica oscila entre la gacetilla incolora y el artículo descriptivo. Para quedar en el justo medio se requiere un prodigio de equilibrio" ("The chronicler's pen should have teeth that bite once in a while, yet without producing blood. I should have said with greater truthfulness: the chronicler's pen should at least nip with its lips. Otherwise, the chronicle oscillates between the colorless gossip column and the descriptive article"; *A ustedes* 34). Nevertheless, Loaeza's "pen" does not always just "nip with its lips," but very often produces "blood," especially when criticizing corrupt or incompetent politicians or their collusion with the media. Recalling Corona and Jörgensen's earlier statement about the purpose of the chronicle after 1968 being that of "social denunciation and democratization" (16), it will be shown how this idea corresponds to Loaeza's work.

### 5.2.2 The characteristics of the *nueva crónica*

First of all, Corona and Jörgensen allege that regarding its structure, the most singular "feature or rule" that distinguishes the chronicle is its registering of time, or

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eran gente apta para "escribir" sus mensajes en lienzos, piedras, pinturas, frescos y jeroglíficos. Si las culturas del México antiguo florecen también en su literatura y en su poesía, correcto es entonces suponer que resultaran diestros en la noción de transmitir mediante elementos lingüísticos, a grupos amplios de receptores, los hechos más importantes de *su* realidad"(151).

*chronos*, obvious in the root of its name, which establishes “a temporal order to events.” Additionally, they assert that “the alternation in point of view between the authority of a first-person narrator-witness and the mediating distance of an omniscient narrator” is just as important to the form’s structure as its *chronos* (7). They also explain its “flexible and elusive nature” (3), by pointing out its relationship to four sub-genres whose borders overlap: “in journalism with reportage and human interest pieces; and in literature with the short story and the essay” (6). Hence they conclude that since it has become such an “imprecise or stretched concept” (7), a “true” chronicle cannot “be written according to certain rigid parameters” (11). In other words, just like literary journalism in the U.S., they defy classification since what some literary journalists write are more like essays –focusing on content– while others focus on style. However, the best literary journalism combines both style as well as substance, what Ben Yagoda refers to as “making facts dance,” and so too do the best chronicles, where each writer has his/her own particular and sometimes quite personal style and voice.

Linda Egan calls the *crónica* “a mestizo genre” (xviii) and defines it as “a seriocomic discourse that places itself provocatively between the assertiveness of journalism and the inventiveness of fiction” (78). She then offers a list of its characteristics, alleging that the “indigenous theory”<sup>30</sup> that she is proposing “arises out of the works themselves,” and that she is unaware of any existing theories which would correspond to the ones she is expounding. She therefore claims the following about the *crónica*: 1) It “includes history” and is the inimitable “ally and accomplice of History” in

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<sup>30</sup>She takes this term from Gérard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), p. 264.

its rendition “of local and national experiences into literature,”<sup>31</sup> yet by itself it “is not history;” 2) It pertains to the discipline of journalism “but exceeds the brief both of straight news reportage” (implying objectivity) and “of opinion-page essay” (implying subjectivity); 3) It shares “close kinship with the essay” although it extends the limits of that genre’s rigid boundaries; 4) It occasionally comprises the “testimony of witnesses or others,”<sup>32</sup> yet it is not, nor does it become “what is understood today in Latin America as *testimonio*;” 5) It elaborately utilizes the “same narrative tools” of both the novel and the short story and hence “may at least in part and some of the time, resemble fictional discourse.” She adds that since it is a “self-declared referential genre,” it attempts “to justify its truth-claim,” at the same time designating comparable “value to its *function* and to its *form*” in its realm as reportage literature (84).

Furthermore, Egan discusses what she calls “the contemporary chronicle’s two defining characteristics” that she maintains are “equal and coexistent, and that each in itself is dual.” She purports that the first one is both “ideological and critical,” incorporating the form’s “intellectual function” evident in “the interaction of its real-world historiographical referent and its critical, revisionist ideology.” The second is both “aesthetic and emotional,” embodying the form’s “emotive function” apparent in “the interaction of its symbolic and entertainment values” (128). In addition, she lists some of what she calls its “poetics” as 1) “an ironic outside narrator;” 2) “heteroglossia and

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<sup>31</sup>She is citing from p. 755 of Monsiváis’s “De la santa doctrina” (“From the Holy Doctrine”): “al verter literariamente vivencias locales y nacionales, es inmejorable aliada y cómplice de la Historia.”

<sup>32</sup>She gives Elena Ponietowska’s *La noche de Tlateloco* and *Nada, nadie* as examples of texts that are made with material obtained through extensive interviews and eye-witness accounts.

represented orality” which she affirms experiments in a kind of “narrative adventurism;” 3) “an emblematic appeal to the senses” (129-130). At the same time, she contends that the chronicle consciously depends on its “poetic language” to transform the veracity of “raw information” into more profound and intricate arrangements (89). This latter statement correlates with two of Yagoda’s requirements for literary journalism: “The reporter at the forefront” and “style as substance” (preface to *Art* 14-16). This is precisely what Loaeza does in her more profound chronicles, combining serious reporting which demonstrates an expertise of the subject matter --Egan’s “raw information”-- with a distinctive affinity for style, which is part of the “substance.”

Yet it is also worth noting that Mexico’s *nueva crónica*, although unique, fits well within the guidelines of literary journalism as practiced north of the border. Hartssock establishes that there is no reason why newspaper commentary such as editorial page pieces “cannot be viewed equally as a kind of literary journalism” (11). Moreover, looking back at techniques, characteristics, rules, etcetera, of literary journalism and literary nonfiction from past chapters, it is easy to correlate them to the majority of those given for the chronicle. An assertion by Tom Connery is specifically pertinent here, since it coincides perfectly with some of the characteristics of the contemporary Mexican chronicle, and that is his theory that the themes that emerge from the stories or sketches by literary journalists not only “make a statement,” but they also “provide an *interpretation*” about both the *culture* and *people* portrayed (preface to *Sourcebook* xiv, my emphasis).

Additionally, there are many comparisons of the *crónica* to Latin American op-ed type pieces that Joaquín Roy calls “artículos interpretativos” (literally “interpretative

articles”) or “artículos de opinión”; *Periodismo y Literatura* 31-32).<sup>33</sup> I will cite what Roy lists as the principal characteristics of these interpretative or opinion articles that coincide with the *crónica*: 1) currency of the topic, 2) the writer’s role as expert of that topic, without being comprehensive in its treatment or precise in citing sources, 3) subjectivity versus objectivity, 4) conversational style without fear of digressing from the topic and making suggestions to the reader (who should be regarded as an active participant in the narrative), 5) absence of a definitive structure. He adds that all of these features should be accompanied by a pronounced style (31-32).<sup>34</sup> Therefore, recalling those features, characteristics or poetics of the Mexican chronicle given by Monsiváis, Egan, and Corona and Jörgensen, Mexico’s chroniclers compare in many ways to op-ed literary journalists in both the U.S. and Latin America.

### 5.3. The awakening of Guadalupe Loaeza’s social and political conscience

Unlike Carlos Monsiváis and Elena Poniatowska, who were already seasoned investigative reporters and chroniclers of Mexico’s social ills when the tragic student massacre took place at Tlalteloco in Mexico City in 1968, Loaeza was only twenty-two

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<sup>33</sup>Roy is paraphrasing from pp. 83-84 of José Luis Gómez Martínez’s study called *Teoría del ensayo* (1981) to establish what he maintains are the essential characteristics of these op-ed opinion or interpretative articles.

<sup>34</sup> “[A]ctualidad del tema tratado, no resultar exhaustivo en el tratamiento de los temas, el papel del escritor como especialista, la imprecisión en las citas, el aspecto subjetivo, el carácter dialogal, la ausencia de una estructura rígida, la presencia de digresiones, la función de sugerencia al lector, al que se considera como miembro activo de la creación ensayística. Todo esto deberá estar acompañado de una voluntad de estilo” (31-32).

and naively ignorant of what was going on around her.<sup>35</sup> In a chronicle titled “Sofia y el 68,” written for the newspaper *Reforma* on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the slaughter, and compiled in *Las obsesiones de Sofia (Sofia’s Obsessions; 1999)*,<sup>36</sup> Loeza admits this fact through the voice of her *alter ego* Sofia: “Me da una pena horrible pero del movimiento estudiantil del 68 no me acuerdo nada. Entonces desafortunadamente no era universitaria, no leía los periódicos y de vez en cuando veía a Jacobo Zabudovsky.<sup>37</sup> Además en esos días andaba muy ocupada (y encantada) preparándome para ser una perfecta edecán de los Juegos Olímpicos Mexicanos” (“I’m extremely ashamed to say this but I don’t remember anything about the student movement of 68. Unfortunately I wasn’t in college then, and I didn’t read the papers and only watched Jacobo Zabudovsky once in

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<sup>35</sup>In the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen II*, Loeza incorporates a comment about these two writers from the point of view of the “niñas bien,” which we interpret to mean from her own perspective at the time: “Elena Poniatowska, les provocaba sentimientos encontrados: era gente bien, pero con ideas ‘raras’. *La noche de Tlalteloco* era una compra obligada, aunque pocos tuvieron coraje de leerlo. Algunas nacionalistas que empezaban a interesarse por su país leían a Carlos Monsiváis confiando sólo a sus más, más cercanas amigas ‘que no le entendían ni papa’” (“Elena Poniatowska provoked new-found sentiments: she was one of them, but with ‘strange’ ideas. *La noche de Tlalteloco* was a must buy, although few had the courage to read it. Some nationalists that began to show an interest in their country would read Carlos Monsiváis confiding only in their most trusted friends ‘that they didn’t understand a word’”; 24).

<sup>36</sup>This is one of two anthologies that chronicle her “obsessions,” that include the economy in general, the economic *crisis*, corrupt politicians, the defeat of the PRI, and Chiapas. The first collection is called *Obsesiones* (1994).

<sup>37</sup>John Ross calls him “the venomous, archly pro-government news director” whose nightly show *24 Horas (Hours)* is “the giant Televisa conglomerate’s most-watched newshour” (*Rebellion From the Roots* 21). In “Contesting the Lettered City,” Ignacio Corona explains that “the television giant Televisa” was founded in the 1950s as Telesistema Mexicano, dominating the ratings and reaching practically all of the viewing public. He also notes its strong pro-government stance in its news broadcasts. Yet he points out that in the past ten years, Televisión Azteca has begun to provide competition to Televisa’s dominance, due to a steady effort toward “political pluralism and media openness” (200).

a while. Besides I was too wrapped up (and loving it) preparing myself to be a perfect ‘aide-de-camp’ for the Mexican Olympic Games”; 114).<sup>38</sup> This meant that she would comply with any guidelines set out by the Olympic organizers: “Después del 2 de octubre, lo que recuerdo que sí nos recomendaron muchísimo es que no nos refiéramos para nada a la matanza. Esto nos resultaba muy difícil, ya que no obstante no estábamos nada informadas de lo que realmente había sucedido porque el 3 habíamos visto las noticias de Jacobo Zabudovsky, se habían corrido muchos rumores” (“After October 2, what I remember is that they recommended to us very strongly not to refer in any way to the massacre. This was very difficult for us, because although we weren’t informed about what had really happened because we had watched the news with Jacobo Zabudovsky, a lot of rumors had been circulating”; 116).<sup>39</sup> She explains that when a French reporter asked her how many were killed at Tlateloco, she nervously spewed out what “Jacobó” had said: “que muertos casi no había habido ninguno; que quizá algunos heridos pero no

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<sup>38</sup>In “Mis hermanas y yo,” the autobiographical first chapter of *Mujeres maravillosas*, Loaeza says that both she and her sister Marisol (Soledad) were “edecanes” in the 1968 Olympic games (28).

<sup>39</sup>Loaeza does admit in the same vignette that there were some *aide-de-camps* that were aware of what was really going on in the country: “Mentiría si dijera que todas las edecanes eran tan fresas e inconscientes como lo era yo. Recuerdo que había algunas que sí se encontraban sumamente indignadas por la intromisión del ejército a la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México... Claro que a éstas les iba muy mal. La responsable de su grupo les recordaba: ‘No olviden que el patrono de los Juegos Olímpicos es el presidente de la República Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, así que la que no esté conforme que me lo diga para que de inmediato sea suspendida’” (“I would lie if I said that all of the *aide-de-camps* were as conservative and clueless as I was. I remember that some were really upset about the army’s occupation of the National Autonomous University of Mexico... Of course things didn’t go so well for them. The one in charge of their group would remind them: ‘Don’t forget that the sponsor of the Olympic Games is the President of the Republic Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, so anyone who doesn’t agree should tell me so she can be fired immediately’”; 116).

de gravedad; y que en realidad los pobres estudiantes habían sido manipulados por comunistas” (“that there were barely any casualties; that maybe some injured but not seriously; and that in all likelihood the poor students had been manipulated by communists”; 116). His reaction was first a look of utter amazement and then a bitter admonishment where he told her that she was “totalmente equivocada” (“totally wrong”), and “no tenía idea de lo que estaba hablando” (“[she] didn’t have a clue of what [she] was talking about”) since he had seen “muchas fotografías de decenas de muertos y heridos muy graves” (“many photographs with dozens of dead and severely wounded”; 116) taken by one of his photojournalist friends. She remembers that she felt “bobísima” (“very stupid”) then, but even worse several weeks later when she actually saw the photos in the *Paris-Match*: “¿Cómo me impresionaron! No lo podía creer. Eran aterradoras. Al principio, cuando las vi, no sé por qué pensé que se trataba de una matanza de un lugar de Africa, pero después cuando leí ‘México’, me dio mucha tristeza y vergüenza” (“How overwhelming! I couldn’t believe it. They were terrifying. At first, when I saw them, I don’t know why I thought they were about some massacre that happened somewhere in Africa, but when I read ‘Mexico’, I was really sad and ashamed”; 117). Likewise, in the conclusion of a more sarcastic depiction of the aide-de-camps written five years earlier and included in *Obsesiones* (1994), Loaeza asks: “¿Cuántas no seguirán ignorando lo que realmente pasó en Tlalteloco? Y ¿cuántas sentirán, 25 años después, culpa por no haber participado entonces?” (“How many continue to be unaware of what really happened at Tlalteloco? And how many, 25 years later, must feel guilty for not having participated then”; 109)? This final question closes the first chronicle --written in 1993-- and reveals Loaeza’s feelings about her own shame for having been so ignorant at that time. Whereas most of her fellow *cronistas* were active participants in the student movement from the



very beginning, denouncing the government's hardline tactics and abuse of power, she was still a spoiled rich girl --a *niña bien*-- whose political conscience was just awakening.<sup>40</sup> That shame might be why she has been so committed to social change and to the attainment of true democracy in Mexico. Thus, albeit some of her writing is considered "light," she knows she has a loyal readership who may find in her entertaining articles what Corona calls "a moral commitment and social consciousness" ("Contesting the Lettered City" 197).

### 5.3.1 Televisa's role in sharpening Loaeza's political awareness

Loaeza concludes the previously mentioned passage with the point that she had alluded to from the beginning and to which she was leading up to --the collusion of the media with the government: "¡Qué ilusa era! Entonces yo no sabía que la televisión mexicana hubiera estado tan vendida y tan controlada por el gobierno. Lo que resulta muy llamativo es que durante años y años Zabudovsky y Televisa siempre ocultaron lo que realmente había sucedido en Tlalteloco" ("How deluded I was! I didn't know then that Mexican TV was so controlled and bought out by the government. What really strikes my attention is how for years Zabudovsky and Televisa always hid what had

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<sup>40</sup>Although that might have been the awakening of her *political* conscience, her social conscience was aroused when she was much younger: "Desde que Sofia era niña siempre se sintió culpable respecto a los pobres. A pesar de que entonces no contaba con mucha información, intuía que su país estaba dividido en dos categorías: los ricos y los pobres. '¿Por qué siempre el cuarto de las muchachas en todas las casas ricas que conozco, es tan pobre y tan chiquito?' ("Since her childhood, Sofia always felt guilty with respect to the poor. In spite of the fact that she didn't have much information then, her intuition told her that her country was divided into two categories: the rich and the poor. 'Why is the servants' room in the wealthy houses that I know always so poor and so small?"; "Nosotros los pobres" [Http://www.reforma.com.editoriales/articulo/179063/default.htm](http://www.reforma.com.editoriales/articulo/179063/default.htm)).

actually happened at Tlalteloco”; 117). It is worth noting that Loaeza’s critiques of Televisa had begun thirteen years earlier. In a chronicle titled “¿Dudar o no dudar?” (“To Doubt or Not to Doubt”) she cites a passage written by Julio Hernández and Pablo Hiriart for the daily *La Jornada* on October 11, 1984: “Televisa es una concentración, una convivencia entre el régimen y un grupo de iniciativa privada” (“Televisa is a concentrated partnership between the regime and a private interest group”; *Niñas* 115). This citing of exact sources is another characteristic of Loaeza’s writing. Unlike other literary journalists or *cronistas*, particularly Monsiváis, who avoid particulars of sources or dates of publication, only telling who said what, Loaeza provides the bibliographical details, as if to vouch for the truth in what she is claiming.

