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EXPLORING *CRÓNICAS* THROUGH THEIR VALUE POSITIONS

A NARRATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
CONTEMPORARY LITERARY JOURNALISM ON THE
MEXICAN ILLICIT DRUG TRADE

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The heart of this dissertation consists of texts that represent *crónicas*, a contemporary form of Mexican literary journalism. The dissertation's original contribution is its concentration on *crónicas* from a unique angle – through the value positions they reveal.

The theme of the illicit drug trade is used as a methodological and contextual tool with which to filter out valid texts about controversies and representations of societal frictions. The aim of the study is to answer three main questions. Firstly, what value positions can be discerned in discourses in the contemporary Mexican *crónicas* that deal with the illicit drug trade? Secondly, how are these value positions composed? The third and final question consists of two parts, and its answers are valid only within the scope of the current textual corpus: taking into consideration the answers to the first two questions, what is the form of a *crónica* and what is its function in Mexico's literary, journalistic, and social scene? To answer these questions, ten *crónicas* have been selected for analysis.

The theoretical framing revolves around three main concepts: values, discourses, and the *crónica* as a genre. Values are theorized from axiological viewpoints of value theory, and 'value' is defined as something considered as either good or important (or negatively, not good or not important). For discourse, I apply the narrative approach (Todorov), the action-based approach (Potter & Wetherell), and the Foucauldian approach, which looks at discourse as a generator of social and collective meaning(s). With regard to the *crónica*, defining the genre is one of the secondary aims of this monograph. In the process of framing the *crónica*, both previous scholarly work and current research results are considered.

To answer my research questions, I employ narrative discourse analysis. The model for the analysis is derived from the semiotic square and actantial model, developed by semiotician Algirdas Greimas. Based on Greimas, I have formed a compatible model that helps to systemize the accounts of values, and this model points to corresponding narrative structures in the texts. According to this model, the narrative is classified into six basic categories: the Subject and the Subject's Objective (the relation between a Subject and its Objective is called the Principal Value Position); Helpers; Opponents; Helpers and Opponents; and Neither Helpers nor Opponents. These last four categories surround the Subject's position when combined with its Objective, and they are called Instrumental Value Positions. The Greimas-inspired axiological model for narrative analysis figuratively presents the relations between the actantial value positions in the narrative and makes it possible to reflect results in reference to the reality the actants depict.

The results of this study demonstrate three main aspects of the value positions in contemporary Mexican *crónicas* dealing with the illicit drug trade:

variety, inconsistency, and contradiction. In composing the value positions, mostly abstract and allusive modalities are employed. In order to heighten emotion in readers, authors of the *crónicas* mainly use four types of literary mood: irony, suspense, worry, and melodrama. In terms of form, the *crónica*, according to this study, could be defined as a genre that mediates the author's value positions vis-à-vis circumstantial value positions. The function of the *crónica* can be described as giving a description, analysis, explanation, or criticism of different value positions. All in all, it could be said that the *crónicas* have powerful evaluative potential.

FOREWORD

Juan Villoro, a *cronista*, has written, ‘The developed countries have demonstrated a need for a utopia of backwardness, a place where their wilderness dreams can still come true, an ideological theme park, sufficiently removed so as not to affect their own reality, but close enough to travel there and write Ph.D. thesis.’

When I first read this witty statement, I could not help but wonder if I was also one of those ‘adventurous’ students who enjoyed telling everybody that they were studying Latin America but always leaving out the fact that Latin America was mostly unravelled in the safe environment of my desk and laptop. Was I one of those investigators who imposed a patronizing tone of someone who knew better just because of being from the outside. Or was I capable to acknowledge the limitations of my ideas? Was I capable of comprehension of the complexity of the realities of Latin America? Above all, was I able to avoid the almost cliché-like understandings of the continent because after all, there is no such thing as the reality of Latin America – when it comes to Latin America, it consists of unimaginable number of different realities dependant on geographical location, ethnical diversities and different historical and political developments.

An impulse to write this dissertation was given by a random thought in the fall 2012 when tired of organizing events and talking to tens of people a day, I suddenly realized how fulfilling it would be to dedicate myself to just one topic, idea or project – something that would keep me isolated from the unpleasant everyday noise. Suddenly dedicating myself to the study seemed appealing. I had completed degree in Spanish Philology at the University of Tartu in 2007 and I had been away from the academia since. But I realized it was time to pull myself back to that world I had escaped from.

The Latin American studies that I had already fallen in love with before (my Master’s thesis had treated the Latin American equivalents of Beat movement) was to be the trampoline to new horizons but as my Alma Mater did not have a special unit of Latin American studies, I turned eyes to the north instead (what an irony!) and chose University of Helsinki to be my new platform of ideas.

Earlier I had been interested in comparisons of differences and similarities but now I wanted to grasp as much as possible through just one phenomenon. What could have been a better research theme than the *crónica* that embodies several elements of the Latin American culture. Yet, I needed to narrow down my research object. And now, something sat on my shoulders, whispering in my ear that against my will, the time had come to face certain demons. The *crónicas* to choose from were to be of the illicit drug trade, a topic that had haunted me for quite some time. An instant geographical narrowing followed as I decided to choose narratives that were from Mexico, one of those countries

where the problem was burning. And this way I could also undertake concepts that I had developed almost an obsession with – values and language. And unexpectedly, the circle was completed because it is precisely the *crónica* that seemed so proper for studying discursive value positions.

My doctoral dissertation is ready now, but I hope that I have not been one of those Ph.D. students that Villoro laughed at. I stood up from the desk to return to my beloved Colombia and later create a temporary new home in Mexico. My reality was shaped by meeting the journalists whose words, fears and wishes touched me. Long shadows of those meetings were cast on everything I studied later at home. These shadows were the longest on the day I learned that one of the Mexican *cronistas* I had interviewed and even formed a sort of mentor-student relationship with, Javier Valdez Cárdenas, was cruelly killed. It was right there when my knowledge about the reality of the Mexican journalists shifted – suddenly I felt as if the subject I was investigating had gone under my skin. Nothing comparable to the journalists themselves who every day must suffer from fear, anxiety, confusion, desperation, and enormous gratitude when something actually works out for the best. No, nothing similar. But at least I had lifted my head from the desk.

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**PART I: INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT,
CONCEPTUAL FRAMING, AND
METHODOLOGY**

1 INTRODUCTION

On 8 October 2015, the Swedish Academy announced the recipient of the 108th Nobel Prize in Literature: the Belarusian journalist and writer Svetlana Alexievich. This achievement is remarkable, because it had been more than half a century since the Nobel Prize committee last recognized the value of nonfiction and documentary writing (Gourevitch 2014). Perhaps this appreciation shows that the world of textual productions is again reassessing the old domains and recognizing the importance and legacy of writings that are nonfictional.

But herein lies confusion about the genre in which Alexievich writes. Should we indeed call it nonfiction? Or does it represent some of the ‘forms’ that John C. Hartsock (2000, pp. 4-5) counts via other sources: creative nonfiction, art-journalism, new journalism, lyrics in prose, literature of fact, non-imaginative literature, or something else? Hartsock himself calls certain types of writing that combine the journalistic with the literary simply literary journalism, and I have decided to follow his example. But on a personal note before undertaking an analysis of the subject, it actually matters very little to me what to call Alexievich’s works and works similar to hers. All I can vouch for is that her writing reminds me of some of the most pleasant and meaningful moments in my reading life. First, it makes me recall the tingling feeling I experienced on first opening Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* and discovering that a book can narrate something that really happened, yet instead of mere description, the whole story and the settings open up as if the reader were right in the middle of it. The next moment I recall is reading, years later, a book that was written long before the Capote’s bestseller. It was *Operación Masacre* by the Argentine journalist Rodolpho Walsh, another piece about a crime and its victims with extensive contextualization. But far from the Americas and their crime stories, such writings also remind me of the fantastic Polish reportage writer Ryszard Kapuściński (who coincidentally was born in a town that today is in Belarussian territory) and whose ‘magic’ travel journalism made me rethink all previous ideas about a journalist’s ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts.’ Or, to be more precise, it seemed that Kapuściński had no ‘don’ts’ at all.

With these comparisons, I do not claim that Alexievich, Capote, Walsh, and Kapuściński write similarly, not at all. They all have very different styles and interests. What I am referring to is this feeling of excitement in reading a literary account about events that really happened, investigated by a writer-journalist, and delivered with unique expression. In the case of the above-mentioned authors, it was never only what was told, but also how it was told. Reading such accounts has also been confusing. It appears that truth is told, but only a version of it. It seems like reading facts, but are the ‘facts’ real? Capote was openly accused of ignoring the veracity of his interpretation (Schrynemakers 2008, pp. 51-52). And Kapuściński has raised doubts about

whether his works were nonfictional at all (Ash 2009; Domosławski 2010). How many subjective facets can truth have before it becomes a lie or until truth becomes meaningless? These questions (which are always left unanswered) add further to the excitement of reading nonfiction.

One of the explanations given as a response to Kapuściński's criticism comes from James L. Aucoin (2001, p. 17; my emphasis):

This would mean developing within journalists the ability to exercise moral judgement in individual situations and giving them broad latitude as they apply the necessary virtues, including honesty, justice, and humaneness. Kapuscinski's work courageously challenges social and political conventions, projecting an intensely personal accounting of horrendous and dastardly events, bearing witness through literary style as well as through content. **His distinct voice becomes his badge of authenticity.**

Aucoin's interpretation offers one way of perceiving the function of nonfiction on a wider scale – not only in the dichotomy of fiction and nonfiction, but also as an author turning into the 'guarantor' of truth. For that purpose, the author succumbs to the context of facts, and the combination of context and author's perspective brings forth idiosyncratic writing with elements of appraisal and judgement – the juxtapositions and the oppositions. In a narrower sense, a nonfictional text could be seen as a mediator of different kinds of values and also as a platform of value positioning.

The value positioning is precisely what I intend to explore in this dissertation. What I mean by value positioning in the narrative is having evaluative standpoints carefully selected, grouped, and presented to the recipient. My aim is not to categorize the values; rather it is to identify and analyse the narrative discourses that relate to values. This also comes with the realization that **values do not mean the same as value positions**. While I define values as something to be considered right, good, or important (or the negative values as something to be considered wrong, bad, or irrelevant), **the value position here is a declaration or a manifestation of value**. Such value positions may become apparent from the words of those who hold the positions; sometimes they are positioned by the bystanders or observers. The positioning of values is a linguistic activity, and discourses as linguistic formations can easily modify the reality around values by modifying our perceptions of that reality.

But it is not value positioning as such that is the focus of this study nor even value positioning in nonfiction writing. More narrowly, I want to shift course towards Latin America or, to be geopolitically more exact, to Mexico, in order to **study the *crónica*** – a Latin American form of nonfiction – and its potential to shape the perception of reality through the value positions expressed therein.

Before arguing the relevance of such an investigation, I will first briefly introduce the notion of the *crónica*. The word *crónica* ('chronicle' in English) might instantly call up associations with the colonial chronicles of the

sixteenth century, texts in which events were described chronologically and for a specific audience. But in the Latin American world (and to a certain extent in the Spanish and Portuguese spheres), the word transcends its historical meaning and carries on today as a notion of writing whereby the descriptions of actual realities are delivered in a form that combines journalistic and literary aspirations – the need to inform joined with the need to do so aesthetically. This also means that authors of the *crónicas*, the *cronistas*, may often define themselves as journalists, but almost always define themselves as writers.

Although the *crónica* has remained marginal in terms of consumption, meaning that it has never been a cultural production for the masses, it has always had a certain cultural prominence. Some authors of *crónicas* in modern times, at the intersection of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, such as José Martí or Rubén Darío, left important legacies that are still being examined. In the twentieth century, the *crónica's* development into contemporary forms has been associated, for instance, with such important literati as Carlos Monsiváis (Mexico), Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá (Puerto Rico), and Pedro Lemebel (Chile). And it appears that the turn of the millennium did not send the *crónica* into oblivion; quite the contrary. The June 2013 issue of the journal *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación* asks openly if we are seeing a boom in the Latin American *crónica*, and the journal's content seems to answer the question affirmatively. This is further confirmed by Viviane Mahieux (2013), who claims that in Latin America 'at the turn of the 21st century, the most prominent public intellectuals can be primarily identified as chroniclers.'

As the pool of *crónicas* in Latin America is extensive, I have decided to narrow the selection by establishing certain thematic, temporal, and geographic filters; thus, for the analysis, I have chosen only **contemporary Mexican *crónicas* about the illicit drug trade**. Such filters have the ability first to present effectively the *crónica's* potential in value positioning, and secondly, do so in a way that could be generalizable and representative. There are several reasons why I argue that studying the value positions in contemporary *crónicas* on the Mexican illicit drug trade can be especially rewarding.

First of all, when it comes to the *crónica* in general, despite its long history and its prominence in Latin American cultural life, **the number of studies on the genre remains modest**. Hypothetically, there could be a wide range of significant possibilities for analysing the *crónica*. As a hybrid form of writing, encapsulating both the literary and journalistic, these possibilities could include various disciplinary realms instead of focusing on just one. Study of the *crónica* could perhaps cover an entire cultural production in a certain territory during a certain period of time. Yet such potential has hardly been fulfilled in scholarly works, although it must be noted that more emphasis has been put on the *crónica* since the mid-1990s. Hartsock (2000), although he talks about US literary journalism rather than the *crónica*, nevertheless gives

an explanation that in my opinion could also explain the relative lack of *crónica*-related research as well. He claims that the ‘critical marginalization’ (ibid., p. 204) of literary journalism has been due to the hegemony of two powerful critical realms – the literary and the journalistic, and neither of them has been able to cope with the liminality of literary journalism, resulting in a situation in which literary journalism has been almost entirely ignored by academia.

Fortunately, research on *crónica* nevertheless exists, and the situation has gradually become better in the critical debate about the genre’s development, importance, and formal nuances. Somewhat helpful has also been that *crónicas* are being published in anthologies. The year 2012 was especially fruitful, as two very substantial collections were issued: *Mejor que ficción: Crónicas ejemplares* (edited by Jorge Carrión) and *Antología de crónica latinoamericana actual* (edited by Darío Jaramillo Agudelo). Here I provide an overview of some of the most outstanding research on the *crónica*. Literary-historiographic outlooks have been provided by Viviane Mahieux (2011), Susana Rotker (2005), and Aníbal González (2007). The *crónica*’s palimpsestic nature has been covered by Tania Gentic (2013). Some studies concentrate solely on certain authors, one of the most remarkable being Linda Egan’s (2001) contribution to the works and thought of Carlos Monsiváis. One topical focus has been the so-called ‘urban *crónica*’; in addition to the aforementioned work of Mahieux, the ‘urban *crónica*’ has also been investigated by Esperança Bielsa (2006), especially the urban *crónica* of Mexico City and Guayaquil. Anadel Bencomo (2002) also concentrates on the *crónicas* of the Mexico City. And in connection with Mexico, as an attempt to give theoretical perspective there is a compilation of articles on the contemporary Mexican *crónica* (2002b, edited by Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen) and Beth Jörgensen’s (2011) *Documents in Crisis: Nonfiction Literatures in Twentieth-Century Mexico*.

By choosing Mexico as the geographical focus of my study, I position this dissertation in an active debate with the prior treatments of the Mexican *crónica*. Some of the articles and monographs on the Latin American *crónica* were originally written in English, but most have been published for Spanish-speaking audiences. And herein lies the reason for the language of this dissertation: a monograph written in English has the prospect of reaching an audience that is still unaware of even the existence of the contemporary Latin American *crónica*.

None of the attempts to theorize and analyse the *crónica* have concentrated on its evaluative potential. This is something to which the present work intends to contribute. But in order to find contextual uniformity, the filtering subject of **the illicit drug trade** was selected for the research.

In 2012, an international encounter between *cronistas* or the authors of the *crónica* (*Encuentro Nuevos Cronistas de Indias 2 Un Mundo de Historias por Descubrir*) was held in Mexico, and the following comment was made by

Mario Jurich (2012), the editor of the Colombian magazine *Malpensante* (my translation):

The *crónica* allows us to understand the complexity of a certain outlook. For example, the *crónicas* about drug trafficking permit us to see in many details that it cannot be solved only by using power measurements. There are many elements in the equation, and a finer design is needed to attack this problem. It is precisely the *crónicas* that have provided us this complexity.¹

Following Jurich's thinking, the present research, by investigating the discursive value positioning, will explore how the *crónicas* reveal a wide range of aspects in such complex and problematic issues as the illicit drug trade. The reflections on and understanding of the subject from the point of view of society, including the oppressed, the poor, and the marginalized, are of a crucial importance.

The illegal drug trade has had both direct and indirect influence on Latin American politics, economy, culture, and everyday life in general. The discourses have not appeared to be consistent. Among the reasons have been political corruption, the growing debate over legalizing drugs, and conflicting images of drug use based on cultural and media expressions. The failure of the U.S.-declared 'war on drugs' has also created several political, cultural, and economic implications for the values and attitudes towards the illicit drug trade.

There are several reasons why drug trafficking has been selected in this dissertation as the subject that bridges value positions in the *crónicas*. First, drug trafficking itself has taken many forms in Latin America, but more important, openly expressed opinions and discussion of the topic have varied a great deal over the decades. The parallel world of real situations and their observation in the *crónicas* opens new perspectives on how the topic has been handled at critical turning points in history, letting us know more about the process towards democratization of the media and simultaneously about the media's changing role. Second, although the topic of the illegal drug trade appears directly or indirectly in many *crónicas* from all over Latin America, it is abundant in *crónicas* from Mexico, a country that is directly involved in such trade. Third, the subject has the necessary 'age' for this research, as it was appearing in Mexican narratives already at the beginning of the twentieth century and has continued to play a significant role since that time, both in society and in writing. Last, drug trafficking is somewhat symptomatic in referring to the biggest issues in Latin America, and in Mexico in particular. It

¹ Originally in Spanish: 'La crónica permite darse cuenta de lo complejo de cierto panorama. Digamos las crónicas que se han hecho sobre narcotráfico, nos permiten entender con mucho detalle que... no se puede solucionarlo sólo de manera policiva. Hay muchos elementos en la ecuación y hay que tener un diseño más fino a la hora de atacar esta cuestión. Las crónicas precisamente nos han dado esta complejidad.'

is a topic full of assumptions, stereotypes, myths, and speculations. Considering the mysticism around the subject and its factual deficiencies, an investigation of the *crónicas* contributes not only to a study of the *crónica*, but also to study of the discourses in the illicit drug trade.

Here is thus the formulation of the dissertation's three main research questions and the closely-connected questions that accompany them. First, **what value positions can be identified in discourses on the contemporary Mexican *crónicas* that treat the subject of the illicit drug trade?** Second, **how are these value positions composed?** The third question actually consists of two parts: **what is the *crónica*'s form and what is its function?**

The first question on what value positions can be found in the *crónicas* will be answered through careful analysis of the corpus with a semiotic narrative model examining the main protagonists (or the Subjects), their respective goals of value (or the Objectives) and other influential entities. The question of how value positions are formed is focused entirely on the author's role in constructing the value positions and manipulating them. The third question on the *crónica*'s form and function is an attempt to define the *crónica* according to the results of this study. There could not be an answer to the third question without having first answered questions one and two. I call this principle a cascade-like investigation. Because of these restrictive conditions for defining the *crónica* fully, the importance of the answer to the last question should not be overemphasized. Yet there will be an opportunity to compare countless other definitions of the *crónica* as a playful closure to this research. Occasionally, this investigation also answers the question of why certain narrative value positions have been included in the illicit drug trade-related *crónicas*, but such moments will be scarce, as they are highly dependent on my ability to interpret the specific context of the discursive utterances (which in the case of Mexico's illicit drug trade is complicated) and also on the indications of possible discursive changes in time.

This work deals with the *crónica* as a cultural phenomenon. It is not, however, a treatment of values as such or of Mexico or of the illicit drug trade, all of which are used as tools having different functions as a means to study the *crónica*. I do not put special emphasis on what the discourses in the *crónica* stand for; rather, through the semi-structural analysis I try to grasp the essence of the *crónica*, which I hypothesize might lie in its evaluative potential. I do not define the *crónica* at the beginning of the study nor do I place it in a certain realm (media, literature, or something else). I want the *crónica* to open itself up to me so that the concepts that the analytical process reveals would not be forced by a predetermined frame of thought. The idea is that, during the analysis, the frames would form, making it possible to identify repetitions, patterns, and key themes that would make sense of the *crónica*. And only then would I proceed, yet very sporadically with the analysis of the *crónica* in its socio-political context. In a certain way, the particularity of every *crónica* is lost in this thesis, and quite intentionally. I am interested in features

that keep cropping up from one *crónica* to another. This means, for instance, that in the chapter about the authors of *crónicas*, I do not concentrate on the authors' creative uniqueness, but rather on how the authors lead the process of writing. By working in this way, it is possible to see how value positions are created and emerge in the narratives.

In structure, the dissertation has been divided into two parts. The first part lays the groundwork and justifies the analytical instruments to be used in dealing with the main textual corpus of ten *crónicas*. Chapter 2 starts with contextualization from the perspective of the Mexican literary and media scene followed by a short description of the development of the Mexican illicit drug trade, both in history and in different forms of writing. All three main concepts in this research – the *crónica*, narrative discourse, and values – are expanded in chapter 3, followed by a detailed explanation of the analytical methodology in chapter 4. The second part of the dissertation concentrates on the results gleaned from examining the corpus texts, and here, all the main research questions are answered. Chapters 5 and 6 contemplate the value positions in the main corpus of the study, and chapter 7 concentrates on how those positions are formed. The final analytical part (chapter 8) provides insight into the *crónicas*' form and function based on the results presented in previous chapters. The conclusions of the analytical work are presented in the final chapter (9).

Viviane Mahieux (2013) has stated that the Latin American 'chronicle remains a thriving and evolving practice, and the early 21st century has seen a number of new developments in the genre [...].' In the spirit of this statement, my study of the value positions in the contemporary illicit drug trade-related *crónicas* of Mexico will contest the academic 'discrimination' that literary journalism has suffered over the decades. It will contribute to knowledge of the *crónica* by focusing on the discursive value positions in the narratives, which in turn are connected with the process of meaning making. Thus, the results of this study will not only be relevant as an introduction to an unfamiliar form of writing or serve as a complementary understanding of it but will also reflect on the abundant opportunities to make sense of the ever-perplexing world around us.

2 THE CONTEXT

The writer of a dissertation on contemporary Mexican *crónicas* about the illicit drug trade faces a terrifying moment in contextualizing the work. Where does one begin? What does one start with? After all, the network of associations and relations is colossal. Parts of the corpus for this investigation, in which events are depicted in a highly visual manner, have made me envision the ancient Maya stelae. Or in dealing with the subject of melodrama, I see its start in the famous Mexican Revolution and its melodramatic heroes such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, yet simultaneously I cannot help but remember the times when the whole ex-socialist region shed a tear or two while watching melodramatic Mexican soap operas. And in reading about the cult of one of the most singular saints I have ever heard of, *Santa Muerte*², the folk deity known as ‘Our Lady of Holy Death,’ I cannot help but be reminded of the Mexican Day of the Dead, a unique festivity in which the Catholic and pre-colonial traditions are combined (Congdon 2003, p. 199).

Mexico forms part of several ‘Americas.’ Being situated to the north of Panama, it is a Mesoamerican and North American country (Almada-Villela et al. 2002; Inglehart, Nevitte, & Basañez 2017 [1996]). Yet Mexico also remains tied to its Hispanic legacy and is still considered part of an entity commonly referred to as Latin America (Altman & Prez-Lin 2002). Obviously, this means that both the North and the South of the Americas have influenced Mexico and vice versa – Mexico has influenced both the North and the South. When Mexico is compared to the U.S. and Canada, the most obvious difference is language – Spanish. Other differences can be found in religion, the political system, or socio-economic conditions. For instance, per capita income in Mexico is roughly one-third of that in the U.S.; and the income distribution remains highly unequal (*The World Factbook 2017*). Compared to the rest of Latin America, Mexico has a particularly surprising statistic: even though Latin American countries were filled with political turmoil during the twentieth century, Mexico is a rare example of a country that from 1929 until 2000 was ruled by the same party (the Institutional Revolutionary Party or *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, the name adopted in 1946). In addition, there is a long list of differences and similarities between Mexico and its neighbours both to the South and to the North.

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), not all associations can be included in the contextualization of my project. In the following paragraphs, I will make my best attempt to limit the treatment to the most relevant issues. Because the *crónica* is a hybrid genre that consists of both journalistic and literary features, I will first describe the Mexican literary scene and then provide insights into the country’s media system. As all the texts that make up the research corpus

² *Santa Muerte* will be discussed further in the chapter 5.

for this study were chosen to reflect realities around Mexico's illicit drug trade and its related social crisis, some key background information will also be offered about the crisis itself. Generally, the division of this chapter into subsections is arbitrary, and all the themes dealt with here merge into one another, as does the last section, which is about the writers who depict the harsh reality of Mexico.

THE MEXICAN LITERARY SCENE

Mexican writers have been some of the most prolific in the world, and noteworthy literary figures in Mexico are numerous. To mention only a few names among many, there would have been no *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez without Juan Rulfo's novel *Pedro Páramo* (Aznarez 2003; Rushdie 2014). The world of poetry would be poorer without Octavio Paz. Mexican prose would be unimaginable without the works of Carlos Fuentes. Moreover, as this dissertation is about the meeting point of literature and journalism, it has to be mentioned that one of the leading authors in joining these two realms was Amado Nervo, whose talent flourished first in news reporting and, later, in poetry. Nervo was also one of the representatives of *modernismo*, a literary movement that marked the change from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. The influence of the *modernista* movement on the contemporary *crónica* will be discussed in the next chapter.

When it comes to finding a common denominator for Mexican literature, there have been several interesting proposals. John A. Ochoa (2004) suggests that, for centuries, Mexican literature (with the exception of some postmodernists) depicts a failure that first surprises, and then grants an epiphany, some kind of insight. Various scholars have also called attention to the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) and claimed that its cultural traces have continuously appeared in the country's literature up until the present time (Altenberg 2014; Breinig 1992). Much attention has been given to indigenous idiosyncrasies in Mexican literature (Hunt 2007; Lee 2014; Poffenberger 2007). Given that a number of Mexicans live in the U.S., much research has understandably been dedicated to these expatriates' cultural production, framed more and more as Chicano literature³ (Sokolova 2015; Vasquez 2005). An original approach is Janzen's (2014), who examines collective bodies and interprets the blindness, pilgrimage, motherhood, and miracles of Mexican literature as a challenge to the historical context, which involves the notion of rebellion or resistance. Janzen considers literature as a powerful tool through which Mexican writers fight oppression.

³ Chicano is a term that is now almost interchangeable with Mexican-American, but it would still be wrong to say that Chicano and Mexican-American mean the same thing. However, the term was widely appropriated after the Chicano movement (in the 1960s), which sought to empower Mexican Americans.

Here I would like to call attention to two influential writers whom I consider extremely important in the context of my study. They are Elena Poniatowska and Carlos Monsiváis. Both have been front-line speakers for the contemporary *crónica*, but merely to call them *cronistas* would be an understatement. They are literati, cultural ‘lighthouses,’ and authors whose work transcends genres, times, themes, and borders.

Elena Poniatowska was born in France in 1932 and moved to Mexico after the Second World War. A prolific author, throughout her life as she has practiced almost all literary genres – journalism, novels, short stories, poetry, and dramaturgy. Through her writing, she has become one of the fiercest civil-rights fighters in Mexico. She has had the sensitivity to perceive Mexico’s harsh realities and describe them in a manner that is both aesthetic and revealing. One of the most noteworthy examples of such acuity is her book on the massacre of student protesters by police right before the 1968 Olympic Games – *Massacre in Mexico (La noche de Tlatelolco)* from 1971. Here, Poniatowska meticulously describes the course of one of the most tragic events in Mexican history. She was able to consider the future that would ensue after such a massacre – a future filled with repression, anxiety, and the feeling that an important part of the collective Mexican soul was also killed that night. Besides novels, Poniatowska has also written countless *crónicas*, especially the so-called urban *crónicas*. She has been an advocate for the genre of the *crónica*, on which she has given many classes and workshops.

Another spokesperson and practitioner of the *crónica* throughout his entire career was Carlos Monsiváis (1938–2010). It is hard to overemphasize his role and importance in Mexico’s literary scene. He was a literatus whose aim was to chronicle the zeitgeist of his day – class struggles, political challenges, cultural tendencies, and change in general. His style was singular, filled with satire, empathy, and aggression. In the context of this study, I find Linda Egan’s description of Monsiváis and his writing penetrating. She first observes that Monsiváis ‘[...] understands oratory’s persuasive resources. Fundamental to the chronicle’s *literary* nature is the emotion it enlists to carry its critical thought [...]’ (Egan 2001, p. 232; original emphasis). Egan (2001, p. 234) concludes that Monsiváis ‘drafts a blueprint for the national character by reading his society’s myths, not only to delineate their structures but also to assess their moral content.’ Thus, Egan outlines some of the main features that characterize the *crónica*, such as the combination of critical thought and emotion in addition to the *crónica*’s potential to address social values. Such features will be further elaborated in this dissertation. Among Monsiváis’s contributions to fostering the *crónica* are his editions of anthologies of Mexican *crónicas*, *A ustedes les consta*, published 1979–80.

Elena Poniatowska and Carlos Monsiváis form part of both the literary and the journalistic scene, as do most *cronistas*, irrespective of whether they are more associated with one or the other. Nevertheless, after this brief contextualization of the literary scene, it is paramount to dedicate some space

to the journalistic scene. In the following section, I will discuss the Mexican media system and the recent challenges and changes it has undergone.

THE MEDIA IN MEXICO

Today, Mexican *crónicas* are rarely published in newspapers, although they used to be. Instead, they have moved to magazines that offer in-depth analysis and often have a very small circulation, a fact which is slowly but steadily compensated for by the digitalization of the media. Such magazines with in-depth analysis are, for example, the Mexico City-based *Proceso* (published weekly, print run 93,692), *Gatopardo* (published monthly, print run 60,000), and *Nexos* (published monthly, print run 11,955).⁴ Not all the *crónicas* are published in the capital city. Some are also featured in regional magazines that skilfully combine the advantages of both print and digital media. Examples are the Tijuana-based *Zeta* and the Culiacán-based *Riodoce*.

In the context of the *crónica*, it is interesting to note that according to some investigators, Mexican journalism, along with many other journalistic scenes in Latin America, favours opinion and commentary (advocacy journalism) over the neutral type of event chronicling (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos 2002, p. 177). This tendency was partly confirmed, but also partly contested by interviews conducted with Mexican journalists. According to Mellado et al. (2012, p. 70), Mexican journalists felt positive about being unbiased and neutral, and also felt positive about making a stand by conducting analyses.

The roots of this attitude may lie in what assorted studies have described as political clientelism and political parallelism, notions that on some occasions can be interchangeable and that clearly characterize the Mexican media system (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos 2002; Hughes & Lawson 2005; Mellado et al. 2012; Waisbord 2000). Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, p. 185) define clientelism as

[...] a pattern of social organization in which access to social resources is controlled by patrons and delivered to clients in exchange for defence and various kinds of support [...] and is typically contrasted with forms of citizenship in which access to resources is based on universalistic criteria and formal equality before the law.

Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (ibid., pp. 175, 179) also claim that in comparison to other Latin American countries, clientelism is a central fact of life, especially in Mexico, where newspapers and the private television company Televisa have been dependent on state patronage. Such mutual

⁴ The print-run of the magazines is given according to 2016 statistics (*Instituto Federal Electoral 2016*). To give a comparison of how small the circulation is of magazines in which *crónicas* are published, there are a number of magazines (especially in the categories of sports, home-and-living, and TV) whose circulation numbers range from 200,000 to as much as 700,000.

reliance is, in Mexico, explained by the fact that the state plays a crucial role in the country's economy, and the business sector has to be allied with the political powers in order to succeed. In the Mexican case particularly, the whole media sector developed historically as a political instrument of the ruling party, the PRI or the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos 2002, p. 183, 185; Hughes & Lawson 2005, p. 14). Mellado et al. (2012, p. 65) use the term 'parallelism' to describe a similar tendency to that of clientelism or to denote that the 'media, political parties and economic powers' are 'extremely linked.' Mellado et al. also suggest that political parallelism is the reason why journalists try to uphold the balance of power and, while influencing the public opinion, do so without disrupting the political status quo (*ibid.*, p. 73).

Although change is slow to come to Mexico, still, there have been glimpses of new trends. Since the student protest of 1968 and the societal eruption that followed, the independent press has grown (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos 2002, p. 190). Sallie Hughes (2008) claims that Mexico has moved from an authoritarian society to a more hybrid version in which the media system is market-driven, oligarchic, propagandistic, ideological, and civic. She gives an example of how the media took a citizen-focused approach during the presidential election of 2000, which temporarily broke the long political dominance of the PRI party (*ibid.*, p. 134). There was also a shift in 2003 when a federal law on access to public information was passed to facilitate scholars' and journalists' access to information important to their investigations, but not damaging to public security (Hernández Ramírez & Schwarz 2008, p. 217).

Nevertheless, many media-related problems in Mexico are still connected with the clientelist media system. Such problems include, for instance, corruption among journalists (Orme 1997) and regulatory weaknesses, which are manifested, for instance, in the so-called criminal defamation laws that allow charges to be brought against journalists when they speak against public officials (Hughes 2008). Even if journalists sometimes are truly offensive, there still are too many times when the reason for the persecution of a journalist is simply the reluctance of political representatives to realize that their actions are in the public interest, and it is the right of journalists to scrutinize their (wrong)doings (Hallin & Papathanassopoulos 2002, p. 189).

Probably the biggest problem of the clientelist media system is lack of press freedom, because, as Waisbord (2000, p. 3) notes, 'the degrees of separation between press and government best indicate the degree of press freedom.' The Freedom House Table of Country Scores, where 0 is the score of the freest country and 100 that of the least free, lists Mexico among the least free countries, giving it a score of 64 points. In the Freedom House survey, one of the elements of this poor result was the especially poor political environment in which journalists have to work. To compare, Chile scored 29 points and the U.S. 23 points, while Norway scored 8 (Freedom House 2017).

Unfortunately, the consequences of the lack of press freedom can be tragic. Besides the clientelism, the reasons for the persecution of journalists also lie

in the decades-long social crisis and the violence committed by organized crime. According to the annual report of *Reporteros sin Fronteras*, 11 journalists were killed in Mexico in 2017, and since the year 2000, more than 100 journalists have been killed. Although the presidents of Mexico have promised to take this issue more seriously, little has changed, and there is an outcry from Mexican journalists for recognition of the critical point that, even if Mexico does well in some statistics (it is the second largest Latin American economy after Brazil), there are also devastating statistics about the killing of journalists, placing Mexico among the least developed countries in the world.⁵ Carlos Moncada Ochoa (2013 [2012], pp. 290–303) proposes that the solution cannot lie only in new legislation to protect journalists, as there has not been any improvement in prosecuting the crimes already committed against them. He further warns about self-censorship of journalists: as a remedy, this would lead to the extinction of the main purposes for which journalists work: to investigate and to inform.

Many of the journalists who have been killed during the current millennium were covering the topic of the illicit drug trade, which has become one of the most pressing societal issues in Mexico. The next section will be dedicated to a broader examination of this problem, because the corpus texts of this dissertation have been filtered through the theme of the illicit drug trade. Yet this is an extensive and complex topic, and I will mostly reflect on the events and problems that have been described in the *crónicas* analysed in the current study.

THE MEXICAN ‘WAR(S) ON DRUGS’

Although the previous section ended with a reference to the worrisome illicit drug trade as one of the most crucial problems in today’s Mexico, it should by no means be taken to indicate that the phenomenon of the trade in illicit pharmaceuticals appeared recently. Nor does it mean that Mexico stands alone in the fight against the problems caused by the illicit drug trade. In Latin America, many countries (Colombia, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru, to name just a few) have faced the consequences of the brutal social crisis that the emergence of organized crime in connection with the illicit drug trade has caused (Garay Salamanca & Salcedo-Albarán 2012; Smith 1993 [1992]).

⁵ Examples of coverage on the issue of the killing of journalists in Mexico can be found in the following articles and blog posts: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/world/americas/veracruz-mexico-reporters-killed.html> (on Veracruz being the most violent place for journalists; accessed 7 August 2017); <https://rsf.org/en/news/after-6th-murder-year-mexicos-president-says-he-will-protect-journalists> (on President Enrique Peña Nieto’s response to yet another killing; accessed 7 August 2017); <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/mexico-journalist-javier-valdez-shot-dead-sinaloa-170516042150982.html> (on the killing of Javier Valdez Cardenas and the subsequent reactions; accessed 7 August 2017).

Luis Astorga (2012 [2004]), in his seminal book *El siglo de drogas* (The Century of Drugs), gives a multifaceted and careful outlook on the genesis of and the reasons for the societal crisis that Mexico is currently facing with regard to the illicit drug trade and the concomitant organized crime. He warns about the discourses of those who have at different times called their fight ‘a war on drugs.’⁶ Two of the reasons Astorga presents for this warning are: 1) it would be erroneous to see the interrelations between drug trafficking, drug usage, and criminality as cultural and political constants; 2) ‘a war on drugs’ is often defended with black and white claims, where the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ participants are clearly defined – an utterly misleading assumption that has caused more problems than it has created solutions.

Astorga gives broad and essential historical perspective on the trafficking of illicit pharmaceuticals. I have no means of dealing with all the connections he makes, but based on his work and on the comments of other authors, I will call attention to some historical events that have shaped the current state of affairs. The first of these is that between 1888 and 1911, Mexican importation figures for opium fluctuated between 800 kilos and 12 tons in total (Astorga 2012 [2004], p. 17). This huge range took place in conditions in which importation was legal, and the consumption of opium was legitimate and usual. Historical reflection comes with complexities and limitations, but the range of figures is rather large. It illustrates the danger of juggling with numbers, and, therefore, in no part of my contextualization chapter will I give concrete figures about the possible exportation quantities of illicit pharmaceuticals at the present time or concrete numbers of victims of drug trade-related violence. I do not have enough expertise to calculate the possible ranges, and as the statistical data show great variety, I would also have trouble deciding whom to quote.

The cultivation and trafficking of marijuana was declared illegal in Mexico in 1920, and drugs made from poppies, in 1926 (*ibid.*, p.19). Already in the year 1937, José Siurob, a medical doctor and a member of the Public Health Control Department (*Departamento de Salubridad Pública*), complained that Mexico had become the centre of narcotics distribution and pointed the finger at corrupt judges and unreliable policemen who were not committed to

⁶ The discursive construct of a ‘war on drugs’ has been utilized especially by American analysts to describe illicit drug trade-related military conflicts in general. The term was coined during the era of U.S. President Richard Nixon, who himself made a statement on 17 June 1971 that ‘America’s public enemy number one is drug abuse’ (Nixon 1971). In his speech on 14 October 1982, a later American president, Ronald Reagan, vowed ‘to fight the drug menace, to eradicate the cancers of organized crime and public corruption’ (Reagan 1982). The Mexican president Felipe Calderón, during his speech on 22 January 2007, called his quest a ‘war against crime’ (Astorga 2015, p. 23). However, the leaders of various countries have framed the ‘war on drugs’ in many ways, and some of these are not exactly subtle. The Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte, who is known for calling his enemies (including Barack Obama and the EU) ‘sons of bitches’, continued on the same track in describing his political mission: ‘all of you who are into drugs, you sons of bitches, I will really kill you’ (Campbell 2016).

eradicating these crimes against health. The doctor also described the city of Juárez as a dangerous place, where gangsters were ready to defend their illicit trade with guns (ibid., p. 39). To demonstrate that no positive change has occurred since then, three of the *crónicas* that form part of the main corpus of this dissertation concentrate entirely on the city of Juárez as a centre of the illicit drug trade and one of the most dangerous places in the world.

In the decades following Dr. Siurob's complaints, the development of Mexico's illicit drug trade was fed by many curious factors, some of them local and some caused by foreign influences. According to Astorga (ibid.), such circumstances included, among other things, the military operation called Condor in 1977, the aim of which was to defeat drug traffickers, but which instead led to brutal attacks on defenceless peasants. The change of course was also affected by trafficking deals made between Colombian and Mexican organized crime groups in the 1980s (led by Pablo Escobar and Miguél Ángel Félix Gallardo respectively). Additionally, it was the period when trade zones in Mexico were expanded, and the division of control over these zones was spread around. The new shifts in the 'rules of the game' came from the U.S. when the 'war on drugs' was declared by Ronald Reagan in 1982 and a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agent was murdered in Mexico in 1985, followed by the incarceration of Félix Gallardo for the murder. This ultimately led to the reorganization of organized crime groups and the emergence of new leaders such as the Arellano Felix brothers in Tijuana, Amado Carrillo Fuentes and his son Vicente Carrillo Leyva in Juárez, Miguel Caro Quintero in Sonora, Juan García Abrego in Matamoros and Tamaulipas, and Joaquín Guzmán Loera and Ismael Zambada in Sinaloa. All except Ismael Zambada are dead or have been arrested by now, but almost all of these names crop up frequently in the *crónicas* used for this study.

In more recent history, one of the pivotal moments was the presidential election of 2006. Felipe Calderón became next Mexican president who represented the National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*, PAN), which had won the presidency only once before, in 2000, after the 71-year-long domination of the PRI. Calderón's victory was very close, and right after assuming the presidency, he had to face many accusations about the legitimacy of the electoral results. In order to consolidate his fragile political power with the help of the U.S. government, and also to avoid having to solve the serious and complex problems of Mexico at that moment, such as social inequality, a tuberculosis pandemic, and hunger, Calderón saw an easy way out by initiating something that Mexico and the U.S. had already seen – yet another 'war on drugs', this time more devastating and damaging than the earlier ones (Astorga 2015; Osorno 2009, cited in Polit Dueñas 2013; Torre 2013). On 11 December 2006, Calderón sent troops to the state of Michoacán, to the scene where the events of the *crónica Juegan a ser sicarios* take place. What followed was a years-long confrontation in many areas of Mexico, with tens of thousands of people killed. One of them was the son of the Mexican poet Javier Sicilia, who consequently summoned people to one of the greatest public

protests in Mexican history, held to demonstrate against the impunity of criminal organizations, but also against governmental discourses and corrupt strategies. The *crónica La voz de la tribu* is about Javier Sicilia.

Although the official discourses have changed significantly since the PRI regained power in 2012, when Enrique Peña Nieto was elected the next Mexican president, by no means has this brought a change in the social crisis. Violent confrontations are still happening in many regions of Mexico, and new victims of the activities of the military and police forces and organized crime are sacrificed regularly (Semple 2016). In the face of other internationally 'hot' topics, such as President Donald Trump's promises of building a wall on the U.S.- Mexican border, or the almost humorous and often entertaining accounts of the many escapes of *El Chapo* Guzman, the leader of the Sinaloa group, from a supposedly high security prison with the help of the prison guards, it often goes unnoticed that one of the world's biggest massacres is going on in Mexico.

What recent decades have shown, and what Astorga (2012 [2004]) also points out, is that the Mexican political powers and organized crime have not functioned as truly separate powers, but rather almost as two sides of the same 'criminal coin.' One of the facts that proves this claim is that after the case against the governor of Quintana Roo in 1999 (which is mentioned in the *crónica Alfombra Roja*), no Mexican politician has been charged with corruption, much less convicted. A cynical and demagogic explanation would be the lack of corrupt politicians. In addition, Astorga (*ibid.*, p. 162–163) points out that the changes in levels of violence in certain Mexican regions have coincided with the political changes in these regions.

The *crónicas* in this study introduce many different perspectives on the damage caused by Mexico's illicit drug trade, and/or they try to see beyond the damage and illustrate other cultural, political, or societal phenomena that are occurring simultaneously. *El teatro del crimen*, for instance, concentrates on the murders of women, who are killed simply for being women, the so-called *feminicidios*. José Manuel Valenzuela Acre (2012, p. 52) sees such actions as a consequence of the patriarchal order, enhanced by corruption and impunity from prosecution, but also as an expression of power over the body. Valenzuela (*ibid.*, p. 67) is convinced that the 'war on drugs' initiated by Calderón, instead of solving the problem, damaged the social fabric even more – an opinion borne out in the *crónica Guerra contra luto*. Another view of the illicit drug trade is from the perspective of the people who live in the border areas of Mexico, all of whom fight for the limited resources there. *Un pueblo en el camino a la frontera*, for example, describes the antagonisms between the traffickers of human beings, the drug traffickers, and the police force in the city of Altar, the last stop before the U.S. border, where drugs and the undocumented are converted into sources of income in business conditions that in essence are universal, but in reality, anything but acceptable. A religious viewpoint is offered in *Santa Muerte*, in which the author eloquently

portrays how violent realities produce new cultural manifestations, such as the cult of an untypical saint in the violent districts of Mexico City.

Regarding the cultural side of things, in the last section of this chapter, examples are given of how Mexican realities associated with (organized) crime, violence, social crisis, and hopelessness have been expressed in narrative writing.

WRITING ABOUT THE ILLICIT DRUG TRADE

The literary production that deals with the illicit drug trade in Mexico could be roughly divided into fictional and nonfictional literature, but with such a cryptic subject, which entails special coded language, few facts, and many myths, it can occasionally prove hard to demonstrate the line between the fictional and the factual.

There is nothing new about this dilemma. In the nineteenth century, when authors of the ballads called *corridos* developed a specific form of crime narrative, it was hard to distinguish the literary from the verified substance. Carlos Monsiváis (2010 [1994], p. 18) claimed that it was also a crucial moment in the evolution of reporting on a particular type of crime news, the *nota roja*, which could be characterized as a sensationalist description of physical violence and the psychological turmoil of a narrative's protagonists. Besides the *nota roja*, which to some degree continues today in various forms (including on the back pages of newspapers), *corridos* also evolved into highly controversial musical ballads about the illicit drug trade – the *narcocorridos*. According to Astorga (1995, p. 13), *corridos* about 'trafficking' or 'mafia' are mediators of the mythological archetypes of the world, which remain distant and otherwise impenetrable. Both the *nota roja* and the *narcocorridos* have in common a thin line between the real and the unreal, and one of their most important functions is to evoke emotional responses. The authors of the *nota roja* and the *narcocorridos* are the 'constructors' of these emotions.

Currently, there are many authors who write on the topic of the illicit drug trade in Mexico. According to María Angulo Egea (2013), authors of these nonfictional works could be called *narcocronistas*, and their aim is to go beyond a laconic body count. There are also many novels on the topic of the illicit drug trade. Their authors do not claim complete truthfulness and veracity, but the referentiality or connectedness of these works to Mexico's reality is indisputable. Sometimes, a curious combination of journalism and fiction takes place. Such is the case with *El más buscado* by Alejandro Almazán, the author of one of the *crónicas* in this research corpus, *El carta desde La Laguna*. In *El más buscado*, the author publishes his journalistic work as fiction in order to protect himself from accusations of unverified sources and facts (Enciso 2012).

Gabriela Polit Dueñas (2013, pp. 4, 8–9) suggests that the purpose of the Mexican writers who narrate tales about the illicit drug trade is, first, to contest

the unilateral governmental discourses; second, to interpret the cruel reality; and, third, to provide some comfort in the chaos by adding a human side to otherwise number-centred accounts. She also states (ibid., p. 19) that 'literature [...] describes the grey zones where these processes take place and explores the moral perils of the characters that inhabit these grey zones.' Polit thus adds an evaluative character to the narratives about societies in crisis, and it is precisely this evaluative character on which this dissertation will focus.

In this contextualizing chapter, I have offered some preliminary insights into the Mexican *crónica* and its different forms of expression, but in order to grasp the notion of the *crónica* better and also to situate it better in the framework of this study, the next chapter will concentrate on the key concepts of this research: *crónica*, narrative discourse, and values.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

Conceptually, this research focuses on the *crónica*, the Ibero-American form of literary journalism. The first part of the present chapter concentrates on how the *crónica* has been theorized and defined to date. In the final part of the dissertation, I offer a new conception of the *crónica* based on the results of my study.

The particularity of this dissertation lies in how the *crónica* is explained or deconstructed: the explanation emerges from the narrative discourses around values. Hence, both concepts – narrative discourse and value – will also be addressed in this chapter, both generally and also in the context of my research.

The chapter will close by affirming that, above all, the research questions and the main textual corpus have inspired the selection of the theoretical framing with which to analyse *crónicas* on the illicit Mexican drug trade. The same can be said about methods, which is why the conceptual framing forms a bridge to the next chapter on the study's research methods.

THE *CRÓNICA*⁷

Both the English word 'chronicle' and the Spanish *crónica* stem from Latin *chronica*, which could be translated as a 'book of annales, chronicles.' The Latin word, in turn, has strong linguistic ties with Greek *khronikos* or 'of time' (*khronos* meaning 'time'). The Royal Spanish Academy (*Real Academia Española*) defines *crónica* (2017) as either a historic story that observes the order of consecutive events or a journalistic piece on current matters. The Oxford Dictionaries Online does not entirely concur in its definition of the word 'chronicle' (2017): this could be a factual written account of important or historical events in the order of their occurrence, but it can also be a fictitious or factual work describing a series of events. As the Spanish and English glosses do not concur, I prefer to use only the Spanish word *crónica*, especially as most of the production that I examine is written in the Spanish language, and the definition of the genre comes from the Ibero-American linguistic and cultural sphere.⁸

⁷ A large portion of this subchapter was published as 'Treating the Undefinable: The Contemporary Latin American *Crónica*' (Ungro 2016).

⁸ However, some scholars, including Ignacio Corona and Beth E. Jörgensen, translate the word into English simply as a 'chronicle' (Corona & Jörgensen 2002b). Tania Gentic (2013) has found a middle ground by referring to all of the Latin American *crónicas* with the English word, but whenever she speaks of the production from a specific region, she uses the local terms, such as the Spanish *crónica* or the Portuguese *crônica*.

The interpretation of the meaning of *crónica* depends to a large extent on the cultural, social, and, most significantly, historical context in which the reference is placed. Generally, in the non-Spanish world, the term ‘chronicle’ would be associated with the past rather than the present, and not just with the past, but also often related to certain geographical contexts. It may not be entirely accidental that, for example, the Oxford Dictionaries Online, after explaining the meaning of the word ‘chronicle’ (2017), gives the following example of the usage of the word: ‘a **vast** chronicle of **Spanish history**’ (my emphasis). As a matter of fact, there have been many occasions when people, on learning that I work with the *crónica*, ask whether my corpus consists of texts from the time of the Spanish conquest and the ‘discovery’ of the Americas. Although the *crónica* as a textual genre is still alive throughout most of Latin America, there is a widespread assumption that people are more likely to employ the term in the context of ancient documents than in contemporary settings. This utterly false assumption needs to be corrected, but before we can concentrate more fully on the *crónicas* written today, we are obliged to link them to their origins, and this requires going back to the time of the conquest of the Americas.⁹

CRÓNICAS DE INDIAS

What we now call the *Crónicas de Indias* is a generic denomination given to the set of texts that are (mostly) from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, written by missionaries, soldiers, officials, or other witnesses of the Spanish

⁹ There are authors such as Carlos Monsiváis (1981, pp. 17–23) who believe that knowledge of the colonial *crónicas* is important for a better understanding of contemporary *crónicas*. Yet other opinions contradict this presupposition: some point out that even today in Spain, there is an official royal institution for the *cronistas* who write about history, and their works have nothing to do with narrative journalism (Carrión 2012, p. 21). Aníbal González (2007, p. 24) states rather explicitly that the *crónica* was created in the Americas by the *modernistas* during the 1870s and 1880s. Viviane Mahieux makes specific reference to the nineteenth century, when the *crónica* as a journalistic form was taking shape, and therefore sees no reason to trace its origins back to colonial times. She continues (Mahieux 2012, p. 3): ‘There is certainly continuity in the implications of the genre since the colony, especially when considering its status as a nonfictional, chronological rendition of events. However, I consider that glossing over the significant differences between a colonial text, usually addressed to a single person of authority, and a journalistic one, which responds to the interest of a broad public and to the requests of an editor, has often reflected a strategic choice to link the genre to a foundational historical moment.’ Although I agree with Mahieux in that the consolidation of the contemporary *crónica* happened alongside the consolidation of the contemporary newspaper industry, there is still a significant link between recent and ancient nonfiction writing forms in and about Latin America, and the only choice the scholar has is to decide whether to start the analysis from the recent era or from further back. It is exactly the ‘continuity in the implications of the genre’, which Mahieux mentions that gives me reason to begin my analysis with the early Latin American *crónicas*.

conquest. When the Europeans started the process of colonizing the Americas, descriptions and narrations of the events were scarce, and the statements in the texts belonged to a limited number of people. In other words, there was a small number of voices in the writings. Some of the authors of the *Crónicas de Indias* did not witness the events personally, but only retold stories that had reached them through other sources. Such is the case, for example, with Francisco López de Gómara, who depicted in great detail the early sixteenth-century expedition undertaken by Hernán Cortés, without ever having visited the Americas himself (León-Portilla 2004, p. 41).

The *crónica* in this specific case is a loose historiographic genre that includes diaries, reports, letters, and other forms of narration. What interests me most about such old documents is their ability to create myths and legends, which every new era re-interprets – a dialectical relationship between the texts and the epochs in which they are researched. The fact that the *crónicas* are not purely descriptions of things, places, properties, or names, but also subjective and sometimes even opportunist assessments of their time gives them additional value when they are examined through the philosophical lens of evaluating history.

For instance, the report of Bartolomé de las Casas to the prince of Spain concerning the devastating treatment of the indigenous peoples and their right to remain free in their choice of whether to accept the new religion was in its own time seen as an unpatriotic act to traduce the Spanish effort to bring civilization to the barbarous territories, the so-called ‘civilizing project’ (Acosta 2011, p. 573). The text also served as a political tool of condemnation in the hands of the Dutch, English, French, and Italians in order to create and reinforce the so-called ‘Leyenda Negra’ or ‘Black Legend,’ historical writing whose aim was the demonization of the Spanish Empire while completely ignoring its positive achievements (León-Portilla 2004, p. 53). The historians of today are most likely to read this text in the philosophical framework of post-colonialism or the ‘liberation project,’ where imperial ambitions are left aside for the sake of rescuing the historical tales from ‘homogenization, invisibilization, and totalization’ (Castro-Gómez 1996, pp. 99-120, cited in Acosta 2011, p. 579). With their numerous means of expression, both written and oral, interpreters of history have a task to fulfil, a task that they either assume themselves or is given by their readers. The Chilean literatus Francisco Bilbao framed this task as a ‘law of history:’ ‘history is reason judging memory and projecting the duty of the future’¹⁰ (cited by Acosta 2011, p. 574; my translation).

It is almost impossible to define the main task of the ancient Latin American *crónicas* and their authors. Obviously, this varied individually, geographically, and again, historically. Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis (2002, p. 26; original emphasis) explains the purpose of the early *crónicas*:

¹⁰ Originally in Spanish: ‘La historia es la razón juzgando a la memoria y proyectando el deber del porvenir.’

These soldiers and holy men sought to write neither history nor literature. For them, to chronicle was to seize the sensations of the moment, to capture *chronos*, to defend themselves from the enemy's version of history, to implicitly and explicitly celebrate their own grandeur, to save others' souls against their will, and to announce the blessings of Heaven.

I draw special attention to what Monsiváis states about *chronos* and the sensations of the moment. At that time the position of the *cronista*, or the author of the *crónicas*, was to mediate opposing realities and discourses. It was a privileged position, and it led in many cases to the repeated reproduction of official narratives. This practice could be observed as early as the Inca Empire in Peru, long before the conquerors from the Old World arrived. As Martti Pärssinen confirms in his doctoral dissertation, 'the interpretation of history [...] was a task of the persons especially chosen for the job' (Pärssinen 1992, p. 50). Indeed, for a long time and in various cultures, the job of a chronicler was institutionalized and controlled by the authorities.

If we compare the position of the *cronista* in the time of the 'discovery of the Americas' and in the times that followed, then obviously the practice has changed significantly. *Cronistas* became more self-determining and autonomous in their choices. But could they ever escape their context? Pärssinen states that 'historians have long known that their own cultural background always has some effect on their reasoning' (Pärssinen 1992, p. 52). Even though the latter *cronistas* enjoyed relative independence, and even more, they saw the fight against perceived despotism as their main task, or, in other words, they started to fight 'official discourses', similar to the historians that Pärssinen describes, they could never definitively leave behind the effects that their cultural background had on their reasoning.

CRÓNICA MODERNISTA

The next historical turning point and the moment when the *crónica* appeared on the cultural map of Latin America took place during the modern period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Latin America, this era was marked by gradual secularization, cosmopolitanism, and the continuous development of technology and urbanization. Latin American states were still nascent and searching for their identities. The nations and their citizens arose with the help of local narratives that transcended the local cultural idiosyncrasies. In the course of the renewal of the continent, new tendencies, notions, and methods appeared. Journalism took on the role of being one of the main sources of daily information, although, owing to functional illiteracy, especially in the rural areas, the progress of journalism was not comparable to that in the pioneering West European countries.

At the forefront of these changes appeared the *crónica* – an appropriate style established in the Latin American literary tradition and a genre that rooted itself in journalistic prose and poetry. Indeed, most of the *cronistas* of the modern period were poets who also wrote for newspapers – José Martí,

Rubén Darío, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, and Amado Nervo, to name just some of the most noted authors, the last two being Mexican in origin. It was only during modern times that the *crónica* was established as an intersection between factual and subjective, literary and journalistic, a hybrid that later came to characterize the whole practice.

In her seminal study on the modernist *cronistas*, *La invención de la crónica*, Susana Rotker summarizes this duality in an eloquent way (Rotker 2005, p. 53; original emphasis, my translation):

And it is in this sense, to unite various forms, where the modernists tried – not always successfully – *duality as a system, writing as tension and meeting point between antagonistic elements: spirit/matter, literature/journalism, prose/poetry, imported/own, I/collective, art/systems of production, nature/artifice, man/animal, conformity/criticism.*¹¹

The dual nature of the modernist *crónicas* was probably not the result of systematic inculcation of new methods and styles, but rather a reflection of the society that surrounded the writers, full of controversies and discontent – a tension in which *cronistas* became the code-breakers of discourses.

The formation of the modernist *cronistas* crystallized in the artistic sphere, and journalistic work frequently served simply as a means of livelihood (Bernabé 2006, p. 16). The position of this emerging genre was therefore fragile and disputed by the institution of literature of the time. The *crónica* was neither journalism properly speaking nor was it poetry. The *cronistas* had to justify their existence and work through their oeuvre, and much of the justification came from critics who appeared after the modernist era. For example, Monsiváis (2002, p. 29) saw the duty of the modernist *cronista* to be in looking at marginal societies, the simple settings that are far from elite and conservative prejudice:

In contrast, the nineteenth-century chronicle captures life and how people live, without any obligations to rhetoric, and does so in spite of the sexual inhibitions and the moralism required by censorship and social conventions, which are always greater in newspapers and journals than in books.

Rotker sets forth some of the aspects that characterize the work of the *cronistas modernistas*: a strong eye for linguistic composition, harmony between realism and occultism, an attention to national identities, descriptions of city life, and commentary on consumerism. Special focus should be given to the transforming position of the author. During the modern

¹¹ Originally in Spanish: 'Y es en este sentido, de unir formas diversas, donde los modernistas intentaron – no siempre con éxito – la dualidad como sistema, la escritura como tensión y punto de encuentro entre los antagonismos: espíritu/material, literatura/periodismo, prosa/poesía, lo importado/lo propio, el yo/lo colectivo, arte/sistemas de producción, naturaleza/artificio, hombre/animal, conformidad/denuncia.'

period, ‘the author ceases to be a spectator who reproduces reality through a universal concept to attempt to reach it from his own self’¹² (Rotker 2005, p. 49; my translation).