Likewise, in a chronicle called “Tu voz” (“Your voice”) from *Obsesiones*, she relates how she participated in a round table discussion titled “Cultura de Masas y Apología del Delito y el Delincuente” (“The Culture of the Masses and a Rationalization for Crime and the Delinquent”; 199), explaining that it was part of a cycle called “La procuración de justicia. Problemas, retos y perspectivas” (“The procuration of justice. Problems, challenges and perspectives”).<sup>41</sup> She poses some questions in a sarcastic tone: “¿Qué será del PRI sin el apoyo de Televisa? Sin la voz de esta empresa, ¿Cómo podríamos estar en contacto con nuestra realidad?” (“What would become of the PRI without the support of Televisa? Without the voice of this firm, how could we be in contact with our reality?”; 199-200). The irony here is obvious, especially in the second question. This same highly ironic voice maintains: “Afortunadísimo, más bien

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<sup>41</sup>Corona points out that the chroniclers are active participants “in public debates,” dealing with topics of “current social importance” (“Contesting the Lettered City” 197). Loaeza has participated in more than a hundred conferences, round-table discussions or debates (“Conferencia”).

concretamente en este caso, podríamos decir ‘gracias a Dios’, la ‘cultura de masas’ en México está en magníficas manos” (“Extremely fortunately, or rather concretely in this case, we could say ‘thank God’, the culture of the masses in Mexico is in magnificent hands”; 200-201). She alleges that it is a crime to let Televisa educate Mexico’s children with their programs that teach violence:<sup>42</sup> “En dos estudios por separado, 22 y 34 por ciento de los jóvenes delincuentes informaron haber imitado conscientemente técnicas criminales aprendidas de programas de televisión” (“In two separate studies, 22 and 34 per cent of the juvenile delinquents claimed to have conscientiously imitated criminal techniques learned from TV programs”; 201). She concludes by asking more thought-provoking questions about the government’s collusion: “¿Por qué el gobierno ha dejado crecer tanto a este monstruo? ¿Por qué parece tan compinche de sus ideólogos?, ¿pensará que sin esta empresa corre el riesgo de no ganar las elecciones?” (“Why has the government allowed this monster to grow so much? Why do they seem so in cahoots with their ideologues? Could they think that without this firm they run the risk of not winning elections?”; 203-204). Televisa, with its continuous doling out of misinformation and its collusion with the government, has been one of Loaeza’s most recurring themes and major irritations: the abuse of power, by both an overly powerful media and the PRI.

Additionally, this vignette coincides with another where she dedicates a full section of *Obsesiones* to a criticism of Televisa that she titles “Veinticuatro bolas” (“Twenty-four Mix-ups”), a play on words of “veinticuatro horas,” mentioned earlier as the title of Zabludovsky’s news hour. The last vignette in this particular section is a scathing

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<sup>42</sup>“¿Acaso no es también un crimen dejar la educación de nuestros hijos en manos de Televisa? ¿Se puede imaginar aún más violencia?” (201).

reproach of both the anchorman and his news program.<sup>43</sup> Here the perspective is not that of a naive and uninformed observer, but rather that of a politically aware and therefore angry citizen who is fed up with the intentional misleading information dished out nightly. Loaeza begins with Zabludovsky's demeanor, saying that he always appears "con su misma actitud, el mismo corte de traje demasiado estrecho para su cuerpo y su misma mirada fría y distante" ("with his same attitude, the same type of suit too tight for his body, and his same cold and distant stare"; 214-215). She continues with a searing censure: "Todo lo que sale de su boca se convierte en mentira. ¿Se dará cuenta de que ya no le creemos absolutamente *nada*, lo que se dice *nada*?... ¿Se dará cuenta que es todo lo contrario de lo que debe ser un informador objetivo y plural? ¿Se dará cuenta de que para todos es archisabido que lo único que hace es obedecer órdenes de su patrón y de Gobernación?" ("Everything that comes out of his mouth is a lie. Does he realize that we no longer believe *anything* that he says, which means *nothing*?... Does he realize that he is the total opposite of what a plural and objective informant should be? Does he realize that it's widely known by all that the only thing he does is obey orders from his sponsor and from the Government?"; 215). Her tirade proceeds in the same mode: "Es obvio que se da perfectamente cuenta de todo, lo malo es que piensa que los que no nos damos cuenta somos nosotros, los televidentes. No soporto su manipulación, su mala fe. ¿Se dará cuenta de que a leguas se le ven en los ojos, en la voz, hasta en el rictus de la boca se le aprecia, cuando habla de la oposición o cuando dice la palabra 'guerrillero'?" ("It's obvious that he's perfectly aware of everything, the bad thing is that he thinks that we viewers are the ones who are unaware. I can't stand his manipulation, his deceit. Doesn't

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<sup>43</sup>This particular chronicle is also included in *La factura: El poder y la derrota del sistema político* (2001), pp. 22-25. Unlike *Obsesiones*, *La factura* gives the dates when the texts were first published as chronicles. This one is from January 6, 1994.

he realize that we can detect it a mile away in his eyes and in his voice, even in his sneer, when he talks about the opposition or when he says the word ‘guerilla’?”; 215).

But Loeza is not only denigrating Zabudovsky and his news channel here, but also the government’s role in the conspiracy: “Los responsables son los del gobierno por haberlo hecho su vocal. ¡Qué irresponsabilidad, porque saben muy bien la enorme penetración que tiene!... ¡Qué harían sin sus servicios!, ¿cómo podrían manipular la información? Han de pensar que entre más bolas hagamos, mejor. Bien dice el dicho, que Dios los crea y ellos se juntan...” (“Those responsible are from the government for having made him their spokesman. How irresponsible, because they know very well the enormous access that he has! What would they do without his services, how could they manipulate information? They must think that the more mixed-up we are, the better. Like the saying goes, God makes them and they find each other...”; 216).

The long passages above illustrate a point that is characteristic in Loeza’s writing –that there is a definite intention of denunciation and of imparting the truth. Secondly, they are demonstrative of her narrative style of incorporating irony, humor and sarcasm, oftentimes with the biting, sardonic timbre that frequently emerges when describing one of her “obsessions,” along with what VanLoan Aguilar calls “a personalized, chatty tone”(154), as seen in the first part of the aide-de-camp story. Thirdly, Loeza has said that all of her work is autobiographical, which is discerned in the confessional tone of the first passage above, as well as the first-person diatribe against Televisa and Zabudovsky. These characteristics will be seen in other examples in this chapter as well.

#### 5.4 Loaeza's development into a mature and seasoned writer

Lastly, it should be noted that Loaeza started writing her chronicles in 1982, when she was thirty-six years old. By that age, Poniatowska had already achieved worldwide fame with her testimonial and documentary literature and Monsiváis was one of Mexico's most widely acclaimed and most popular cultural critics. However, Luis H. Peña puts them all in the same class, alleging that although they are from different generations, Loaeza shares “una misma actitud crítica frente al estado de cosas actual, como Carlos Monsiváis, Ricardo Garibay, María Luisa Mendoza, Elena Poniatowska, Cristina Pacheco y José Joaquín Blanco quienes asumen un quehacer testimonial a contracorriente”(“the same critical attitude toward the actual state of affairs, like Carlos Monsiváis, Ricardo Garibay, María Luisa Mendoza, Elena Poniatowska, Cristina Pacheco and José Joaquín Blanco, who assume a testimonial task as an undercurrent”; “La nostalgia del milagro: Guadalupe Loaeza y la crónica como crítica social” 132). Therefore, although Loaeza has not achieved the recognition of Poniatowska or Monsiváis, her writing has evolved over the years just as her social and political consciousness has developed. This premise is alluded to in a response given to a question in the same on-line video chat mentioned earlier. Loaeza was asked if she was ever going to write the novel that she had been promising since 1994: *Las yeguas finas* (“*The Fine Mares*”),<sup>44</sup> to which she answered:

Que he tenido otros proyectos antes, que el género literario de la novela es un reto enorme y exige mucho, y el periodismo ha ocupado un lugar más importante en mi vida. Pero ya tengo otra en mente [que] se llama *Flores negras*, de un colegio de monjas, de una mujer de unos 30 años que despierta, una mujer burguesa, rica y de pronto en un año comienza a sensibilizarse, a despertar. (Videocharla)

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<sup>44</sup>The inside flap of the cover for *Obsesiones* lists Loaeza's other publications to date, and adds that “tiene en preparación una esperada novela: *Las yeguas finas*” (“she is preparing a much awaited novel: *The Fine Mares*”).

I had other projects first, and the literary genre of the novel is an enormous challenge and demands a lot, and journalism has occupied a more important place in my life. But I have another [novel] in mind called *Black Flowers*, about a private school run by nuns, about a 30 year-old woman who wakes up, a rich, bourgeois woman who suddenly one year begins to become sensitized, to wake up.

The latter part of her reply provides another autobiographical reference –a thirty year old woman who wakes up and now must make up for lost time– that points to why she involved herself in writing chronicles. And since then not only her writing has developed over the years just as her social and political consciousness has evolved, but she has also matured into a seasoned writer with a loyal readership.<sup>45</sup>

## 5.5 Concluding comments

I will again cite Michele Foucault’s statement –given at the beginning of this chapter– since it illustrates what Loaeza and most of her colleagues who write urban chronicles of the here and now demonstrate in their work:

What blindness, what deafness, what awful weight of ideology have to prey on me to forbid my concern on what’s probably the most important issue in our existence, that is, the society in which we live, its economic structure and the power system that defines norms, attitudes and prohibitions in our culture? After all, the essence of our life has to do primarily with the political function of society.

They show “concern on what’s probably the most important issue in our existence” by documenting and critiquing the society in which they live, including its economy with all of its failures, and its corrupt and inept “power system that defines norms, attitudes and

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<sup>45</sup>VanLoan Aguilar points out that while Mexico is a country where books sales are relatively low and where second editions are not very common, compilations of Loaeza’s chronicles have been published in multiple editions (2). Currently, her first two books --*Las niñas bien* and *Las reinas de Polanco*– have reached nearly 30 editions each.

prohibitions” of their culture’s complexities, at the same time referring again and again to the political *misfunction* of their society. Loaeza and the contemporary chroniclers prove Roland Barthe’s reasoning that “la palabra es un poder” (“the word is power”; *Ensayos críticos* 177). Yet “the word” is also their voice, and they use it to communicate not only what is wrong with Mexican society –the economic injustice, the political incompetence and corruption, the racism and classism, the ungovernability, the terrible living conditions of the poorest sectors, corruption in the business world, the tragedy of Chiapas– but also, as Monsiváis said earlier, “darle voz a los que no la tienen” ( “for giving a voice to the voiceless”; “El fin” 23).

It was discussed how Loaeza’s writing possesses “value judgments,” and “the expression of what is moral, of common ethics,” and how she feels that due to her privileged social position she has the duty to speak out to demand political and social changes. In a chronicle written for the newspaper *Reforma* on March 19, 2002, titled “Nosotros los pobres”(“We, the Poor”), Loaeza poses questions that have been the corpus of her work. She asks why Mexico’s ex-Presidents and politicians don’t return the money they stole from the treasury, or at least do something good with it such as building schools; why Mexico continues to be such a poor country with non-living wages; why the servants’ quarters in affluent homes are not even as big as their employers’ walk-in closets; why the indigenous in Chiapas are so poor, even poorer than their grandparents, while their ex governors are so filthy rich; why the most sumptuous weddings take place in poor countries; why the poorest countries produce an elite that shows off its wealth in the impeccable finery of its apparel while visiting First World countries.<sup>46</sup> These questions not

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<sup>46</sup>“¿Por qué los ex presidentes y ex políticos mexicanos no devuelven todo el dinero que se robaron, o por lo menos regresan una parte para construir más escuelas?... ¿Por qué desde hace tanto años México sigue siendo un país tan pobre, con más



only summarize the content of Loaeza's chronicles, but they also embody the obsessions about which she writes. They correspond to what Egan claims are the goals of the contemporary Mexican chronicle for their "moral, political and cultural" (89) content. Thus, Loaeza's work should not be regarded as merely what Wolfe calls "plutography," but writing of substance that addresses primary issues of our time.

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población pobre, con salarios pobres?' '¿Por qué los cuartos del servicio doméstico en las casas ricas son, por lo general, más chiquititos que el walking closet de las patronas ricas mexicanas?'... '¿Por qué las indígenas en Chiapas son tan pobres o mucho más, que lo que fueron sus abuelas, si sus ex gobernadores siguen tan, impunemente, millonarios?'... '¿Por qué las bodas son más lujosas en los países pobres?'... '¿Por qué los países más pobres, siempre producen un elite que se luce en el Primer Mundo con los mejores vestidos, los más elegantes y los más caros?'" ( [Http://www.reforma.com/editoriales/articulo/179063/default.htm](http://www.reforma.com/editoriales/articulo/179063/default.htm)).

## CHAPTER 6

### Guadalupe Loaeza Chronicles Her “Obsessions”

The literary journalist sees news in relation to its human quality, its possibilities of showing people in the midst of life, a life that may seem comic, tragic, pathetic, farcical.

Edwin H. Ford (cited in Hartsock, 242)

Many radical artists and cultural activists consider irony to be usefully subversive; others see it as more suspect. After all, irony can just as easily legitimate as undermine relations of power.

Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* i

#### 6.1 Introductory remarks

Almost all of Loaeza's writing encompasses the questions she raised at the end of chapter five and are indicative of the themes, or obsessions, that will be addressed in this chapter. I will begin here with a presentation of some of the history of those who make up the different categories of the *gente bien*, since so much of the body of Loaeza's work incorporates cultural criticisms of this social class of the “rich and avaricious.” It was mentioned in chapter five how she referred to this class as being “profoundly racist and classist,” and that subject in itself is one of her “obsessions” and will be treated extensively in this chapter as well. At the same time, this background history or who's who of the well-to-do will serve as a contextual framework for future references to Mexico's *gente bien*, its *niñas bien*, or simply its bourgeoisie. I will continue with an analysis of her other

obsessions, or how the ineptitude and corruption of the politicians exacerbated the economic crises which led to Mexico's chaotic state of ungovernability. I will also demonstrate how the economic crises culminated in the indigenous uprising in Chiapas, which played a role in bringing about the defeat of the PRI at the dawn of the new century.

6.2 Loaeza's obsession with the classism and racism of the "rich and avaricious," or Mexico's who's who of the well-to-do

6.2.1 The post-revolutionary *gente bien*

In the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen I (Manual of the Well-to-do; Volume I; 1995)*, Loaeza relates the story of the so-called "landed gentry," or those families who considered themselves Mexico's aristocracy. She starts her narration during the 1930s, in the time of President Lázaro Cárdenas's land reform program. Loaeza explains that to be a *gente bien* meant to be from a "buena familia" ("good family"), in other words, from one of the three hundred families, "y ni una más que entonces componían a este sector de la alta sociedad mexicana [que] tenían reglas sumamente rigurosas en lo que se refería a la buena educación" ("and not one more that at that time made up this sector of Mexican high society [that] had extremely rigorous rules regarding what were referred to as fine manners"; 21). She further points out, even though many of these families were facing somewhat hard times due to the distribution of much of their land during the Cárdenas administration, "habían heredado tradiciones y virtudes que ciertamente no se pueden comprar con dinero" ("they had inherited traditions and virtues that certainly can't be bought with money... ; 21). Loaeza summarizes what it meant to be from a "good family" at that time:

Significaba poseer uno de los trescientos apellidos más viejos de “la aristocracia mexicana”, haber heredado propiedades, muebles, joyas, cultura; haber estudiado en excelentes colegios en el extranjero y en el país, y ser sumamente educado. A estas personas se les identificaba por el modo de comportarse en sociedad, de vestirse, de expresarse; por la colonia donde vivían; por la “facha”, es decir, por la apariencia física. El tener “clase” y “buen gusto” era imprescindible para pertenecer a este mundo; si se era cursi o por añadidura se tenían acusados rasgos indígenas, las posibilidades de convivir con esta aristocracia eran nulas. Algunos de sus miembros eran tan, pero tan extremadamente educados y refinados, que aun cuando eran casi analfabetas y muy ignorantes, pasaban por ser personas inteligentísimas y cultísimas. (21-22)

It meant possessing one of the three hundred oldest surnames of “the Mexican aristocracy”, having inherited properties, furniture, jewels, culture; having studied at excellent schools abroad and in the country, and being exceedingly well-mannered. These people were identified with how they acted in public, how they dressed, how they expressed themselves; by the colony in which they lived; by their “facade”, that is, by their physical appearance. Having “class” and “good taste” were requirements for belonging to this world; if one were loud or flashy or had distinctly indigenous features, the possibilities of mingling with this aristocracy were null. Some of their members were so, so extremely well-mannered and refined, that even when they were almost illiterate and very ignorant, they came across as being both exceptionally intelligent and cultured.