We can see the ambiguous standpoint of the *cronista* in a concrete example. In José Martí’s (2007 [1887]) *crónica* about the prosecution of a group of anarchists in Chicago, the so-called Haymarket Martyrs, he delivered a detailed and intense narration of the process, including a description of the faces, clothing, and reactions of the people. Later it was discovered, however, that Martí actually never witnessed the trial. He received all the information about the event from the newspapers. His intentions seemed to indicate a desire to ‘give a human face’ to the poor convicts and to provide a critical perspective on the event (Bernabé 2006, pp. 17–18). Or as Rotker has put it, to affirm ‘subjectivism as a means to authenticity’¹³ (Rotker 2005, p. 47; my translation). Aníbal González (2007, p. 28, 29) states that the *crónica modernista* was ‘characterized by a strong subjectivism’; for instance, in the works of the Mexican *cronista* Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, he indicates a ‘purposeful blurring of the line between journalism and fiction’, which he also ties to the subjectivity of his texts. Authentic subjectivism, however fictional it may be considered to be, as will be discussed later in chapter 7, is something that was transmitted to the contemporary forms of the *crónica* today.

González (ibid., p. 26) makes another interesting observation about the *crónica modernista*. He claims that, although the *crónica* was tied to the institution of journalism, it actually ‘[explored] and defined the nature of literary discourse in contrast with journalistic discourse.’ The authors took language not only as a tool to mediate information, but also as an object to explore in itself while conveying ideas to readers; thus, according to González (1993, p. 85), the *crónica* started to combine the whole of modernism, making it ‘a complex interplay between literature, philology and journalism’, and with that, the *crónica modernista* stepped onto the path towards the contemporary *crónica*, which combines the need to read with the pleasure of reading.

THE CONTEMPORARY CRÓNICA

Today, there is no doubt that the *crónica* is widespread throughout Latin America. A sign of its certain consolidation as a journalistic practice is the fact that workshops are held for *cronistas* and that scholars are researching the topic. Moreover, it has often been included in the curricula of Latin American universities (both in the humanities and in the social sciences). The *crónicas* are published on various platforms, such as newspapers, magazines, online

¹² Originally in Spanish: ‘El autor deja de ser espectador que reproduce lo real tras un concepto universal, para tratar de alcanzarlo desde su propio ser.’

¹³ Originally in Spanish: ‘subjectivismo como recurso de autenticidad.’

blogs, anthologies, and books.¹⁴ *Cronistas* such as Juan Villoro (Mexico), Alberto Salcedo Ramos (Colombia), Pedro Lemebel (Chile), Julio Villanueva Chang (Peru), and Leila Guerriero (Argentina) form part of the ‘the universe of the most prominent authors of contemporary Latin American *crónica*’¹⁵ (Jaramillo Agudelo 2012, p. 14; my translation) and are also recognized and awarded on the international level.

Part of the resurrection and success of the *crónica* can be credited to the Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez, who wrote narrative journalism himself and established the Gabriel García Márquez Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism,¹⁶ a non-profit institution that aims to improve journalistic standards and reinforce democracy and development in Ibero-American and Caribbean countries. The foundation organizes workshops and seminars and gives annual international awards.

Crónicas are either literary (*crónica literaria*) or journalistic (*crónica periodística*), depending on their inclinations towards either aesthetics or information (Correa Soto 2011, pp. 57-98) or based on their length (often the *literaria* have the length of a novel and the *periodística* the length of a magazine piece). Yet there is still frequent confusion about whether a particular text under study is a *crónica*, an essay, reportage, or something else. Even the authors themselves categorize a single piece in various genres. This situation can cause anxiety, as the Mexican *cronista* Vicente Leñero (2002, p. 64) explains: ‘It bothers me that the title of [a] chronicle may be given to everything or almost everything produced by a writer concerned with literary journalism: that is, journalism written with narrative ploys related to the novel or other narrative genres.’ It is thus not an easy task to define the *crónica*.

There have been various attempts to explain the genre. As a metaphor, we could try to view the *crónica* as a puzzle, but it would quickly lead to a dead end, because even though puzzles can be separated into many small pieces, whenever we put them together using some kind of visual logic, the result is a picture that everyone sees the same way. But the *crónicas* have never been ‘seen’ in the same way, and there is no prescribed method for describing them. Therefore, I have found it useful to illustrate the *crónica* as being like assembling a collage. The result is always different. There is not much sense in trying to collect all the information about the *crónicas* to make some sort of final assessment. The *crónica* is a dynamic and constantly changing genre, and, consequently, its definitions are also constantly changing. Yet it still

¹⁴ The style, length, and theme of the *crónica* can depend largely on where it is published. See the online outlets, magazines, and publishers that distribute *crónicas* in the section ‘Dónde habita la *crónica*’ of the web platform Nuevos Cronistas de Indias: <http://nuevoscronistasdeindias.fnpi.org/>, accessed 9 March 2017.

¹⁵ Originally in Spanish: ‘el universo de los más destacados autores de la *crónica* latinoamericana actual.’

¹⁶ The name of the foundation in Spanish is La Fundación Gabriel García Márquez para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI).

might be rewarding to try and define the *crónica*, if for no other reason than for the sake of capturing its function during a certain moment and thereby linking the definition with the very notion time.

In the following section, I will highlight just a small sample of definitions given by others that in my opinion merit consideration in order to create my own ‘collage’ or somewhat structured analysis of what may be seen as the contemporary *crónica*. First, I use a playful act to illustrate the potential breadth of the ways to describe the *crónica*. I showcase the most methodological and then the most poetic approaches in the form of direct quotations. The first three come from Latin American manuals of journalism: these are quite technical and view the *crónica* through other journalistic genres or methods. Here the distinction between the *crónica* and other journalistic expressions is made, and it is clear that the *crónica* is seen as an almost explicitly journalistic practice with some tendencies to literary aspiration. In other words, the journalistic context prevails.

It is a hybrid genre halfway between the press release and what we’ll see is a feature, in which the author can make a whole series of associations of informative ideas, because he believes that they illustrate the subject in question¹⁷ (Bastienier 2009, p. 84; my translation).

We consider the journalistic *crónica* as a genre which explicit communicative function is to inform and which is built with a textual structure in which narrative is predominant¹⁸ (Peralta & Urtasun 2007, p. 37; my translation).

The *crónica* relates something that happened at a certain time and with a certain action. It is the story of the event as it happened, from beginning to end. The *crónica* is the journalistic genre closest to literature, and often many of the great *cronistas* are, at the same time, writers¹⁹ (Baena Paz 1995, p. 9; my translation).

These are descriptions of the *crónica* in journalistic jargon. But knowing now that the *crónica* is not only journalistic but also literary and that many *cronistas* are noted authors, it would be interesting to see how the writers’ own vision of the *crónica* is expressed. Vincent Leñero, like Guillermina Baena Paz, sees the *crónica* as determined by time and chronology: ‘[...] a chronicle: that

¹⁷ Originally in Spanish: ‘Es un género híbrido a medio camino entre la nota y lo que veremos que es el reportaje, en el que autor puede realizar toda una serie de asociaciones de ideas informativas, porque considera que ilustran la materia de que se trate.’

¹⁸ Originally in Spanish: ‘Consideramos *crónica* periodística al género que tiene como función comunicativa explícita la de informar y que se construye con una estructura textual en la que predomina el tipo narrativo.’

¹⁹ Originally in Spanish: ‘La *crónica* cuenta un hecho ocurrido en un tiempo y una acción determinadas. Es la narración del suceso como ocurrió, desde el principio hasta el fin. La *crónica* es el género periodístico que más se aproxima a la literatura; y es frecuente que muchos de los grandes *cronistas* sean, a la vez, escritores.’

is, a chronological account that develops along a linear time line' (Leñero 2002, p. 63). In contrast, Dante Medina emphasizes the *crónica* as an original textual instrument in the hands of the author:

The chronicle illuminates with a different light than that of fiction: it puts its faiths equally in reality and in textuality. The chronicle believes that the Word can go behind the scenes of real life and give a true testimony (Medina 2002, p. 47).

Probably the most poetic and famous definition of the *crónica* is by the Mexican author Juan Villoro, who sought help from a metaphor. This metaphor has been quoted numerous times in anthologies of the *crónica*, in scholarly works, and in interviews with *cronistas*. Villoro compared the *crónica* with a strange creature from the animal kingdom, a semiaquatic egg-laying mammal: 'The chronicle is the **platypus of prose**; it incorporates all kinds of foreign elements' (Villoro 2002, p. 66; my emphasis).

Villoro makes a clever literary reference to the hybrid and liminal character of the *crónica*, which has also made it difficult to frame this genre in a conclusive manner. The *crónicas* could be seen as literature or journalism; they are micro-stories with a capacity to represent entire social groups. As we observed earlier, similar duality and consequent difficulty in genre determination can also be observed in the modernist *crónica* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In order to organize at least in a limited manner the process of defining the *crónica* and to find my own path in the midst of such uncertainties, I have found it useful to examine the *crónica* through its form and function and in the debates and controversies that arise from these. In my final analysis chapter (8), I will return to this topic and will make an attempt to articulate the *crónica*'s form and function for myself, based on the results of my research. Yet first, I will recapitulate what other scholars and writers have said about the topic.

What has been said about the form of the crónicas

According to the Colombian media scholar and *cronista* Juan José Hoyos (2013, pp. 28-30), any given discourse of narrative journalism, including the *crónica*, should possess the following features: 1) chronological order, 2) one or several narrative climaxes, 3) attention to significant and symbolic details, 4) a close-up of the protagonists, 5) description of the space where the events occur, 6) transmission of dialogues, 7) the presence of the narrator, and above all, 8) context for the information delivered.

Esperança Bielsa (2006, p. 39) has concluded an intensive study on Latin American urban chronicles, and in her view, the basic characteristics of the *crónica* are a concentration on 'real events and characters that have a certain quality of immediacy and presentness', 'a descriptive intention', 'the central position of the author', 'emphasis on style', and 'a strong presence of orality.'

Bielsa does not agree completely with Baena Paz, who states that the *crónicas* are depictions of events that have a concrete beginning and an end; on the contrary, in her opinion the *crónicas* 'finish but have no end' (Bielsa 2006, p. 39). In other words, Bielsa's opinion merges with Bernabé's (2006, p. 14) statement that the *crónicas* have no closure. What calls for more attention in Bielsa's characterization is that she relates the *crónica* to fiction and to an analysis of the author's position in general. Based on this reasoning, I would like to highlight the dichotomy of subjectivism and objectivism and the concomitant concentration on the author's central standpoint.

Generally, *cronistas*, critics, and scholars agree that the author's voice is important and even central to the *crónicas*, as is repeatedly emphasized. This does not mean that all *crónicas* are egocentric texts, however. Rather the *cronistas* use their voices as an instrument to depict the reality around them. Yet there are *cronistas* who find themselves the main protagonists of their own texts, while others are modest in revealing their own persona and concentrate fully on other voices and actors. Thus, ultimately there is no consistent pattern in how to approach an author's choices. Anadeli Bencomo (2002, pp. 24–25; my translation) mentions 'the personality of the authorial voice that strives to intellectually unravel the problem it faces.'²⁰ This characterization can also be interpreted as a call not to investigate an author through their persona, but by the ways in which the author deals with the situations and questions that arise.

There is a philosophical question of whether objectivity in journalism is even possible, but without doubt it can be said that the *crónicas* are subjective pieces of writing. But does this subjectivity possibly lead to writing fiction? Bielsa claims that *cronistas* fill the 'empty places' in their stories with fiction. This might have been the case in some of the *crónicas modernistas*, and maybe even later, after the *crónica* was resuscitated by the *cronistas literarias* in the epoch of such writers as Rodolfo Walsh and Gabriel García Márquez.

However, there is also a front of *cronistas* who make an effort to convey a firm message of the *crónica's* nonfiction quality. For instance, some of the *cronistas* who were interviewed by Gabriela Esquivada for an academic research project stated something similar to what I have heard during my own interviews with *cronistas*, namely the *crónicas* do not incorporate fiction. According to Esquivada (2007, p. 125; my translation). 'A point of agreement, explicit or implied in the responses, is that the *crónica* excludes fiction: It uses its tools but only to relate the facts.'²¹

Some sceptics might still hesitate and ask whether readers know all the facts, but there have been very few incidents of *cronistas* being accused of

²⁰ Originally in Spanish: 'personalidad de la voz autorial que se afana en desentrañar intelectualmente el problema que lo ocupa.'

²¹ Originally in Spanish: 'Un punto de acuerdo, expreso o implícito en las respuestas, es que la *crónica* excluye la ficción: toma sus herramientas, pero solo para contar hechos reales.'

dishonesty in their production.²² There are also *cronistas* who openly declare the fictitious character of some of their works; in such cases most audiences have not objected to the idea of representing the reality through a (partly) imaginary world. There are also *cronistas* who declare that sometimes, for lack of verifiable proof of the testimonies and comments by the protagonists in their stories, it is easier to call a piece fiction, although everything that happens in the piece is portrayed as nonfiction.²³ And here lies the ethical aspect of the modern-day *cronista*: dodging the haziness of whether or not the *crónicas* should be trusted as sources of information. This aspect exists even in circumstances when it is quite clear that whatever we learn from the *crónicas* comes from a highly subjective and author-centred point of view.

What has been said about the function of the *crónicas*

Every cultural phenomenon is closely tied to its contexts, and most literary movements, new genres, and new paradigms appear during moments of friction in societal developments. The same applies to the *crónica*, which has constantly changed its expressions, means, and forms. This aspect in explaining the *crónica* is significant when we frame the genre according to its societal function, which has also changed over time. The purpose of the *Crónicas de las Indias*, the *crónica modernista*, and the contemporary *crónica* has not been the same. The *crónicas* from the sixteenth century had various purposes, justifying the violent changes to the status quo in Latin America being one of them. The *crónica modernista* intended both to record and to make sense of the new trends of consumerism, cosmopolitanism, and the avant garde at the dawn of the twentieth century. As we are still living the time of the current *crónicas*, it is difficult to distance ourselves and see them through functional lenses, but this is necessary in order to grasp the changes both around and within the *crónica*.

The societal significance, purpose, and values of the *crónica* have been described in a number of ways. However, in literature about the *crónica*, again and again its main aim has been expressed as to represent all different groups of society or to ‘give voice,’ especially to those who are marginalized or silenced

²² One of these cases concerned a Colombian *cronista* José Alejandro Castaño. In 2011, an editorial in the Colombian magazine *El Malpensante* alleged that his accounts were untruthful. Later, Castaño was directly accused of untruthfulness by the Colombian journalist Joaquín Botero in the online platform *La Silla Vacía*. Castaño defended his position in 2013 and added a warning that he would go to court for being falsely accused. See the exact statement in Spanish on these links (accessed 2 May 2017): http://www.elmalpensante.com/articulo/1752/el_caso_castano_explicacion_a_los_lectores and <http://www.arcoiris.com.co/2013/02/mi-defensa-jose-alejandro-castano/>

²³ As I demonstrated in chapter 2 on context, an example of a fictional book based on nonfictional material is Alejandro Almazán’s *El más buscado*.

by society. Let us look at a compendium of some of the explanations that have been published (my emphasis and translation):

One of the trends of the *crónica* [...] is the will to represent or **give a voice to marginalized social groups** and to document the emergence of collective social movements (Bielsa 2006, p. 53).

According to Monsiváis, the journalist-writer seeks and risks his own words that respond to a vocation: **to make the least visible voice in society eloquent**²⁴ (Falbo 2007a, p. 12).

In some cases, **it concerns finding a voice that could be interceded**, without any claim to carry out a translation between the voices of others and the reader (Bernabé 2006, p. 12).

[...] the chronicle has earned a reputation as a contestatory discourse, a committed literature, a counterversion to official history and rhetoric, and **a voice of the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the discriminated in Mexico** (Jørgensen 2011, p. 142).

Whether the *cronistas* themselves took on a self-appointed task or have taken up a task set by others, it seems that they are filling a void created by the flawed and non-democratic political and media systems of many Latin American countries (Fox & Waisbord 2002; Hallin & Mancini 2012). As a matter of fact, we have observed for more than a century the tendency of Latin American writers to take up some of the biggest societal issues needing to be addressed, whether on paper or, often these days, in digital formats. Writers have the power of representation and reference.

Still, there is a difference between representing and giving voice. Representation in the *crónica* includes making generalizations and providing strong evidentiality, sometimes even justifications for actions of the social groups depicted. The texts that represent certain social groups **are the voices** of those groups, while other *crónicas*, in which a variety of people are presented, **give them voice**. To be more precise, all the *crónicas* give voice to people who come from different backgrounds, but not all *crónicas* represent those groups. This does not mean that one or the other of these approaches should be considered as an exclusive possibility – they just do not mean the same thing.

In most Latin American societies, public voices or public spaces for communicative acts have generally been granted to the politically or economically prioritized elite. The *crónica* endeavours to improve the situation by covering a variety of spectrums of society. As a result, many *crónica* settings are situated in the underground, in the poor areas, amongst victims of repression, violence, and harassment.

²⁴ Originally in Spanish: ‘Según Monsiváis el periodista escritor busca y arriesga la palabra propia que responde a una vocación: hacer elocuente la voz menos visible de la sociedad.’

The Latin American *crónica* has had a long and interesting history. According to analysts, current *cronistas* are carriers of idiosyncratic literary and journalistic traditions. The characteristics, forms, and functions of the *crónica* have changed over time. The contemporary *crónica*, similar to the colonial *crónicas*, considers time in a specific moment, while imparting a personal seal and pointing out the most urgent issues and societal dialogues. It still has the dual character of the *crónica modernista*, and it has kept alive the full concentration on auctorial responsibility and liberties as well as open subjectivity in journalistic settings. But it has recently added an empathetic position of providing space for marginalized societal groups, and sometimes the *crónicas* also have a representational value. While the *crónicas* certainly have their limitations, but these depend on the expectations one has of them.

I would still like to stress that Latin America is not a unified place with one and the same culture, tradition, history, and political or journalistic structures. Rather these vary a great deal from country to country. The same goes for the *crónica*. The *crónica's* presence, importance, and expression are not the same in all countries or regions of Latin America. Or to paraphrase Gentic (2013, p. 12), the all-too-common assumption that there is a single Hispanic Atlantic that is unified ideologically and epistemologically by a shared linguistic and cultural past needs to be dismantled. In this context, to define the *crónica* is an ungrateful task that does not offer too many possibilities for success, but rather limitless possibilities to fail.

It is not enough to concentrate on explanations of *crónica* as a means of covering the theoretical basis of my research. Besides seeing *crónica* as subjective texts of both literary and journalistic nature, we must also realize that these are containers with different layers of meaning, which also convey a variety of discourses. Because the *crónica* takes part in the tradition of storytelling and delivering narratives, in a study on the *crónica* the narrative discourse prevails.

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

To define and apply the term 'discourse' can be a challenging task. Few words have been more closely analysed, conceptualized, or utilised in recent academic studies. The abundance of discourse-related research is partly due to the rise of new interest in meaning-making on various levels of human behavior. Since the beginning of the twentieth century and especially since the Second World War, meaning-making is one of the main concerns of the humanities, especially in the fields of philosophy, linguistics and philology, cultural studies, social sciences, and communication studies.

Considering that even with palimpsestic treatment of discourse across languages and contexts, some consensus has been found, at least in the realms into which discourse falls. I do not pretend to have found a universally acceptable explanation of the term discourse in the current study. Rather I

adapt different conceptualizations of existing theories and make sense of discourse in the context of my research data – the *crónicas*. And as the *crónicas* are textual units, before turning to the specific theories that have influenced my reasoning, I will make as explicit as possible the difference between text and discourse, as there are situations in which even those two linguistically-tied concepts can be confused one with another (Widdowson 1995).

TEXT AND DISCOURSE

I see texts as units of linguistic structure. Texts include linguistic components such as letters, words, sentences. In discourse studies, when discourse is compared to text, one of the working definitions is that discourse is a linguistic unit longer than one sentence (Crystal 1992, p. 25). Even if this definition might seem the most functional, going beyond text to understand discourse is more fruitful. The reason has to do with the senses. Texts can be seen (on paper) and heard (in recordings). Discourses cannot be seen or heard. Michel Foucault (2014 [1968], p. 105) went as far as to refer to discourses as something that exists without text. Discourses exist at levels of comprehension that go beyond the five human senses and enter the cognitive, the epistemological, the contextual. Texts are seen or visualized similarly, whereas discourses are experienced individually or socially. The formation of discourses as containers of meaning is conditioned by immediate and (not so immediate) contexts – individual, social, and cultural contexts. Interestingly, the contextual meaning is one of the circumstances in which discourses appear, while simultaneously the discourses around us (in the context) are also shaping the self-same context that creates the discourses. So meaning-making through discourses is a completely reciprocal cognitive process.

Let us take a look at the process of the formation of discourse in an example represented in the *crónicas* – the ‘Mexican’ word *chingado*. This one short word encapsulates an entire universe of contextual meanings. To use this word, the context should be introduced by stating that closely connected with the aspect of the Mexican character is the grotesque unification of the low with the high, the popular with the exclusive, and the vulgar with the sophisticated. *Cronistas* explore this territory most often by extensive exposition of local jargon, slang, vulgar expressions, or double meanings, expressed by people from all economic and educational levels. Drug dealers, accomplices, peasants, people from the higher social strata all share the need to symbolise their complex ideas with the help of charged words. *Chingado* is one of these ‘charged’ words, one that is hard to translate, and one to which Octavio Paz dedicated an entire convoluted deliberation in his essay ‘Los hijos de la Malinche’ (Paz 2005). According to the Mexican Academy of Language *Dictionary of Mexicanisms* (2010), the meaning of *chingado* can be situated in many different contexts, including being annoyed, looking for something, being badly treated, or something that is complicated or bad. Indeed, only a

true Mexican can place this word in its proper context. And it could be with an emancipated smile that a Mexican reads Diego Osorno's *crónica Un alcalde que no es normal* ('A mayor who is not normal'), whose main protagonist, the mayor of the city called 'San Pedro Garza Garcia' says, '*Chingado, hombre.*'

As there is an avalanche of interpretations arising from the contextual considerations, I am obliged, in the context of my own research, to narrow the concept of discourse in one way, while at the same time expanding it to the level where discourse is no longer explained only by its difference from text. For that reason the term will be defined through the framework that the texts themselves create: the narrative. Not only is the narrative discourse a particular category of discourse, but it could also be theorised as an action on societal scale. In other words, discourse will be discussed in the framework of constructive and societal meaning-making through narratives.

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE IN ACTION

The corpus of this study consists of writing compositions that have come to be known as representations of narrative journalism. What is a discourse in narrative? One possible answer was given by Tzvetan Todorov (2014 [1966]), who saw narrative or any literary work as consisting of story and discourse. The story exists through the logic of actions and also through characters and their relationships. In his view, narrative as discourse is 'an utterance addressed by the narrator to the reader' (ibid., p. 403). He separated processes of discourse into three groups: the time of the narrative (temporal deformation, linking, alternation, embedding), the narrator and character relations, and the modes of the narrative represented, for instance, by the objectivity and subjectivity in the language.

All these aspects are readily observable in the *crónicas*, where discourses are formed, among other ways, by altering time to distinguish linear from distorted narration. What happens through this process is that the events are put in subjective relation to the rest of the information in the narrativity. Subjectivity appears in other features too, most directly through the author's position. This is one of the central interests of this study because literary journalism is often defined as subjective journalism and author-centred journalism (Hartsock 2000, pp. 51-55; Sims 2007, p. 222). In order to study the auctorial presence in the *crónicas*, in my chapter 7, following Todorov's distinction, I will discuss more closely the author as narrator (in my framing, the actant) and the author as writer.

With regard to the potential of discourse outside strictly defined structural categories, it was Ludwig Wittgenstein who contributed largely to the debate about the constructive character of discourse by describing language as an action and not merely as descriptions of actions. According to him, the meaning of a word is its use in language because in literal form, words are merely scripts, and there are countless ways to use them in what Wittgenstein

referred to as a 'language game' (2014 [1953]). Much later, social psychologists Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, building on the work of John L. Austin on speech acts, confirmed the idea of language as being much more than just a form to describe the world around us (1987, p. 6; all emphases in the original):

[S]ocial texts do not merely *reflect* or *mirror* objects, events and categories pre-existing in the social and natural world. Rather, they actively *construct* a version of those things. They do not just describe things, they *do* things. And being active, they have social and political implications.

Potter and Wetherell suggested that, because there are many ways to describe the same thing, what is important for a discourse analyst is the accounts of things. Accounts do not function only as descriptions, but also as possibilities with which to construct the world. And there is a great deal of variation in the accounts (*ibid.*, p. 35).

This variation is what most interests me. Narrative discourses about the illicit drug trade, even when literary, tend to have a polarizing effect – a search for 'good guys and bad guys'. This means that thematically, and representatively, discourses in the Mexican illicit drug trade-related narratives could fall into the same trap of polarizing and stereotyping. My analysis will focus on this threat, and I will describe my results and discuss them in chapter 5 in connection with antagonism found in my data. Also, if we assume that, as an action, discourse reveals an actor behind the discourse, then those actors, for the sake of revealing the context, should also be investigated, especially for their will and agency to construct discourse. This will be taken into consideration in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

The reference to actors in the previous paragraph brings up other considerations; actors can act individually, and their agency can be constituted independently. But not only that: as long as the actors function within cultures and a society, there is always the question of how many of their actions are determined by the surroundings, that is, the context, as well as by cultural and social factors. Michel Foucault studied discourses on a wider scale and with a strong inclination to define what discourses are, determine how they form, how they change (an especially important matter for Foucault), and what they do. He articulated his aims as part of a response (Foucault 2014 [1968]) that he himself made to questions that emerged after critical analysis of his previous work.

First, Foucault claimed that discourses can in fact be identified from their beginning point on, which means that it is also possible to discern the moment of their rise. In my own research, I have addressed some of the historical moments that could have been markers of change. Such discursive friction, I claim, might have been the start of Mexico's 'war on drugs,' declared by President Felipe Calderón in 2006. It was a moment that introduced a completely new set of discourses, if nothing else, which instantly led to counteractions, counter-discourses, and the interplay among those. Then

again, as a second problem regarding discourses, Foucault mentioned the question of spontaneous oppositions and the need to eliminate them. Although Foucault seemed mainly to be referring to the analysis of historical processes, I find some use for his ideas in my examination of how oppositions are forcefully and quite arbitrarily created around the same 'war on drugs', which in turn has created a new set of discourses. These oppositions are at least partly artificial; this means that the oppositions exist only as discursive constructions and have little to do with the surrounding reality, a fact that demonstrates once again how discourses are actions, not descriptions. And that leads to Foucault's thesis, which I would like to mention here, the same thesis with which Potter and Wetherell concurred, the thesis of denial that surrounds the analysis of discourses. According to Foucault, for a long time there was a denial of the extent, presence, and importance of discourse, as if it did not really exist. But as he cleverly observed (*ibid.*, p. 109), whenever something **is said**, there is something that is **actually said**, or in other words, between the said and the actually said, there is a difference, and this difference is of interest to discourse analysts. To put it simply, for Foucault, what society does and what society is saying about what it does are both important, and we should not dismiss what is said about the actions, because those can define a certain other type of reality, the one that exists simultaneously with the produced reality (*ibid.*).

Foucault also provided firm grounds for the so-called 'what' and 'how' questions in discourse analysis. This is also where his interest in change lies. He wanted to see change within the discourse in order to understand its formation, as that would help answer the question of what kinds of discourses there are and assist in separating them from one another. But he also insisted on investigating transformations between discourses that influence their generations, convergences, and changes on a larger scale. Such influence would also be connected with answering how discourses are formed. The questions of what discourses can be found in my corpus and how they are formed are both central to my study. They are analysed in chapters 5-7 and also serve as the basis for the methodology I have chosen.

Where I differ from Foucault is that I will touch on change in discourses only very generally in this dissertation. I do not take word-for-word Foucault's call to 'substitute the analysis of discourse itself in its conditions of formation, in the series of its modifications and in the play of its dependencies and its correlations' (*ibid.*, p. 110). I propose instead that the analysis of discourses can and even must attempt to define, frame, and mark the subject matter. But with regard to change of discourses my study nevertheless provides material for examining that as well. If, for instance, some years hence there were to be researchers who wanted to study changes in the discourses of value positions (or in the illicit drug trade) in certain specific contexts, they would find valuable material for comparison in this dissertation. I do pay attention to friction points in discourses, which makes it easy for future analysts to take up.

I have now conceptualized discourse from two theoretical standpoints: as an action and as a social construction in the framework of narratives. But how do these two approaches conflate in my research? First of all, I do not look for narratives within discourses, but rather the other way around. I have narratives that are discourses and that also contain discourses; both levels are studied, and the *crónicas* are taken as platforms of meaning-making. Now meaning-making in the *crónicas* is considered as an active process whereby the reality depicted in them is seen as both described and created simultaneously. The discourses in the *crónicas* are formed not only on the individual level, but also on the societal level where it is also possible to observe important moments of discursive frictions, that is, moments in which discourses emerge, merge, and ultimately, ‘submerge’ into oblivion.

As the central theme of the current narrative discourse analysis will be values, value positions, and evaluative standpoints in general, in the next section I would like to introduce my theoretical bases to explain and handle the complex concept of value.

VALUES AND VALUE POSITIONS

‘Value’, similar to ‘discourse’, is a concept that has stimulated debate since the dawn of human science. Values have also been interpreted as a ‘central core of meanings’ (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck 1961, p. 2). The study of human values goes back at least to the time of ancient Greece where, for example, Epicurus (341-270 BCE) advocated enlightened self-interest for enhancing pleasure. There have been value theories with huge ethical and socio-philosophical implications for societies. One of these came from John Locke (1632-1704), who championed the liberties and rights of individuals, which in turn influenced Western ideas of the role of political systems. The ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883) could also be interpreted as value perspectives: his conclusions about the possibility of freedom in capitalist conditions influence political regimes, academic research, and individuals to this day. One philosopher who devoted most of his intellectual contribution to ethical values was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). His theory of deontological ethics holds that the correctness of a human action does not just depend on the action’s consequences. Kant suggested that some values should be intrinsically right, a notion which was followed by the concept of the categorical imperative, human beings’ moral obligations. He developed a complex understanding of good and bad, which are fixed, not relative, although they are not always clearly perceptible. And according to him, good not only exists, but also should be pursued (see Facione et al. 1978, pp. 145-147).

UNIVERSALIST VALUE THEORIES

In the twentieth century in the realm of social sciences, a wave of new analysts, having stepped away from ethical philosophy, concentrated on describing human beings by their values and thereby treat values as something universally constant or having systemic consistencies. One of the well-known universalists is Ronald Inglehart who in 1971 coined the terms “materialism” and “post-materialism” in the context of value inquiry. According to him, because Western birth cohorts before the Second World War were forced to maintain order and fight severe conditions, they had materialist values (Inglehart 1977). The materialist values were replaced by the post-World War II birth cohorts, who enjoyed prosperity, and consequently, their values were and are post-materialist. Inglehart is also the director of the World Value Survey, which was carried out for the first time in 1981 and has since been a regular endeavour. The World Value Surveys, although having different sets of variables, are ultimately grouped into categories. Cultural distinctions, for instance, are described as traditional values versus secular-rational values and survival values versus self-expression values.²⁵

Other noted value researchers, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck, deliberately framed their work in ways other than with universalism. Their approaches stemmed from criticism of the anthropological treatment of values as something determined by culture, which ‘makes small allowance for variability and individual differences’ (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck 1961, p. 3). Understandably, in order to stress further the variability in values, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (p. 4) called values ‘value orientations’ and defined them as

[...] complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically distinguishable elements of the evaluative process – the cognitive, the affective, and the directive elements – which give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of ‘common human’ problems.

The authors prepared themselves for the scrutiny that universalists have suffered regarding the dismissal of variations. They set their theory clearly apart from other universalists by recognizing variations, and also by introducing affective and directive evaluation processes (along with the cognitive).

What differentiates another of the universalists, Shalom Schwartz, from Inglehart, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck is his inclination to define core or basic human values, plain and simple, without having any bypasses in mind. However, there is nothing simple in his method. Schwartz builds on theories of intercultural research, and the application of his Theory of Basic Human Values focuses on individuals and could be used to interpret larger groups. Yet in order to measure basic human values on an individual level, Schwartz made deductions from large-scale studies. He first introduced ten universal value

²⁵ See World Value Surveys at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

clusters, later enlarging the group to nineteen. Similar to Inglehart, Schwartz also developed his theory into methodological measuring of values in the value surveys such as the one used in the European Social Survey.²⁶

What is beneficial about universal value theories is their methodological contribution to studying changes in beliefs and important principles on a larger, societal scale, even if the study is conducted via questionnaires meant for individuals. Then again, these studies tend to generalize the answers received from individuals; in universal approaches, individual and also societal discourses are converted into ‘universal accounts’ or one might even say ‘universal discourses.’ There is also another important problem: the interpretations and translation of ‘how’ something is said into ‘what’ was said leads to ‘losing the shades and tones’ of the overall palette of human value positions as such. In other words, the universal approach is obliged to ‘fit’ all that is said into patterns and categories. Furthermore, the survey questions are derived from pre-established knowledge. Obviously, as the value categories are rather abstract and wide, it is possible to place all answers in the respective categories, but the conclusions do not include information on individual inconsistencies, rhetoric, mood, or exact wordings as opposed to other exact wordings by the same person in relation to opposing matters – all of which is particularly interesting to a discourse analyst. Interpreting the results of surveys is especially important in measuring not only values, but also the validity of the measures. A great deal of research has been carried out to determine the validity of both Inglehart’s and Schwartz’s methodologies, and the results show that, across cultures, their methods, although generally applicable, need to be revised, as they do not always function as originally predicted (Datler et al. 2013; Lilleoja 2017).

I compare my research results with the universal approach in chapter 6, where I situate the accounts (or utterances) of the protagonists in the *crónicas* on a comparative scale with Schwartz’s value categories. There it will be demonstrated how obvious inconsistencies in narrative value positions do not translate into universal value categories. I do not intend to reproach Universal Value Theory with this comparison. Rather, my purpose is to show the necessity of doing both: analysing values on a universal societal scale and simultaneously, studying discourses on values in order to learn about the particularities of the value positions. Otherwise, we might simply discern the change in value positions, yet not be able to explain why the change happens, what drives people to have them, or how people justify their positions. But it is precisely in analysing these minor-scale discourses while also identifying their societal contexts that I have learnt that another approach to values, namely axiology, can be very valuable.

²⁶ For more on the European Social Survey, see <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/themes.html?t=values>

THE AXIOLOGICAL APPROACH

In axiology, value implies whether a certain person, situation, concept, feature, or thing is 'good' or 'bad', and therefore, values can be positive, negative, or neutral. The concept of value has been seen in numerous ways. First of all, 'values were organized into more or less important sets of subject matter, such as moral, aesthetic, cultural, and natural values' (Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011, p. 3). Some authors have identified values as conceived from within, meaning that something is valuable in itself (intrinsic) or is valuable as an end (an extrinsic or instrumental or final value) (Hirose & Olson 2015, p. 2). In addition, values have been studied along the spectrum of objective to subjective.

Similar to Hirose and Olson, I have found it useful to investigate how values are measured, compared, or aggregated, but I would not like to stay in the realm of values in relation to other values. What interests me is how values relate to or, even more ambitiously, reflect on and reveal the epistemic structures on societal and personal levels. Epistemic here is an adjective used in a wider concept to refer to the ontological and cognitive mind models that shape our perceptions of everyday living. But on a more concrete level, 'epistemic' leads to the area of knowledge, learning, information-acquiring, and interpretation in addition to mediating this information. Nonfiction narratives such as the *crónicas* are ideal containers of epistemic structures because they include information about the idiosyncratic framing of ideas and thoughts. Discourses within the narratives, on the other hand, reveal the ideas and thoughts themselves.

Axiological discourse analysis is a critical analysis of the occurrence of the discursive elements or utterances that reveal values expressed in the text, both through the protagonists and through the authors. As Jay L. Lemke (1990, p. 447) writes,

Axiological analysis is about the expression of evaluations, about how texts say and imply in their situational and intertextual contexts what they regard as good and bad, desirable and undesirable, proper and improper. Axiological analysis takes us very close to the realm of social relations of power and interest, to the heart of conflicts and alliances, and even to the interdependence of what we hold to be 'good' for us and what we hold to be 'true' for us.

In light of Lemke's explanation, there are several reasons why I have found it useful to research the *crónicas* on Mexico's illicit drug trade on an axiological scale. The *crónica* is meant to be a critical analysis of the society it describes. This criticalness should not be confused with judging and taking sides. What I mean here by criticalness is strictly limited to in-depth overviews of a variety of situations, settings, events, and people where the author deconstructs a specific story into significant elements (the significance is chosen and given those elements by the author) and later reconstructs the story by using any given literary strategy. This concrete kind of critical perspective also differentiates the *crónica* from other journalistic genres such as press notices,

news reports or documentaries. Precisely how *crónicas* differ and what kind of critical perspective they embed will be discovered after careful analysis of the current sample.

In the cultural idiosyncrasies of *crónicas* and in the distinctive characteristics of the genre lies the reason it is beneficial to study their knowledge production, especially through the values represented therein. Some might say that all journalistic production carries value or represents values. Yet based on how the *crónica* has been defined so far, it is possible that *cronistas*, the authors of the *crónicas*, make it one of their main tasks to deliver a critical perspective on the society they describe by introducing sets of value combinations or axiological models in each of their texts. In other words, *cronistas* might use values as epistemic instruments to deliver their message. And if we consider *crónicas* through their specific form, that is, literary and journalistic aspirations combined in the same genre, then the variety of tools for delivering knowledge via axiological models is rather great. I would like to test and analyse this idea in the present dissertation.

Axiological discourse analysis could work especially well with the Mexican illicit drug trade-related *crónicas* because the genre conditions of the *crónica* imply a full concentration both on the contents of the writing and also on its author. This leads to many possibilities for dealing with expressions that position values in a complex thematic setting, such as the illicit drug trade. The central notion here is the evaluative character of different kinds of human voices.

In this chapter, I have presented a theoretical framing of this thesis, a ‘table’ that conceptually stands on three ‘legs’ – the *crónica*, discourse, and values, all helping to carry the main weight of the study. I have also presented my research questions about the *crónica*’s ability to explain the world through discourses on values, and consequently, through this ability, to define the very essence of the *crónica*. In the next step of the research process, the *crónicas* as narratives lead directly to the choice of methodology; after all, narratives are not merely a sequence of events here, but textual units in the process of meaning-making. A proper methodology for this study has to take into account the fact that the narratives will be analysed as discourses on values or as containers of discourses on values. Therefore, the methodology should meet the need to encapsulate these aspects. In the following chapter, this all-encapsulating method will be introduced.

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the dissertation's methodological considerations. The first section delves into the selection criteria for the research corpus, that is, the texts that will be discussed. The second section justifies the research design based on the Greimassian actantial model and semiotic square, which have formed the basis for coding the texts and establishing how to evaluate the discourses in them in line with the research questions. In this chapter we will concentrate on the coding process and see its challenges and main norms with examples from the corpus. In addition, an explanation will be given as to how the analysis of the coding results goes further than Greimassian structuralism and places the inquiry in a critical perspective.

As was stated both in the introduction to this dissertation and in chapter 3 on conceptual framing, this work strives for interdisciplinarity and qualitativensness. These goals have also been taken into account in choosing the study method. Qualitative methodology is addressed through constant **interpretation** of both **text** and its **context** (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). This means that the observed data have to be situated in the specific situational circumstances from which they arise, and in reading the data, the researcher should be constantly aware of where the data come from. For the sake of reliability and validity, and especially because qualitative analysis has sometimes been accused of lacking both (Silverman 2000, pp. 10-11), the data selection needs to be well argued, the coding process transparent, and the final analysis of the coding results show consistency and depth. Describing qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 4) remark that 'there is frequently commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study', which does not mean interdisciplinarity *per se*, but does indicate that variety is a common notion in qualitative research.

In order to be truly interdisciplinary, the method should follow the principles that define interdisciplinary studies, such as those presented by Allen F. Repko (2008, p. 12):

Interdisciplinary studies is a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights to produce a more comprehensive understanding or cognitive advancement.

The central notions and their respective fields or, in other words, the study objects of the current research, are 'values' (axiology), 'the *crónica*' (genre), 'literary journalism' (which in itself entails two entities, literature and journalism), 'Mexico' (politics, history, society), 'illicit drug trade' (sociology), and 'discourse' (language). Therefore, it could be said with certainty that this research requires an interdisciplinary approach. From a broader perspective,

I see this investigation as part of cultural studies, which often require a model of interdisciplinarity that Theo van Leeuwen classifies as **integrationist**. He specifically mentions scholars of cultural studies, observing that they mostly ‘work alone, or with other cultural studies scholars, rather than in interdisciplinary research projects, maybe because the field is so interdisciplinary already’ (Leeuwen 2005, p. 8). He sees a danger in cultural studies projects lacking depth and methodological rigour, in addition to running the risk of amateurism and eclecticism (ibid.). I have kept his words constantly in my mind as I chose my research design and completed the analysis, so as to not incarnate the scholar about which he warns.

The most important factors in choosing the methodology for this investigation arise from the research questions. The research corpus has been assembled from *crónicas*, a type of Latin American literary journalism, as the main interest of this inquiry is to study the narrative or literary forms of Latin American journalism or nonfiction. What is sought in analysing the *crónicas* is how their authors, based on their own interpretations of the social agents they observe or interview and also on how the social agents themselves (through the lenses of the authors), mark the value positions around a certain topic, which, in this case, is the illicit drug trade.²⁷ Value positions are seen here as having already been partly ‘coded and interpreted’ through the authors’ choices.²⁸ Therefore, to avoid duplicate interpretations, I have decided to add no further comments by interviewing the *cronistas*. This decision was also influenced by the time factor, because interviewing the authors would have taken place during a particular short period of time as well as much later in time than the *crónicas* were written. Thus, the information obtained would inevitably have been sealed by the societal realities at the moment of the interviews.²⁹ Ultimately, I agree with Polit Dueñas (2013, p. 9), who states that ‘speaking with authors does not necessarily improve our textual analyses.’

The fact that the *crónicas* have been seen here as a **narrative** body of simultaneously **journalistic and literary discourses** reflecting **aggregated and individual evaluations** of **social realities** has been crucial in the choice of methodology. In choosing the method, I took into account its correspondence to the nature of my data, seen by many analysts as narrative combined with the journalistic and the literary. In the conceptual framing, as I have also explained, because the *crónicas* are texts that convey

²⁷ The justification for the emphasis on value positions and for filtering the *crónicas* through the subject of illicit drug trade was presented in the introduction to the dissertation.

²⁸ See further on auctorial choices in the positioning of values in chapter 7.

²⁹ During fieldwork in Mexico in 2014, I did in fact interview some of the *cronistas*, and I noticed during every interview this process of re-interpreting their own texts, years after writing them, and basing their new interpretations on the new realities in Mexico. It would be very interesting to study this phenomenon of re-interpretation, but as it is not currently my main research focus, it would be superfluous to add the interviews to the research corpus.

discourses, the method chosen needed to allow elaboration on the discourses and meaning-making in general. The method also addresses the fact that the research questions revolve around the identification of values, which is addressed from a perspective that combines structural and constructivist approaches. Consequently, the method applications are similar to the research questions: they open in the format of a ‘cascade’ – a succession of different methodological considerations, whereby one triggers the next. The methodological proceedings therefore follow one another, and each of them includes expectations of that particular phase.

The first of these ‘cascade’-like proceedings was selecting the specific *crónicas* to investigate. The next section focuses on the principal criteria that determined the final outcome of the selection process – the ten *crónicas* that form the textual corpus of this study.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE RESEARCH CORPUS

The number of texts that could be or have been identified as *crónicas* is relatively large. In order to limit the material, first of all the research questions were revisited and, secondly, additional limitation criteria were set. One of these criteria is the time frame, which has been defined as ‘contemporary’, and specifically the ‘twenty-first century’. All the *crónicas* in the current corpus were written between 2000 and 2013. I wanted the corpus to be narrow enough to reflect a few of the fissures or crucial moments in Mexico’s recent societal and political transformation, including the rise of new discourses. One such fissure was caused, for instance, at the beginning of the Felipe Calderón presidency in 2006 and the subsequent ‘war on drugs’ or ‘war against the illicit drug trade.’³⁰

Not only is the term ‘contemporary’ ambiguous, but so too is the genre specification of *crónica*, and this created a major methodological dilemma. In order to analyse *crónica*, I needed to be absolutely certain that the texts I chose are in fact *crónicas*. Yet I wanted to avoid making a final judgement as to whether or not a given text can be categorized as a *crónica*, because this would cause additional questions about the validity of my corpus. Although I place the *crónica* under the larger category of literary journalism, this research does not make a special effort to frame the *crónicas* as such; rather I see the *crónica* as a culturally-embedded and historically-rooted concept throughout Latin America. The complication lies in the intentional ‘contradiction’ provided by the current research settings. In order to define *crónica*, the subject matter of this research, I have to obtain *crónicas*. But in order to find *crónicas*, I need some kind of definition in order to recognize *crónicas* among other textual productions. After all, the *crónica* has been seen by many scholars and analysts as a genre difficult to define (Jaramillo Agudelo 2012, pp. 14-17). To

³⁰ See the chapter 2 on context.

avoid providing a preliminary hypothesis about the essence of *crónica*, I have decided to let other literati, and above all, authors of *crónica*, make the initial selection for me, so that I could proceed from their verdict. This way, the jurisdiction in deciding what is and what is not a *crónica* has been given almost entirely to those who write *crónicas* and other contextually savvy people who collect and systematize such texts.

Anthologies, which collect and classify certain types of written texts, make a good starting point. Because anthologies of contemporary *crónicas* do in fact exist, I began with them. I also decided to include texts that have been recognized by a jury or evaluative body as *crónicas*. To anthologies and awards, I have added an international dimension by expanding the anthology sources to a variety of countries and seeking awarding committees multinationally in order to determine whether *crónicas* have been written on the theme of the Mexican illicit drug trade by someone who came from outside Mexico.

Evaluation is involved both in selecting texts for anthologies and in choosing texts for an award. This means that in my corpus, there are texts that someone else has decided to emphasize over other similar texts or to call outstanding. However, having acknowledged that such an evaluation has taken place, I want to point out that in the framework of this research it has no significance that, for some unknown reasons and often by unknown people, these *crónicas* have been designated as better than others. As my evaluation of the *crónicas* is based on other kinds of issues, there is little importance in the fact that some people have considered these *crónicas* as ‘good *crónicas*.’ Above all, I rely on the selection of others only as a reasonable alternative to making the choice myself. The quality of a *crónica*, in the present context, is of no interest to me.

As the central theme, the Mexican illicit drug trade has been challenging to bring into focus via the *crónicas*. A preliminary criterion I established was that all the *crónicas* under discussion should deal with the illicit drug trade in some way. Yet this too created ambiguity, as there are texts that focus entirely on the illicit drug trade and those in which the illicit drug trade appears only as a contextual variable or even as a phenomenon external to the theme. I have decided not to view these differences as a problem and not to focus on the ‘amount’ or ‘quantity’ or proportion of the illicit drug trade-related accounts compared to accounts that treat other themes. The reason lies entirely in the fact that the illicit drug trade has been used in this study as a methodological filter to select works for the semi-structural analysis of value positions as such, with less emphasis on value positions in discourses specifically related to such trade. However, in the analytical part of the dissertation, I have noted any patterns that owe their existence only to or mostly to the illicit drug trade-related context. Besides the anthologies that are thematically generic, I have sought out anthologies that have collected texts treating only violence, death, crime, corruption, or other negative societal phenomena associated with the illicit drug trade.

For my purposes, there were ten anthologies available (listed in the References) that specified either in the title or the foreword the inclusion of *crónicas*. Some of the authors, such as Marcela Turati or Diego Osorno, appeared in several anthologies, but so as not to give too much weight to any one author in my corpus, I chose only one piece from each. The criterion was to select the most recently published piece. In the case of Alejandro Almazán, I chose a text that received an award from the Foundation for New Journalism (La Fundación Gabriel García Márquez para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano or FNPI) as the ‘Best *crónica*’ of 2013. Another of the award-winning texts is by Juan Villoro, who won the International King of Spain Journalism Prize (Premio Internacional de Periodismo ‘Rey de España’) in the ‘Ibero-American’ category. Although the award itself does not state that the text is a *crónica*, it is Villoro himself who has several times in interviews declared that the piece is in fact a *crónica*.³¹ In most cases these *crónicas* were originally published in different journals, newspapers, or books, and they are of different lengths, the shortest having 863 words and the longest 11,561 words. The quotations from *crónicas* in this dissertation, however, come only from the anthologies or, in the case of the two award-winning *crónicas*, from webpages, which are also listed in the Bibliography. The validity and reliability of the corpus is also strengthened by the fact that all ten authors in my sample have been nominated as New Cronistas of the Indies (Nuevos Cronistas de Indias) by the Foundation for New Journalism,³² even though this was not a criterion for making my choices.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The points of departure in the research design have been first, the research questions, and second, how the main concepts have been theorised. My intention is to examine twenty-first century *crónicas* about the Mexican illicit drug trade to determine, compare, and analyse what social actors and social agents emerge as significant and identify their evaluative positions or, in other words, to determine what such actors value as important or good and what they consider unimportant or not good. Seeing ‘value’ from such a perspective has an axiological inclination (Hirose & Olson 2015, p. 1) and, therefore, the study method has to address this. Besides determining value positions, it is also imperative to observe how the value positions are construed and the

³¹ Interviews with Villoro are found at <http://prodavinci.com/2010/02/28/artes/juan-villoro-%E2%80%99Cla-fuerza-del-periodismo-depende-de-su-independencia%E2%80%99D/> accessed 9 March 2017. <http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/sociedad/print-228705.shtml/>, accessed 9 March 2017. <http://archive.ahorasi.com/premian-a-escritor-juan-villoro-por-su-cronica-del-narcotrafico/>, accessed 9 March 2017.

³² See the full list of the *cronistas* on the FNPI webpage <http://nuevoscronistasdeindias.fnpi.org/>, accessed 9 March 2017.

reasons for such an outcome. In the final phase of this dissertation, the genre *crónica* is examined as a medium through which the value positions appear.

The *crónicas* are often described as a form of narrative journalism in the sense that a *crónica* is a narrative in itself, although several smaller narrative units can also be found within it. Approaching the narrative can be done structurally, and this has been done in many studies in linguistics, literary criticism, or semiology. Another way to see narrative is as a conglomerate of accounts or discourses that do not simply define or structure the way meanings are created, but also are seen as generators of new meanings and therefore part of a larger process of constructing the realities around us (in social psychology, critical discourse studies, or narrative inquiry).

My attempt to approach narrative has been triggered by the desire to determine how and why the evaluative discursive positions create meanings and frame the realities of the social agents in the particular moment when those stands or positions have been formed. I have also considered it important to point out the author's role in positioning those values and potentially moulding the reader's view of what is considered as good or important for the social agents in *crónicas* that deal with the subject of the illicit drug trade. Therefore, for this project, it has been necessary to define some of the structural components of the narrative, see their inter-relations, and then take a further step to place these components in the context from which they arose, adding a critical analysis of the possible reasons that these components exist. Considering all the above-mentioned prerequisites, I have decided to create a methodological model that would serve as a tool to code the *crónicas* in a way that would facilitate finding meaningful evaluative stands and analyse them according to the principles of critical inquiry.

THE MODEL FOR CODING THE *CRÓNICAS*

It is a common practice in text and/or discourse analysis first to read the corpus thoroughly and later choose the parts to be analysed. Such a process is called coding. Coding can consist of simply highlighting or setting apart all the meaningful or significant accounts, but it can also follow a pre-set and research questions-based model (Willig 2006, pp. 164-166, cited in Laherand 2008, p. 318). I have chosen the latter course. The model for coding my corpus is largely based on two semiotic innovations by Algirdas Greimas, namely **the actantial model and the semiotic square**, models that are in turn elaborations of the ideas on structural semantics and the concepts introduced in linguistic theories.

The Greimasian actantial model, first introduced in 1966 in *Sémantique structurale*, is a development from Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968 [1928]),³³ and Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural theory of

³³ Vladimir Propp's original work was published in 1928 in Leningrad and entitled *Морфология волшебной сказки*.

mythology and indigenous categorization as in *Structural Anthropology* (1963 [1944-1957, 1958]) and *The Savage Mind* (1966 [1962]) (see also Jameson 1987). Greimas adopted the Levi-Strauss culture/nature dichotomy in its operational mode and interpreted it as a first step towards the social semantic smaller ‘micro-universes’ where culture and nature are not actually defined similarly (Greimas & Courtés 1982 [1979], p. 66). According to Eero Tarasti (1990, pp. 12-13), Greimas delineated the Levi-Strauss treatment in a more formalistic version, in addition to expanding it from binary to a more ample and denial-accepting sociolectic model of values. Tarasti also observes that the Greimassian elaboration of Levi-Strauss was concentrated on narrative semantics.

The term ‘actant’ was first used by Lucien Tesnière, and in his treatment it signified an argument of syntax.³⁴ According to the Greimassian actantial model, there are several positions in a narrative, namely subject and its anti-subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent (Greimas 1987, pp. 107-113). It is the object that in this schema determines the structural relationships in the narrative. As Greimas and Courtés (1982 [1979], p. 217) put it, ‘The object – or object of value – is then defined as the locus wherein values (or qualifications) are invested and to which the subject is conjoined or from which it is disjoined.’ Senders, receivers, helpers, and opponents all form their positions around the subject’s quest to achieve its object or object of value. A narrative can produce many actantial relations because there are usually many actions (Hébert 2011, p. 72). As Sulkunen and Törrönen (1997, p. 47) put it, ‘The model should not be understood too rigidly. The actantial positions are usually not each occupied by different actors; they are positions between which actors may move in the course of the narrative; and some may remain empty throughout the story.’ This potential ‘mobility’ and ‘temporality’ of the actantial value positions is also confirmed by Greimas and Courtés (1982 [1979], p. 6):

As the narrative discourse progresses, the actant may assume a certain number of roles, defined both by the position of the actant in the logical sequence of the narration (its syntactic definition) and by its modal investment (its morphological definition). Thus the hero will be the hero only in certain parts of the narrative – s/he was not the hero before and s/he may well not be the hero afterwards.

After first reading all the pieces in my corpus, I realized quickly that, indeed, there could be numerous actantial relations in the *crónicas*. But what stood out was that, after forming more concrete principles tailored to the specific needs of my research, I would be able to choose one relations schema for each of the *crónica*. For instance, it is always possible to elect the main subject of the narrative. That would narrow down the vast number of actantial

³⁴ Tesnière, L 1959, *Éléments de syntaxe structurale*, Paris.

positions and emphasize only the one that defines the narrative's most important value relations.

Another observation was that actantial relations between subject and object, or the axis of desire (Hébert 2011, p. 71), and actantial positions of the helper and opponent, or the axis of power (*ibid.*), were dominant and repetitious. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that in the context of my own research and for the sake of pointing out the prevailing patterns, it was reasonable to concentrate on those two axes and leave out the actantial positions of sender-receiver and the position of anti-subject from the coding. Yet there were two emerging needs: first, to address the circumstance that often the actants in the narrative did not entirely belong either to the helper or to the opponent category, but rather occupied intermediate positions; and second, a coherent whole model was necessary to tie all the coding processes together.

For that need, Greimas himself 'lends a helping hand' with another of his nominative tools of meaning – the semiotic square, developed together with François Rastier and derived partly from Aristotle's square of opposition. The semiotic square is in essence a tool with which to state the relations of oppositions between entities that carry meaning. None of the 'corner-categories' of the square mean exactly the same thing. In the beginning, there is a concept or term that carries a certain meaning, however abstract this meaning might seem; let's take 'good', for instance. One way to differentiate 'good' from other terms is to place an opposite to it, for instance, 'bad'. Now the category that would complement 'good' without turning to 'bad' would be stated as 'non-good' on the square and the category that would complement 'bad' would be called 'non-bad' (again, 'non-bad' does not equal 'good'). Hébert (2011, p. 41) defines the essence of the 'non'-categories by stating that one of the complementary terms could add the two principal ones together, and the remaining term would be neither. Then again, one could easily argue against such a procedure because the result might be too simplistic and insufficient, because first of all, perhaps 'non-good' does not always mean 'both good and bad' or 'non-bad' does not have to mean 'neither one nor the other'. Moreover, it could be argued that these four are not enough, and that even more categories could be placed in the square, somewhere between the 'corners'. But I do not have to go to that level in the context of this research, and I do not have to start finding categories that remain between the four 'corner-categories' because of this concrete setting. Rather, it is important simply to recognize that there are more meaning categories besides the principal categories of opposition, or, as in this example, there is more than just 'good' and 'bad'.

This reasoning corresponds clearly to some of the axiological considerations. For instance, the treatment of ethical value notions is sometimes based on opposition (Ivic 2010). Whenever something is considered good or important, the ethical or moral counterpart makes it actually existent or visible. To put it simply, we cannot claim that something is

good without admitting that there also exists something that is *not good* or *bad*. However, *not good* and *bad* do not mean the same thing. By placing these ethical notions in a semiotic square, we can analyse their meanings structurally. Here is a simple example in the state governance normative principle of paying one's taxes:

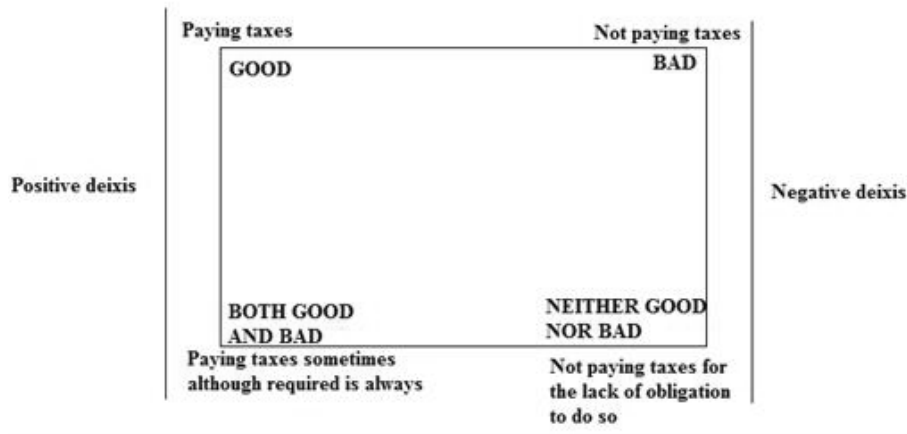


Figure 1 An example of the semiotic square (Source: Personal collection).

In this example of how to determine semantic positions in the semiotic square, the governance-related activity of paying taxes is set in oppositional relation to not paying taxes. From an ethical viewpoint, one could be considered 'good' and the other 'bad'. The potential coverage of oppositions does not, however, end with paying taxes or not. One could pay taxes once in a while, or in other words, deceive their country, but then occasionally, also do their duty. This individual is then acting according to both the 'good' and the 'bad' categories. And when one does not have to pay taxes and rigorously decides to act upon their liberty not to do so (a case of no-tax liability), the action could be seen as 'neither good nor bad.'