If at the beginning this passage seems to be simply descriptive and informative about the “lifestyles of the rich and famous,” the use of hyperbole in the final statement alludes to the satirical intention of the author. In *Irony and the Ironic*, D.C. Muecke alleges that “hyperbole is the most obvious device for setting up what is being attacked” (57), and it is obvious what Loaeza is “attacking” here. Likewise, In *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Wayne Booth affirms that when an author reaches a point of exaggeration, it is an alert to his/her intention of satire, which he claims is a sub-genre of stable irony (140). Linda Hutcheon in *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, claims that from the point of view of the ironist, “irony is the intentional transmission of both information and evaluative attitude other than what is explicitly presented” (11), and it is intimated that Loaeza is

rendering an opinionated appraisal of Mexico's "blue-bloods." This ironic device is one of the trademarks of Loaeza's satire and will consequently be seen on numerous occasions throughout this examination of her work.

The passage cited above continues with the question of why aristocrats, "even when they were almost illiterate and very ignorant" could be perceived as "being exceptionally intelligent and cultured":

¿Por qué? Porque nunca discutían, no se atrevían a contradecir, sabían escuchar, a todo decían que sí, no eran conflictivos, eran tolerantes, jamás criticaban a nadie, no gritaban, no se peleaban, no insultaban, eran respetuosísimos, discretos, cumplidos, puntuales. Eran sencillos entre ellos, pero eso sí, sumamente pretenciosos con la gente que no era como ellos, es decir con "los pelados". (122)

Why? Because they never argued, nor did they dare to contradict, they knew how to listen, they said yes to everything, they weren't conflictive, they were tolerant, they never criticized anyone, they didn't shout, they didn't fight, they didn't insult, they were inordinately respectful, discreet, reliable, punctual. They were simple among themselves, but yes, they were highly pretentious with people who weren't like they were, that is with "the hicks."

For them, "[e]l resto de los mexicanos –es decir los que no se encontraban en sus fiestas– no existían, literalmente no existían para ellos" ("the rest of the Mexicans –that is the ones that weren't present at their parties– didn't exist, literally didn't exist for them"; 122).

This is the point where Loaeza's depiction of the elite begins to turn more caustic, because from here through the rest of this long introduction, she is merciless in her portrayal of this class, whose "regla de oro consistía en verse ex-clu-si-va-men-te entre ellos" ("golden rule consisted in being seen ex-clu-sive-ly amongst themselves"; 122).

Julia VanLoan Alguilar makes the point that in essence, satire "seeks to evoke laughter not as an end in itself to amuse the reader but rather to forge a weapon of sorts aimed at the disorders of society." Therefore, she concludes that Loaeza's readers "laugh

at the pompous who appear ridiculous in their excesses” (157). R. Fernández-Levín holds that Loaeza’s satire is permeated “with obvious exaggerations and conspicuous contradictions” (“Trapped in a Gilded Cage: Guadalupe Loaeza’s Unhappy Women” 86),<sup>1</sup> which have been and will be apparent in all of the passages cited in this chapter. But would these contradictions be evident to everyone who reads them, or only to whom Ronald Paulson calls “the morally aware reader” (*Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism* 15) who can interpret the irony? One of the most noticeable techniques of Loaeza’s style is demonstrated in the above passages and the ones which follow. She opens up her chronicles or articles as if she were merely going to narrate a story, and then intercalates ironic statements –at first innocently as if she were naive about what she was relating–, gradually building up to a crescendo, where the irony reveals its intention of satire, and the satire changes to sarcasm.

Continuing the above excerpt, Loaeza defines “hicks” from the perspective of Mexican society’s supposed gentility:

¿Quiénes eran los pelados o los léperos para estas familias?: los que NO tenían tipo de “gente decente” (los prietos), los que habían hecho dinero demasiado rápidamente, los que NO sabían comer en la mesa, los que pertenecían al gobierno, los que NO se sabían vestir con gusto, los que NO conocían París, los que NO conocían al “todo México” (el suyo), aunque también los *parvenus* o arribistas. [...] Para ellos el “todo México” significaba aquel que se componía con sus trescientos apellidos. [...] Por eso era rarísimo que se mezclaran con apellidos nuevos o con personas de dudosa procedencia, o con los señores del gobierno. “A esos ‘pelados’ no los quiero ver en mi casa”, decían las señoras al referirse a los González, a los Pérez o a los Martínez a secas, aun si acababan de adquirir ingenios azucareros, minas o empresas millonarias. (122-123)

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<sup>1</sup>Likewise, Helmut Hatsfield points out that ironic ambiguity has more of a punch “cuando la hipérbole, como signo exterior, forma con el contenido una evidente contradicción” (“when the hyperbole, as an exterior sign, forms with the content an evident contradiction”; *El ‘Quijote’ como obra de arte del lenguaje* 203).

Who were the hicks or the lepers for these families?: the ones that did NOT look like “decent people” (the dark-skinned), the ones that made their money too quickly, the ones that did NOT have table manners, the ones that appertained to the government, the ones that had NOT been to Paris, the ones that did NOT know “everybody in Mexico” (their kind), and even the *parvenus* or upstarts. [...] For them “everybody in Mexico” meant those that made up the three hundred surnames. [...] That’s why it was extremely rare that they would mix with new surnames or with people of doubtful lineage, or with men from the government. “I don’t want to see those ‘hicks’ in my house,” the ladies would abruptly say referring to the Gonzálezes, the Pérezes or the Martínezes, even though they had just acquired sugar refineries, mines or millionaire firms.

Loeza closes this passage with one of the main themes of her writing, which has proven to be one of her “obsessions,” and one which was also illustrated in Allende’s novels in chapter three through the representative points of view and behavior of Esteban Trueba and Beatriz Alcántara: “Era tal su racismo y clasismo que para ellos no había mejor indio que el indio muerto” (“Their *racism* and *classism* was so great that for them the only good Indian was a dead Indian”; 123) [my emphasis].<sup>2</sup> Loeza points out that this sentiment remains the same at the end of the twentieth century just as it was in the beginning. In a discussion about the indigenous cause in an interview with Loeza in *Detrás del espejo (Behind the Mirror; 1999)* in the early part of 1999, Monsiváis claims that there are sectors in Mexican society today that want to crush the indigenous movement because it is disturbing to them. He alleges: “Es como lo que había a principios de siglo, la idea de que los indígenas son el peso muerto... Es una estupidez monstruosa. Y ese racismo no sólo afecta a sectores indígenas, sino que extiende y afecta a todos los

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<sup>2</sup>The latter part of this statement coincides with the philosophy of the Old West or Manifest Destiny in the U.S. from the latter part of the nineteenth through the early twentieth century. Eduardo Galeano alleges that Teddy Roosevelt, (ironically the first U.S. President to win a Nobel Peace Prize) made the statement: “In nine out of ten cases there is no better Indian than a dead Indian (and the tenth must be more closely examined)” (*Faces and Masks* 249).

pobres. Si se es racista entre los indios se es racista entre los pobres. No hay manera de evitarlo” (It’s like it was at the beginning of the century, the idea that the indigenous are dead weights... That’s monstrous stupidity. And what’s more, racism not only affects indigenous sectors, it also extends to and affects all of the poor. If one is racist among the Indians, one is also racist among the poor. There’s no way around it”; 258). Monsiváis is specifically referring to the uprising in Chiapas here, which is another of Loaeza’s obsessions and will be discussed again later in this chapter.

Additionally, just as Allende had juxtaposed opposing ideological perspectives and demeanor ironically, so too does Loaeza. Again in the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen I*, she advances two scenarios for the celebration of New Year’s Eve of 1936: one is a sumptuous feast and night of merrymaking, at the magnificent residence of the “Luján” family;<sup>3</sup> the other is a quiet dinner party amidst family, friends, and the members of the Cabinet, at “Los Pinos,” the official residence of Mexico’s President, at that time the general Lázaro Cárdenas. The first party is superbly decorated and awaiting its guests with an orchestra and an army of chefs, waiters and servants, attended by the *gente bien* in all of their regalia, arriving in expensive cars with uniformed chauffeurs. Loaeza is meticulous in describing everything about this party in minute detail for over four pages, including as she always does when portraying the rich, their fondness for the perfect attire (30-34). In the interview mentioned earlier with Moyers, Wolfe also explains why he pays such “meticulous attention to what people wear, as signals of status.” He claims that “[c]lothing is a wonderful doorway that most easily leads you to the heart of an individual; it’s the way they reveal themselves.” He also contends that details of all kinds, which would include furniture or anything to depict status, “are of no

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<sup>3</sup>She gives the address as “Reforma 423,” what is today the Cinema Diana.



use unless they lead you to an understanding of the heart” (“Master” 287). Like Wolfe, Loaeza’s use of “Wolfean status detail” is intended to “reveal the hearts” of the rich and “heartless.” For amidst all of the merriment, right after the hostess whispers directions to the orchestra director, and right before she announces the approach of midnight, Loaeza intercalates a sentence that shows the revelry from the perspective of the servants: “En la cocina, las cocineras y las galopinas se sienten rebasadas por las pilas de platos, cubiertos, vasos, copas, platonos, soperas, cucharones que aparecen doquier en la inmensa cocina” (“In the kitchen, the cooks and the scullery maids feel overwhelmed by the stacks of plates, silverware, glasses, goblets, platters, bowls, and ladles that appear wherever you look in the immense kitchen”; 34). In stark contrast to this lone statement, Loaeza continues with the rich and their festivities. At the stroke of midnight, amidst a raucous celebration of drinking and dancing and the orchestra playing, and shouts of “¡Happy new year!”, “¡Bonne année!” and “¡Feliz año nuevo 1937!”, someone among the *gente bien* proposes a toast: “‘Mejor brindemos porque nos regresen nuestras haciendas’, dice muerto de la risa un señor canoso, peinado con rayo en medio” (“Let’s make a toast so that they give our haciendas back to us,’ says a man with grey hair parted down the middle, dying of laughter”; 34). On the other hand, President Cárdenas stands up from the dinner table, raises his glass of champagne and says: “‘Brindemos por México, para que este año sea más libre y más justo.’ Todos los invitados lo acompañan muy serios en el brindis” (“Let’s make a toast to Mexico, so that this year is freer and more just.’ All of the guests are very serious as they accompany him in the toast”; 35). The contradictions at the end of this vignette are apparent. Loaeza has managed to chronicle the ringing in of the new year of 1937 from three perspectives. At the same time, she is juxtaposing the ideological points of view of the truly rich with the truly revolutionary politician --Lázaro

Cárdenas. This technique of using opposing viewpoints demonstrates what Egan professes to be one of the fundamental roles of the *nueva crónica*: “After documentable facts, the principal marker of the chronicle’s nonfictional status depends on skilled manipulation of point of view and voice” (105).

Ironically, the next time that Loaeza contrasts two new year’s eve celebrations is in 1994, with President Carlos Salinas de Gortari epitomizing *both* the truly rich and the truly *corrupt* politician, and Marcos –the spokesman and intellectual leader of the Zapatistas in Chiapas-- the true revolutionary.<sup>4</sup> In the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien*:

*Volumen II*, Loaeza supposes two scenarios for two very distinct “cenas” (“dinners”):<sup>5</sup>

Mientras que la primera se llevó a cabo en Los Pinos, la segunda se organizó en el mero fondo de la Selva Lacandona. La primera fue con *champagne*; en cambio, la segunda, con mezcal. En la primera todo el mundo se felicitaba porque los pasamontañas negros cubrían perfectamente unos rostros demacrados por el hambre y las enfermedades. Mientras en la primera cena todos estaban felices por el futuro triunfo del candidato Luis Donaldo Colosio, en la segunda se encontraban encantados porque ya estaba listo el documento *Declaración de la Selva Lacandona*, que sería leído en San Cristóbal de las Casas. Y cuando justo las dos manecillas del reloj de la catedral marcaron las doce, en la primera gritaron: “*Happy New Year!!! ¡Viva el TLC! ¡Viva Colosio! ¡Viva Salinas! ¡Viva Clinton!*” En la

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<sup>4</sup>Che Guevara’s definition of a true revolutionary is given in *Venceremos!: The Speeches and Writings of Ernesto Che Guevara*, edited by John Gerassi: “Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality... In these conditions the revolutionary leaders must have a large dose of humanity, a large dose of a sense of justice and truth, to avoid falling into dogmatic extremes, into cold scholasticism, into isolation from the masses. They must struggle every day so that their love of living humanity is transformed into concrete deeds, into acts that will serve as an example, as a mobilizing factor” (396).

<sup>5</sup>This piece is called “Happy New Year 1994!!! o primera llamada, primera...” (“Happy New Year 1994!!! or First Call, First...”). A similar account is given in “Dos años nuevos” (“Two New Years”), which appears both in a section devoted to Chiapas in *Obsesiones*, and as the initial chronicle in *La factura*.

segunda exclamaron: “¡Viva México! ¡Viva el Ejército Zapatista! ¡Viva el Subcomandante Marcos!” (76)

While the first took place at the President’s mansion at Los Pinos, the second was organized deep in the Lacandon Jungle. The first was with champagne; on the other hand, the second, with mezcal. In the first everybody was celebrating because the country was finally getting its right foot in the door of the First World; in the second, they were congratulating each other because the black ski masks covered their faces gaunt from hunger and disease. While in the first dinner everyone was happy for the triumphant future of the candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, at the second they were ecstatic that the document *Declaration From the Lacandon Jungle* was ready, that would be read in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. And just when the hands of the clock on the Cathedral marked twelve, in the first they shouted “*Happy New Year!!! Long live NAFTA! Long live Colosio! Long live Salinas! Long live Clinton!*” In the second they shouted: “*Long live México! Long live the Zapatista Army! Long live Subcommander Marcos!*”

Salinas’s guests are naturally all wealthy politicians from the PRI, celebrating the signing of NAFTA, while Marcos’s are the most destitute of Mexico’s indigenous people, protesting that same signing. Noam Chomsky claims that Marcos’s followers –the Zapatistas– have called NAFTA “‘a death sentence’ for Indians, a gift to the rich that will deepen the divide between narrowly concentrated wealth and mass misery, destroying what remains of their indigenous society” (“Time Bombs” 176).

These passages also demonstrate a point that is implicit. I referred earlier to Lázaro Cárdenas as “the truly revolutionary politician” since he was the hero of the peasants –mostly Indians– who had followed Emiliano Zapata in the Mexican Revolution fighting for land and dignity, by introducing his land reform programs that were actually an implementation of Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917.<sup>6</sup> That is why the rich land

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<sup>6</sup>According to Judith Adler Hellman, all the peasants had to do was formally enunciate their claim for land, and Cárdenas would reciprocate “with the full authority of his office,” disbursing land on a grand scale according to the provisions of Article 27 (*Mexican Lives* 58).

owners despised him with such vehemence. The irony here is that the first president to implement revolutionary reforms,<sup>7</sup> was in sympathy with the exact same class –the landless and oppressed (by the wealthy) indigenous people– who at the end of the century were clamoring for the same thing –land and dignity. On the other hand, President Salinas became the archetype of the *anti-Cárdenas* President, by dismissing the revolutionaries in Chiapas as merely a deterrence to the signing of NAFTA, which in turn led to the onset of Mexico’s last revolution of the century –the Zapatista Revolution–<sup>8</sup> which would ultimately achieve the biggest victory of the century –the ousting of the PRI.<sup>9</sup>

#### 6.2.2 The new Mexican bourgeoisie

Again in the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen II*, Loeza describes how the lives of the elite had changed twenty years later, even though in some regards they were still very much the same as they had been in the 30s. She relates how the political landscape had transformed and a new Mexican bourgeoisie was born during the presidencies of Manuel Avila Camacho and Miguel Alemán. In the fifties the *gente bien* were now seen rubbing elbows with politicians at parties and weddings, and current and former Presidents were always in attendance at the truly “*chic* and exclusive” weddings, although Loeza points out that there were always “*voces de desdén*” (“voices

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<sup>7</sup>It should be noted that Cárdenas’s party was not yet the PRI at the time in 1934, but rather the PNR (National Revolutionary Party) which would later become the PRM (The Mexican Revolutionary Party) in 1937, and finally the PRI in 1941 (Hellman 60-62).

<sup>8</sup>It should also be pointed out that the guerrilla movement in the state of Guerrero in the 60s and 70s under the leadership of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro García was the precursor of the rebellion that started twenty years later in Chiapas.

<sup>9</sup>This revolution also called for the demise of Salinas’s neoliberal policies, which had been strengthened by the signing of NAFTA.

of disdain”) in the background complaining of “men from the government” just as there had been in the 30s. However, their sons were now forming partnerships with politicians and establishing their residences in extensive terrains in new areas of affluence and distinction: the colonies of Polanco, las Lomas or Pedregal de San Angel. Yet, Loaeza affirms that notwithstanding this new Mexican bourgeoisie was adapting more modern lifestyles, “[s]u mundo era igual que el de sus padres, pero todavía más cursi, aldeano, hipócrita, represivo, prejuicioso, arribista, *snob*, conformista y clasista” (“their world was the same as that of their parents, except that it was even flashier, more cliquish, hypocritical, repressive, prejudicial, social climbing, snobbish, conformist and classist” 37).