It should be mentioned that placing the value-related oppositions on quadratic models has been a favourite activity of scholars for a long time, indeed, since the time of Aristotle. In 1926, Nicolai Hartmann, created a model to illustrate the values' formal relation between the types of contrast and their reciprocity. He did not care about contradiction so much as about the relation between value and its respective disvalue, its non-existence or its neutrality. Using the concepts 'good' and 'bad', Hartmann's model would like in Figure 2. In this model, it is not the vertical deixis that forms oppositions, but the horizontal ones. And there is no inexistence of the value; rather, the model shows saturation at different levels, and the oppositions overrule each other. The biggest difference between my approach (and the Greimassian, for that

matter) and Hartmann's is that Hartmann actually discusses ethics and morality, while the semiotic square inclines towards the meaning of the value in its various possible contexts.

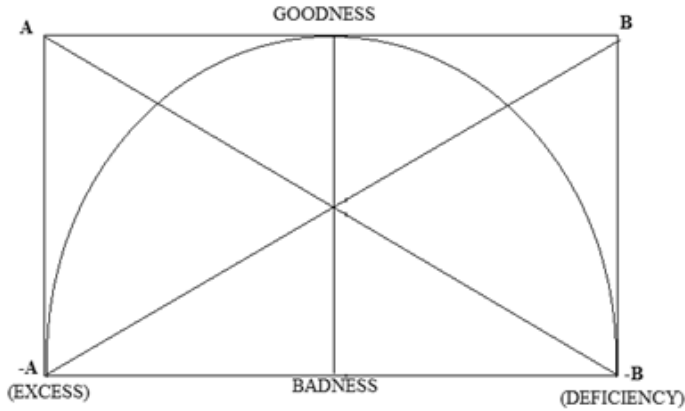


Figure 2 Hartmann's model of values' formal relation between the types of contrast and their reciprocity (Source: Amended from Hartmann 1951 [1926], p. 417).

Drawing on Hébert's (2011, p. 42) description of the function, there are two kinds of opposition marked in the semiotic square: first, on the horizontal lines **contrariety**, which is the relation between 'good' and 'bad', and between 'both good and bad' and 'neither good nor bad'; secondly, on the vertical lines, **contradiction**, which is the relation between 'good' and 'both good and bad', and between 'bad' and 'neither good nor bad'. Greimas and Courtés (1982 [1979], p. 21) saw the possibility of the semiotic square not only in defining categories of terms that are treated in the framework of axiology or, in other words, the terms that relate to values, but they also saw the way to see the semiotic square itself as an axiologized model by placing semantic categories on the evaluative deixis – positive and negative (or euphoria/dysphoria).

Now the question arises of how to unite the actantial model and the semiotic square in order to code the *crónicas* in a manner that would provide the answers to the research questions about the value position. First of all, Greimas himself did not object to placing any of the actants in the semiotic square (Greimas & Courtés 1982 [1979], p. 6). But I intend to do more than just that. I have gained certain validation for my proceedings from the playful phrasing of Fredric Jameson who, in the foreword to the collection of some of Greimas's works that were translated into English, refers to the famous concept of *bricolage*, coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1966 [1962]). *Bricolage* signifies the skill to use creatively existing tools and materials in order to compose something new (Jameson 1987, p. viii; original emphasis):

I will be so bold as to suggest that, besides trying to grasp the conceptual links between all these terms as signs and moments of a whole project, we outsiders, or interlopers – who resist the invitation to join the discipline and to ‘become semioticians’, that is, to *convert* to the entire Greimassian code (and to abandon the other ones as so many false religions and false gods) – should also feel free to *bricolate* all this, that is in plainer language, simply to *steal* the pieces that interest or fascinate us, and to carry off our fragmentary booty to our intellectual caves. The dishonesty of the suggestion (in our current penal code it bears the name ‘eclecticism’) is not as fundamental as it may at first seem for we will find ourselves obliged, in the fullness of time, to return to the central laboratory complex for conceptual spare parts and missing tools or instruments.

Just as Jameson suggests, I have decided to unify the ‘materials and tools’ provided by Greimas and construct a model that would correspond to the needs of the current inquiry. There are actantial positions in the Greimassian schema that I find relevant for determining the value positions – ‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘helper’, ‘opponent’. Yet I prefer to differ from Greimas in terminology and replace ‘object’ with ‘objective’ for the sake of clarity because I see the Subject’s quest rather as a **goal of value** and not so much as an object of value. Certainly, the goal could also be objectified, but I prefer to leave it open to different variables. In order to expand the discourse-semantic potential of the so-called power axis, or helper and opponent categories, I have decided to place them in the semiotic square and indicate their contrary and contradictory counterparts, which are the categories of ‘helper and opponent’ and ‘neither helper nor opponent’. In the list of value positions (see the appendix) and in the analytical part of the dissertation, I mark actantial positions with capital letters in order to avoid misrepresentations between the actantial positions and moments where the terms such as ‘helper’ or ‘opponent’ have not been used in the context of value positions. I have also purposely avoided dividing the process into parts by first coding the four actants from the Greimassian model and then adding two more in the form of a square. Instead, I have united all six components into one system and visualized it accordingly. This visualized schema could be called the ‘Greimas-inspired axiological model for narrative discourse analysis.’

The central part of this model is the relation between the Subject and its Objectives. I call this central value position the Principal Value Position. This Principal Value Position is goal-oriented; it marks the aim of the Subject and often reveals the reason why the Subject wants to achieve the aim. Other value positions are those of Helpers, Opponents, Both Helpers and Opponents, and Neither Helpers nor Opponents. These actants help to see the ‘bigger picture’ and place the Principal Value Position in context. The Helpers and Opponents appear to be either in line with or against the narrative’s main value position. The actants that function as both Helpers and Opponents ‘team up’ with Helpers and Opponents alike, or they present ideas that are in accordance with, yet also are against the main value position. The actants that have no

particular standpoint regarding the main value position are referred to as Neither Helpers nor Opponents.

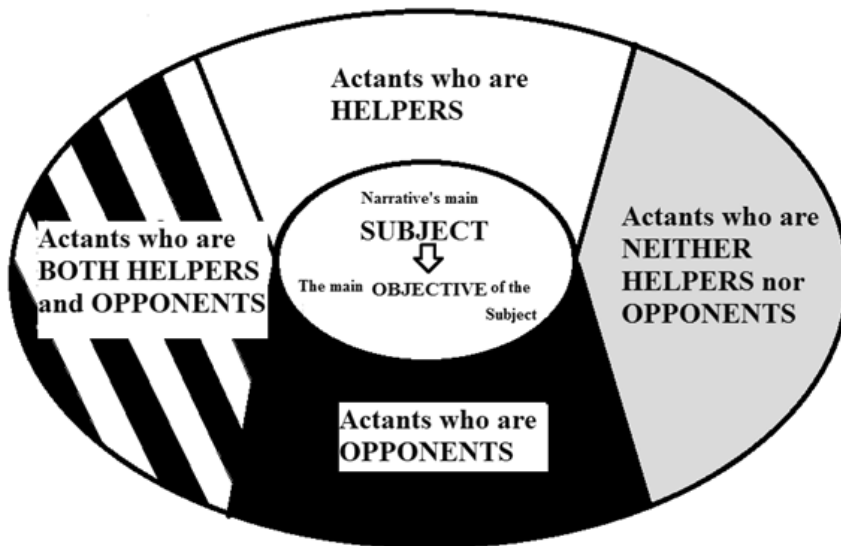


Figure 3 Greimas-inspired axiological model for narrative discourse analysis (Source: Personal collection).

For the sake of accuracy, it should be mentioned that I have only adopted a version of Greimas' models here, and it should not be treated as a comprehensive treatise of Greimassian theory.³⁵ For example, Greimas put a great deal of emphasis on modality, and in the narrower sense, on the modality of actants. He saw 'an exceptional role that the modal values of **wanting, having-to, being-able, and knowing** – which can modalize being as well as doing – play in the semiotic organization of discourses' (Greimas & Courtés 1982 [1979], p. 194; original emphasis). I recognize the analysis of modality as being important in discourse analysis. In the axiological model, the category of the Objective indicates the modality. But in this enterprise, for reasons of analysing to the maximum extent the existence and patterns of value positions, modality has been treated only *en passant*.

Another aspect that the axiological model for narrative analysis does not help with is coding the specific moments when concrete value positions are formed, and therefore, this model almost completely dismisses the

³⁵ Greimas's contribution to the study of meanings in language is far greater than the actantial model and semiotic square, both of which were developed over a long period of time. He also elaborated many other theories and schemas such as the narrative schema or thymic analysis. They are all valuable to study in order to grasp the deeper understanding of Greimassian thought.

temporality of value positions. This aspect is compensated for by the time frame of a single *crónica*. This means that the time frame of a single *crónica* can be the maximum time of existence of a single actant. But the full timeline analysis of the value positions would not be possible if the analysis were based on coding the texts according to the axiological model for narrative analysis. What is noteworthy though is that the value positions of most actants (except those that are inanimate) are easily transferable to value positions of social agents, but only if referred to in the setting of a concrete narrative. This I see as one of the main strengths of Greimas-inspired axiological model of narrative analysis. The model will also be subjected to thorough analysis in chapter 6 on Instrumental Value Positions. The model does not simply reduce narrative to a structuralist schema; rather, it helps to bring forth elements that are analysable in the context of the story and also in the larger socio-economic and socio-political contexts.

THE PROCESS OF CODING THE VALUE POSITIONS

In order to avoid confusion and later misinterpretations of the coding results, some criteria have been established for the coding process, which determine some of the guidelines for identifying value positions in the texts. Here I will also show some of the dubious cases of coding the actantial positions, those in which it could have been possible to choose between several options and go either this way or that way in the coding process. The aim of this section is to make my coding process as transparent as possible and give some examples of the difficulties I faced.

Criteria for coding the Principal Value Position

Identifying the narrative's main Subject involves ascertaining the central character and ideology or background that the Subject carries. The Subject can be an isolated social actor or a group or an institution. The Subject's value position is in itself a micro-story, which does not have to mediate any contextual problematics besides that of the Subject itself. Yet the Subject can also possess a quality of representation, in which case we learn through a single Subject and narrative something about other similar Subjects that have not been treated in the concrete text. The selection of the Subject can indicate the possible focus of the narrative, but it would not be complete without knowing the ideas and goals that get the Subject going, namely its Objective(s). One Subject can have many Objectives. The Objective(s) can be constituted by verbal accounts or by activities that are carried out by the Subject, or they can be the wishes and dreams of the Subject regarding the near or distant future. Altogether, the combination of the Subject and its Objective showcases the identity and the goal of the main actant.

The Objectives do not exist apart from the Subjects. They cannot be treated separately from their sources. Neither can they be treated as something easily transmittable from one Subject to another or from a Subject to the readers, for example. In that sense, they are unique, even if representative in some cases. What an Objective does is to make the Subject full in its existence and comprehensible to outsiders. The reader's comprehension can, of course, be at times constrained by the fact that they might not easily relate to the Objectives.

In theory, the Subject can also land on an Instrumental Value Position. Once, in the *crónica Un pueblo en el camino a la frontera*, I identified one of the citizens of Altar (Paulino) as also being a Helper, albeit one who formed part of the Subject (the citizens of Altar who were involved in human trafficking). Paulino's position was depicted as such in the narrative, and I saw no reason not to code him in both positions (although in his Subject's position he was not identified by his name, but simply formed part of the generic citizen group). But generally the rule ought to be not to code the actants into more than one actantial position (especially as the category Both Helper and Opponent facilitates placing double appearances there).

A practical consideration is the following: in order to find the Principal Value Position in a narrative, first there has to be contemplation of any macrostructure that entitles it (if such macrostructures exist). Macrostructures can be main titles, subtitles, or other summarizing units. A title can give away the Subject or the Objective in just a few words. Such is the case, for instance, with the title *Juegan a ser sicarios* or 'Playing at being hitmen': here the Subject is not expressed, but it is possible to grasp instantly that someone's goal is to become a hitman. Therefore, when in the narrative the actants who want to become hitmen are found (in this case, children of Apatzingán), the Subject is also instantly identified. The title can be of a decisive nature in some of the most questionable deliberations, for example when the narrative is based on strong antagonisms. Although the villain and hero can be clear, the decision about which of them is the Subject cannot rest on the judgement of which of them is the positive character. In *La caja negra del comandante Minjárez* ('Officer Minjárez's black box') both the author (the hero) and Officer Minjárez are the protagonists. In the end, as the title clearly refers only to the officer, he was coded as the Subject. To compare, in the cases of *Carta desde La Laguna* and *El teatro del crimen*, there was no antagonism; neither the titles nor other content were directed to other protagonists, so in those cases the authors were easily identified as Subjects (especially in the case of *Carta desde la Laguna*, as the author points to the letters sent by himself).

Criteria for coding the Instrumental Value Position

In any given situation, a social actor can become either a Subject of the narrative or an actant carrying instrumental value to the Principal Value Position, which means that the actant either helps or opposes the Subject in the pursuit of their Objective. Or they can do both or neither. The actants on

the Instrumental Value Positions could also appear as plain tools, without any will of their own. This occurs with people who are not aware of their relatedness to the Subject, but it also occurs with inanimate things or phenomena that are used by Subjects to accomplish their Objectives. Therefore, the Instrumental Value Positions can be voluntary and conscious or involuntary and unconscious.

Greimas himself tolerated the idea that inanimate things can help out in a cause (for example, the sword can help the prince cut off the head of the dragon). But the standpoint on phenomena and sentiments has been more precarious. The Subjects can choose the things they want to be their Helpers. But sentiments come from within. Phenomena arise without will. Yet, if the account makes it explicit, an actant can also be an inanimate feeling or phenomenon.

Coding the author's actantial positions could be challenging. What makes it hard is the palimpsestic presence of the author: where to draw the line between the actions of the writer and the actions of the protagonist? Is it even necessary to draw this line? For instance, with *Guerra contra Luto*, the complication of coding was the fact that the person who writes the *crónicas* later, after visiting Juárez, is no longer the narrative's actant. Technically, the protagonist in the narrative becomes the writer somewhere between stepping out of the story and sitting down to write it. In that case, it would have been my first decision to code the author of this narrative as Neither Helper nor Opponent or even leave her uncoded (as in *Juegan a ser sicarios*). However, the relatively determined voice of the author, a voice that continually interposes itself between the accounts of other actants, made me change my mind. The author's actantial value position is fulfilled by the intentionally evaluative wording, the aim of which is to see the point of the Subject. The author shows sympathy towards the thanatologists by stating that those women 'are just one of the examples of how civil society in Juárez is improvising urgent attention to those affected by violence.'³⁶ The author reveals herself as a person whose values concur with those of the Subject, and she does not make the case for being merely an observer. Her position converges in the act of being present in her own writing as one of the supportive voices. But the decisive element here is that one of the Subject's Objectives is to let its voice be heard and thereby change the public discourse. As the author assists particularly in the quest for the Subject, I have therefore decided to code the author as the Helper in this instance.

Coding Helpers and Opponents might seem rather straightforward compared to coding Both Helpers and Opponents (HO) and Neither Helpers nor Opponents (NHO). HO can appear in a single account, for instance in a descriptive paragraph of an actant having Helper-quality along with Opponent-quality. Such is the case when it has been clearly stated that the

³⁶ Originally in Spanish: '[...] son sólo una muestra de cómo la sociedad civil juareense está improvisando la urgente atención a los damnificados de la violencia' (Turati 2012, p. 235).

actant wants both to help and to oppose the Subject. But I have also coded as HO the actants that show an HO-quality as a combination of several accounts throughout a *crónica*. For example, an actant is also an HO when in one paragraph it helps the Subject, and in another, opposes.

As long as the actant does not appear to be in any other value position, it is valid to decide automatically to code it as NHO. Therefore, it is acceptable to turn this category into a sort of a ‘trash bin’ of value positions. This actant group can also be functional for those actants that have a particular role in the narrative, but this role does not correspond to any other actantial positions (the case of *La voz de la tribu*, for instance). It is more important and interesting to focus on **which** actants gather there and not as much effort should be put into **if** they gather there.

What sometimes makes coding hard is dwelling upon the complexity of relations among actants and the realization that all such complexity cannot be grasped in actantial positions; sometimes it is good ‘just to let it go.’ Such is the case, for instance, with questions of whether the friend of the opponent is the Helper of the Subject and whether the enemy of the Helper is automatically the Opponent. I would answer these questions with ‘no, they are not.’ The most important thing is to recognize these situations. As an example, in *Un pueblo en el camino a la frontera*, the author advises one of the migrants to seek help in the local parish, which hypothetically could have harmed the potential profit of the ‘collector,’ or *juntador* or the Subject. The author is not the Opponent of the Subject, because first of all, the migrant never positioned himself as an opponent to the Subject. Secondly, quite clearly the decision to send the migrant to church was an act of helping the migrant; the Subject, although somewhat indignant, continues collaboration with the author. The general rule has been that if there was not a particular reason to do otherwise, the actants who did not relate directly to the Subject were coded as NHO.

Here arose another practical consideration: when there were many actants in a certain role, it seemed sensible to group them in some way. In *Un alcalde que no es normal* I have, for instance, grouped under the category of ‘supporters’ all the actants who rooted for the mayor during his campaign. In *La voz de la tribu*, the Helpers have been divided according to the time frame of their ‘helping’ – those whose act of helping happened before Sicilia’s protest were identified as ‘Helpers from the past,’ while others were classified as ‘Helpers during the protest.’

ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE POSITIONS

The Greimas-inspired axiological model for narrative discourse analysis only answers the so-called ‘what’ question of my research – the question about what value positions can be detected in the Mexican contemporary illicit drug trade-related *crónicas*. But considering the nature and demands of qualitative research, it is equally important to answer the question of ‘how’ such value positions appear. This is the second main step that the current research design

presupposes. The axiological model only becomes valid and effective if analysis is added to the coding.

The narrative discourse analysis of value positions treats those verbal accounts that position the beholder of those accounts in an evaluative setting. The evaluative accounts are not merely morphological and syntagmatic compositions, but also, according to the theorization of discourse in this dissertation, form new meaning constellations. Discourses are therefore not just entities that carry meaning: they also **create meaning** (Potter & Wetherell 1987). It is those ‘created meanings’ in the *crónicas* that are studied here. Value positions are, in their very essence, discursive positions. They might have been triggered and be represented by different kinds of physical actions, but it is the act of verbalization that constitutes them and makes them effective. The verbalized value positions show consistency or patterns at certain moments. Those moments are interesting for the discourse analysis. But equally interesting are particular cases that show no relations to other accounts, yet still create new discursive formations.

In order to see how discourses are created, it is paramount to take a closer look at the accounts and not just state that a certain actant holds a certain value position. Therefore, the way the actant stated the value position has also been studied. The linguistic peculiarities and connotations have been underlined. Also, the situational aspects (such as geography or atmosphere) have been taken into account. As Foucault (2015 [1966], p. 531) observed, analysing discourses needs to recognize the human beings behind them.

The most important aspect of the ‘how’ question is the presence of the author in every verbal account that we read. It is the author who has situated the value positions in their respective contexts, even if these positions originally appeared independent of the author. It is the author who decided to include them in the narrative, and it is the author who determined how they were presented. It is the author who decided on which sources to use and whom to quote or paraphrase. And what makes the presence of the author even more complicated is that authors do not just appear as mediums of value positions, but also appear as actants in their own narratives. Consequently, a large part of the analysis is dedicated to the author concept and to the role of the author in the composition of value positions.

The ‘why’ question of this inquiry, or the question of the origins of value positions, makes explicit the existence of context. It is only through context that value positions can be reasoned. Without context, we would just have a vacuum-like situation where the value positions appear out of nowhere and disappear into nowhere. Such an impossible premise would also lead the research nowhere. Therefore, the context will be underlined in those sections of the analysis where the potential reasons for certain value positions are discussed. The explanations of the value positions are spread throughout the whole analytical part, not attached only to a certain segment. The justification for such distribution is structural. The next part of the dissertation is

constructed so that at every step of introducing the coding results, analysis and discussion immediately follow.

This research includes an additional question that is a product of the cascade-like approach to research problems. It concerns the essence of *crónicas* as a Mexican cultural phenomenon, and more concretely, the form and function of *crónicas* in the Mexican cultural scene. This topic goes beyond value positions and addresses the genre of the *crónica*. I have decided to approach the question from a critical perspective. What I mean here by 'critical' is not problem-orientated as it is, for instance, in the disciplines of critical linguistics or critical discourse studies. Rather, I see the 'critical' as being similar to Bhavnan, Chua, and Collins (2014), who broach the notion from the substantial content of Marxist dialectical materialism. In dialectical materialism **change** is seen as intrinsic to human practice. Discursive practices form part of human practices, and, therefore, discursive practices shape and change the world around us. Drawing on dialectical materialism, Bhavnan, Chua, and Collins (ibid.; original emphasis) state that a critical approach in qualitative research should first study 'the **essence** and **root cause** of any social phenomenon', 'the **relationship** between the essence of the social phenomenon under consideration to the general social totality', and 'the **contradiction** within this social phenomenon.' Assuming that the *crónica* is a discursive phenomenon, the *crónica* can be analysed critically by defining its essence and root cause, the relationship between the essence of the *crónica* and its surrounding society, and contradictions within it. The final step in answering the question of the *crónica*'s form and function is to add some reflections on the potential of the *crónica* to generate change.

PART II: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The list with abbreviations of the *crónicas* that constitute the corpus of this analysis

- *Juegan a ser sicarios* by Daniela Rea = *Sicarios*
- *Alfombra Roja* by Juan Villoro = *Alfombra*
- *Carta desde la Laguna* by Alejandro Almazán = *Carta*
- *Un alcalde que no es normal* by Diego Osorno = *Alcalde*
- *Un pueblo en el camino a la frontera* by Óscar Martínez = *Pueblo*
- *Santa Muerte* by Guillermo Osorno = *Muerte*
- *Guerra contra el luto* by Marcela Turati = *Luto*
- *El teatro del crimen* by Fabrizio Mejía Madrid = *Teatro*
- *La caja negra del comandante Minjárez* by Sergio González Rodríguez = *Caja*
- *La voz de la tribu* by Emiliano Ruiz Parra = *Tribu*

5 PRINCIPAL VALUE POSITIONS: CONTRADICTIONS AND RESULTING TREATMENT OF NORMALITY IN THE CRÓNICAS

*Doublethink means
the power of holding two contradictory beliefs
in one's mind simultaneously,
and accepting both of them.*

George Orwell, 1984

A certain consistency occurs in the Principal Value Positions of almost all the *crónicas* studied here.³⁷ Significantly, the consistency lies in an abundance of inconsistencies. Apart from one *crónica*, both the semantics and the discursive constitution of the Subjects and their respective Objectives show elements of irregularity, strong opposition, conflict, or even absurdness. These incongruences not only appear in comparisons external to the text, for instance, the societal and cultural contexts, but also are internal: the inner sense of the Subject's identity is shaken by an apparent incompatibility with its Objective. Because of apparent inconsistencies and propositions that contradict one another, these incongruences can be considered contradictions.

When I started to look for a common denominator for this phenomenon of contradictions, I realized that the title of one of the *crónicas* embodied the key umbrella concept for my in-depth analysis: *Un alcalde que no es normal* ('A mayor who is not normal'). Indeed, all the inescapable contradictions between the Subject and its Objective could be conditionally summed up as abnormality. The abnormality is rendered through the meaning-worlds created by the narrative construction of the Principal Value Positions and by the discursive constructions of the actants. Yet one cannot help but wonder whether this abnormality exists only on first, superficial glance. When one gets to its core, the contradictions present something utterly normal, both in narrative and also in the context that the narrative represents. This relation between discourses of contradiction and (ab)normality will be the focus of this chapter.

Before examining specific corpus-based examples, I want first to consider an example from an imaginary life experience. Let us imagine a child who wants to eat candy – lots of candy. Eating ten big packages of candy might

³⁷ From now on, whenever I write *crónicas* in the analysis section, if not otherwise stated, I am referring to the main research corpus of the dissertation. The translations of the excerpts from the research corpus are my own.

seem like a good idea to a child, but a bad idea to a parent. The child might argue that he is eating those candies for the sake of well-being or getting into good mood. Or he could just play the Freedom card, using the discourses of rights by stating that children have the right to eat whatever they want. But the parent might not share the same viewpoint. And from the parent's dominant position, the Health card is played, and thus it is settled once and for all that the parents of this child have the right to say what is good and what is bad for their offspring. Here the parents' position is the dominant legitimate position and the child's position could be called a suppressed one. Yet we have no doubt that both are normal. We somehow expect the child to want the candy, and we also expect the parent to deny it. But what happens if there is another parent (Parent 2) on the playground who secretly buys a huge pile of candy and delivers it to the child. A dominant position would deny Parent 2 the right to do such a thing. Parent 2's values would not be considered normal. What makes the abnormality of this situation visible to the bystander is the position of Parent 2, the fact that it is another parent, and parents should know the 'rules' of the playground. The objective of Parent 2 is contrary to the main Subject Position – a parent who should know that lots of candy is bad for children. Now we can take this example even further and state that the previous situation applies to some pre-determined external standards set by parents, the playground, or even the state. But the abnormality could also appear according to the inner logic of the objective of Parent 2, whose behaviour would be antagonistic if she or he were to go against other parent(s) just for the sake of opposition. Parent 2's behaviour would be paradoxically contradictory if her actions were done for the sake of the child, because her actions – making piles of candy available – would instead harm the child. In all these cases, the relationship between the Subject position of Parent 2 and her objective would prove abnormal.

In comparing the example of the two parents with the Principal Value Positions of the *crónicas*, in most of the *crónicas*, the Subject appears to be more like Parent 2, the one who behaves in a contradictory way, doing the unexpected, or in other words, behaving abnormally. Now there would, of course, be a place for assuming that illicit drug trade-related texts, given the controversial main theme, bring out many contradictions in the Subjects as well, and this is partly true. But it is good to remember here that the Subjects of most *crónicas* are not drug traffickers, but representatives of other social areas, and their dilemmas concern not only organized crime. And the forms of irregularity in the *crónicas* are not only connected to some sort of pre-determined norms in the outer world. Rather there is an inner balance between the Subject and the actively sought Objective.

To make that clear, I first list briefly all the Principal Value Positions and with each of them, after dots (...), I provide their respective, **seemingly** abnormal meaning elements. These dots are metaphorical as well as grammatical because they mark the abnormality between the Subjects and their Objectives. In the final phase of this chapter 'the dots' will be revisited.

In parentheses, there are excerpts of some of the accounts from the *crónicas* that exemplify the irregularities in the Principal Value Position.

Alcalde: A mayor wants to fight criminals ... by going above the law. (*[...] dijo que pasaría por encima de la ley para combatir al crimen en el municipio de San Pedro Garza García.*)³⁸

Caja: A police officer appointed to catch kidnappers ... is a chief of the kidnappers, a role he wants to hide from the public. (*El ejemplar jefe antisequestros habría sido el capo de los “narcolevantones” y la industria del secuestro en Chihuahua.*)³⁹

Alfombra: Mexican organized crime, instead of hiding out in secrecy, is coming out in public and ... making the public sector and the public in general govern ‘in the shadows’ (*en la sombra*). The borders between organized crime and other sectors are fading away. (*De manera simultánea, el terror se ha vuelto más difuso y más próximo. Antes podíamos pensar que la sangre derramada era de “ellos”. Ahora es nuestra.*)⁴⁰

Sicarios: Children want to become ... hitmen and act out being such individuals (not playing cops and robbers or Indians and colonizers, just hitmen). (*Desde hace un mes y medio, aproximadamente, es cotidiano que los niños de esta región michoacana jueguen a “los sicarios” en la vía pública, y cierren calles con las camionetas prestadas por sus papás, para hacer batallas campales.*)⁴¹

Muerte: The people from violent and miserable areas of Mexico City worship ... death.⁴² (*La señora María de los Ángeles llevaba una caja en la mano y, cuando le pedí que me enseñara qué contenía, sacó la mano poderosa de la muerte, una especie de mano amistosa que, según explica, es como la mano de una persona que salva. La mano es azul y venosa. También tenía una botella rellena de semillas que significan prosperidad. Todas estas cosas se ponen en el altar hogareño a la Santa Muerte.*)⁴³

³⁸ Osorno 2012, p. 509.

³⁹ González Rodríguez 2004, p. 96.

⁴⁰ Villoro 2008.

⁴¹ Rea 2012, p. 177.

⁴² I see the irregularity here only from the perspective of an atheist’s subjective logic, partly also due to the particular situation in Mexico City. Obviously, at a very general level, it is rather easy to prove that people have worshipped what they fear or what they do not tolerate since the dawn of humankind. This irregularity/normality about Santa Muerte will be touched upon later.

⁴³ Osorno 2006, p. 204.

Tribu: An injured man whose son has been murdered by drug traffickers starts to rail against...governmental discourses. (*‘Y por eso lanzó esa exigencia antes de leer un discurso cuidadosamente preparado y que no particularizaba culpables sino apuntaba contra la clase política entera.’*)⁴⁴

Luto: The thanatologists in Juárez help the grieving who, according to the governmental discourses...are guilty of their problems and also deny that violence even exists. What does the story make of the thanatologists? (*‘El secretario de Gobernación [...] culpó a los juarenses de propiciar su destino. En mayo, durante su última visita, responsabilizó a los medios de comunicación por magnificar la violencia. La Presidencia arrancó una campaña que promueve la idea de que la violencia mexicana es un problema de percepción.’*)⁴⁵

Exceptionally, in the *crónica* abbreviated as *Pueblo*, there is no inner conflict *per se* in the fact that the human traffickers want to continue working as human traffickers and try to create proper conditions for that. Two somewhat different cases to analyse are *Teatro* and *Carta* because in these *crónicas* the Subjects are the narrators, and their Principal Value Position is a combination of personal and professional targets and tasks. I consider this in chapter 7 on authors' value positions.

Even from this very compressed outline we can see that it is the nature of almost all the Principal Value Positions of the *crónicas* in my corpus to exhibit contradictions within the Positions. There are deviations from the norms set by the Subjects themselves, and therefore, it is possible to call these Value Positions abnormal (and only in this setting). But as the title of *Alcalde* clearly indicates ('A mayor who is not normal'), there are narrative and discursive constructions. Every construction serves a purpose as does the so-called abnormal character in the *crónicas*. By creating a narrative structure of contradictions, the *crónicas* engage the readers in inner battles fought between the main characters and their goals. And as the Principal Value Positions can also be interpreted as the source of principal discourses, then when it comes to the *crónicas*, they are often and primarily discourses of contradictions. Moreover, the contradictions and contrariety are also apparent in other value positions, not only in the principal one, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter about Instrumental Value Positions.

I have grouped the contradictive utterances and oppositional structures of value positions in three categories: paradox, antagonism, and oxymoron. These categories emerge frequently, and they also call for considering different facets of the concept of abnormality in the current research setting. But before analysing these three forms of contradiction more closely, I discuss the

⁴⁴ Ruiz Parra 2012, p. 213.

⁴⁵ Turati 2012, p. 232.

meaning of contradiction in some academic paradigms and frameworks in order to reflect on the concept on a wider scale.

WHAT IS CONTRADICTION?

The concept of contradiction is actual, not only in the Principal Value Positions but also in the whole corpus; it is discussed as something that portrays the reality of Mexico. The author of *Alcalde* claims from his author's position that 'To tell about [Mauricio, the mayor] is to tell something that forms part of my birthland and its peculiar contradictions'.⁴⁶ Here the author points out clearly that the Subject of his writing is representative of the country he comes from. Therefore, when we learn about his contradictions, we learn about his homeland. In *Caja*, the *crónica* about a corrupt police officer, the author polemicizes contradictions around the truth: 'Legal truth thus constructed a similar building of lies that contradicts the historical truth'.⁴⁷ Here we encounter a discussion about different kinds of truths that contradict each other, and, as we will soon see, the author has grasped the very essence of how to see contradiction: as a situation of several truths.

In academia, contradiction has been dealt with in many disciplines and often as a central notion. In philosophy, there is a widely-known Aristotelian law of non-contradiction (Aristoteles & Kirwan 1971). It 'presumes (1) the presence of a relation of contradiction (2) within the same Objective (3) seen from the same point of view. [...] Aristotelian contradictions often dissolve completely or partially through dissimilation, a differentiation of relationships' (Hébert 2011, p. 18). In semiotics, contradiction along with contrariety is a form of oppositional comparative relations (Hébert 2011, p. 18). In the semiotic square, the contradiction would state the relation between term A and term not-A, and between term B and term not-B (see also the methodology chapter of this dissertation).

The literary theorist Brian Caraher states that 'contradiction yields creative or generative activity' (Caraher 1992, p. 14). When viewed in the framework of values, contradiction is connected with the understanding of truth. In philosophy and religion, truth has been one of the central themes of investigation. What is considered to be truth? Is there an ultimate truth? Who has the last word on truth? The concepts of truth and lies are intertwined with good and bad or correct and wrong, concepts that in turn are central to value theories. But discourse studies have opened a door to the constructionist and critical perspectives on these notions. For Habermas, it was important to distinguish between the socially acceptable and the non-acceptable. He spent

⁴⁶ 'Relatarlo a [Mauricio, el alcalde], me parece, es relatar lo que es en parte mi tierra natal y sus peculiares contradicciones' (Osorno 2012, p. 523).

⁴⁷ 'La verdad legal construyó así semejante edificio de mentiras que contradice la verdad histórica' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 89).

time finding a way that could guide our judgement. He also questioned the possibility of finding a critical approach in a world that consists of a plurality of values. For Habermas, discourses can be criticised if they do not emerge from 'the principles of equality and universality' (Habermas 2014 [2001]; see also Angermüller, Maingueneau & Wodak 2014, p. 365). So Habermas distinguished the utopian 'solvable discourse' (my term), finds a solution to all contradictions or at least tolerates them, from the 'unsolvable discourse' (my term) or the 'real' (Habermasian term) discourse of power and domination (Habermas 2014 [2001]).

Based on discursive literary and philosophical settings, or aesthetics, Caraher formulates quite an exhaustive typology of contradiction. According to him, in discourse, there are four senses of contradiction: contrariety, paradox, irony, and the contradictory self (Caraher 1992, p. 18). Contrariety is 'preoccupation with contraries, oppositions and antinomies' (ibid., p. 15). Paradox happens when a single statement 'makes two apparent and mutually negating truth claims' (ibid., pp. 15-16). Irony can be understood as 'inconsistencies and discrepancies in human motivation and activity' (ibid., p. 17). The contradictory self is actually quite similar to the third category and shows inconsistencies, but only as found in human nature in general (ibid., p. 18).

In his search for a central understanding of contradiction, Caraher cruises through almost all areas of sense and knowledge. His voyage between notions starts with formal logic and ends in human nature. Similar to Caraher, I have identified discursive formations of contradiction in the *crónicas* as well. Somewhat different from Caraher, I have identified three categories which, in their linguistic meanings and their given context, could easily be treated as ways to articulate (and simultaneously construct) the abnormality of the Principal Value Position. These categories are 'paradox', 'antagonism', and 'oxymoron'. Although Caraher notes that irony could also be seen as a kind of contradiction, for several reasons, which I explain in the analysis of discourses on irony (see chapter 7), I would like to differ and place irony among the discourses of humour-related expressions and categorize irony as a narrative's mood.

PARADOX

'Paradoxes are fun,' writes Richard Mark Sainsbury (1988, p. 1). Equally enthusiastic is Doris Olin who adds, 'Paradoxes are fascinating: they baffle and haunt' (Olin 2003, p. ix). For most formal logicians, paradoxes such as the famous Liar Paradox⁴⁸ are a constant source of inspiration. Yet there is more

⁴⁸ The Liar Paradox is one of the most appreciated paradoxes among philosophers. The core of this paradox is the claim 'This sentence is false.' If true, then the sentence is indeed false. But if the sentence is false, then it cannot be true. It is a binary truth value contradiction.

to paradox than just fun. Sainsbury (1988, p. 1) continues, saying that paradoxes are also serious because they raise important questions:

Historically, [paradoxes] are associated with crises in thought and with revolutionary advances. To grapple with them is not merely to engage in an intellectual game, but is to come to grips with key issues.

In strictly logical terms, paradox has also been investigated in such areas as linguistics and media studies (Detges & Waltereit 2008; Couldry & Curran 2003), as well as in religion and physics (Bagger 2007; Peres 1980). Paradox is a word that is sometimes used without paying much attention to its existence and meaning. One analysis of Mexico is entitled *The Paradox of the Mexican State: Rereading Sovereignty from Independence to NAFTA* (Erfani 1995). In this case the title is in fact the only time the term paradox is mentioned and there is no explanation given of a selection of words in which Mexico is referred to as 'paradoxical.'

What is a paradox? Among other features, Olin (2003, p. 5) defines paradox through its conflict of reasons:

There is, in each [paradox], an apparently impeccable use of reason to show that a certain statement is true; and yet reason also seems to tell us that the very same statement is utterly absurd. Apparently letter-perfect operations of reason lead to a statement that reason is apparently compelled to reject.

In my study, paradox is any situation, statement, or action that presents a contradictory nature of truth. Or more precisely, truth can reveal itself in a seemingly impossible condition: there is an acceptable truth and next to it another equally acceptable truth, and these can be mutually exclusive. Contradictory truths revolve around values; values can therefore be contradictory as well.

In the following section, I will analyse and discuss how and why the conflict of contrary truths, or paradoxes, appears in the Principal Value Positions of the *crónicas*, most importantly in three of them. The topic of inconsistency and paradoxes in other value positions besides the principal one will be further elaborated in the next chapter.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Yet there is one group of actants that by its name could be called paradoxical – the group of Both Helpers and Opponents in instrumental value positions. In that category we find actants (units, individuals, literary constructions, inanimate concepts) that are standing in contrary value positions. Paradox is a presence of contrary truths. Can contrary values be part of one truth, or do they mutually exclude one another? The answer to this question is also an answer to the question of whether the category of Both Helper and Opponent is paradoxical or not. I argue that the category is not paradoxical, and therefore, I will not discuss it further in the chapter on Instrumental Value Positions. Instead, I solve it here, in the segment where paradox is the main theme.

Paradoxes in the Principal Value Positions

In the corpus, there are three *crónicas* where the Principal Value Position revolves around paradoxes. In *Alcalde*, the Subject is the mayor of the wealthy Mexican city of San Pedro Garza García. For this mayor the paradox lies in the incompatibility of his goal and the method he uses. As usual for mayors, he wants to fight crime. But, according to the author, the mayor ‘would go above law to fight crime in the municipality.’⁵⁰ The Subject here has to come to terms with something that seems impossible: to fight crime by committing crime. As an instrument of combat, the mayor secretly hires the so-called *escuadrones de muerte* or ‘death squads.’ The fact that these forces are summoned by a person who should be an unimpeachable representative of the law makes the situation questionable. Not only is the goal-method combination paradoxical, but also the goal itself remains vague. The mayor looks at crime ambiguously. He evaluates it according to the size of the criminal groups. He had to ‘send a

Paradox should not in this context stay incomprehensible. A proper signified (situation or concept in the *crónica*) should be found for the signifier (paradox). As a complex concept, paradox can certainly occur in many settings as signified, but here, after opening the concept to the extent that it always occupies the same text-room (*crónicas*) and is employed in this text-room with the same meaning criteria (the contrary truths that mutually exclude one another), it can become a signifier. Following Saussure, ‘paradox’ as the signifier appears only with its signified in the *crónicas* (Saussure 2014 [1906-1911]). If we follow this rule strictly, then considering the paradox as a signifier, the actant category of ‘both helper and opponent’ does not necessarily strike us as the signified.

For example, the military commander in *Alcalde* appears to be both Helper to and Opponent of the mayor, because he acts as the mayor’s supporter at one time but opposes him later. The concept of paradox in this case lacks something that the actant category ‘both Helper and Opponent’ possesses – a time frame. During the state of paradox, things happen simultaneously, while an actant can first be a Helper and then an Opponent. So the military commander could be described as an individual with ambiguous or hypocritical values, but he does not embody a paradox.

Another aspect to consider is that the situation of an actant that appears as both Helper and Opponent is not universal; it does not occur everywhere. And to be precise, an actant can only manifest itself in a concrete narrative and nowhere else. Given this rationale, there is another reason why this category is not paradoxical: the actants are sometimes merely conditional combinations. To illustrate with an example, in *Alfombra*, the ‘medios de comunicación’ (media and communications) are shown as an actant or hereby also a social actor, which opposes organized crime with critical and honest writings (at the potential cost of losing the possibility ever to write again). Yet it also cooperates with organized crime in broadcasting *narcocorridos* or avoiding investigations on critical topics that could harm organized crime. It is the metonym of ‘medios de comunicación’ that creates confusion here. We have many actors hidden inside the actant: they remain unmentioned. The metonym constructs a generic denominator, but it consists of several levels – individual (different journalists) and institutional (different media outlets). The value position of the ‘medios de comunicación’ is categorised as ‘both Helper and Opponent’, because the author is using this generic denominator, which probably combines many (and sometimes opposing) value positions. Therefore, there is no paradox here.

⁵⁰ ‘[...] pasaría por encima de la ley para combatir al crimen en el municipio’ (Osorno 2012, p. 509).

strong message to small criminal groups so that they would not take advantage of the power of big narco cartels and would not commit extortion, kidnappings and thefts on their behalf.⁵¹ The question arises: does the mayor see the small criminal groups as a bigger threat to society or does the reason lie in something else? The answer is brought to light in a subtle and, again, vague way, by the author. He claims that there has been an insinuation that the mayor has a connection with the Beltrán Leyva organized crime group, which, in this setting, can indeed be regarded as the 'big' one.

Another reason for solving a problem in an unexpected manner is that the mayor does not want to become part of what he calls *una masa que nunca cambiaría nada*, or, in other words, he is not willing to act exactly like others. He wants to change things, but accidentally he follows the same rules as those he is seeking to oppose. He wants to eradicate lawlessness with means that demand lawlessness. Yet does he really change anything? The fact that the mayor himself does not see the situation as paradoxical is reflected in this dialogue between the mayor and the *cronista*:

'And if you are unseated?', I asked him when he returned.

'Who is going to unseat me?'

'Well, the people who are not comfortable with what you do.'

'And who is going to know what I do? I will tell you that I will do things but I will not say in detail. And besides, who is going to accuse who of doing what? I do not think that organized crime itself would say: "Hey, the mayor has a system of intelligence and it is spying on me".'⁵²

Besides other details, we observe in this dialogue that the *cronista* is making the mayor reflect on possible opposition to his agenda. Among the people who could possibly oppose the mayor's viewpoint, the mayor himself can only detect organized crime. He uses words like 'who knows,' 'who accuses', and 'in detail', which emphasize the secrecy of his actions. If no one knows about it, then there is no one to oppose it. What makes the outcome of the situation again paradoxical is that the mayor's vision is widely supported by the citizens of San Pedro Garza García. This is apparent from the list of the mayor's Helpers, a didactic and punctual lawyer being one of them. They either do not see the paradox in the situation or they do not see a problem with it. We

⁵¹ 'enviar un mensaje fuerte a los pequeños grupos criminales para que no aprovecharan el poder de los grandes cárteles del narco y realizaran por su cuenta extorsiones, secuestros, y robos' (ibid., p. 524).

⁵² '¿Y si te desaforan? —le pregunté cuando volvió.

¿Quién me va a desaforar?

Pues la gente que se inconforme con lo que hagas.

¿Y quién sabe que estoy haciendo? Yo te voy a decir que voy a hacer cosas, pero no te voy a decir al detalle. Y además ¿quién me va a acusar si estoy haciendo qué? No creo que el propio crimen organizado diga: "Hey, mira el alcalde tiene un sistema de inteligencia y me anda espiando" (ibid., p. 525).

get to know, for instance, about an elderly lady who even calls the mayor's office to donate money to his cause.

As a comparison, I will move on to another *crónica* and another Principal Value Position. The Subject in *Caja*, Officer Minjárez, appears to be a representative of the law. He is a policeman whose main targets are the kidnappers. But this police officer has a secret. Instead of fighting the kidnappers, he is secretly their boss. To sum up matters very simply, this is a *crónica* about a corrupt individual whose main goal through the entire story seems to be a cover-up of a fact that would cause him public embarrassment. The paradoxical moment appears when Minjárez claims to have solved all the cases of kidnappings in his districts, including the city of Juárez. To be exact, he uses the term 'one hundred per cent of the kidnappings.'⁵³ It would be an amazing achievement if this were true, but in the *crónica* the claim is challenged. The author brings up one circumstance after another to prove that things are not so simple. We learn that, indeed, the 'propagandistic bulletins attributed to him one hundred per cent efficiency in the rescue of victims alive and well, and also decreased to only five the number of kidnappings per year',⁵⁴ but what continues next is contradictory: while the previous source credits Minjárez with a huge decline in the number of kidnappings, another source asserts that there are now more than one hundred kidnappings per year. There seems to be confusion in how the data are used. Whether or not Minjárez is a 'Super(police)man' appears to depend on how the contradictory numbers are interpreted. Later the confusion is explained by setting Minjárez's view against that of the National Commission of Human Rights. This is when we are given other information, which claims that between 1993 and 2003 more than four thousand women have gone missing. Thus, it is precisely language that creates contradictions between one fact and another. If a police officer decides to register only the solved cases as 'kidnappings' and not deal with the rest, classifying them as something else, it is rather easy to become an efficient professional. The author chose a metaphor to describe this contradiction: a black hole that turned the officer sideways. Later, when we learn of the accusations against Minjárez and of his activity as a *capo de narcolevantones* (boss of the narco kidnappings), everything falls into place, at least in the framework of the *crónica*. Contradictions are no longer contradictions. There is just the paradox: 'the exemplary police officer of the section of kidnappings had himself been head of the narco kidnappings...'⁵⁵

In *Caja*, there is another paradox in the value positions of the Subject and the institution he represents. The corrupt police officer Minjárez is 'the head

⁵³ '[...] ciento por ciento de los casos de secuestro [...]' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 92).

⁵⁴ '[...] los boletines de propaganda institucional le atribuían el ciento por ciento de efectividad en el rescate de víctimas vivas y sanas, así como un decremento a sólo cinco secuestrados al año [...]' (ibid., p. 90).

⁵⁵ 'El ejemplar jefe antisequestrados habría sido el capo de los "narcolevantones" y la industria del secuestro [...]' (ibid., p. 96).

of the Special Group of Anti-Kidnappings.’⁵⁶ The noun ‘anti-kidnappings’ comes as a surprise, because Minjárez’s Principal Value Position is to cover up the fact he is allegedly the boss of an organized crime group carrying out kidnappings. One of the main activities of this group is drug trafficking. It is thus paradoxical that one of Minjárez’s Helpers is an establishment called the ‘National Institute for the Fight against Drugs.’⁵⁷

Similar paradoxes in names of institutions can be found in *Luto* where the Subject consists of the thanatologists of Juárez who work on relieving the pain of hundreds of mourners who are grieving the lost in this violent city. Yet their narrative Opponents, the president and the government, have created programmes and initiatives with names like ‘Unit for Attention to Victims’,⁵⁸ ‘Plan of Reconstruction for Juárez’⁵⁹ and ‘All of Us Are Juárez’.⁶⁰ These names appear to indicate the programmes share exactly the same goal as the thanatologists. A close investigation of the programmes reveals more similarities than just the names. These initiatives, at least on paper, were created to improve the lives of the people who are suffering. But why then does the government position itself as the opposition? Where does the friction lie between the institutional names and what they represent? In the *crónica*, this friction is explained by differing discourses, as will be explained more extensively in the following sections. Nevertheless, according to the commissioners of these initiatives, the thanatologists are not worthy of receiving financial aid, which also means that the funds do not reach the great numbers of people whom the thanatologists treat. The names remain simply names, and in the setting of the *crónica*, they do not represent what they mean.

The last *crónica* I have chosen to demonstrate paradox is *Tribu*, and this is the only one in which the author actually used the word ‘paradox.’ The Principal Value Position here is complex and especially multidimensional (I have also interpreted it as antagonistic, and I analyse it in the next section as well). The Subject, Javier Sicilia, is a poet who, after his son is killed by drug traffickers, decides to organize a public demonstration. In order to describe the nature of the leader who is about to head one of the biggest civil movements of present-day Mexico, the *cronista* employs paradox:⁶¹

⁵⁶ ‘[...] jefe del Grupo Especial Anti-Secuestros de la Policía Judicial de Chihuahua’ (ibid., p. 84).

⁵⁷ Instituto Nacional para el Combate a las Drogas (ibid., p. 94).

⁵⁸ Unidad de Atención a Víctimas (Turati 2012, p. 231).

⁵⁹ Plan de Reconstrucción por Juárez (ibid., p. 235).

⁶⁰ Todos Somos Juárez (ibid.).

⁶¹ ‘Pero esa “sociedad civil”, decisiva en las batallas políticas mexicanas, no había tomado las calles en todo el sexenio de Calderón. Hasta hoy carecía de una causa suficientemente sólida. Le hacía falta un líder confiable y, paradójicas de la política mexicana, el líder más confiable de nuestros días es aquel que no quiere ser líder, sino que encabeza este movimiento por un sentido de responsabilidad’ (Ruiz Parra 2012, p. 212).

But this ‘civil society’, decisive in the political battles of Mexico, had not taken over the streets during the whole presidency of Calderón. Until now they have lacked a cause that would appear sufficiently solid. They lacked a trustworthy leader, and given the paradoxes of Mexican politics, the most trustworthy leader of our day is the one who does not want to be a leader, but wants to lead this movement out of a sense of responsibility.

Sicilia himself confirms that he never wanted to be a leader; as a poet, he never imagined his destiny was to lead masses of people and demand political and societal changes. Perhaps the greatest paradox for the author is that great change was possible only through a person who had no political ambitions. People gather around him precisely because he is not a professional politician. Not gaining personally from this ‘adventure’ made Sicilia trustworthy.

Another time that the *cronista* mentions paradox in *Tribu* is when he is amazed by the variety of people who support Sicilia. In my value analysis, these people are placed in the category of Helpers. The author is surprised that at the forefront of a progressive march are a Catholic poet, Catholic priests, and a Mormon leader. Thereafter, he says, comes the left wing: the Zapatistas and the farmers. And thereafter even policemen and entrepreneurs join the march. Here a question is posed: is it possible (or is it perfectly normal) that the same values are shared by people with contradictory interests, professions, and backgrounds?

ANTAGONISM

The word ‘antagonism’ comes from the Greek *antagonizesthai*, meaning ‘to compete with’ (s.v. ‘antagonism’, *Oxford English Dictionary* 2016). Antagonism as a term is widely used in both the natural sciences (especially in medicine)⁶² and the human sciences. Some studies of antagonism have pinpointed key changes in society and created new discourses to describe these changes. The most remarkable and well-known study has surely been Karl Marx’s approach to antagonistic contradiction, as in class struggle. Massimo Modonesi has described Karx Marx’s notion of antagonism as ‘extensive use as a synonym of contradiction or contraposition, and therefore, susceptible to application to diverse situations’ – and a particular meaning that focuses on capital and working-class conflict (Modonesi 2014, pp. 37-38). In the 1980s Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in their seminal book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Socialist Democracy*, set forth a new set of ideas on antagonism that came to be known as post-Marxist. They tried to unite emerging political identities under the concept of democratic socialism. They denied Marxist economic determinism and did not accept that class struggle is the only societal antagonism. Instead, they recognized the

⁶² See for instance M.E. Wiisanen & D. Moliterno (2012), Platelet protease-activated receptor antagonism in cardiovascular medicine, *Coronary Artery Disease*, 23(6), pp. 375-379.

plurality of antagonisms in society and came out with a project of 'radical and plural democracy' (Laclau & Mouffe 2001).

In analysing the treatment of antagonism in the Mexican illicit drug trade-related *crónicas*, I combine the original etymological idea of the Greek *agon* as 'struggle' with the concept of a plurality of antagonisms. Above all, as I will demonstrate, the *crónicas* introduce an appropriate contextual approach to two kinds of antagonism: merging values between historically antagonistic social agents – the legitimate and the criminal – and antagonism revisited between a government and its citizens.

Blurring lines between the legitimate and the criminal: a mirage-like antagonism in the Principal Value Position

Briefly put, what I intend to do in the current analytical section is demonstrate how in the Principal Value Positions of the *crónicas*, antagonism occasionally disappears and then reappears in complex and novel ways. I describe this kind of antagonism as 'mirage-like' because it seems to exist, yet rather than being actual, it results in being imaginary.

The Subject of *Sicarios* is the children of Apatzingán, a region in Michoacán where, since 2006, the conflict between military forces and organized crime has become especially fierce. The *crónica* depicts children playing. These children are chosen to be at the centre of the story because of their seemingly abnormal choice of antagonism while at play. They do not engage in the usual games of 'cops and robbers.' Nor are they playing out being Batman who would go against Joker or other villains. They are acting out hitmen, *sicarios*, and their idols or heroes are people who kill for money. And if we take hitmen for what they represent, then the antagonists are hard to define for children; basically, it could be any 'killable person.' And, as we learn from the story, indeed, while playing, the children actively want to raise the game to the more real level. They accidentally harm an elderly woman with a fake bullet, and they also try to hit a homosexual in the street. These people become their villains. As noted by the director of the school where the children study, 'Pistols have two sides. One is playful [...] and another is harmful [...] which does not distinguish between the limits of play and the violent reality of this city; it does not know how to differentiate between good and bad.'⁶³

Sicarios is not the first time that Mexican narrative journalism has taken on the subject of children in conflict and how violent antagonistic reality transforms them. Luis Guillermo Hernández, whose *crónica Los niños de la*

⁶³ 'Las pistolas tienen dos lados. El lúdico, que aún tienen los jóvenes de secundaria, pues todos alguna vez hemos jugado a eso, y el del daño, el de lastimarnos y agredirnos sin menor atención, el de no saber distinguir los límites del juego con la realidad violenta de esta ciudad, el de no saber diferenciar entre el bien y el mal' (Rea 2012, p. 179).

furia won the Mexican National Award for Journalism in 2007, reflects on this issue (Meneses 2012, p. 117; my translation):⁶⁴

When I came across this subject, I was surprised by the level of vulnerability that children have in the conflict. Not only as victims. Also as victimizers. With such deficient laws, drug trafficking takes advantage of children in criminal activity, as they get smaller punishments and relapse into crime. Additionally, the efforts to rehabilitate, almost always, come up against an indolent and passive society. The crisis of values, a product of an egoistic and degenerate society, is reproduced in children like a virus that is impossible to inoculate against: they want to be fashionable *narcos*, those with vans and easy money. And they do not care if their life is short.

Luis Astorga mentions in his analysis of ethics, aesthetics, and mythology in the *narcocorridos*⁶⁵ that at least from the 1970s, in Mexico and in the north or northeast of the country, the bandit-hero from earlier epochs was replaced by the trafficker-hero. This means that it was not the ‘war on drugs’ that for the first time generated an idealization of the illegitimate social agents, but rather there is a long historical track record behind this socio-cultural phenomenon (Astorga 1995, p. 91).

We have seen in *Caja* how a character attempts to conceal criminal activities from the public. In *Alfombra*, the author describes how the criminal world and its ‘way of thinking’ are trying to take over the public. The Subject here is a vast and ‘amorphous’ social agent, which the author characterizes as *los narcos, el narcotráfico, los cartels*. I have summed up all of these under the name ‘organized crime’ (which is also used by the narrator), but obviously with the disclaimer that there is no absolute certainty about which exact entities constitute this agent. To define the targets and goals of organized crime might have been an ambitious task for the *cronista*. He does not make any clear-cut assumptions or deductions, but settles for describing what he sees has been happening in society. He concludes that Mexican organized crime has recently come nearer to people who used to think that they observed criminal activities from a distance. With heavy irony, he writes about people who used to see Mexican hardcore realities as a kind of spectacle, but are now forced to be part of this spectacle. The spectators become ‘spect-actors.’⁶⁶

There are two contradictions embodied in the Principal Value Position of this *crónica*. First, one would perhaps assume that organized crime stays

⁶⁴ ‘Cuando me tope con el tema, me sorprendió el grado de vulnerabilidad que tienen los niños en el conflicto. No solo como víctimas. También como victimarios. Al tener leyes tan deficientes, los niños son utilizados por el narcotráfico para delinquir, por su baja penalización y su alta reincidencia. Además, los esfuerzos para la readaptación se estrellan casi siempre con la sociedad indolente y pasiva. La crisis de valores, producto de una sociedad egoísta y extraviada, en los niños se reproduce como un virus que no se puede inocular: quieren ser el narco de moda, el de las camionetas, el de dinero fácil, y no les importa que la vida sea breve.’

⁶⁵ For the explanation of what *narcocorridos* are, please revisit chapter 2.

⁶⁶ The topic of ‘actors’ will be further elaborated in the next chapter on Instrumental Value Positions.

hidden, away from the open, public, and legitimate representation of society. There are everyday expressions that confirm this assumption, such as ‘shadow economy’ or ‘underground economy.’ Yet in the *crónica* the narrator explicitly points out that the activities of today’s organized crime are not clandestine. Instead, according to the *cronista*, ‘the Mexican way of governing, far from transparency and balance, transformed a language with the grammar of darkness.’⁶⁷ Second, this Principal Value Position implies that organized crime encounters no substantial resistance to fulfilling its Objective. And indeed, the *cronista* points out different social entities who seem to be, if not happy, then at least subconsciously or consciously working for the Objective of organized crime. On the list of the Helpers we find political parties, the clergy, enterprises, cultural representatives, and the police force.

The Principal Value Position of this *crónica* indicates grey areas between the legitimate and illegitimate worlds that not only merge actively, but also discursively. Organized legitimate agents and organized illegitimate agents can be both public and concealed, and there is a form of expression to describe this (‘grammar of shadows’ or *gramática de sombra*). Posing such a value position also is intended to write off the rather ‘petrified’ antagonism (or even dichotomy) between the illicit drug trade and the public sector. Where the antagonism between the public and the clandestine should exist, it has only one way to materialize: in the imagination.

The *cronista* explains the disappearance of antagonism as the growing violence that occurs not far away and comes increasingly close, again not only physically, but also culturally and verbally: ‘The illicit drug trade has won cultural and informative battles in a society that has protected itself from the problem with the resource of negation: the *sicarios* kill only among themselves’.⁶⁸ The Mexican journalist Carmen Aristegui, in the foreword to the book *Vacíos de poder en México: cómo combatir la delincuencia organizada* by Edgardo Buscaglia, highlights the words of the author about how the appearance of violence has returned to the public sphere, and those criminal organizations, which in other countries are usually silent, manifest themselves in Mexico in violent conflict (Aristegui 2013, p. v).

In 2006 another wave of violence in Mexico was brought on by the military initiative that has come to be known as the ‘war on drugs.’ However tangible is the presence of conflict in everyday life, the *cronistas* add another dimension – the contradictory ways in which this conflict and its results have been portrayed. This leads us to the Principal Value Positions that take on the task of addressing the war.

⁶⁷ ‘[...] ajeno a la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas, el modo mexicano de gobernar transformó el lenguaje vernáculo con una gramática de sombra’ (Villoro 2008).

⁶⁸ ‘El narcotráfico ha ganado batallas culturales e informativas en una sociedad que se ha protegido del problema con el recurso de la negación: “los sicarios se matan entre sí”’ (Villoro 2008).

Discourses of antagonism and the struggle against them: A two-fold antagonism in the Principal Value Positions

Societal antagonisms can be perceived in different ways. Sometimes there are discourses, especially in politics, that present antagonism (for instance, good vs bad) in order to unite the people against a common enemy. Then again, to define the enemy can be very problematic, and failure to do so justly causes antagonism between the addressees of the antagonistic discourses and the discourses themselves. The whole process can end in a situation in which the creators of antagonism appear on the side of the bad. But whom do we blame then? The failure to identify the origins of such false antagonisms can end up creating even more confusing antagonisms. This is the contradiction referred to in the next two *crónicas* under discussion.