Additionally, whereas many of the *gente bien* were barely maintaining enough of their fortunes to keep up appearances, the politicians’ sons –known as *juniors*– enjoyed the political privileges of their fathers as well as their rich bank accounts. Consequently, Loaeza maintains, it was only natural that some of the *gente bien* began to make concessions that their ancestors would never have understood nor permitted, and the “mezcla de clases sociales comienzan a ser cada vez más notorias y toleradas” (mixing of social classes begins to become more and more notorious and tolerated”; 41). Thus it was that *juniors* would begin dating and eventually forming marriages of convenience with *niñas bien*: “Yo me caso con tu posición económica y tú te casas con mi posición social. Tú me pones mi casa en las Lomas o en Polanco y yo te mejoro la raza y te doy hijos rubios de ojos azules” (“I’ll marry your economic position and you’ll marry my social position. You give me a house in las Lomas or in Polanco and I’ll better your gene pool by giving you blue-eyed, blonde children”; 41).

This latter point is almost an obsession in Mexican “higher” society (meaning non-majority), and that is the idea of “the whiter the better,” or at least “the whiter the finer.”

This racist ideology has existed in Mexico since the time of the conquest with the birth of the first “mestizo,”<sup>10</sup> which at the same time was the birth of a so-called Mexican inferiority complex. In *El laberinto de la soledad*, Octavio Paz refers specifically to the Mexican with this inferiority complex when he notes that “el mexicano no quiere ser ni indio ni español. Tampoco quiere descender de ellos. Los niega. Y no se afirma en tanto que mestizo, sino como abstracción: es un hombre” (“the Mexican wants to be neither an Indian nor a Spaniard. Neither does he want to be their descendant. He denies them. And he does not affirm himself to be a mixture, but rather an abstraction: he is a man”; 91). In *Las obsesiones de Sofía*, Loaeza cites Carlos Montemayor who affirms that “México sufre una especie de esquizofrenia nacional, por un lado aplaude al indio histórico y ensalza el patrimonio cultural prehispánico; por otro lado margina, subestima, desprecia al indio real de carne y sangre” (“Mexico suffers a type of national schizophrenia, on one hand s/he applauds the historic Indian and spices up the cultural pre-Hispanic patrimony; on the other hand, s/he marginalizes, undervalues, scorns the real flesh and blood Indian”; 321). Loaeza elaborates on Montemayor’s statement, again in *Las obsesiones de Sofía*, at the same time explaining how the term “naco” has replaced “pelado”: “Hace muchos años, cuando un miembro de la burguesía mexicana quería insultar a alguien decía: ‘¡qué horror, parece indio!’ Ahora ese calificativo ha sido remplazado por ‘naco’. Parecer ‘indio’ o ‘naco’, significaba ser de tez morena, no tener cultura; pero sobre todo carecer de tipo de ‘gente decente’” (“Many years ago, when a member of the Mexican bourgeoisie wanted to insult someone s/he would say: ‘how horrible, s/he looks like an Indian!’ Now this label has been replaced with ‘yahoo.’ To

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<sup>10</sup>A “mestizo” was a child of mixed birth, i.e. Spaniard with native Mexican. The mestizo was the “new” Mexican, with the “old” Mexican being the “Indian.”

look like an ‘Indian’ or a ‘yahoo’ meant to be dark-complected, to have no culture; but above all, to lack any semblance of ‘decent people’”; 322). Ross Gandy concurs with both Montemayor –who does not allude to any particular class– and to Loeza who refers specifically to the bourgeoisie, by showing how it is not just the upper classes that feel superior to the Indians. He holds that the Indian is “at the bottom of the pecking order”: “The official ideology of the Revolution glorifies the Indian past, but in spite of nationalist praise of *indígenas*, most Mexicans in the elite are often racists who boast about their white heritage. But the underclass of mestizos also feel superior to Indians. The Indians are brownest of all, and the more color you have, the worse it is” (*Twenty Keys to Mexico: The Door to Latin America* 29).<sup>11</sup> However, it must be remembered that Loeza focuses her satire on the well-to-do, while Gandy’s statement is more all-encompassing, which is due to his specialization as a historian and a sociologist.<sup>12</sup>

### 6.2.3 The post-1968 well-to-do

In the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen II*, which she subtitled “Tiempo de mirar a USA,” (“Time to Look at the USA”), Loeza proceeds in her criticism of the upper classes where she left off in the first volume –in post 1968 Mexico. She highlights that “[e]n esos tiempos, el *american way of life* se había instalado en todo

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<sup>11</sup>Ross Gandy is a sociology professor at the UNAM in Mexico City, and a history professor at the Universidad Internacional in Cuernavaca. He refers to himself as a “gringo ex-patriot” (comment given by a St. Francis University student who studied with him in Cuernavaca in May of 2000).

<sup>12</sup>Both Montemayor’s and Gandy’s concepts are illustrated in Celestino Gorostizo’s play from 1952 called *El color de nuestra piel* (*The Color of Our Skin*), depicting Mexicans love for “güeritos” (“fair-haired and light-skinned”) and scorn for “prietos” (“darkeys”).

su esplendor” (“[i]n those times, the *American way of life* had established itself in all of its splendor”; 13). This she translates as material consumerism, especially for anything “made in the USA.” It also includes “peace and love” for the younger generation, meaning rock music, marijuana, and sexual liberation (14-16). Furthermore, the comfortably well-off “no les importa gran cosa quién gobierna mientras puedan hacer buenos negocios; les da lo mismo si el presidente del país es uno u otro y cuál es el sistema político” (“don’t give a hoot who governs as long as they can make good business deals; they could care less who’s the country’s President or what the political system’s like”; 30). But they identify with the PAN<sup>13</sup> more than any other party because “en los miembros del PAN han visto los tipos criollos de sus propias familias y han encontrado en sus palabras el eco de sus anhelos cristianos y la defensa de valores como el *american* [sic] *way of life*” (“in the PAN members they see the same criollo types as in their own families and have found in their words the echo of their Christian aspirations and the defense of values like the *American way of life*”; 30). In an early *crónica* for *Unomásuno* from 1983, compiled in *Las niñas bien*, Loaeza describes a dream of a church scene set in her affluent Lomas district, where the priest is reading the offertory petitions:

Que siga ganando el PAN, te rogamos Señor, repetían todos. Que nos devuelvan la banca, te rogamos Señor... Que nos arreglen los baches de las Lomas, te rogamos Señor... Que sean juzgados y encarcelados todos los corruptos del gobierno, te rogamos Señor. Que Reagan pueda resolver los problemas en Nicaragua, te rogamos Señor... Que vengan a auxiliarnos los transnacionales, te rogamos Señor... Que desaparezca el PRI, que está lleno de nacos, te rogamos Señor... Que la influencia de Clouthier tenga cada día más peso, te rogamos Señor... Que la “gente decente” tenga cada vez más fuerza política, te rogamos Señor... Que Televisa siga aportando sano esparcimiento a los hogares mexicanos, te rogamos Señor... Que nunca falte agua para nuestros jardines y albercas, te rogamos Señor. Que prohíban las huelgas en la UNAM, te rogamos Señor... Que el populismo

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<sup>13</sup>The Partido de la Acción Nacional (National Action Party).



oficial desaparezca, te rogamos Señor. Que el Opus Dei siga incorporándose a las empresas públicas, te rogamos Señor... Que la Iglesia penetre en las fuerzas armadas y en la política, te rogamos Señor. (50-51)

May the PAN keep winning, Lord hear our prayer, everyone repeated. May the banks be returned to us, Lord hear our prayer... May they repair the potholes in Las Lomas, Lord hear our prayer... May all of the corrupt politicians be sentenced and jailed, Lord hear our prayer. May Reagan solve Nicaragua's problems, Lord hear our prayer... May the transnational companies come to our rescue, Lord hear our prayer... May the PRI that is full of yahoos disappear, Lord hear our prayer... May Clouthier have more clout every day, Lord hear our prayer.. May the "decent people" have more and more political power, Lord hear our prayer... May Televisa continue to bring healthy entertainment into Mexican homes, Lord hear our prayer... May we never lack water for our gardens and swimming pools, Lord hear our prayer. May they prohibit strikes in the UNAM, Lord hear our prayer... May the official populism disappear, Lord hear our prayer. May the Opus Dei continue to mix with public businesses, Lord hear our prayer... May the Church penetrate into the armed forces and politics, Lord hear our prayer.

What is so striking about this passage is not only how the comical and burlesque tone intensifies the irony, but also how Loaeza parodies the official religious discourse, to point out the frivolity of the elite, as well as their "mochismo" ("self-righteousness").<sup>14</sup> In "Cuadrando el círculo," Corona points out that one of the elements that has become a constant presence in the chronicle is its unique sense of humor. He adds that humor and irony are in tune with the "parodia del discurso oficial y la sátira de la clase social dominante. Un humor, entonces, como comprensión pero también como un vehículo de crítica social" ("parody of the official discourse and the satire of the dominant social class. A humor, then, as an understanding but also as a vehicle of social criticism"; 15).

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<sup>14</sup>Mexicans sometimes use this term to denounce the PAN's traditional alignment with the Institutional [right-wing] Catholic Church. At the same time it is commonly employed to say that somebody is a little too "mocho" or "mocha," meaning "goody-goody" or merely pious, depending on the tone of voice or the context in which it is used.

Likewise, Egan attests that “the critical sharpness of parody, satire and irony are almost identifying features” of what could be called a “truly effective” contemporary Mexican chronicle (129). Humor, irony, satire, and often sarcasm, parody and anaphoric repetition are demonstrated whenever Loaeza is discussing one of her obsessions, and have become a trademark with her readers, who seek entertainment along with the interpretation of the news.

It should also be pointed out how she uses her writing to record history by incorporating true facts. In the above passage she mentions [Manuel] Clouthier, who at that time [1983] was only a PAN *wannabe*. However, in the 1988 election he won 16.1% of the votes. Loaeza maintains that the following year, “murió en un accidente de automóvil. Para algunos de sus seguidores y familiares, el accidente no fue tal. Alguien lo provocó con la intención de hacerlo desaparecer porque representaba una amenaza creciente contra el PRI” (“he died in a car accident. For some of his followers and family, there was no such accident. Someone provoked it with the intention of getting rid of him because he represented a growing threat to the PRI”; *Manual II* 56).

Another point worth noting from the above litany is the reference to Reagan. The whole passage is reminiscent of the so-called “values” of the U.S. Republican party. In a chronicle from November of 1984 titled “The winner,” Loaeza records the perspective of a well-to-do woman about Reagan’s second victory: “Mira, yo no sé mucho de política, pero creo que ahora que volvió a ganar el Partido Republicano esto va a fortalecer muchísimo al PAN. Híjole, creo que ahora sí ya la hicimos, *Thanks God*” (“Look, I don’t know much about politics, but I think now that the Republican Party won again it’s going to strengthen the PAN a lot. Wow, I think that we’ve finally made it, Thank God”; *Niñas* 49). She continues by saying that since Reagan was reelected President, “por lo menos

tendremos garantizados cuatro años de paz, porque es obvio que seguirá poniendo en cintura a toda esa bola de centroamericanos que ni saben lo que quieren, por eso ahora sí les vamos a mandar los *marines*... Como dice Reagan, las elecciones que tuvieron en Nicaragua, fueron puro *show time*” (“at least we’ll be guaranteed another four years of peace, because it’s obvious that he’ll keep the reins on that whole bunch of Central Americans that don’t even know what they want, that’s why we’re now going to send in the marines... Like Reagan says, Nicaragua’s elections were pure show time”; *Niñas* 49). It was mentioned earlier how Paulson alleges that satire is “only understood by the morally aware reader.” However, in this passage as well as in the longer one above, the reader would have to be politically aware as well. She is not depicting a true history here *per se*, but rather one that requires a knowledge of U.S., Mexican, and Central American history and politics in order to render an interpretation.

In the same mode, Egan cites Teun A. van Dijk, who contends that “a knowledge of aspects of the empirical world and the way these are normally described or referred to in different types of texts is essential for the perception of the specific referential character of literary discourses” (102).<sup>15</sup> Egan asserts that the “competent reader must take the fictive and factual parts of a *crónica* as a whole,” by filling in the gaps by reading between the lines. She clarifies her reasoning by propounding that the “effective reader” should not presume that a whole text is fictional because one of its segments or parts seems to be invented, but rather look at the text as a whole to be able to interpret its true meaning (102-103). It was pointed out in chapter five how Connery affirms that the themes that appear in literary journalism must “make a statement, or provide an *interpretation*” that

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<sup>15</sup>Egan takes this from p. 337 of van Dijk’s *Some Aspects of Text Grammar: A Study in Theoretical Linguistics and Poetics* (1972).

depicts the culture and people presented (preface to *Sourcebook* xiv, my emphasis ). Additionally, in chapter three it was shown how John Warnock contends the same about literary nonfiction. In his introduction to *Representing Reality*, Warnock holds that truth is “always arguable” since it “is obtainable only through the work of interpretation” (xviii). I cite Connery’s and Warnock’s ideas here to make my point that although the chronicle is a unique Mexican form, it coincides with literary journalism or literary nonfiction in the way that the *cronistas* not only make statements or present what they perceive as “truth” about their society, but through their use of irony, humor, or other stylistic devices, they are also rendering an *interpretation* about it. The reader in turn, must interpret for him/herself whether the “truths” or facts presented are valid, and it will only be so if they correspond to his/her own individual life experiences.

The litany of petitions cited above ends with Loaeza’s claiming that she was trying to wake up: “Por un momento dudé de estar realmente dormida. ¿Era esto la realidad o una pesadilla?” (“For a moment I doubted that I was really asleep. Was this reality or a nightmare?”; 51). In an on-line video chat in December of 2000, Loaeza was asked by Granados Chapa why she so often uses her imagination to create characters and scenarios that are contrived in order to disclose her political perspectives, which he presumes to be “tendentious” and not very journalistic.<sup>16</sup> Loaeza responds that it is her own personal style, just like all writers and journalists have which is their distinguishing trademark. She then explains: “Lo que procuro es darle estilo distinto al texto periodístico, pero siempre he enfrentado lo que he dicho, a lo que me refiero siempre doy la cara a lo que he dicho. En el momento en el que está seguro de lo que dice se le puede decir personalmente a la

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<sup>16</sup>“Por qué siempre recurre al uso de imaginar personas e historias falsas para expresar sus puntos de vista políticos? ¿No le parece eso muy tendencioso y muy poco periodístico?” (Videocharla).

persona de la que se habla” (“What I try to do is give a distinct style to the journalistic text, but I’ve always stood by what I’ve said, what I’m referring to is that I face up to what I’ve said. In the moment that one is sure of what s/he’s saying one can say it to the person’s face about which s/he’s talking”; Videocharla). This passage of petitions where she incorporates fictive elements or presumptions to embellish her story, is consequently indicative of Loaeza’s personal writing style.

Yet albeit the situation is imagined, it is one which she would personally know very well. Her father, Enrique Loaeza, not only directly knew the founder of the PAN –Manuel Gómez Marín– but he was also one of the party’s first active participants (*Detrás* 357). At the same time, she is aware of the importance of the separation of church and state, as she demonstrates in an answer to another of Granados Chapa’s queries about the current government’s<sup>17</sup> confrontation between religious zealots and “juaristas” –backers of Juárez– and her own personal opinion of Juárez.<sup>18</sup> She responds that her own perspective of Juárez has always been favorable, since her father was a declared *juarista*, and her grandfather –General Loaeza– was very close to Juárez. She then says in reference to Fox’s “guadalupanismo” –proclivity towards the Virgin of Guadalupe– which has raised some concern among the public, that she feels “que hay que tener cuidado en no mezclar política con religión, el Estado es un Estado y corrió muchos

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<sup>17</sup>Vicente Fox won the presidency in 2000 for the PAN.

<sup>18</sup>Benito Juárez (1806-1872) was a Zapotec Indian and Mexico’s first Liberal President to tackle the Catholic Church’s intervention in the affairs of the state. See Meyer and Sherman’s *The Course of Mexican History*, pp. 373-388, for a concise look at Mexico’s conflict between church and state. See also Michael Tangeman’s *Mexico at the Crossroads: Politics, the Church, and the Poor*, for a complete and detailed history of Mexico’s church-state relations from the time of the conquest until the end of the twentieth century.

sacrificios para esto,... y se corre riesgos al mezclarlos. Creo que se le está señalando que en un país como México hay que tener mucho cuidado” (“that care must be taken against mixing politics with religion, the State is a State and it sacrificed much to obtain this... and it takes risks in mixing the two. I think that what is being pointed out is that in a country like Mexico one has to be very careful”; Videocharla).