The Subject of *Tribu* is a Mexican mystical poet Javier Sicilia, a faithful Christian. When his son is killed by drug traffickers, Sicilia undertakes a crusade, both literally and symbolically, against a significant and powerful social agent that has declared itself vigilant for justice, namely the State, represented by President Felipe Calderón. One of Sicilia's main accusations concerns wrongdoings in the 'war on drugs', and as expressed by the *cronista*, the poet's goal is to 'redeem forty thousand deceased.' What awakened the civil sense in Sicilia was that the dominant and 'official' discourses had framed the 'war on drugs' as the 'war on criminals'. Roughly, this meant that the people dying in the war were either soldiers and policemen or criminals. And suddenly when Sicilia's son became a victim of the violence, the poet sensed that the antagonisms as presented by President Calderón no longer had any bearing. So Sicilia created alternative discourses. He launched a public campaign to call people to a more thoughtful debate on the question of who are the victims and whether a 'war on drugs' was in fact necessary. His words about the victims try to distance them from the official antagonism, away from belonging to a group of 'criminals' (my translation):

We owe them and their families a debt. It is not only the destruction of a life that did not deserve to be destroyed, but also entire families are destroyed. Wounds are left that do not heal, and they [the victims] are obliged to carry the weight of being criminals. It is shameful that a State would carry on with that: it is criminal. And even if they were going down the wrong path, they were victims of the State's neglect.⁶⁹

He continues blaming the social agent that he calls the State: 'The State is criminal. The State that governs us, the government that runs the State, are

⁶⁹ "Tenemos una deuda con ellos y con esas familias. No sólo es la destrucción de una vida que no merecía ser destruida sino que se destruye la vida de familias enteras. Se dejan llagas que no vuelven a componerse y se les obliga a cargar con el peso de que son criminales. Es indigno que un Estado sostenga eso, es criminal. Y aun cuando hubiera andado en malos pasos es una víctima de la omisión del Estado' (Ruiz Parra 2012, p. 221).

criminals. And the powers that be are criminal as well.⁷⁰ In this one paragraph, some of the villains of Sicilia's discourses are identified: 'the State,' 'the government,' and 'the powers that be.' In other paragraphs, to an already colourful palette of actors, he adds 'political class' (*la clase política*), 'the parties' (*los partidos*), and 'politicians' (*los políticos*).

The problem of Sicilia's antagonistic discourses is rather simple: his rhetoric is strong, but it lacks precise contextual meaning, as it often occurs with metonyms, especially in political discourses. In addition, after using so many words that stem from the Greek term *politika*, a friend of Sicilia claims that 'it is not about [going against] Calderón or about politicising it all.'⁷¹ If Sicilia damns nearly all forms of politics, but does not want to stand up against them or politicise the movement, then a confused reader is forced to see a contradiction here and to ask wherein does Sicilia's struggle lie? What are its roots and was it first the words and then the antagonism or the other way around? Or was there no consistency at all?

A confusion in language astonished the scholar Luis Astorga as well when he analysed the meetings between the president of Mexico and the rebellious poet. He questions the ways in which Sicilia uses the phrase 'militarization of the country', especially as Sicilia claims to be a 'a man of words', a person who criticises others who use words incorrectly (Astorga 2015, p. 89). Astorga is also rather confused by Sicilia's selection of words in calling for the perpetrators of organized crime to '[return] to their code of honour' (*[volver] a sus códigos de honor*). Without going into a detailed interpretation of the possible meanings of Sicilia's phrases and without judging the accuracy of his argument on the wrongdoings of the 'war on drugs', it is clear that the antagonisms created by metonyms and slogans cannot always be destroyed just by substituting them with other slogan-based antagonisms.

The topic of dominant discourses and the struggle against them also arises in *Luto*. Here as well, the Mexican government and its president are presented as the villains of the piece, and mostly for the same reason as in *Tribu*. At the centre of the narrative (although not as the Subjects) are the citizens of Juárez who during the 'war on drugs' have lost family and friends (yet in very different kinds of confrontations and for a variety of reasons). We have the official and dominant discourse (delivered by the Secretary of the Interior Fernando Gómez Mont), which claims that the people of the city of Juárez are guilty of having brought their terrible fate upon themselves. Yet in the text we get to know the *Juárenses* who are simply trying to cope with the violence, which often hits them both from the criminal and the governmental sides. Their main fight is against grief. The Subject of the *crónica* is the thanatologists or the professional aid workers who help the people in their fight against grief, but also against the dominant oppressive discourses that maintain that the

⁷⁰ 'El Estado es criminal. El Estado que nos gobierna, los gobiernos que administran el Estado, son criminales. Y los poderes fácticos son criminales también (ibid.).

⁷¹ '[...] no se trata de [ir contra] Calderón ni de politizar esto [...]' (Ruiz Parra 2012, p. 216).

‘violence in Mexico is a problem of perception.’⁷² The aim of the Subject is to oppose the official ‘stories’ about the State versus *Los Narcos*. These ‘stories’ tell about the evil of the Narcos and how the State is ready to spill blood for the sake of the fight. But who exactly are the *narcos*? And are the people of Juárez part of the evil? Here we come face to face with the tendency of such stories to stigmatize certain sectors of society (Polit Dueñas 2013, p. 3). We also learn that the Subject’s goal is to fight stigmatizations. The contradiction of the thanatologists’ Objective is not that they fight the dominant discourses; it is that they create open antagonisms between their own opinions and the state discourses for the sake of overcoming the official discourses and eventually also overcoming the State’s antagonistic paradigm.

OXYMORON

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines oxymoron as ‘a figure of speech in which a pair of opposed or markedly contradictory terms is placed in conjunction for emphasis’ (s.v. ‘oxymoron’, *Oxford English Dictionary* 2005). In other words, an oxymoron combines contradictory meanings into one, unified field. In contrast to antagonism, an oxymoron intends to unite and not separate; to put it poetically, it wants to overcome contradiction. The process is playful and instigates envisioning, which is one of the reasons why oxymorons are used in all kinds of creative writing (academic writing included). An oxymoron gets attention, and what better way to engage an audience than with an intriguing figure of speech right off in the title. Some of the captivating titles in literature are *The End of Eternity* by Isaac Asimov, *Loving Sabotage (Le sabotage amoureux)* by Amélie Nothomb, *Snow Is Silent (la nieve está vacía)* by Benjamin Prado. Some film titles that are oxymorons include *Eyes Wide Shut*, *Best Worst Movie*, *Back to the Future*. Even Foucault uses an oxymoron in the title of his methodological *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.⁷³

It was the title of the *crónica Santa Muerte* (or Saint Death), abbreviated as *Muerte*, that inspired me to study the oxymoron in the value positions. But in *Muerte*, instead of just captivating a reader’s imagination, the oxymoron taps into a phenomenon used in many *crónicas* and one that calls upon contradictory meaning systems and societal perceptions. This phenomenon is death. And this oxymoron serves a unifying function noted above, in this case bringing the feared and distant concept of death closer to life in all its expressions.

⁷² [...] la violencia mexicana es un problema de percepción’ (Turati 2012, p. 232).

⁷³ I consider the title *The Archaeology of Knowledge* an oxymoron from the perspective of archaeology, which is a study of **physical objects** from the past.

Death as a capsule of contradictions

The author of *Muerte* has been rather resourceful with the title of his piece. All the polarities, potential questions, and hesitations are embodied in the name of the phenomenon that the *crónica* is about: Saint Death, a being whose apparition helps to explain important changes in Mexican society. The Subject of the *crónica* is the people who live in the suburb of Morelos in Mexico City, where death is often heard about or experienced. Their lives are intertwined with death; as the author describes the suburb, ‘It is also one of the most violent areas. There are murders all the time, many of which are associated with the illicit drug trade.’⁷⁴ Instead of negating death and attempting to forget about it, the inhabitants deal with the cruel realities around them by worshipping a deity that is a cultural embodiment of their fear or their admiration of something they do not understand. It is a mystical way to cope with unanswered questions. The author of the *crónica* takes us to ceremonial services in Alfarería Street as well as to a prison where there are many devotees of *Santa Muerte*. On the streets, people are described to pray with rosary. They also bring gifts (‘bottles of beer, tequila or cigars so that people would light them and leave them on the ashtray so it could be smoked’⁷⁵) to the statues of *Santa Muerte*, which come in different sizes.

It is instructive to observe why death and sanctity have been used in the service of getting across the injustices of the world. Whereas the *crónica* falls short in thorough explanations although it mostly describes the practice itself quite vividly, we have a first-hand field report from the experience of Laura Roush, a scholar who spent years observing the emergence and evolution of the practices around *Santa Muerte*. She made her observations in exactly the same place the *crónica* refers to – in the congregations on Alfarería Street. In describing the origins of *Santa Muerte*, Roush quotes from *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (2005) by Claudio Lomnitz, who suggests that the ‘long-standing practice of making offerings to the old image passed through a sort of gestation period before the crime wave of the 1990s, and that the key crucible for this was the prisons’ (quoted in Roush 2014, p. 138). Roush also associates the multifaceted ways *Santa Muerte* is conceived today with the scandalous case of *narcosatánicos* of 1989 (ibid.):⁷⁶

[...] because it was such a well-developed iteration of a public story that brought obscure “sects” into a common narrative framework with stories about the world of the cartels. This episode can

⁷⁴ ‘La zona también es una de las más violentas, constantemente hay asesinatos, muchos de los cuales están relacionados con el narcotráfico’ (Osorno 2006, p. 203).

⁷⁵ ‘[...] botellas de cerveza, tequila o cigarros, que la gente enciende y deja en un cenicero para que se consuman’ (ibid.).

⁷⁶ For more about the *narcosatánicos* cult, see this *New York Times* article from 1989, accessed 9 June 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/13/us/drugs-death-and-the-occult-meet-in-grisly-inquiry-at-mexico-border.html>

be thought of as having provided a template for interpreting *Santa Muerte*, not only to tabloid readers, but also, importantly, to a generation of journalists, and not only to mainstream readers but potentially to devotees in formation.

Santa Muerte has caused controversy on the pages of nonfiction or through different expressions of popular culture. It has also caused controversy in religious debates. Especially agitated have been the Catholic authorities, who have occasionally seen *Santa Muerte* not only as sacrilegious, but also as a threat. In the 1990s, the situation and discourses around *Santa Muerte* were harsh and pointed exactly at the oxymoron of *Santa Muerte*. As Roush (2014, p. 139) frames it, ‘In flyers [...] parishioners were warned that the cult was a mask of Satanism [...] To parish priests and others less worried about demonic possession, there was an accompanying explanation: death cannot be holy, because Christ overcame death.’ Later the restrictions loosened and the Catholic Church has demanded only that religious activities be commissioned and officially certified with a license. What makes the value positioning between the Catholic Church and the devotees of *Santa Muerte* interesting is, that however contradictory it might seem, the practitioners of this cult are active Catholics (Hedenborg-White & Gregorius 2017). Then again, as Roush points out (2014, pp. 140-141), the activities around *Santa Muerte* are not controlled by doctrines, and there are several ‘faces’ or ways of expressing *Santa Muerte*. Doña Enriqueta, who founded the congregation on Alfarería Street and who is one of the main protagonists in the *crónica* as well, had a gentler *Santa Muerte* in mind. Roush suggests that this *Santa Muerte* was meant to have a therapeutic influence on its followers, who sought a kind of redemption and, above all, protection. This is another way to overcome the stigmatization, both through their new faith and the social context from which the devotees originate. In the *crónica*, before the religious service, the author senses ‘an atmosphere of good will.’⁷⁷

In the *crónicas*, death is continuously represented as an oxymoron. The religious connotations of death are noted in *Tribu*, where the author, while keeping in mind Javier Sicilia’s poetry, considers whether God itself is an oxymoron – after all, the Almighty has shown itself in pure frailty when he died for humankind. Life and death are two of the concepts that are sometimes united in an oxymoron. One author depicts people ‘living from a distant death,’ and another one sees ‘death forming part of life.’ There is also an existence of something I would call a *symbolic oxymoron*. This is when a quite purposeful mention is made of several objects that represent opposite values or oppositional institutions, mostly in the context of the coexistence of violence and religiosity. There is, for instance, a vivid description of a car shop where a body guard whose keychain with an image of Christ collides with an AR-15 gun at the gas pump. In another situation, the author contemplates how in a funeral in a violent city, there are coffins with religious crosses next to coffins

⁷⁷ [...] un aire de buena voluntad’ (Osorno 2006, p. 203).

with images of AR-15 guns. Last but not least, there is a description of an inmate's tattooed chest where images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a Christ, an elf, a witch and Saint Death join the image of a loving couple.

After all these utterances and accounts in which death is part of an oxymoron, the question arises of why? I suggest that it is the function of the oxymoron that gives us the answer. An oxymoron is a meaning field that merges contradictions. Just like the oxymoronic film titles mentioned above appear in a context that explains the contradictions and makes them disappear, so the context of death described in the *crónicas* functions the same way. Death in Juárez is indeed part of life. Death is indeed a saint for some people, and if violence and religion are lived simultaneously in real life, why not then in the figures or symbols that represent them? In this way, the oxymoron serves as a bridge between meanings that, while conflicted, are also meant to balance out one another.

ERASING THE DOTS OF CONTRADICTION: ARE THE PRINCIPAL VALUE POSITIONS NORMAL?

In the previous section, I pointed out several forms of contradiction in the Principal Value Positions of seven *crónicas* from my textual corpus. These contradictions are not just narrative constructions. Rather, the authors have most likely chosen these life stories because of the existence of such contradictions, and these contradictions have become the core of the narratives. Earlier, when I pointed out these contradictions, I used the grammatical dots (...) to mark them. In the following, I would like to explain how these dots, which I artificially placed between seemingly contradictory claims, should not be there and how the very same narratives that demonstrate contradictions also normalize them.

Contradiction can be handled in different ways: it can be described, questioned, analysed, even explained, or just ignored. In the current situation, the contradictions have been brought forth, more than anything, in order to make the reader do all these things: question, analyse, make sense of them. In addition to other questions that these contradictions might provoke, there is one that leads us back to the initial inquiry: are these contradictions normal? I consider it important to ask this question, because if these contradictions are not normal, then we are dealing with a rarity, an anomaly, a one-time thing, something that is interesting simply from the position of being on the margin. But if we are dealing with a normality, then the contradiction becomes representative; it has an effect and the potential for explaining or describing similar contradictions.

Before returning to the corpus, it is important to determine as explicitly as possible what is meant by 'normal.' And how does 'normal' relate to other terms such as 'norm' or 'normativity?' Common definitions are inclined towards the cultural and medical contexts. But how is 'normal' related to

‘norms’ and ‘normativity?’ In order to have a comparative perspective, here are two approaches that Marco Spina selected to explain the difference (original translation by Marco Spina):

The term ‘norm’ originally denotes a measuring instrument, such as the cord or the square that is used by architects. The ‘norm’ is divided in both ‘normality’ and ‘normativity’. These two are very similar. So what are the differences between them? Following Hume and Kant, normality is conceived as a plethora of descriptive rules, and normativity as a complex of prescriptive rules. The descriptive rules lead to questions of fact, whereas the prescribed ones lead to questions of law. Human behaviour is subject to two dimensions: normality and normativity (Waldenfels 2005, cited in Spina 2012, p. 42).

The common understanding of ‘norm’ and ‘rule’ is characterized by prescription regarding its function (from where the adjective ‘normative’ derives), and by the typicality of the behaviour regarding its content (from where the adjective ‘normal’ derives). One could say that ‘norm’ must be intended as a normative proposition that tends to recognize and establish a normal behaviour: normativity is linked to its aim; normality pertains to its result (Bobbio 1994, cited in Spina 2012, pp. 42-43).

Marco Spina (2012, p. 43) points out that normality is ‘difficult-to-define,’ and sometimes even dangerous to define, because normality concerns ‘pressures, inhibitions, and discrimination within a community.’ He also notes that the postmodern era has ‘progressively led to condemnations and attempts at total elimination of the concept of normality, meant as an instrument of power and of oppression, of the institutional and established power’ (ibid.).

In the current research setting, it is appropriate to pose the question of normality from a discourse-narrative standpoint. In other words, it is proper to investigate the narrative structure and identify discourses that lean either towards validating the contradictions or that make them seem like aberrations.

I return to the *crónica* that instigated the whole analysis of contradiction. It is *Alcalde*, a narrative of going above the law for the sake of fighting crime. Here it is clear that we have to start with the title, which ostensibly answers the question of the normality of the Value Position right away. No, the mayor is not normal. Later, when we delve into the origin of this claim, we find that it comes from the mayor himself, who after hearing people commenting that he might be crazy, admits rather amusingly, ‘Well, completely normal I am not.’⁷⁸ The author himself explains the reasons for choosing the mayor as the topic of his story. He identifies the mayor as a somewhat idiosyncratic character vis-à-vis the culture he comes from. Does the mayor embody the same craziness and abnormality of the society he represents? If he does, there must be an element of normality in his behaviour, at least for the members of the society that he represents. The self-reflectory capacity of the mayor and the

⁷⁸ ‘Pues, normal, normal, no soy’ (Osorno 2012, p. 528).

contemplation of the author both indicate that the title is at least partly ironic and that there is method behind the mayor's madness. And, regardless of accusations, as we clearly learn from the text, there are supporters of this method. Still, the title indicates the two-fold considerations behind the judgements on the issue; it is up to readers to decide whether they see irony in the title or whether they take it quite literally. After reading the whole *crónica*, the reader finds that both considerations are valid.

Although the judicial aspect of the mayor's activity does not bring any clarity to the deliberation of the normality of his Value Position, the dubiousness of going against the law is made rather clear in *Caja*. And again, this is clear right from the beginning, from the title on. In the context of airplanes, the 'black box' or flight recorder is opened after a catastrophe in hopes of finding explanations for the catastrophe. In the *crónica*, the black box is used as a metaphor to illustrate the secrets that have to be revealed after Minjárez, the Subject, is killed. The secrets were concealed by Minjárez during his life because, obviously, he also understood the negative weight they carried. He considered it one of his aims not to let anyone know that he was a corrupt police officer. He knew that he had to conceal this information from the public. His value position, although contradictory from the legal perspective, can be considered normal from a human perspective. Just for clarification, this does not mean that criminal activities should be considered (or are considered) normal. Rather, it means that both the author and the Subject see the value position as being dubious; their opinions coincide on the matter and they act accordingly, both again in the 'normality' of their own respective value positions, which ultimately lead them to antagonistic stances.

Some of the previous linguistic and narrative logic can also be applied (or explained) in the *crónica Pueblo*, which showed no inner contradictions in the Principal Value Position. The reason *Pueblo* was not treated as contradictory is because its value positioning shows coherence. The Subject – the human traffickers on the border area – is supposed to be pursuing its Objective – the conditions that would permit them to continue trafficking the undocumented. Although highly immoral by many standards, the value position of the human traffickers is expected, mainly because of one thing, and this one thing also makes the difference in comparing this story with that of the corrupt police officer: the difference is their expressed identity. And this is also the reason why Minjárez shows contradictions, while the citizens of Altar do not. Minjárez expresses himself as an efficient policeman who goes after kidnappers, while at the same time the so-called 'black box' points to him as being the chief of the kidnappers. During the process of revealing his value position, Minjárez shows a double identity, which creates an element of abnormality. The citizens of Altar, on the other hand, are very frank about what they are and what they want. Throughout the whole text we have no indication of any alternate identities. Even though there is normality embedded in their value positions, this does not mean that the same can be said about the citizens' activities. Paulino, one of the protagonists in the *crónica*, is nostalgic for the times when

the undocumented were not the main income source for the village. He reminisces, 'It used to be a normal village with its old ladies in church and its people greeting each other as they crossed the square.'⁷⁹

The author of *Alfombra* contemplates what is and what is not normal in the criminal world. In describing Sandra Ávila Beltrán, a drug trafficker who has come to be known as *La Reina del Pacífico* (the Queen of the Pacific) in the popular media, the author points out that it is exactly her contextual normality that is amazing and horrifying:

The Queen of the Pacific does not seem to be the 'strategist of evil' that the president credits her [with being], but she is something more common and terrible: a partner in insult. She has lived her life in a plain and complete way without going through the legalities. The most astonishing is not her hierarchy in the crime, but the fact that she fulfilled in a 'normal' way all the conventions of the subculture she was born into (with the only complaint being not born a man in order to have greater prominence).⁸⁰

The way I interpret Villoro's words is that, instead of the evilness of the perpetrators of illicit activities, we might find it more beneficial to consider different normalities, which leads us back to the topic of different value positions and the way these positions are either normalized forcefully or change organically. The Queen of the Pacific is acting normally for her context, but her 'normal' is too violent for people outside what Villoro calls her 'subgroup' to digest. It is actually rather significant that Villoro designates the circle around the Queen of the Pacific a 'subgroup'. It could be so many other things – the mafia, a group of organized criminals, a cartel, or other designations that relate to the economy or the social sphere. Yet Villoro refers to the cultural basis, and in the reflection on contradictions and normality of value positions this is very apt wording: a (sub)culture as a set of meanings we attribute to actions creates a suitable framework to analyse values as they change in context and in their presentation. In the criminal context it is possible to differentiate between the legal (norm) and the cultural (normal).

The question of normality in the criminal context and in the framework of subculture is also brought up by Luis Astorga (1995, pp. 13, 20-21), who claims that drug trafficking, while a marginal phenomenon at certain historical moments, has gone through a process of 'normalisation' and now occupies an important place in people's lives. And in this situation, it is difficult first, to

⁷⁹ 'Esto antes era un pueblito normal, con sus viejas en la iglesia y su gente saludándose al cruzarse en la plaza' (Martínez D'Aubuisson 2012, p. 563).

⁸⁰ 'La Reina del Pacífico no parece la estrategia del mal que le urge al presidente, sino algo más común y terrible: la consorte del ultraje. Ha vivido una vida plena y completa sin pasar un momento por la legalidad. Lo más asombroso no es su jerarquía en el delito, sino que haya cumplido con "normalidad" todos los protocolos de la subcultura en que nació (su única queja es no haber sido hombre para tener mayor protagonismo)' (Villoro 2008).

discern the truth of being a trafficker and second, even to begin a discussion of 'right' and 'wrong' or 'good' and 'bad'.

Another type of normalization is a central source of debate in the value positioning mentioned in *Luto* and *Tribu*. The Subjects are determined to fight for their own and for alternative normality in the context of a dominant and forced normalcy, which one of the actants in the *crónica* calls 'normalized war'. In both *crónicas*, the Subject is bound to accept a normality that is unacceptable. The complexity of their reality makes it difficult to generate new normalities. These people find it difficult in the circumstances of an intrusive 'official normal'; in other words, being surrounded by official state discourses and narratives.

All in all, it is clear that in the Principal Value Positions of the *crónicas*, there is no single or certain way that the narrative and the discourses approach the topic of normality. No value position has been sealed with a meaningful or explicit (or even less, well-argued) label of 'normal' or 'not normal'. Instead, the *crónicas* have treated the contradiction and normality in the opposite way: they point out the contradictions sharply in order to blur the lines between different normalities. Value positions are the principal instruments in this process. In other words, the Principal Value Positions help to bring out circumstances in which the contradiction itself can and perhaps even should be considered normal if we take it as a representation of contradictory reality.

CONCLUSIONS

Apart from one *crónica*, in all others in my corpus the Principal Value Position is composed of a contradiction. It comes off as a seeming abnormality between the narrative's Subject and its Objective. In the analysis of these contradictions, the utterances and oppositional structures of value positions have been grouped in three categories: paradox, antagonism, and oxymoron. Paradox is mainly found in discourses in which contrary truths are presented. Antagonism is mainly found in two forms: one in which the value positions have been presented discursively as something that should be oppositional, but is not (the legitimate and the criminal); the other manifesting as antagonism that should not appear, yet it does (the government and the citizens). The third kind of contradiction, the oxymoron, revolves mainly around the concept of death. Apart from the unification of death and its counter-terms, there is also the symbolic oxymoron whereby the merging has been achieved through symbolic objects in the narrative.

The apparent abnormality in the Principal Value Positions is demonstrated as being only apparent, because there are no references in the narrative to their abnormality. Contradictions in the Principal Value Positions indicate that different realities can exist simultaneously without ruling out one another. Or to put it differently, the narratives' Principal Value Positions make it apparent

that reality can have many normalities that not only contrast, but also are synchronous.

6 INSTRUMENTAL VALUE POSITIONS: ACTORS BEHIND ACTANTS

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.*

William Shakespeare
As You Like It, Act II, scene vii

We have learned in the previous chapter that there is a variety of value positions in the *crónicas*. Different entities – individuals, groups of people, institutions, objects and things, and even sentiments and phenomena – reveal their standpoints or instrumentality. On the generic descriptive level, it is possible to conclude that the *cronistas* have exploited both journalistic and literary tools to acknowledge the complexity of evaluative stances.

Up to this point, the present study has been conducted on the premise that all value positions in the narrative are construed discursively. They are neither inherent nor innate to the prototypes of the narrative. Nor are they absolute or universal constants. The actantial value positions exist only in a certain narrative, and there, they are not constants, as their functions can vary. Even so, if it is assumed that discourses are not mere reflections of reality but actually construction blocks of reality, the value positions are also significant outside their respective narratives.

The essence of the analysis so far has been to determine and investigate the Principal Value Position of the narrative, which consists of two actants – the Subject and its Objective. The Subject is the protagonist whose presence and aims are the most elaborated, the centre of the narrative. The Subject is a volitional actant, striving towards a goal of value, the Objective. Whatever the volitional goals of the many other protagonists in the narrative may be, in this concrete narrative research setting, their value positions are seen as being connected with the Subject's by the auxiliary potential either to assist or to disrupt the Subject's quest for its Objective. The Principal Value Position is what dictates the choice of actantial positions of whomever and whatever, which either helps or opposes the Principal Value Position or does both or does neither. Whenever such an additional value position is found in the narrative, it is considered the Instrumental Value Position.

The Instrumental Value Positions can be volitional but they do not have to be. Entities can serve the interests of the Subject without knowing it. And entities can be inanimate actants, such as things or forces that shape the course of action. In a fairytale, for example, the prince can find a helper in a sword

that cuts off the head of a dragon, but he could also find an opponent embodied in his fear of facing the dragon (Hébert 2011, p. 71). Similarly, in the *crónicas*, human actants can be distinguished by their attempts to achieve something. There are things that help them or forces and sentiments that hinder the desired outcome.

Actants are narrative-based, but the question arises: what is the actant's potential for external reflectivity, or in other words, what if we try to reflect actants outside the narrative? After all, keeping in mind the presupposition that the *crónica* is a genre of nonfiction, we should be able to convert value positions into an analysis of the reality behind the narrative.⁸¹ Then again, such analysis is not reserved only for nonfiction. Even if we assumed that the *crónicas* have a partly fictitious character, the value positions posed would possibly still refer to the historical or factual world. However, Jørgensen (2002, p. 77) calls for separation of nonfiction and fiction by stating, 'it appears that the element of doubt and the invitation to verification may be what distinguishes nonfiction from fiction in terms of reference.' The actants' referential potential was revealed in the previous chapter on the contradiction in the Principal Value Positions, which convert into contradictions of the reality those positions represent. But I would like to take this further and analyse discursive stances of Instrumental Value Positions as well, first, with respect to their capacity to be referential, and secondly, and perhaps even more important, with respect to the particularities of instrumentality and what the fact of either helping or opposing the Principal Value Position suggests in the framework of this corpus.

Besides marking the Instrumental Value Positions in the *crónicas* and describing them, I endeavour in this chapter to analyse volition and in relation to volition, the identity of the entities behind the actants who could be seen as references to 'real life' among the actants – the 'actors'. I have chosen to call them 'actors', as both in Greimasian and in social theory, actors have been seen as having volition, agency, and identity. Regarding the inanimate actants in the Instrumental Value Positions, I will explore whether those seemingly unintentional objects or forces in assisting the Principal Value Position could be theorized as having power of their own and what their potential is to be the (determined or undetermined) means to achieving the desired goal. In addition, all Instrumental Value Positions' volitional emotionality, rationality, and normativity will be briefly touched upon here.

First, it will be determined what 'actor' means and what it means when an actant becomes an 'actor'. Actants' lack of awareness of their respective value positions brings up a second question, namely the possibility of agency. The third section will focus on inanimate actants and their potential to become 'operative' for the sake of the actors. The most problematic part of this chapter is the final section, where the shifting of Instrumental Value Positions will be

⁸¹ The presupposition of nonfiction will also be discussed in the next chapter on the author's role in the *crónicas*.

projected onto Schwartz's value theory and Bourdieu's field and habitus theories.

WHAT IS AN ACTOR?

It has been determined so far that actants are, just as in Greimas's original formulation, 'that which accomplishes or undergoes an act' and 'designates a type of syntactic unit, properly formal in character, which precedes any semantic and/or ideological investment' (Greimas & Courtés 1982 [1979], p. 5). Actants are related to (a narrative's) syntax; therefore, they are structural. Greimas and Courtés (ibid.) also explain that the 'concept of actant has the advantage of replacing, especially in literary semiotics, the term of character as well as that of "dramatis persona" (V. Propp), since it applies not only to human beings but also to animals, objects, or concepts.' Actant is, therefore, a broad notion, but it remains strictly on the fringe of the narrative.

But within the narrative, the actant can be transformed into something new and more complex. Greimas himself coined a particular narrative theory-related definition of what happens when an actant becomes an 'actor'. He stated that an 'actor is [...] a meeting point and locus of conjunction for narrative structures and discursive structures, for the grammatical and the semantic components' (Greimas 1987, p. 120). Thus, an actant becomes an actor in a discourse, and in connection with that discourse, overcomes the structure and transits to the realm of meanings. But at least in the narrative, both actants and actors can also bring about **change**. An actant can become something different through various stages of a narrative or between narratives. And an actor carries some sort of meaning at one moment, yet in another moment can be something new. Such changes of modalities can also be referred to as actantial and actorial 'roles'.