Another thing that stands out in the above excerpt is how in the 70s the affluent continue to be very much the same as they were in the 30s and 50s with respect to their prejudices: “la burguesía mexicana desprecia todo lo que no es ella, lo que no se le parece, lo que no es blanco, bonito y caro. Es profundamente racista y clasista. Se consuela de sus miserias y sus pequeñeces con el orgullo de una pretendida superioridad basada cómodamente en el color de su piel, en su apellido, en su grandeza monetaria, cuando aún le queda” (“the Mexican bourgeoisie despises everything that is not like they are, that does not look like they do, that is not white, beautiful and expensive. They console themselves of their miseries and their trifles with the pride of a pretended superiority based comfortably on the color of their skin, on their surname, on their monetary greatness, when they have any left”; *Manual II* 45). The final phrase of this statement is also characteristic of Loaeza’s style, where she hints at things not being quite the way the bourgeoisie “pretend” them to be. In other words, keeping up “appearances” continues to be just as important to them as it had been for their parents and grandparents.

Yet the main point in that last statement is that many middle and upper class Mexicans have remained obsessed with skin color. In *Compro, luego existo (I Shop, Therefore I am; 1992)*, Loaeza illustrates this through one of the female characters on a shopping spree in Miami. Throughout the first part of this chapter, it has been made clear that she only stays at the best hotel, shops only at the most exclusive shops, and eats at the

most expensive restaurants. Furthermore, there are continuous references to how she loves being in such a civilized society with so many refined and beautiful people—in other words, rich. On the other hand, after returning to Mexico, while standing in line for the Migration check, she experiences the typical culture shock that she always gets upon returning to her country: “La verdad es que son feos los mexicanos. Ya no me acordaba de que fueran tan morenos, ¡qué horror!” (“The truth is that Mexicans are ugly. I didn’t remember that they were so dark-complected. How horrid!”; 56). In addition, in the same book, Loaeza gives us the perspective of a dark-complected *nouveau riche* Mexican woman, who is trying to elbow her way into the elite’s circle, naturally made up of fair-skinned and “beautiful” people. From the time she was in high school and heard someone shout “¡Lárgate, prieta horrorosa!” (“Get out of here, you horrible darkey!”), Ana Paula realized that “ser morena en este país de mestizos era peor que ser fea, bisca, tonta, pobre o ladrona” (“being dark-complected in this country of mestizos was worse than being ugly, cross-eyed, stupid, poor or a thief”; 87). This topic of racial superiority based on skin color continues to appear in Loaeza’s chronicles up to this day.

Another of Loaeza’s techniques is to juxtapose opposing viewpoints where the servant class is shown to be the moral better and the rich are seen to be petty and selfish. In a chronicle called “Lucha en Las Lomas” (“Struggle in Las Lomas”), first published in *La jornada* on April 6, 1987, the maid—who only earns \$40.00 U.S. monthly—tells the lady of the household that she desperately needs a \$10.00 U.S. monthly raise because everything is going up, including the bus fares. The lady feels like she’s being black-mailed and pressured by one of

estas “horribles *maids*,” como las llama ella, “criadas encajosas, que no hacen más que pedir, mal encaradas, pero sobre todo, mal agradecidas; ¿cuándo se iban a imaginar estas indias que podían vivir como gente y no

como animales como tenían costumbre de vivir en sus pueblos?, muchachas irresponsables, flojas buenas para nada, les da una la mano y se cogen del pic.” (*Las reinas* 71)

these “horrible maids,” as she calls them, “freeloading servants, that don’t do anything but request things, extremely plain, but above all, ingrates; when would one have imagined these Indians that could live like people and not like animals the way they were accustomed to in their towns?; irresponsible maids, lazy good-for-nothings, give them an inch and they take a mile.”

She then begins an internal diatribe complaining about all she’s given this worthless maid, but imparts to her that she is very happy with her in spite of her “defectitos” (“little defects”). The maid in turn, “la mira fijamente, de pronto se acuerda que la odia, que la detesta, que no la puede ver ni en pintura: ‘vieja hipócrita, si yo tengo ‘defectitos’, usted nació toda defectuosa” (“stares at her and suddenly remembers that she hates her, detests her, and can’t stand to look at her: ‘hypocritical old lady, if I have ‘little defects’, you were born full of them’”; 72). She continues with an internal monologue about how she’s treated in a degrading manner: “¿Cómo dice que está contenta conmigo si cada día me trata peor [sic]: no se te vaya a ocurrir comer del filete, allí tienes tus huacales y frijoles, acuérdate que el queso es para el licenciado y la fruta para los niños; ¿tú te acabaste el pan dulce?” (“How can she say that she’s happy with me if she treats me worse everyday: don’t let it occur to you to eat the steak, there you have your thick tortillas and your beans, remember that the cheese is for the licentiate and the fruit for the children; did you eat up all of the sweet bread?”; 72). She continues by saying how she’s told not to leave the TV turned on for so long, that she shouldn’t receive personal phone calls, and that she’s asked to go fetch everything under the sun to accommodate the least whim of her boss. She ends her internal tirade by mentioning that “todo el día me trai [sic] como su burro, vieja coda” (“all day long she treats me like her burro, cheap old lady”; 72).



Nevertheless, she tells her boss that other maids in the neighborhood are receiving \$60.00 U.S. monthly for doing much less, and that she doesn't even make enough to be able to afford to give her daughter a better education, nor to buy a skirt and blazer –\$23.00U.S.– on credit. The lady's reaction upon hearing this is one of scorn, but she keeps from bursting out in laughter. She thinks to herself: “pero, ¿qué se cree?, ahora resulta que las *maids* usan *blazer*, ¡qué horror!: de rebozo al *blazer*... ¡pobrecitas!, se quieren vestir como uno, definitivamente ya no hay clases” (“but who does she think she is? Now even the maids are wearing blazers. How horrid!... Poor things! They want to dress like we do, there is definitely no longer a distinction between classes”; 72). The scene ends in total silence, with both trying to justify their own points of view. But Loaeza is definitely favoring the maid, who is only asking for a ten dollar monthly raise, and the lady boss is shown to be petty and authoritarian. This illustrates Corona and Jörgensen's contention about the chronicle since 1968 cited in chapter five, that it has assumed a more discriminating outlook toward “the dominant groups, and a more sympathetic stance in favor of the causes of the popular sectors” (15).

Again in the introduction to *Manual de la gente bien: Volumen II*, Loaeza states these prejudices are demonstrated in the society pages that have always been a who's who of the well-to-do, and that had always taken care to portray “only those who most deserved to be there.” She recounts that in the full-color photographs from the society section called “Cuic” of *Novedades*, appeared “las señoras más bien y las más guapas de México” (“the finest and best-looking women in Mexico”). She points out in her tongue-in-cheek manner that we can be grateful to Nicholas Sánchez Osorio who always made sure “de que fueran exclusivamente nombres conocidos. No obstante que el *jet set* mexicano ya estaba muy ‘revuelto’, en esa época no se hacían concesiones con los

apellidos ni mucho menos con los tipos físicos. O eran de buenas familias con apariencia de gente decente o, de lo contrario, estaban totalmente *out* de los ‘Cuic’” (“that they were exclusively well-known names. Even though the Mexican *jet set* was already a ‘mixture’, at that time there were no concessions made with surnames and even fewer with physical types. They were either from good families with the appearance of decent people or, on the contrary, they were totally left *out* of the ‘Cuic’ sections”; 23). She concludes by speculating that there must be some today who long for the “good old days”: ¿Cuántas de ellas actualmente sienten nostalgia por aquel México donde todo el *jet set* se conocía! Y, por último, ¿cuántas prefieren hoy en día no leer estas secciones por miedo a deprimirse al constatar quiénes componen la crema y la nata de la sociedad mexicana?” (“How many of them today feel nostalgia for that Mexico when everybody in the *jet set* knew each other? And lastly, how many of them nowadays don’t read these sections anymore for fear of becoming depressed about who makes up the cream of Mexican society?”; 23). She also stresses the fact that *los trescientos y ninguno más* (“the three-hundred and not one more”) that made up the *old* family surnames in the 30s became *los trescientos y algunos más* (“the three-hundred with several more”) in the 90s (*Manual II* 81, Loeza’s emphasis).

In the same discussion mentioned earlier with Monsiváis in *Detrás del espejo*, Loeza responds to his claim about her oftentimes irritation with the society pages that depict “bodas suntuosas para mil invitados” (“sumptuous weddings with a thousand guests”; 259). She shows him the cover of a society magazine depicting the wedding of the daughter of ex-President Salinas de Gortari (in exile in Ireland at the time to escape

charges for fraud, robbing the Mexican treasury,<sup>19</sup> and a murder cover-up): “¿Qué es? ¿Una inconciencia? ¿Inmoralidad? ¿Primitivismo? Para mí esta fotografía es el ejemplo de la impunidad” (“What is it? Recklessness? Immorality? Primitivism? For me this photograph is the epitome of impunity”; 259). For Loaeza, it is impunity for what it represents, for “todo lo que hay detrás de esa familia” (“everything that family stands for”). Monsiváis remarks that it is also impunity for those families who are not marked by scandal but who show off their wealth just the same: “resulta muy claro que mostrarle a la sociedad que tú tienes los recursos es burlarte de todos los que no tienen los recursos” (“it is clear that by showing that you have resources is a mockery to all of those who have no resources”; 259). He contends that if you have the resources and you use them however you please is one thing, but flaunting them is “insolence.” Loaeza agrees and asserts that it is also “racism” and “ostentation,” to which Monsiváis adds that it is “provocación en un medio que está dominado por el resentimiento” (“provocation in an environment that is dominated by resentment” 259-260).

This provocation and resentment have fueled a rash of robberies of all kinds, and kidnaping for high ransoms, culminating in what has been commonly referred to as Mexico’s state of “ingobernabilidad” (“ungovernability”) in the last two decades. However, there were other factors of this ungovernability as well, such as the economic crises that started in 1982 after the nationalization of the banks, Mexico’s introduction to

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<sup>19</sup>In November of 1995, Alva Senzek contends that the group known as “El Barzón” introduced “formal accusations of criminal negligence” against both ex-President Salinas and Pedro Aspe, his minister of finance, alleging that they “engaged in illicit enrichment during the process of privatization of the country’s banking system.” Senzek describes the Barzón movement “as a catchall organization for persons with any kind of financial grievance involving the banks or the federal, state and municipal governments” (29).

neoliberalism and the resulting austerity programs, and the growing anger at the impunity of the PRI with its continually fraudulent and evermore less credible elections. These issues will be treated in the following section, which continues the discussion of Loeza's obsessions.

### 6.3 Loeza's other obsessions, or how politics, the economic crisis and Chiapas were all factors in Mexico's ungovernability

In her first published article in *Unomásuno* in August of 1982 –“Con el alma en un hilo”– Loeza includes critiques of the nationalization of Mexico's banking system, the second devaluation of the peso, political corruption and the flight of capital by many of the politicians before the devaluation, Mexico's debt of eighty billion dollars, and the role of the International Monetary Fund, all within the framework of a discussion by two affluent and selfish women who are only worried about how politics and the economic crisis will affect them. In other words, her first chronicle is indicative not only of her sarcastic style in writing about self-centered women, but also of her savvy comprehension of economics and politics. She also maintains in “La gente bien ante el crisis,” from November of 1983, how she feels a deep sense of responsibility with her acceptance as a collaborator for *Unomásuno*, where her chronicles are interpreted as denunciations and social criticism since they are published in a newspaper whose ideological slant is toward the left. On the other hand, she asserts that if published in a right wing newspaper, the same texts' intentions would be diluted and would be interpreted as being merely anecdotal (*Niñas* 62).<sup>20</sup> This takes us back to the role of the reader again as the

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<sup>20</sup> “[S]iento una profunda responsabilidad de poder colaborar en *Unomásuno*. No es usual que un artículo como el de las niñas bien haya causado tanto interés, por publicarse en un periódico con la línea ideológica como la de *Unomásuno*. Allí apareció

interpreter of irony. What Loaeza is trying to say is that readers with her shared ideological perspectives would recognize the irony in her chronicles, whereas those with opposing ideological viewpoints would not.

Regarding her obsessions, it should be noted that three of her books are compilations of oftentimes sarcastic political critiques, the first of which is made up of texts written between 1983-1991, called *Los grillos y otras grillas* (1991), a highly ironic title close in meaning to “*The Politicians and Their Shenanigans*.”<sup>21</sup> And albeit all of this book’s chronicles treat the topic of politics, many assimilate criticisms about the economy and sarcastic observations of the elite as well. The same holds true for her other collections of political chronicles: *Sin cuenta* (*Who’s Counting?*; 1996), compiled between 1994-1996, and *La factura: El poder y la derrota del sistema político* (*The Invoice: Power and Defeat of the Political System*; 2001), a collection made up of texts written between 1994-1999, although they also include reflections on Chiapas. Hence it is difficult to discuss one theme at a time since they are usually intertwined. Nevertheless, I will attempt to present two of Loaeza’s earliest fixations that were constant topics in her writing from 1982 until 2000: 1) her obsession with the economy and neoliberal programs that exacerbated Mexico’s state of ungovernability; 2) the defeat of the PRI. I will incorporate deliberations on Chiapas when they appear in 1994, and that have remained a constant subject in her writing since then. But I will first illustrate how and when Loaeza became such a zealot for the downfall of the PRI.

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como una denuncia, una crítica social. En cambio, si este mismo texto se publica en un diario de derecha, su intención se diluye y hubiera quedado exclusivamente en un nivel anecdótico” (62).

<sup>21</sup>VanLoan Aguilar translates this title in its literal sense –*Crickets -Male and Female*– which does not connote its ironic meaning.

6.3.1 Loaeza's obsession with the overthrow of the PRI's "dictablanda" ("soft dictatorship")

In *Obsesiones* (1994), Loaeza declares what will become one of her primary fixations: the end of the PRI. In a piece titled "En el ácido," ("A nervous wreck")<sup>22</sup> she agonizes over being asked to run as an independent candidate backed by the PRD<sup>23</sup> for representative of her home district –the 8<sup>th</sup> district. In the following article titled "La decisión," after much soul-searching, she decides that she can "hacer mucho más escribiendo con objetividad asuntos que le conciernen a todos los ciudadanos, no nada más el octavo distrito" (do much more objectively writing about issues that affect all citizens, and not just those that make up the 8<sup>th</sup> district"; 152). She therefore concludes with her resolution that she will not run as a candidate for representative of the 8<sup>th</sup> district by announcing: "A partir de este momento, me autolanzo como candidata plurinominal por la democracia, por el no-fraude electoral, por la transparencia en las urnas, por el respeto de los derechos humanos de todos los mexicanos y por último, porque desaparezca el PRI" ("From this moment on, I lance myself as a majority candidate for democracy, for elections free from fraud, for transparency at the urns, for the respect of human rights for all Mexicans and lastly, for the disappearance of the PRI"; 153). She then states that if anyone wants to join her party, that she'll be voting for the PRD in the

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<sup>22</sup>Mexicans use the expression "en el ácido" to indicate that they are in a very nervous state of being, over worry caused by an upsetting life situation, or in this case, an important decision that they are having trouble making.

<sup>23</sup>PRD stands for Partido Revolucionario Democrático (Democratic Revolution Party), and whose candidate in the 1988 presidential election –Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas– actually won the election, but the PRI prevailed by fraud and the backing of the U.S. government.

next presidential election on August 21, 1994, with both her heart and her brains.<sup>24</sup> Albeit that is her official declaration of her determination to work for the disappearance of the PRI, she had been implying it in her chronicles throughout the 80's and early 90's, by continuously mocking the priistas for their deceit and corruption.

### 6.3.2 Economic crises and corruption

Mexico's economic problems began in the 1970s. Just when the economists and politicians thought that the newly discovered oil reserves would lead them to prosperity, OPEC lowered the price of oil worldwide. Mexicans had been counting on their oil reserves to boost their economy, and the fall in the price of oil caused the government to take out loans which ultimately led them into debt. President Luis Echeverría devalued the peso at the end of his term in office in 1976 from 12.50 pesos per dollar to what was at first 19 pesos. It was later left to "float" at the mercy of the IMF, reaching 22 pesos per dollar by Christmas of that year. The problems continued throughout José López Portillo's presidency, and were exacerbated in 1982 when he devaluated the peso by 50% in February, and again at the end of his term with the nationalization of the banking system on September 1<sup>st</sup> to deter the "sacadólares" ("dollar removers") from ruining the nation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>“¿Hay alguien que se quiera unir a mi partido? Dicho sea de paso, el próximo 21 de agosto, tanto con la cabeza como con el corazón, votaré por el PRD” (*Obsesiones* 153).

<sup>25</sup>I personally experienced the devaluations since I lived in Mexico from 1970 to 1984. I remember in 1976 how from one day to the next, I could no longer afford my once a year flight home to Ohio, and it was tough just to make ends meet. I started converting all of my pesos into dollars, like most Mexicans did with anything they could scrape into savings. Although the peso continued to devaluate, no one had anticipated the next devaluation in 1982, which was devastating to everyone except the truly rich, and naturally, the upper echelon of politicians.

VanLoan Aguilar points out that although “the upper middle class (los *sacadólares*) did, in fact, have their dollars in foreign banks and real estate, the middle class to hedge against inflation had been buying dollars with each paycheck and depositing them in dollar savings accounts in Mexican banks which up to that time had been earning 20% interest a year.” She continues by saying that after the President’s proclamation, their dollars “were instantly converted to pesos and devalued by half,” resulting in the devastation of “many a family’s life savings” (153). Ironically, she claims how López Portillo himself was revealed to be one of Mexico’s most infamous *sacadólares* three months later. On the morning news it was reported that a check for \$80,000,000.00 U.S. had been deposited in his name in a New York bank account (154). In the final text in *Niñas*, dating from November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1985, Loaeza imagines a scenario where the PRI’s Secretary of Finance –Jesús Silva Herzog– accompanies her on a tour of Mexico City. He asks her to show him the real world, since the public is always reproaching the *priistas* for not being realistic. She in turn tells him that he should return to the Chamber of Deputies where he was explaining the “Ley de Ingresos” (“Law of Income”) to the deputies [representatives] and general citizenry, asserting that “... si bien 1985 ha sido un año extremadamente difícil, no se perdió el rumbo ni el control de la economía... La inflación bajó del 150 a 60 por ciento, lo que significa una diferencia importante y –sin lugar a dudas– un logro de la política” (“... even though 1985 has been an extremely difficult year, it didn’t lose its direction nor control of the economy... Inflation went down from 150 to 60 per cent, which means an important difference and –without a doubt– a political achievement”; *Niñas* 136). But he insists that she take him to see how people actually live, and accordingly they get in her Volkswagen and head towards downtown:

“¿Por qué hay tanto tráfico?” me preguntó intrigado. “Ay licenciado, así es siempre.” “¡Qué raro! Cuando voy en coche con mi chofer, siempre



llegamos a todos lados muy rápido.” “Eso es en su mundo licenciado, pero en el nuestro, sufrimos entre muchas otras cosas, del tráfico.” “¿Qué son esas llamaradas de fuego que se ven desde aquí?” “Ay licenciado, son los lanzafuego.” “¿Y esas señoras qué venden entre los coches?” “Ay licenciado, son Marías que venden chicles.” “Tome 5 pesos para que compre dos cajitas.” “Ay licenciado, ahora cuestan 50 pesos cada una.” “Pero no entiendo, si nosotros hemos luchado contra la inflación.”... Como no avanzábamos mucho, a causa del tráfico, decidimos entonces tomar el metro. Allí el licenciado no daba crédito a lo que veía. “¿Por qué hay tanta gente?” “Ay licenciado, siempre está igual de lleno; esto es México.”... Nos bajamos en el Zócalo. “¿Qué hace toda esa gente frente a Catedral?” “Son los desempleados.” “Pero, ¿todavía hay desempleados?, si también eso lo hemos controlado.” “Esas cosas se dicen en la televisión, cuando van ustedes a la Cámara, pero la realidad es otra licenciado. Estamos en crisis. Cada vez estamos más pobres.” Caminando nos fuimos hasta Tepito. “¿Y qué es toda esa gente en la calle viviendo bajo los plásticos?” “Esos son los damnificados del temblor, aún no les resuelven sus problemas de vivienda.” “Pero si hemos dado miles y miles de casas. Además hay muchos albergues que funcionan todavía.” Ya no quise contestarle. (137)

“Why is there so much traffic? he asked me intrigued. “Oh licentiate, it’s always like this.” “How strange! when I’m in my car with my chauffeur, we always get everywhere very quickly.” “That’s in your world licentiate, but in ours, we suffer among other things, from traffic.” “What are those flames that you can see from here?” “Oh licentiate, those are the fire swallowers.” “And those women that are selling something between the cars?” “Oh licentiate, they’re homeless women selling gum.” “Take these 5 pesos and buy a couple of boxes.” “Oh licentiate, they now cost 50 pesos each.” “But I don’t understand, since we’ve been fighting against inflation.” ... Since we weren’t advancing much, due to the traffic, we decided to take the subway. There the licentiate couldn’t believe what he saw. “Why are there so many people?” “Oh licentiate, it’s always this crowded; this is Mexico.”... We got off at the Zócalo. “What are all those people doing in front of the Cathedral?” “They’re the unemployed.” “But, are there still unemployed? We’ve also controlled that.” “Those things are said on TV, when you’re in the Chamber, but reality is different licentiate. We’re in a crisis. We get poorer every day.” We walked to Tepito [a poor area of town]. “And what are all of those people doing in the street living under sheets of plastic?” “Those are the ones who lost everything in the earthquake, their housing problems still haven’t been resolved.” “But

we've given away thousands and thousands of houses. Besides, there are still many shelters open." I refused to answer him anymore.<sup>26</sup>

What Loeza is clearly stating here is that the *priistas* have been out of touch with reality for so long, and hence have been feeding out false information to the public for so long, that they have reached the point of actually believing what they had and have been claiming. She ends by saying that Silva Herzog went back to the Chamber of Deputies where he declared: "... los problemas económicos tan graves y delicados que afrontamos no pueden ser resueltos por fórmulas mágicas de medieval alquimia y mucho menos de un día para otro" ("... the grave and delicate economic problems that we are facing cannot be resolved with magic formulas from medieval alchemy and much less from one day to the next"; 138). She is therefore implying that the *priistas* should go out and see what the country is really suffering in order to comprehend what an enormous task it will be to repair the devastating effects that their economic policies have had on the majority of Mexicans.

In *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*, John Gray affirms that during the presidency of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), "Mexico was a show-case of neoliberal market reform," and its political elite were ready and willing to obey anything that the IMF (International Monetary Fund) told them to do, and thus the neoliberal austerity program was launched that would call for reduction of government spending, and the control of wages and prices. The icing on the cake would be Mexico's signing of the

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<sup>26</sup>Ross Gandy explains the usage of the term "licenciado" ("licentiate") in Mexico, saying that "it is used when addressing anyone with a four-year university degree. You don't say to such a person 'Señor Fulano,' you say 'Licenciado Fulano' or 'Licenciada' if it is a woman." He adds that for persons in other professions, "you address them as 'Arquitecto Fulano, Ingeniero Mengano, Doctor Sutano.' If you say 'señor to a person with a degree you are being insulting. You have to find out everyone's title and use it" (29).

GATT treaty in 1986, that would infuriate all of the PRI's "dinosaurs" (46). But the "PRIinosaurios"<sup>27</sup> ("combination of PRI with dinosaurs) would simply be able to find another way of "making" money. Judith Hellman maintains those hardest hit by the GATT were Mexico's small businessmen. Whereas they had always been protected by tariffs before, these domestic manufacturers were caught off-guard when "from one day to the next, the borders were thrown open to cheap Asian products" (29).<sup>28</sup> Consequently, almost everyone in the entire country was hit hard by the neoliberal policies, except of course those priistas who Ignacio Solares maintains "además de medio pendejos resultaron ladrones" ("besides being half-wits they were also thieves"; *El gran electoral* 36), or the rich, those "hijos de puta de arriba" ("sons of bitches on top"; 35, 36, 37), who Lawrence Whitehead calls "los hombres de negocio avaros y no patriotas" ("those greedy and unpatriotic businessmen"; "Por qué México es casi ingobernable" 230).

After suffering five years of austerity programs and inflation, Loaeza illustrates the times in a chronicle from March of 1987, titled "La inexistencia" ("The Inexistence"):

"Todos los mexicanos sabemos que la crisis sí es existente; que la inflación sí es existente; que la injusticia sí es existente; que el descontento general hacia el gobierno sí es existente; que el pago de los intereses de la deuda externa sí es existente; que el aumento del

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<sup>27</sup>Although I had heard this expression used before, I first saw it in print in Ignacio Solares's *El gran electoral*, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup>In "The Rapid Rise of the *Neobanqueros*: Mexico's New Financial Crisis," Carlos Marichal explains that while the colossal crash of the Mexican stock market in 1987 –due to the collapse of world oil prices– affected almost everyone, "the rich few" got richer and the poor got even poorer. He explains that whereas small businesses were wiped out, "the big fish moved in" to appropriate the stock of many small businesses who had gone bankrupt (29). He adds that by 1997, "the wealthiest 10% of Mexico's population receives 50% of total income" –which was the highest it had ever been since the 50's– although the neediest 20% gets less than 3% (28).

desempleo sí es existente; que la devaluación sí es existente” (“All of us Mexicans know that the crisis does exist; that injustice does exist; that general discontent towards the government does exist; that the payment of interest on the foreign debt does exist; that the increase of unemployment does exist; that the devaluation does exist”; *Grillos* 190). What Loeza is emphasizing in this piece is that while problems exist for the general public, they are *nonexistent* for the *priistas*. On the other hand, what exists for them is a farce to the general public: “Estamos ciertos que para los del gobierno hay muchísimas cosas que sí son existentes, como por ejemplo: la Renovación Moral, la firmeza de su gobierno, las negociaciones, la limpieza de las elecciones, la lealtad de los priistas, la democracia cada vez más ampliada y de mejor calidad, el control de inflación, la inversión extranjera, el turismo, etcétera” (“We are sure that for those in government there are extremely many things that do exist, like for example: Moral Renovation, the fortitude of their government, negotiations, clean elections, loyalty of the *priistas*, an ever-growing and better quality government, control of inflation, foreign investment, tourism, etcetera”; *Grillos* 191). Loeza’s point here is to “tell it like it really is,” to reveal the hypocrisy of those in power like she does with the rich and greedy, who are also part of that latter category as well. This and many more of Loeza’s accounts coincide with Egan’s “two defining characteristics” of the contemporary Mexican chronicle cited earlier. The first one is both “ideological and critical,” incorporating the form’s “intellectual function” evident in “the interaction of its real-world historiographical referent and its critical, revisionist ideology,” while the second is both “aesthetic and emotional,” embodying the form’s “emotive function” apparent in “the interaction of its symbolic and entertainment values” (128).

The neoliberal austerity programs that were put in place by the de la Madrid administration, the devaluations, the severe unemployment, GATT, and the stock market crash continued throughout the next term under Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Julio Moguel gives some official statistics taken during Salinas's administration that were in direct relation to his neoliberal programs. They reveal that in 1990, 40.3 million Mexicans were considered poor –almost half of the population-- of which 17.3 million were destitute. He also points out that in that same year, “just over 2% of the Mexican population received 78.55% of the national income.” He adds that between 1984-1992, neoliberal policies created more than 2 million new poor people in the countryside, many of which went to the U.S. to find work (“Salinas’ Failed War on Poverty” 38-39).<sup>29</sup> Considering these numbers, it is easy to understand why Rubén Zamora claims that for the poor, neoliberalism was “a destroyer of dreams,” because it put “people face to face with a life of scarcity, without horizon or hope.” He then paraphrases Marx, saying that neoliberalism was “the opiate of the business class” (“Toward a Strategy of Resistance” 8). Noam Chomsky alleges that it was NAFTA that locked in neoliberal reforms that “reversed years of progress in labor rights and economic development, bringing mass impoverishment and suffering along with enrichment for the few and for foreign investors” (178). In “Effects of NAFTA One Year Later: The Tragedy in Mexico,” Donald Nollar tells how the middle class was ruined. He explains how during the Salinas administration, the middle class was encouraged to buy appliances, cars, and houses on credit at variable

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<sup>29</sup>On the other hand, John Ross contends that in 1994, thanks to President Salinas, 24 new billionaires enjoyed “neo-liberal luxury” (404). One of these new billionaires is Carlos Slim Helú, who Marichal says was “ranked by Forbes as the wealthiest man in Latin America” in 1997,” and whose total worth was estimated at \$6.1 billion dollars (“The Rapid Rise of the *Neobanqueros*” 28).

interest rates. Many then found it either extremely difficult or impossible to pay the usurious and exorbitant interest rates, or they lost everything, even their jobs. He gives the example of a man who bought a car in 1992 for 39,000 pesos –\$13,000 U.S. at that time. Over a two year period he paid a total of 36,000 pesos and then the bank informed him that he owed them 47,000 pesos more –about \$8,000 U.S. (7).<sup>30</sup>

The desperation of so many who had been devastated by the economy left the country in such a chaotic state of ungovernability that the police could not keep up with the denunciations of crime and delinquency. In *Obsesiones*, Loeza chronicles robberies of all kinds. She takes her information from titles which she cites verbatim from newspaper reports:

“Se roba, en menos de dos minutos, radio-caseteras de coches estacionados frente a casas particulares.” “En menos que canta un gallo, se asaltan, profesionalmente, bancos, casas de bolsas y joyerías.” “En un dos por tres, se roba nóminas y quincenas recién cobradas por obreros.” “Con técnicas a nivel internacional, se asaltan residencias, cafeterías, restaurantes de lujo, departamentos y pequeños comercios.” (134)

“In less than two minutes, Radio-cassette players are robbed from cars parked right in front of their owners’ homes.” “In less time than it takes a rooster to crow, banks, stock market exchanges and jewelry stores are held up professionally.” “In a flash, payrolls and paychecks just cashed by manual laborers are robbed.” “With international techniques, homes, cafeterias, classy restaurants, apartments and small businesses are held up.”

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<sup>30</sup>William and Patricia Coleman also give the perspective from a middle class perspective by interviewing a Mexican architect. He tells them how the crisis affected him and his neighbors: “The crisis is about food, rent, and how to get back and forth to work. It’s about democracy and repression by the police. It’s about feeling frustrated by the news on the television, which we know is pure propaganda. It’s about feeling powerless” (“Mexican Bishops Decry ‘Chain of Injustice’” 9).

In this small excerpt, she not only illustrates the efficiency of the delinquents, but also their callousness by even robbing the manual laborers, who usually earn the minimum wage and work hard to barely eke out a bleak existence.

Loeza presents the police's response to the rash of crimes in a piece from November of 1986, titled "007, permiso para matar." After reading a report stating that the chief of police –General José Domingo Ramírez Garrido Abreu– was offering a reward of one hundred thousand pesos (\$120.00 U.S.), a medal and a diploma as a reward to each policeman who killed a delinquent, and fifty thousand pesos (\$60.00 U.S.) for bringing him/her in alive, she lists some crime statistics that terrified her from the same paper: "[Q]ue de enero a diciembre, cada 90 minutos se habrán producido un asesinato y ocho robos, cuatro a mano armada" ("That from January to December, every ninety minutes, one murder and eight robberies, four with arms, will have been committed"; *Grillos* 244). She then begins to reflect on the consequences of the award system, and speculates different if case scenarios:

Y si de tanto pagar recompensas, ¿la Secretaría General de Protección y Vialidad quiebra por completo?... ¿Y si un delincuente rico (que hay muchísimos) le ofrece de mordida al policia 125 mil pesos por dejarlo vivo? Y si los delincuentes ahora muertos pero de miedo con estas declaraciones, les proponen a las otras bandas, recompensarlos con 150 mil pesos por cada policia que maten, ¿tendrá que subir la tarifa del general? Y si dentro de los policías existieran miles de delincuentes, ¿cómo podrán distinguirlos?; y si se encuentran dos policías delincuentes uno frente al otro y terminan por matarse, ¿a quién se le dará la recompensa? ¿A José Domingo Ramírez Garrido Abreu? (*Grillos* 245)

And after paying so many rewards the General Secretary of Protection and Transit goes completely bust?... And if a rich delinquent (of which there are very many) offers a 125 thousand peso bribe to a policeman to let him live? And if those delinquents who are not dead but scared to death with these declarations, propose a reward of 150 thousand pesos to other gangs for every policeman they kill, will the general have to raise the stakes? And if inside the police corps there existed thousands of crooked cops, how

could they tell each other apart?; and if two crooked cops stood face to face and ended up killing each other, who would get the reward? José Domingo Ramírez Garrido Abreu?

This passage illustrates not only the police chief's "solution" for combating crime, but also the general corruption within the police department itself, criticizing the customary bribing of police officials and the fact that there are thousands of "crooked cops."<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Loaeza offers her own solution: "Y si en lugar de pagar tanta recompensa, mejor les sube los sueldos a los policías, mejora las patrullas, les cambia los uniformes y les da un buen aguinaldo?" ("And if instead of paying so much out in rewards, they raise the polices' salaries, give them better patrol cars, change their uniforms and give them a better bonus"; 245).<sup>32</sup>

Recalling the documented information given in the previous excerpt, as well as this one, it will be easy to see the parallels with a later section from *Manual II*. Here is part of the article where Loaeza has been listing incidents that took place during the chaos rampant after the Salinas administration:

el extraño e increíble suicidio de Luis Miguel Moreno, ex director de la ruta cien, quien ya herido mortalmente de bala se disparó de nuevo; el crimen contra el juez Polo Uscanga, quien ya había dicho que lo querían

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<sup>31</sup>In early June of 2001, four St. Francis University (PA) students were assaulted by three Cuernavaca policemen at gunpoint. One of those students had been mugged only five days earlier by another police patrol. Not only was he robbed, but he was also beaten up and dumped off in a remote area of the city. The incidents were not only reported, but they also made the headlines in the crime section of the daily *La Unión de Morelos* on June 5, 2001.

<sup>32</sup>Although Loaeza's suggestions might seem naive considering the degree of corruption within the police department, that is exactly what Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas tried to do during his mayorship of Mexico City (1997-2000). Things did improve somewhat, and some claim it was due to the firing of a number of crooked cops and replacing them with women transit police who refused to accept "mordidas" ("bribes") (Discussion with Mexican friends who reside in Mexico City and who are PRD enthusiasts).



matar, en la ciudad de México seguían en aumento los asaltos, los robos de coches, la policía “mordiéndolo”, la aprehensión de más niños bien de la Banca Cremi y de la Banca Unión y la amenaza de una absoluta in-gobernabilidad. (89-90)

the strange and incredible suicide of Luis Miguel Moreno, ex-director of bus line one-hundred, who after being fatally wounded by a bullet, then shot himself again, the crime against Judge Polo Uscanga, who had already warned that someone was going to kill him, in Mexico City the increase in mugging, car thefts, “biting” [bribe-seeking] by the police, the apprehension of more young well-to-do men from the Cremi and Union Banks for white-collar crime, and the threat of absolute un-governability.

Loaeza has been consistent in exposing social ills that have resulted in Mexico’s desperate situation of total ungovernability, which coincides with Corona’s hypothesis about chroniclers: “As commentators of social life,” or narrators of the here and now, “their chronicles become ongoing processes, changing subjects often, but with an undeniable historical sense.” He adds that due to the wide appeal of their writing, they remain committed to their readers “to provide an ongoing narrative of Mexican society” (“Contesting the Lettered City” 196).

The social turmoil and corruption continued on a grand scale under Salinas, who Loaeza calls “a man in a hurry.” The following is an excerpt from a piece titled with the same epithet that she uses for Salinas and appears in *Manual II*:

*Man in a hurry* era ciertamente Carlos Salinas. Sí, era un hombre que tenía prisa, mucha prisa. Prisa por llevar el nombre de México y el suyo a la cima del Primer Mundo; prisa por firmar el TLC... prisa por acumular todo el poder posible que jamás presidente mexicano haya acumulado; pero sobre todo, prisa por entenderse en los mejores términos con el sector empresarial, con los ricos, con los *happy few*, con los tecnócratas, con la Iglesia, y naturalmente, con los estadounidenses. (62-63)

Carlos Salinas was certainly a *man in a hurry*. Yes, he was a man in a really big hurry. A hurry to take both Mexico’s and his name to the top of the First World; a hurry to sign NAFTA... A hurry to accumulate the most

power that a Mexican President had ever accumulated; but above all, a hurry to get on the best of terms with big business, with the rich, with the *happy few*, with the technocrats, with the [Catholic] Church, and naturally, with the North Americans.

Thus Salinas was a major factor of Mexico's ungovernability, not only due to his catastrophic economic programs, but also because of his signing of NAFTA that was the straw that broke the camel's back for Mexico's poorest of its poor –the indigenous people in Chiapas.<sup>33</sup> Loaeza points out that right after the firsts shots of the Zapatistas were fired, Granados Chapa claimed that the grand vision that Salinas had of his country and of himself as that of a protagonist of “un fin de sexenio excepcional en el que todo estaba bajo control” (“an end to an exceptional six-year term where everything was under control”) was completely altered. For as Granados Chapa affirmed, the Zapatista rebellion showed him the exact opposite of what he had believed, because “el Mexico profundo no había sido engañado con la intensa y hábil propaganda salinista” (“the deep Mexico had not been deceived by the intense and crafty Salinista propaganda”; *Manual II* 81).<sup>34</sup> The next section will discuss the uprising that had more to do with the PRI's downfall than the corruption rampant within the party or the people's indignation of its fraudulent elections. It roused the rest of the Mexicans to believe that they could create a civil society where

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<sup>33</sup>Moguel gives some statistics of that time. He explains that the majority of Chiapas's 3 million inhabitants live in extreme poverty, declaring that “of all of the dwellings in the state, 43% have no indoor plumbing, 35% lack electricity, 50% have dirt floors, and 74% are classified as overcrowded.” He adds that 80% of those who are lucky enough to have jobs, earn two times less than Mexico's minimum wage of about \$4.50 U.S. per day, situating them way below the official poverty line (39).

<sup>34</sup>Guillermo Bonfils defines “deep Mexico” as “the unseen and unheard-of poor nation buried in the remote sierras and deserts and in the equally out-of-sight lost cities seething on the outer rims of Mexico City.” Bonfils also claims that the 15,000,000 Mexicans living in this basement of Mexican society represent “an injustice against humanity” (cited in Wheaton, *Unmasking the Powers in Mexico* 16).

they could then build a democracy by being more responsible citizens by demanding their rights.

### 6.3.3 The uprising in Chiapas: Mexico's last revolution of the twentieth century

The new year of 1994 rang in with the Salinistas toasting the signing of NAFTA and the Zapatistas shouting “Ya, basta” (“Enough is enough”), for 500 years of suffering exploitation, humiliation, indignity, racism and scorn in their place in the basement of Mexico's social pyramid. It immediately became one of the most discussed issues of Mexico's *cronistas*.<sup>35</sup> In a chronicle about the insurgency titled “Happy New Year 1994!!! o primera llamada, primera...,” incorporated into her historical tour through the latter half of the twentieth century in *Manual II*, Loeza begins with the passage cited earlier contrasting the New Year's celebrations of the Salinistas in the presidential mansion at Los Pinos, and the Zapatistas in the Lacandón jungle in Chiapas. She then intercalates a lengthy interpretation by Carlos Montemayor –who she regards to be the expert on Mexico's guerrilla movements– from his article printed in *La Jornada* the day after the outbreak. He warns that a military solution in Chiapas would be a terrible mistake, since a social agrarian conflict can only be resolved through social, political and economic

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<sup>35</sup>In a discussion about Chiapas with Loeza recorded in *Detrás del espejo*, Ricardo Rocha, one of Mexico's most prestigious media journalists, thanks Loeza and her fellow chroniclers for their continued coverage that kept him abreast of the development of the events in Chiapas, and which inspired him to go see what was actually happening (80). “Mira, antes que nada, déjame decirte, Guadalupe, con toda sinceridad, que yo estoy profundamente agradecido siempre con todos mis compañeros, con mis colegas como tú, que son muy generosos, porque yo admiro mucho y me nutro mucho de ustedes cuando los leo, son fuente de inspiración y también de motivación para hacer cosas. Yo había venido siguiendo en los periódicos el desarrollo de los acontecimientos en Chiapas, y es a partir de ahí que me nace la inquietud por ir a ver qué es lo que está pasando”(80).

reforms, and not with the intervention of the army.<sup>36</sup> He attributes the armed conflict in Chiapas to “la ineptitud política del gobierno estatal y el desprecio étnico y la rapacidad de ganaderos y terratenientes que socavan las tierras y selvas de las comunidades indígenas sin la menor conciencia” (“the political ineptitude of the state government and the ethnic contempt and rapacity of the cattlemen and large landowners who seize the lands and jungles of the indigenous communities without a shred of conscience”; *Manual II* 77-78).<sup>37</sup> In this same chronicle, after citing Montemayor, she incorporates the perspectives of Mexico’s bourgeoisie and what she calls “los conformistas desmemoriados” (“the conformists without a memory”). She explains how on the morning after, while watching the news, they could not stop blurting out their opinions:

“¡Que los exterminen!” “No hay que tomarlos en cuenta!” proponían algunos. “¿Por qué se preocupan tanto si Chiapas está en Guatemala?” preguntaban los más desinformados. “Pero, ¿de qué se quejan si siempre han sido pobres, ignorantes y para acabarla de amolar, ¡indios!?” comentaban otros. “Por su culpa, México está dando una pésima

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<sup>36</sup> “[E]n México no podrá resolverse ningún conflicto social agrario, indígena con la intervención del Ejército Mexicano porque estos problemas no son del orden militar, sino social político y económico y por tanto las soluciones deben ser también de ese orden” (*Manual II* 77).

<sup>37</sup> In his deeply researched historical political novel *Guerra en el Paraíso* (1993), Montemayor cites Ruben Figueroa, a senator of the state of Guerrero in the early 70's during the insurrection of the “campesinos” (“rural workers”). His words are a forewarning of the dangers of promoting military policies rather than attempting a mutual willingness to dialogue to reach a non-violent conciliation: “Lo que yo puedo decir es que si en Guerrero hubiera habido una política de conciliación, posiblemente no estaríamos lamentándonos ahora de la guerrilla de Genaro... sus programas son subversivos, incitan a la rebelión. Así tiene que vérsese como delincuente, como enemigo del orden. Aunque lo obligaron a asumir esa postura violenta políticos incapaces” (“What I can tell you is that if in Guerrero we had had a conciliatory political policy, we might not be lamenting Genaro’s guerrilla movement now... His programs are subversive, they incite rebellion. So he has to be seen as a delinquent, as an enemy of law and order. Even though inept politicians made it necessary for him to assume that violent position”; 13).

impresión hacia el extranjero”, opinaban los más interesados en la imagen de su país. (Manual II 78-79)

“They should exterminate them!” “They should ignore them!” proposed some. “What are they so worried about if Chiapas is in Guatemala?” the most uninformed asked. “But, what are they complaining about if they’ve always been poor, ignorant and what’s worse, Indians!?” others commented. “Because of them, Mexico is giving an abominable impression to the rest of the world,” opined those most interested in their country’s public image.

The insensitive responses included in this excerpt correspond to other citations or commentary in previous sections of this chapter, where the upper classes of Mexican society display their racism and classism. The comments in this passage also parallel some given by Carlos Fuentes. In a response to a letter written in June of 1994 from Marcos –the leader of the Zapatista indigenous movement in Chiapas– he says that the revolt incited strong reactions in the Mexican media and throughout the whole country: “I have heard people say, ‘The Indians are an obstacle to progress and modernity.’ The inevitable corollary is ‘They should be exterminated.’ I have heard one person say, with macabre humor, ‘In Mexico there are ninety million people. If we were only thirty million, we would already be a First World country’” (*A New Time for Mexico* 124-125).

Loeza immediately follows those remarks with some by Marcos from the same morning news program that had provoked the callous statements given above, where he started out by announcing “Hoy, decimos ¡basta! al pueblo de México” (“Today we say enough! to the people of Mexico”). She presents the end of his communiqué with his message that the men and women of Chiapas are conscious that they are declaring war as a last resort but that it is a just cause war, since the PRI’s fraudulently elected Presidents [and different state governors] have been conducting an undeclared war of annihilation

against the indigenous peoples of Mexico for a long time.<sup>38</sup> Marcos then requests the whole country's collaboration to support the Zapatistas in their "lucha por trabajo, tierra, techo, alimentación, salud, educación, independencia, libertad, democracia, justicia y paz" ("struggle for work, land, shelter, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice and peace"; 79).<sup>39</sup> Consequently, she offers viewpoints of those who are sympathetic towards the Zapatistas' cause and hold favorable opinions towards Marcos himself, and as such most likely concur with her own perspectives: "Conforme pasaba al tiempo, sin proponérselo se fueron apasionando con las tesis de ese Robin Hood posmoderno, de ese poeta enmascarado, de ese enigma, de ese hombre misterioso de quien nada más conocían un par de ojos color miel, una pipa desgastada, dos manos de proporciones generosas y una pluma que sabía decir las cosas con el corazón" ("As time passed, without proposing to do so, they became passionate with the theses of that postmodern Robin Hood, that masked poet, that enigma, that mysterious man that they

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<sup>38</sup>"Nosotros, hombres y mujeres íntegros y libres, estamos conscientes de que la guerra que declaramos es una medida última pero justa. Los dictadores están aplicando una guerra genocida contra nuestros pueblos desde hace muchos años" (79).

<sup>39</sup>The statements by both Montemayor and Marcos, as well as the cold-hearted attitude of the affluent towards the indigenous in this section, correspond in many ways to what caused the insurrection in the state of Guerrero in the in the 60s and 70s under the leadership of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro García that was previously referred to as the precursor of the rebellion that started twenty years later in Chiapas. In Montemayor's *Guerra*, the justification for the war in Guerrero is summarized in the words of Lucio Cabañas: "Nuestra revolución es devolver a los pobres lo que no les dejan tener, lo que no les dejan disfrutar también. [...] Porque es importante decir que nos han quitado todo, que nos dejan sólo miseria, que se llevan a otro lugar lo nuestro, nuestro café, nuestros animales, nuestras siembras, sí" ("Our revolution is giving back to the poor what they don't let them have, what they don't let them enjoy too. [...] Because it's important to say that they've taken everything away from us, that they've left us only misery, that they take away what is ours, our coffee, our animals, our crops, yes"; 213-214).

only recognized by his honey-colored eyes, a worn-out pipe, hands of generous proportions and a pen that knew how to tell things with the heart”; 79-80).

Loeza has managed to juxtapose five voices and points of view in this article, to allow her readers to interpret the situation, issues and events of Chiapas from opposing angles. They either contradict each other or demonstrate their consensus: the Salinistas, Mexico’s bourgeoisie and what she calls “the conformists without a memory,” in contrast to Montemayor, Marcos and his sympathizers including herself. This technique of employing opposing viewpoints again illustrates Egan’s assumption cited earlier about one of the essential roles of the *nueva crónica*: “After documentable facts, the principal marker of the chronicle’s nonfictional status depends on skilled manipulation of point of view and voice” (105). It is also worth noting that Loeza had inserted in this piece the opinion about Salinas by Granados Chapa given at the end of the last section. This adoption of intertextual quotes either by other *cronistas*, experts of a particular subject matter or of intellectual figures –in this case Marcos and Montemayor–, are indicative of Loeza’s attempt to emphasize the veracity and to add substantiation to her writing, to convince her readers that her own ideas are based on research, or in-depth reporting. This is another characteristic of the *nueva crónica*. Moreover, it has also been seen how she inserts bibliographical data whenever possible, for that same reason.

In a discussion about the poorest state in Mexico with Ricardo Rocha in 1998 on her TV program titled *A través del espejo*, Loeza tells the distinguished media journalist that his two part program on Chiapas as an update on the terrible events of 1997<sup>40</sup> was so

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<sup>40</sup>The most tragic incident was the massacre of 45 people –mostly women and children– at Acteal on December 22, 1997. Loeza eulogizes the victims in a *crónica* in *Reforma* from December 30 of the same year. It is titled “45 esquelas” (“45 Death Announcements”) and is included in *Las obsesiones de Sofía*.

important for the entire country because images speak louder than words: “ya sabíamos de la miseria que siempre ha habido en Chiapas, pero verlas así, ver a esos tzoltziles moverse, comer esas tortillas duras con sal, a esos niños con los pies sumidos en el lodo... Yo creo que a millones de televidentes nos conmovió muchísimo y te agradecemos mucho en esos momentos que nos abrieras de esa forma los ojos” (“we already knew about the misery that has always existed in Chiapas, but seeing them like that, seeing those tzoltzils moving, eating those hard tortillas with salt, those children with their feet stuck in the mud... I think that millions of viewers were moved tremendously and we thanked you much in those moments when you opened our eyes in that way”; *Detrás del espejo* 79). He responds that it was difficult for him and his whole crew to overcome their pain at what they were witnessing and to maintain their equilibrium, at the same time not losing their ability to suffer while dedicating their whole heart and soul to their job.<sup>41</sup> He adds that he can tell her with total candor that of all of the conflicts that he covered in Central America, including the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, that nothing came close to what he experienced in Chiapas: “[J]amas en mi vida había visto y había vivido y había escuchado y había sentido en la piel, en el alma, tanto dolor como cuando llegué al campamento en Sheollep. [...] Por un lado el ejercer tu oficio, el descubrir, y por el otro lado el no poder dejar de lastimarte, de morirte un poco con esta gente, de sentir sus fríos y sus temores y sus dolores” (“Never in my life had I seen and lived and heard and felt in my skin, in my soul, so much pain as when I arrived at the camp in Sheollep. [...] On the one hand, doing

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<sup>41</sup> “[L]as principales dificultades son intentar sustraerse al dolor que vas descubriendo paso a paso, y quiero decir sustraerse porque tienes que seguir siendo un profesional de la información, seguir manteniendo y tratando de mantener un equilibrio, y a la vez seguir teniendo la capacidad de sufrir, de estremecerte, de poner la piel, las entrañas en tu trabajo” (80).



your job, discovering, and on the other not being able to stop from hurting, from dying a little with these people, of feeling their cold and their fears and their pains”; 80).

Loeza and Rocha then discuss what is the most important part in this interview, and the reason for which I am citing so much of it, for it leads into my conclusion that the rebellion in Chiapas had more to do with the PRI’s defeat in the elections of 2000 than the people’s anger at the widespread corruption within the party or its 70 years of electoral fraud. They examine the lessons learned from Chiapas and how it has affected the whole country, by reminding Mexicans that what is fundamental “es la sociedad civil, la sociedad” (“is the civil society, the society”; 88). Rocha claims that “ahora la sociedad está mucho más informada, mucho más organizada y con toda la razón del mundo, mucho más demandante con los gobiernos. Quiere gobiernos transparentes, limpios, que no sean rateros, que no sean corruptos” (now society is much more informed, much more organized and with all of the reason in the world, much more demanding with their leaders. It wants transparent and clean governments, that don’t rob, that aren’t corrupt”; 89). They both agree that Mexicans have matured and become democratized. Loieza concludes: “Ahora somos más responsables, puesto que ahora sabemos más; entonces, ya no tenemos esta venda en los ojos. Por ende, tenemos que responder con responsabilidad. La respuesta es res-pon-sa-bi-li-dad... El pueblo ya no chupa el dedo, ya no lo puedes engañar” (“Now we’re more responsible, because we now know more; so, we don’t have that blindfold on our eyes anymore. Therefore, we have to respond with responsibility. The answer is re-spon-sa-bi-li-ty... The people aren’t sucking their thumb anymore, you can no longer fool them”; 90). Thus, Chiapas awakened the conscience of the rest of the Mexicans to believe that they could build a civil society made up of responsible citizens by demanding their rights. The result would be the birth of a true democracy that Mexico

had never experienced. The long revolution at the beginning of the century would finally be realized at the very end, in a revolution that gave continuous updates on the Internet (see [www.ezln.org](http://www.ezln.org)) and was followed by an international audience.<sup>42</sup>

In Solares's *El gran electoral* from 1993, there is an insightful prediction about what would take place in Chiapas, and in turn, what would bring about the demise of the PRI. For Solares, the country people were waking up, whether the PRI was aware of it or not, creating "vientos que se le pueden volver tempestades en los años próximos" ("winds that could turn into storms in the coming years"). His conclusion is that "la clave del fin del sistema está en esa gente, porque el día en que el México rural deje de ser manipulable, el partido oficial se volverá minoritario... y morirá" ("the key to the end of the system is in those people, because the day that rural Mexico stops being manipulable, the official party will become the minority... and will die"; 85). And that is exactly what happened in the presidential elections of 2000 that will be discussed in the next section.

#### 6.4 Mexicans achieve what had become a national obsession

In the Epilogue to *La factura* titled "Feliz como una lombriz" ("Happy as a Clam"), Loaeza expresses her jubilation over Vicente Fox's victory, even though she says he was not her candidate nor her "cup of tea" (267).<sup>43</sup> After admitting how much she and

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<sup>42</sup>Current nightly newscasts of the war between the Palestinians and the Israelis show scenes where in the background in the Palestinian sectors can be seen posters of Arafat alongside those of other 20<sup>th</sup> century revolutionaries, among them Che Guevara and Marcos with his black ski mask. Marcos has become one of the new international symbols of struggles for justice by the oppressed.

<sup>43</sup>It is worth noting here that Loaeza does not say that she did not vote for him but rather that he was not her candidate. In "Opting for Fox: Why –and How– the Mexicans Went for the PAN," Judith Hellman explains that many PRD voters opted for Fox simply because they knew that their candidate –Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas– could not win. Their

others had ridiculed this “rancherote tan rústico” (“big rancher who was so rustic”) for his boots, his ignorance, his way of speaking –more ranch-like than presidential, like the U.S.’s George W. Bush– his impenetrable logic, and above all because his party [the PAN] was so “mocho” (“self-righteous”) and conservative, she claims that his victory led Mexicans through the doorway to democracy. Albeit she does add that the road was there in 1988 but Mexicans had not dared to travel it at the time (270).

The following passage that Loaeza directs toward the “ciudadanos priistas” (“PRI’s citizens”) is spoken in the name of all of the rest of Mexico’s “citizens”:

...ya estábamos hartos. Ya estábamos saturados. Ya estábamos hasta la coronilla. Ya los a-lu-ci-ná-ba-mos. Ya no los queríamos ver ni en pintura. Ya no queríamos saber de ustedes. Nos chocaban. Nos irritaban. Nos ofendían. Nos desdafiaban. Nos robaban. Nos subestimaban.. Nos fregaban. Nos cansaban. Y lo que es peor, nos degradaban. ¿De veras, queridos priistas, no se habían dado cuenta antes a qué grado millones de mexicanos los repudiábamos? ¿De veras creyeron que a pesar de todo lo que ha cambiado la sociedad civil mexicana, íbamos a votar por ustedes? (269)

...we were fed up. We’d had it. We couldn’t take anymore. You were freaking us out. We couldn’t stand looking at you anymore. We didn’t want to hear about you anymore. You made us sick. You irritated us. You offended us. You scorned us. You robbed us. You underestimated us. You screwed us. You wore us out. And what’s worse, you degraded us. Really, dear priistas, hadn’t you realized to what degree millions of us Mexicans repudiated you? Did you really think that despite all that has changed in Mexico’s civil society, that we were going to vote for you?

Here she is not only pouring out her feelings, by speaking on behalf of other non-priistas, but she is employing everyday Mexican language and expressions. This “orality,” Corona contends, is another feature that should be emphasized in the context of the chroniclers’

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vote became a vote against the PRI. She also claims that “[m]ore than two million people who voted for PRD candidates for the Senate and Chamber of Deputies nevertheless chose Fox for president” (8).

writing. He holds that “chronicles are filled with colloquialisms, inflections from oral discourse, and verbal expressions transcribed from the different subcultures and dialects of Mexico City’s urban sprawl” (“Contesting the Lettered City” 199). However, Loeza’s “orality” is typical of the Mexican middle class rather than the popular classes, although sometimes she does use terms that cross class lines. Most of the passages cited in this chapter demonstrate this characteristic of what Corona calls the urban chronicle as well.

Loeza’s final thoughts on the results of the 2000 election are summed up in her call to action: “Dejémonos de viejos rencores y celebremos el hecho de que ya no nos gobernará un partido, un sistema, un régimen, un aparato y una banda, cuya mayoría está coludida por la corrupción y la impunidad” (“Let’s leave our old grudges behind and celebrate the fact that we’ll no longer be governed by one party, one system, one regime, one political machine and one band, whose majority is tied with corruption and impunity”; 269-270). Loeza is delighted with what she is regarding here as a major coup for Mexican democracy. Now, one of her current obsessions is how to get President Fox to address and resolve the situation in Chiapas, which is still ongoing and which still continues to receive international attention, but has not received the President’s attention because it is not presently on his agenda.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>In a chronicle titled “El silencio elocuente de Fox” from March 14, 2002, Loeza discusses the letter written by Madame Mitterrand to Fox –printed in *La Jornada* the day before. In it she reminds him of his promise to her and to the Mexican people to effect real change in the government, particularly in regard to the conflict in Chiapas “de honrar la firma de los acuerdos de San Andrés, que reconocían los derechos de los indígenas, para así crear las condiciones adecuadas para una paz justa y digna” (“by honoring the signing of the San Andrés accord, that recognized rights of the indigenous, and thus create appropriate conditions for a just and dignified peace”).

## 6.5 Concluding remarks

Thus it has been seen how Loaeza's writing addresses a wide variety of issues that Corona points out as being some of the most consequential in the recent past: NAFTA and the problems it generated; Chiapas and the awakening of Mexico's national conscience toward indigenous rights; the corruption in politics and the abuse of governmental power resulting in the repression of human rights and the mockery of democracy; Mexico City and its social problems resulting in violence and ungovernability ("Contesting the Lettered City": 197). Additionally, she chronicles the flaunting of wealth, pettiness, snobbery, racism and classism of the upper classes that never cared who was in power as long as their personal interests –i.e. their personal fortunes– were not affected, and therefore were oftentimes in collusion with the ruling party. She also offers her readers a history of these well-to-do –that coincides with the changes taking place in society– and who never seemed to be affected until the crisis of December, 1994. In other words, her writing has shown how she has always been an advocate for change by criticizing the powers that be. In the prologue to *Las obsesiones de Sofía*, Luz Aguilar Zinser affirms that Loaeza's work "será fértil documento para entender cómo vivieron en carne y hueso estos tiempos de transición" ("will be a fertile document to understand how these times of transition were lived in flesh and blood"; 17), and that is what I have tried to prove in this chapter.

At the same time, Loaeza's narrative style of incorporating irony, humor, parody and sarcasm, oftentimes with the biting, sardonic timbre that frequently emerges when describing one of her "obsessions," correspond to the *crónica's* characteristics. So too are her continuous employment of "mexicanismos" ("Mexican expressions"), foreign words –particularly English and French– her play on words with titles, her use of epithets, her almost trademark use of anaphoric repetition, and her orality in all of the ways

outlined in the last section. In addition, her intertextual references and bibliographic citations give her writing a flavor that is uniquely Loaeza. It is entertaining as well as thought-provoking, often “light” as well as “heavy.”<sup>45</sup>

Loaeza, who is considered by Linda Egan to be “a younger member of Mexico’s cadre of quality *cronistas*” (240, endnote18), has written seventeen books—seven of which are compilations of her chronicles—yet she has not yet been included in any anthologies of the *nueva crónica*. Although the examination of Loaeza and her texts in these last two chapters is by no means complete, since there is still so much of her writing that could be analyzed, it is my hope that it serves to introduce her as a *cronista* who has made a significant contribution to the contemporary Mexican chronicle. Egan asserts that good chronicles are commensurate to good literature (131), and Loaeza’s literary journalism is writing of both style and substance. It was pointed out in chapter five how Corona claims that there is a need for further study of the urban chronicle of the twentieth century, since it has been relatively ignored by the literary academy, and “el panorama bibliográfico, tanto teórico como crítico, es todavía muy limitado” (“the bibliographic panorama, both theoretical and critical, is still very limited”; “Cuadrando el círculo” 12). That sentiment is echoed by Egan. She maintains that although there have been a few histories of chronicles, and there are a fair number of anthologies, “[t]he regret is that they

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<sup>45</sup>Both *Manual I* and *II* have introductions that are loaded with history, yet the actual content of the rest of these two books are merely entertaining definitions of mostly very “light” words or phrases. Whereas the Introduction to *Manual I* has only twenty-five pages, the Introduction to *Manual II* is eighty-six pages long, is made up of forty-four separate chronicles, only two of which had been previously published in *Niñas*—“Los sacadólares a fuerzas” (“The Dollar-removers, Who Had to Do It”) and “La gorda en patines” (“The Fat Lady on Skates”). The other forty-two chronicles, as well as these latter two, offer a chronological tour through Mexico’s history from 1968 through the Salinas administration.

go so short a distance toward criticism” (xx). Monsiváis is the core of her sources of criticism, and a few others who studied him.<sup>46</sup>

I join both Corona and Egan in their assertion that this unique form of Mexican literary journalism merits and requires further in-depth study since it is so important for chronicling Mexican society in all of its aspects. Part of Foucault’s statement in the epigraph at the beginning of chapter five is again of pertinence here for its suggestion that “the society in which we live” –encompassing both its economical and power structures that result in its political function– is perhaps the most crucial factor in our existence. It has been shown how Loaeza is not only aware of, but is also concerned with the political function of her society. In conclusion, Loaeza and her fellow Mexican chroniclers write articles everyday, just as literary journalists do the world over. For Mexico, their *crónicas* will not only be tomorrow’s history, but part of its literature as well, i.e. Pound’s “news that stays news.”

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<sup>46</sup>At present, there are only a handful of scholars of the form, and they were the ones most cited in this analysis of Loaeza’s work: Egan, Corona, and Jörgensen.

## CONCLUSIONS

Several years ago, I took a course titled “Literary Journalism” at The Ohio State University with Professor Sharon West. I did not realize at the time that it had such a long history that included the New Journalism that I had read in the 60s and 70s. I was immediately “hooked” on this kind of writing since I found it amazing that it was as entertaining as some of the best novels that I was reading and had read for many of my courses in Latin American literature. I began to see its connection to other kinds of literary nonfiction writing, and discovered that there were debates about such things called fact/fiction novels, nonfiction novels, factual fiction, etcetera. This led me to realize that my favorite author –Isabel Allende– was a literary journalist who just happened to write novels. The result is this dissertation.

I chose to pursue these ideas, although my ambitions at first were just to explain what literary journalism was and then to present how elements of this literary nonfiction form functioned in Allende’s work, and in some other author’s that I had not yet chosen. However, I soon realized that what one scholar called literary journalism, another called literary nonfiction, and there was no consensus at all with the terminology, nor with the characteristics, rules or guidelines. I then figured that it would be interesting to show how this genre corresponded in both Latin America and the U.S., and concluded that it would also be original to compare the work of a novelist to a practicing literary journalist. By accident I came upon Guadalupe Loaeza’s *Sin cuenta (Who’s Counting?)*; 1996), and



perceived that it was not only a work of literary journalism, but was also a compilation of her chronicles, which in turn steered me to an investigation of the contemporary Mexican chronicle. Thus, one thing led to another, and that is why I am telling this story. It narrates the birth of this thesis and what I have accomplished.

In chapter two, I pointed out how Beth Jörgensen contends that with the exception of *testimonio* and autobiography, serious critical studies of “nonfiction literary writing” in Latin America are sorely lacking as well, and this absence lies in direct contrast to the huge effect that nonfiction writing has had “on the formation of Latin American letters since the colonial period,” as well as the widespread “popularity of contemporary nonfiction among the general reading public” (“Facing Facts” 119). Likewise, I presented John Hartsock’s complaint about the dearth of significant studies of literary journalism, what he calls in the subtitle of his book a “modern narrative form,” given the prominence that many of its authors –such as Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, among many others– have had and continue to have today. One only needs to look at the *New York Times* reading list every week to realize the importance of nonfiction for the publishing industry. That then, was the starting point for the investigation that I undertook in chapter two. Since the purpose of this dissertation was to explore how nonfiction literary writing conformed to Allende’s and Loaeza’s work, I provided a summary of literary nonfiction and literary journalism in both Latin America and the U.S. I did so not only to lay the groundwork for the examination of Allende’s and Loaeza’s work in the following chapters, by explaining exactly what *are* literary journalism, literary nonfiction, and the Mexican chronicle –the foundation of this thesis– but also to fill the void that I observed more and more as I discovered that there were no studies that encompassed both of these disciplines at the same time. My research of literary nonfiction writing has helped me to

understand, like Hartsock and Jørgensen, how much more exploration in this field still needs to be done. It is therefore my hope that this area of my dissertation will help to pave the way for future investigations by providing a source of reference for a comparative look at how the genre works on both sides of the border.

In chapters three and four, I offered a comprehensive analysis of the literary nonfictive features in three of Allende's novels. I demonstrated how the writing in *La casa de los espíritus* (*The House of the Spirits*), *De amor y de sombra* (*Of Love and Shadows*) and *El plan infinito* (*The Infinite Plan*) comprises testimonial and documentary aspects of literary nonfiction, and how it incorporates journalistic characteristics. I also explained how the writing in these novels crosses the boundaries between fact and fiction, defying classification. Additionally, I showed how her affinity towards veracity led her to create what Lennard Davis and Ronald Weber call "factual fiction," in her own unique and creative style, "making [the] facts dance," as Ben Yagoda would say.

Chapters five and six were probably the biggest challenge of this dissertation –due to the work involved in exploring the contemporary Mexican chronicle. Yet they were also the most rewarding because I still have Mexico in my blood and still consider myself a Mexican more than I do an "American." Accordingly, my concerns for Mexico over the years correspond, and have corresponded, to those of Loeza that consist of social and economic justice for all Mexicans, as well as a legitimate democracy obtained through a civil society that is truly participatory. My goals for the examination of Loeza in this dissertation were firstly to introduce her as a writer/*cronista* of significance, by showing how her chronicles are valuable for both their "style" –of incorporating humor, irony, satire, parody and oftentimes sarcasm into her narrations–, and "substance" –by addressing moral and ethical issues. Secondly, I wanted to present how her obsessions

illustrated what was wrong with Mexican society and what led to its state of ungovernability, which culminated in the ousting of the PRI as a fitting beginning to the start of a new century. That is also one of the reasons why I chose to analyze her works thematically. Not only would I be able to refer to more of her texts, published in a variety of sources, but I would also be able to demonstrate how her obsessions compared to the social, political and historical preoccupations of her fellow *cronistas*. Lastly, as I express my final conclusions about Loaeza and her work, I reiterate what I stated at the end of chapter six. Like Ignacio Corona and Linda Egan, I agree that much more in-depth study needs to be done on the Mexican chronicle. At the same time, albeit the analysis in chapters five and six fall short of demonstrating the extensiveness of Loaeza's writing, it can serve as a point of departure for further exploration of either Loaeza or another chronicler as yet unnoticed or ignored by the critics, but whose work in its totality contributes significantly to the existing research of the contemporary Mexican chronicle.

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