This then is the 'actor' in the paradigm of narrative analysis. Yet the value positions in the *crónicas* are not just tied to the story; they also reflect social reality. For that reason, let us consider for a moment the term 'actor' in the paradigm of social theory. A social actor is a widely used term in the social sciences. Above all, a social actor is conceptualized as having the ability to choose independently, or in other words, to determine their own agency. Talcott Parsons for example, sees norms and values as impediments to the social actor in choosing a proper goal and means. According to him, norms and values inhibit the agency of the social actor or, in effect, the appearance of the social actor (Parsons 1968, cited also in Scott & Marshall 2009).

To add another example of the theorization of the social actor from a much later time, Roberta Lamb and Rob Kling have introduced the social actor into the context of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and they differentiate between 'user' and 'social actor' in ICT-related practices. They conceptualize the social actor from an institutionalist perspective in order to 'portray the complex and multiple roles that people fulfill while adopting,

adapting, and using information systems' (Lamb & Kling 2003, p. 197). It is possible to conclude that Parsons as well as Lamb and Kling see agency as something that is shaped socially, although Parsons presents society's influence on social actors in a much more deterministic frame.

To balance out non-deterministic and deterministic views of agency, identity, and structure, Anthony Giddens (1984) proposed that individual action is shaped by structure, but simultaneously individual actions create structure, and therefore, 'duality of structure' (Giddens 1984, p. 19) takes place. One of the first scholars to criticise Giddens was Margaret Archer (1982), who saw several contradictions in the Giddens theory, one of them being precisely the oscillation between determinism and voluntarism, resulting in failure to distinguish between the 'individual and social reality' (King 2010, p. 254).

Yet Margaret Archer (2000) also discusses 'actors' in the sphere that oscillates between the individual and the social. She makes agency and identity central themes for understanding the 'social actor'. First of all, she calls for comprehensive study of human agency, and she sees a particular threat in determining human agency only through a postmodernist perspective. Above all, she scrutinizes the attempt to determine and describe human volition only through discursive means. She describes the transformation of the human being into a social actor as a three-step process of conflating the individual and the social into an identity that is able to act on its own will. The social actor, instead of just being transformed by society, transforms society.

Given Archer's discussion as well as, to some degree, the general discussion of the social actor in social theory, it could be said that one of the central debates in the identity of the social actor lies in agency and volition. The questions posed in this debate are as follows: Is the social actor able to form its own agency? What does one's 'own agency' mean? Is the 'own', 'self', or 'identity' formed only in conformity with the social surroundings?

Contrary to what Archer suggests, my study focuses entirely on discourses, but there is 'redemption' for me at least in the fact that this research does equate a human being with discourse, which is one of Archer's criticisms of the contemporary academic enquiry into the human being (Archer 2000, p. 2). However, all the conclusions about the agency of a social actor are derived from discursive data. This does not mean that the existence of social actors implies an existence only through discourses: such a realm is preserved for actants. To paraphrase what Archer claims, when actants reflect on their potential to become social actors, they start to exist naturally, socially, and practically (*ibid.*, pp. 9-13).

Yet Archer's view of social actors is still incomplete in current settings because first, she so indisputably diminishes the importance of discourses in constructing social identity, and second, she ties social actors firmly to their own choices. In her view, social actors are always reflective about their actorial choices. Such a definition would eliminate many possibilities to analyse actors

whose willingness to act on certain roles has not been clearly presented.⁸² Turning back to the Greimassian ‘actor’, we find it too is alien to the current study, because for Greimas, the ‘actor’ is only seen through the narrative’s discursive lenses and provides almost no possibility to analyse societal references. But both Archer and Greimas have contributed to my definition of the ‘actor’ by providing some key notions (Archer: agency, Greimas: meaning). In the present study, I suggest the following interpretation of the term ‘actor’ (used without quotation marks from here on):

Actors

- 1) are the actants’ counterparts in a narrative in their respective real-life reference(s);
- 2) appear when the relations between actantial value positions are reflected in their respective real-life reference(s);
- 3) do not appear only in a narrative’s discursive value position, but have goals and values in real life.

The agency of actors whose values are studied via actants on Principal Value Positions is rather easily observed because of an Objective uttered by the Subject. This was seen in the previous chapter where the Principal Value Positions showed a wide array of value goals, almost all of them unifiable under the same designation, contradiction.

The agency of actors whose appearance accrues from Instrumental Value Positions is a much more complex issue. This is mainly due to three reasons. First, occasionally the actant-related discourses do not reveal anything about the actants’ self-awareness of their value positions. Second, we are yet again faced with a systematic inconsistency. This time the inconsistency becomes evident through the way the value positions emerge normatively, ethically, or group-wise societally. Third, some of the actants are inanimate, and the possibility of the agency of objects, sentiments, or phenomena could easily be dismissed. All three cases will be discussed in the next sections.

THE RELATION BETWEEN AWARENESS OF THE VALUE POSITIONING AND AGENCY

Depending on the theorization, actors’ agency has been associated with ‘selfhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom, and creativity’ (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, p. 962). It is the level of influence from the external society that leaves room for additional debate, and we can never be assured of how much a certain agency has been constrained from the outside and how much of it comes from within the actor. Despite their

⁸² Archer, in her comprehensive theory on agency (2000), addresses the question of choice by presenting the development of human agency in three phases: Primary Agent, Corporate Agent, and Social Actor, where Social Actor has gradually obtained the maximum level of compatibility between individual and social identity.

far more direct associations with reality in comparison to actants, actors are still just temporary constructions (ibid., p. 1012); they exist only in certain situations and contexts, and therefore, they are ephemeral. Their expressions of volition, or agency, are temporary as well. In one 'role', the volition of an actor can be quite different from another 'role', and the reasons for changing the 'roles' is extremely hard to discern. It is also important to stress that in contrast to the general view of social actors, the actor in the current case is not volitional *per se*. In other words, actors can sometimes appear in their roles unconsciously, unwillingly. Does this automatically result in actors not having agency? That is the question that drives the analysis in this section.

In the following I will consider how actants' potential volition and willingness to act have been conveyed in narrative discourse and how volition could be interpreted in the face of the circumstances that the actants depict. In connection specifically with the Helpers category, some actants are presented or present themselves as conscious of a Subject's quest and of their role in this search. There are those who declare themselves contributors and those who are just supporters. But the fact that Subjects have a goal of value makes the Helpers almost by definition instrumental, whether they actually want to help or not. Helpers can be understood in the most cynical way as a means to an end.

In *Alcalde*, the mayor is helped quite literally by bodyguards, consultants, and family. Their value goal is clear and well-defined. But there is also a vast crowd of supporters who are classified separately on the list of actants (see the appendix) because their value position, although also well-defined, is of another kind, mainly due to the emphasis on emotional accounts. In the meeting in which the mayor announces publicly the 'elimination' of a perpetrator of organized crime, a fact that is known to him but not to the police force (and a circumstance that has raised many eyebrows), the crowd of supporters expresses support; therefore, their help is willing, although less active. The author uses the words 'a choir of voices'⁸³ to describe this group. Such a description provides two indications: the group is loud and it is huge, although somewhat anonymous. We learn something about the voices because their comments are quoted: 'This is having balls!', 'You are brave, Mauricio!', 'You were wonderful!', 'How we missed you!', 'You surely have them where they are supposed to be,' 'They will be so annoyed!'⁸⁴ and finally an old lady who just says, 'You will never change'⁸⁵ and yet her supportive attitude is shown by her desire to pose in the same photograph with the same 'unchangeable' daredevil mayor. Through the vulgar reference to 'balls' and other colloquial terms, we learn that the mayor is largely supported for his courage and his unconventionality, which might not be liked by some, but are

⁸³ '[...] el coro de voces [...]' (Osorno 2012, p. 509).

⁸⁴ 'Ésos son huevos [...]', 'Eres un valiente, Mauricio [...]', 'Estuviste maravilloso [...]', 'Cómo nos hacías falta [...]', 'Tú si los tienes donde deben estar [...]', 'Te la van a pelar [...]' (ibid.).

⁸⁵ 'No vas a cambiar nunca [...]' (ibid.).

welcomed by this large group of supporters. These supporters value the mayor's courage highly, and they do not reject his Machiavellian 'means justify the ends' approach – going above the law and taking the initiative in his own hands, no matter the outcome. They are drawn to his strength, his power, and his way of seeing the world, and even though they declare support for the mayor's means, they themselves are converted into means for the mayor's cause because his political position demands just such a crowd of supportive voices.

The case of the mayor's supporters is an example of how the value positions known to us are also known to the actors. But this is not always known in the *crónicas*. One remarkable case is the meeting between the author of *Carta* and his sources, victims of drug wars – relatives of people who have gone missing. This case is interesting because it provides many variables that could change the interpretation of meanings created by different actors in the story. What we learn from the *crónica* is that the author meets a group of people who have lost their loved ones and who are looking for help everywhere, including from the current president, Enrique Peña Nieto, who, in the end, refuses to see them. Before talking to the *cronista*, the victims complain about the media and journalists who 'do not publish anything' and 'only [go there] to become famous and take advantage [of them].'⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that the *cronista* has decided to publish this piece of information as if to provide an honest platform for the readers' reflection to decide whether his reporting continues the pattern that the victims complain about or whether he differs from that pattern. What follows is eight short transcriptions of conversations without any analysis or comment by the *cronista* except the mention that the president refused to meet the victims' families.

The analysis of this part of *Carta* is interesting for the methodological considerations it brings up. If quotations from the victims' families are read without any pre-text to model them according to some method of discourse analysis, it is a fact that the victims have had their share of space in the *crónica* (even if the space is probably less than they would have liked) to express what they want to say. But in the current methodological context, their goal is transformed, because the Principal Value Position of this piece is the narrator's goal of creating negative emotions about La Laguna through a careful selection of information that would gradually fulfil this aim. We do not know whether the victims' families guessed that they would be converted into Helpers on this mission. Neither do we know if they would have agreed to play this role. And this is where the goals of the victims have a potential mismatch with the goal of a story or its narrator (this time an actant).

One *crónica* in my corpus – *Teatro* – could be described as a '*crónica* of unaware Helpers'. Here almost all actors who give their Helper input are probably ignorant of having done so. And once again, the Subject is the author himself. But the setting is different, as in this story, quite clearly, the goal of

⁸⁶ '[...] no publican nada; sólo vienen para hacerse famosos, nos utilizan [...]' (Almazán 2013).

the author, instead of expressing a sentiment, is a search for understanding. As contributors to his quest, he used the conversations of strangers on a bus, the observations of women who escape attention, policemen who keep an eye on suspicious neighbourhoods. Probably none of these people knew that while engaging in everyday actions, they were also helpers in ‘solving a puzzle.’

These examples of unawareness of a value position illustrate a fissure between a narrative’s discursive reality and its referential reality. Such unawareness could be something that the *cronistas* noticed before writing the piece; later, it is noticed by the readers who interpret it. In the above-mentioned cases, the **actant’s agency and actor’s goal might not correspond** (the weak modality of this claim comes from insufficient contextual information). And this result in turn raises the topic of the author’s overall goals (even more so, because the Subject of this piece, *Teatro*, is the author) in the action of positioning the values. It could even be said that instead of the actant’s agency, we can observe here the **agency of value positioning**. This topic will be explored further in the next chapter about the author’s role in the *crónicas*.

It is not only authors whose value goals are unknown to the actors around them and whose respective narrative value positions would perhaps even be disagreeable to them. In *Sicarios*, the principal Value Position is tied to children who would like to try out being hitmen and who enact such characters in their games. There are two actants whose value positions have been marked as Both Helper and Opponent, and probably the Helpers component would surprise, if not even shock, these two actants in reality. One is an elderly lady who was ‘shot’ by a toy bullet to the chest and must take to her bed to recuperate. The second is a gay man who was harassed by the youngsters to the point that a policeman had to interfere. In both cases, the victims might have known they had interfered in children’s play, but not realized that they were its pieces so that the game’s victims were simultaneously the game’s instruments; after all, when hitmen shoot, there are injuries, and considering the character of a real hitman, attacking someone would demonstrate the ability to be a good hitman. In a very cynical way, the children were also helped by the victims of their games. The axiological model of narrative discourses has pinpointed something that might have also been the author’s intention, namely to showcase this value-related controversy without specifically advocating it.

The unawareness of the actors of their respective actantial value positions in the narrative demonstrates first, that a narrative’s value positions are not the same as actorial real-life values, because helping or opposing (or both or neither) someone else’s value goal may take place unwillingly or without conscious knowing. Second, the analysis has shown the narrative’s ability to reflect back a somewhat realistic situation in which along with the fluctuation of the actantial value positions, the actorial roles shift as well. This shifting happens not only when actors are unaware of their value positions, but also knowingly and willingly. This will be the topic of the next section.

INANIMATE ACTANTS AS MEANS TO AN END (OR MEANS TO AN AGENCY)

In many ways, the subject of inanimate actants relates to the previous sections on the actants' unawareness of their value positions because obviously, the inanimate actants are not aware of the actantial position. They do not have a will of their own. But they are the most 'instrumental' of all the actants because their purpose is defined solely through being the means to someone's end, or in other words, they could be seen as the means to an agency.

While some of the actants are individuals or collectives, others remain either in a liminal status or are straightforwardly non-human. The latter are, for instance, abilities or states ('power'), sentiments ('fear'), principles ('law' or 'our law'), activities ('leaving guns behind,' 'reiki' [alternative medicine therapy]), objects ('technology,' 'toys,' 'money,' 'figures of Saint Death'), personal characteristics ('sense of humour'), or even a national holiday ('Day of the Dead'). In *Alfombra* we come across probably the most abstract actant in the corpus, described by the author as a compound of 'past and future, traditional values and planned hopes.'⁸⁷ The more liminal actants that could be considered simultaneously non-human and human are institutions ('undertaker's offices,' 'border patrol,' 'the US government,' 'the Catholic Church,' 'political parties'), or social groups ('organized crime,' 'clergy,' 'media').

The inanimate actant's discursive formation does not automatically translate into an actor's value position and goals. First, because the narrative's discursive value positions are not the same as a real-life's actor's values, and second, even if there are rather many theories about the existence of structural or even objects' agency,⁸⁸ I assume that goals of value are still mainly properties of the human condition. Therefore, even if we find on the actantial value positions such structural entities as political parties or the US government, treating these as actors is conditioned by the analyst's ability to detect human agency. In that sense, this analysis deals with the micro-level of values (individuals) and does not have the capacity to identify macro-level values (cultures), even though it is sometimes hard to see the difference.⁸⁹

Some of the most complex actants in conveying meanings are social phenomena in a society such as 'violence,' 'rumour,' 'denial,' or 'silence'. These phenomena possess the quality of encapsulating many other hidden actants within their nominal status. Violence as a Helper of organized crime

⁸⁷ '[...] el pasado y el futuro, los valores de la tradición y las esperanzas planeadas [...]' (Villoro 2008).

⁸⁸ Examples of such theories are, for instance, the actor-network theory: see Bruno Latour (2005), *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory* (Oxford University Press). Another account of objects' agency is Alfred Gell's (1998) on the agency of artefacts in *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Clarendon Press, Oxford).

⁸⁹ For an analysis of the difference between micro- and macro-level values, see, for example, Datler et al. 2013.

incorporates other meaning-loaded concepts such as control, liaisons, or a particular sense of honour. 'Denial' as Both Helper and Opponent of the author also embodies the fear of facing cruel realities, self-protection, and survival skills, as well as a reluctance to see situations as they are. At the same time, none of these actants exists alone, isolated from others. Fear, violence, denial, and silence are all tied together and sometimes even interchangeable. For instance, at the moment the authors of *Teatro* and *Carta* decided to abandon their fieldwork and leave the place of interest, fear and denial were two facets of the same feeling that each described as influencing their decision.

In order to illustrate the discursive accounts of complex inanimate entities for the analysis, I have chosen the discourses around the actant of 'silence'. Most *crónicas* reflect on the topic of silence in Mexican societal structures. Actually, according to the *crónicas*, silence is everywhere. The members of organized crime are expected to keep some confidentiality. Yet they are loud in sending out public messages to rivals, citizens, and the media. Other 'silent social groups' mentioned in the *crónicas* are politicians who have to conceal their political or economic interests that go against their public image. Then there are victims, their relatives, or just citizens who find the harsh realities of Mexico too hard to handle and choose silence as an alternative. And as mentioned above, in certain situations strategic silence is chosen by the *crónicas'* authors themselves.

Three *crónicas* which treat silence thoroughly and almost as a principal theme are *Pueblo*, *Alfombra*, and *Caja*. *Pueblo* centres around the undocumented immigrants at the US-Mexico border, who are pawns in the hands of the social actors who control the 'game' of illegal trading in the border area. Conflict arises when the somewhat 'traditionally established' human trafficking in the village is threatened by 'newcomers', or drug traffickers, who do not want to attract the attention of police whenever they send the *burreros* or drug mules over the border. Because of this intertwining of all kinds of criminal activities (including corruption of the authorities), the whole town of Altar seems to exist in a conscious silence. Everyone knows, nobody talks. As stated by one of its citizens, 'All of us here know the names of every one of the operating *narcos*, but nobody informs on them. Everybody here also knows that it is not in the interest of either the *narcos* or the government to let everybody know about it, because it would trigger a war, if the government, under the social pressure that would be generated, would have to act.'⁹⁰ There is also fear for their lives, which explains why people keep quiet. An immigrant asks, 'What is there for us to gain? [...] If here our life has no value, [*narcos*] kill the truck drivers; they are buried in the roads, and no one will ever know

⁹⁰ 'Aquí todos sabemos cómo se llama cada uno de los seis narcos que operan, pero nadie lo denuncia. Todos sabemos también que ni al narco ni al gobierno le conviene que esto se sepa, porque se desencadenaría una guerra si el gobierno, bajo la presión social que esto generaría, tuviera que actuar [...].' (Martínez 2012, p. 568).

about it.⁹¹ A taxi driver in Altar sees the reason for this situation in the very fact that people do not speak up: 'That is the reason why we are the way we are! *El narco* keeps killing people and no one will say anything.'⁹² In the end, the author has no alternative but to be aghast at how massacres are occurring in the borderland without any reference to these atrocities being made in the news or in the authorities' press releases.

In *Alfombra*, there is an emphasis on the contribution by the entire society, but especially the politicians, who have a general reluctance to face publicly the effects of the illicit drug trade. An exemplary literary journalist, the author combines literary tools with an urge to inform readers of something that might not be visible at first. He blames Mexican politicians for 'the domain of the secret'⁹³ and even for creating a whole 'language of shadows',⁹⁴ which is understandable only to the clique members in order to keep the public excluded from reality. The author also warns members of society about public denial and about distancing themselves from the problem as if it were a problem for 'other people,' as if the illicit drug trade was some kind of TV show that we can turn on and off whenever we feel like it.

Caja takes up the case of a corrupt police officer who is murdered in Juárez, one of the most turbulent and violent cities in Mexico and in the world as a whole. We learn of his journey through a story that is revealed layer by layer until we get to the bottom of it: there is/was a group of high-ranking police officers in Juárez who covered up the kidnappings committed by the city's central organized crime group, often referred to as the Cartel of Juárez. The author even illustrates the idea of discovering a secret in the recurring metaphor of a black box, which will tell us after this officer's death exactly what happened. Two times in this piece, the author makes a direct link between the police force and silence: 'the Attorney General of Mexico remained silent again'⁹⁵ and 'both the authorities of Chihuahua and the Feds kept silent again.' Drawing on context provided by the *crónica*, the silence here could potentially mean covering up or ducking the issue in public.

In other *crónicas*, the specific mentions or allusions to the actant of silence are coincidental and scarce. But there are unifying elements and links. For instance, in four *crónicas* (*Alfombra*, *Caja*, *Tribu*, *Alcalde*), the authors compare silence and secrets to shadows and darkness. From this figure of speech, several metonyms and allegories are composed. The most common is 'governing in shadows,' which refers to the common protective behaviour of Mexican politicians and drug traffickers to act in secrecy and keep information

⁹¹ '¿Qué ganamos con esto? –dijo–. Si aquí nuestra vida no vale nada, a cada rato matan a conductores de las Van, los entierran en los caminos y nadie se entera nunca' (Martínez 2012, p. 564).

⁹² '¡Por eso estamos como estamos! El narco sigue matando gente y nadie quiere decir nada' (ibid.).

⁹³ '[...] el dominio del secreto' (Villoro 2008).

⁹⁴ '[...] el lenguaje vernáculo con una gramática de sombra' (Villoro 2008).

⁹⁵ 'La Procuraduría General de la República volvió a callar' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 94).

away from the public. The opposition would be bringing the facts to light, unveiling secrets. *Crónicas*, being subjective in their expressions, lead us to narrators who reveal their value controversies and debates in hesitant inner monologues. For example, the narrator of *Carta* says after a visit to a violent region that ‘right there, you too will decide not to learn anything anymore.’⁹⁶ He expresses here a form of satiety or even overdose on information that disgusts him – a feeling that might happen to everyone and that explains partly why distancing from and denial of the problems with the Mexican illicit drug trade take place. So in the blink of an eye, a critical observer becomes the object of criticism. A personal revelation hits the narrator of *Teatro*, who feels panic in the city of Juárez and declares, ‘only denial would make me go out into the streets of Juárez again.’⁹⁷ At the city’s very core, the narrator, similar to many who live in violent regions, senses that in order to go out of doors and carry on everyday duties at least a minimal level of denial is necessary, and denial demands a certain level of ignoring or keeping silent about the problem being faced.

One of the most ambiguous oppositions between value positions is revealed in two statements from two different characters in two different *crónicas*. Let us suppose we give both characters a reliable status in the value-related dilemmas in our corpus. One statement comes from the previously mentioned man from *Pueblo* who says that keeping quiet is a major reason for the problems in Mexico. Then there are the words of a drug dealer in *Carta*: he declares that to be happy, he needs only to turn a blind eye to the violent realities that surround him. Basically, these statements suggest that the axiological problem, whether silence is good or bad, wrong or right, cannot be solved because it could in fact be both.

The implications of social silence are manifold. The silence could be both symptom and cause – the symptom of a society in fear and the cause of continuing fear-making. And the same process starts over with fear; as Jorge Balán (2002, p. 5) puts it, Latin American social scientists have developed the concept of a culture of fear that is ‘not just [...] a product of authoritarianism but also [...] an element fostering its continuity.’ Tani Marilena Adams (2011, pp. 27), referring to Mo Hume (2008), sums up the situation by stating that in a situation controlled by drug traffickers and corrupt policemen, silence is imposed forcefully. The ‘silencers’ and ‘silencees’ form (paradoxically) a complicity that converts into a mechanism for controlling the vulnerable groups in society. With silence, these groups are incorporated into illegality and by keeping the silence, they show consciousness of their complicity. Such a situation is far from being healthy in the most literal way, as it can easily lead to chronic alcoholism, psychological illnesses, and drug abuse.

To summarize this section, it can be said that inanimate actants do not translate into actors, but they do function as ends to an agency because they

⁹⁶ ‘Y ahí, también, decidirás que no quieres saber nada más’ (Almazán 2013).

⁹⁷ ‘Sólo la negociación podría hacerme salir de nuevo a las calles de Juárez’ (Mejía Madrid 2012, p. 273).

are instrumental for those actants that have animate references in real-life situations. Some of the inanimate actants are complex social phenomena, such as social silence, violence, or fear, and their actantial function is not fully explainable by their nominal meaning, but only through contextual analysis.

Yet to come back to the topic of silence and to introduce the next section in this chapter, sometimes the lips of the security structures are also sealed. Sometimes it is their value positions that are still the 'loudest' in the sense of appearing often and in many guises. When it comes to the police, although not only them, there is a variety of role shifts. The shifts are largely dependent on the purpose of the specific actor in a specific *crónica*, as those elements also vary. The shifting of actorial values will be the focus of the next sections, and police representations will be used as illustrative examples.

INCONSISTENCY IN INSTRUMENTAL VALUE POSITIONS AND THE CONSECUTIVE SHIFTING OF ACTORIAL VALUES

Throughout the *crónicas*, it is possible to observe how actants of the same kind seem to shift between different value positions. 'The same kind' refers here to actants that represent the same individual or similar social, political, or cultural groups of people. For instance, Arturo Beltrán Leyva, El Chapo Guzmán, or Héctor Saldaña could all be mentioned as perpetrators of organized crime and more precisely as heads of organized crime groups. 'United Forces for Our Missing' [*Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos*], 'The Grieving/People in Pain' [*dolientes, con luto*] have also been called 'victims' by the *cronistas*. 'Media' [*Medios de comunicación*] and 'Press' [*Prensa*] represent the same cultural sector, whose aim is to inform about actualities. There are different forms of shifting value positions among these groups. One form is when similar actants behave differently and do not share the same goal or behavioural patterns. Another form is that nominally the same individual or a group has a distinct agency from one *crónica* to another.

Even though value positions are not the same as values, both are rooted in the idea of what is considered desirable (although as we have come to realize, this only applies fully to the Principal Value Position). Given this similarity between value positions and values as such, it could be worthwhile to investigate how inconsistency has been treated in value theory.

The idea of unfixed values is not an original notion. But it has mostly been theorized from a larger, macro-cultural level. As an example, Ronald Inglehart has been involved in the study of how values change due to 'external variables' such as the modernization and industrialization of a society (Inglehart 1997; Datler et al. 2013). Another of the most important contributors to value theory, Shalom Schwartz, devised a model of basic human value types, which are partly incongruent with each other. Schwartz's initial model had ten value

types (Sagiv & Schwartz 1995); he later refined it with an additional nine in order to ‘provide greater heuristic and explanatory power’ (Schwartz et al. 2012, p. 663). Table 1 gives an overview of the basic values according to Schwartz, defined by their respective motivational goals.

Table 1 Values in Schwartz’s refined theory (Source: Amended from Schwartz et al. 2012, p. 669).

Value	Conceptual definitions in terms of motivational goals
Self-direction-thought	Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas and abilities
Self-direction-action	Freedom to determine one's own actions
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and change
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification
Achievement	Success according to social standards
Power-dominance	Power through exercising control over people
Power-resources	Power through control of material and social resources
Face	Security and power through maintaining one's public image and avoiding humiliation
Security-personal	Safety in one's immediate environment
Security-societal	Safety and stability in the wider society
Tradition	Maintaining and preserving cultural, family, or religious traditions
Conformity-rules	Compliance with rules, laws and formal obligations
Conformity-interpersonal	Avoidance of upsetting or harming other people
Humility	Recognizing one's insignificance in the larger scheme of things
Benevolence-dependability	Being a reliable and trustworthy member of the ingroup
Benevolence-caring	Devotion to the welfare of ingroup members
Universalism-concern	Commitment to equality, justice and protection for all people
Universalism-nature	Preservation of the natural environment
Universalism-tolerance	Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself

Schwartz’s value types sometimes constitute incongruences because some values oppose others. For example, as Datler et al. (2013, p. 908) have pointed out about the earlier ten-item model, tradition and self-direction may not be

in line with each other when pursued by the same entity. With regard to the refined version, the conflict or compatibility of values has been shown to be on a so-called Circular Motivational Continuum (Schwartz et al. 2012, p. 669), where values that are expressed ‘in a single decision or action’ are compared according to the decision-maker’s personal or social expectations of outcome, the aim’s anxiety level, and whether values serve self-protection or growth.



Figure 4 Circular Motivational Continuum. Source: Amended from Schwartz et al. 2012, p. 669.

Because of the holistic, yet relatively narrow form of Schwartz’s basic value types, I propose combining his value theory with the evaluation of congruence in the value positions of the *crónicas*, and using the combination as a tool to verify whether there seems to be an incongruence of value positions when we place the actantial positions on the Schwartz Circular Motivational Continuum. If incongruence is found, then it too should be analysed in the actorial context.

In the following paragraphs, I will take up one group of actants, **the police**, which shares a similar societal characteristic and is repeated through most of the *crónicas*, thereby providing numerous samples for demonstrating patterns. In the current corpus, there are frequent and repeated mentions of the police because of the focus theme – the illicit drug trade. Yet none of the *crónicas* treats the topic of the illicit drug trade alone, but also take up other matters as well; hence, the frequency with which the police appear differs from one *crónica* to another. There is only one *crónica* in which a police-related

actant does not appear at all – *Muerte*. In all others the police appear in all possible actantial value positions.

In *Caja*, the police appear in almost all value positions except Neither Helper Nor Opponent. The Principal Value Position of this *crónica* is occupied by an allegedly corrupt police officer. This is the only time in my corpus when a representative of the police is found in a Principal Value Position, and the appearance explains why in this text the police are so frequently found in other value positions as well. As the narrator of *Caja* insists on revealing the *modus operandi* of the Subject, it is no coincidence that most of the actants are in the Helper category, sometimes in the form of police-related activities. We learn that the Subject was helped by police training and police propaganda bulletins – institutionally by the Attorney General's Office and individually by a police attorney from Chihuahua. Yet the Subject encounters opposition in an ex-commander of the police force, who had been officially accused of corruption and tried to drag the Subject down with him. Somewhat similarly, another Opponent is a group of three federal police agents whom the Subject accuses of conducting kidnappings, but in their testimonies, the agents frame the Subject as being guilty of the same crime.

One of the most complex value positions in this *crónica*, and perhaps in the whole corpus, is held by the Subject's superior, the police officer Francisco Molina Ruiz, who occupies the value position of Both Helper and Opponent. He is portrayed as someone who has helped the Subject obtain his position on the police force, but also someone who perhaps secretly was directing the group of kidnappers. Owing to the illicit nature of this activity, the Subject was never safe and ultimately is killed. The *crónica* leaves open the possibility that behind the assassination of the Subject was the same man who was behind his professional career in the first place. The *cronista* eloquently explains Ruiz's Helper position with respect to the Subject in terms of his almost mystical presence in the Subject's life: 'Francisco Molina Ruiz, the first chief and friend of the officer Minjárez, has always brought bad luck to those around him.'⁹⁸ And as a fulfilment of the writer's prophecy, the status of Ruiz's Opponent is formulated in a subtle allusion: '[Minjárez] was murdered by the power that left him behind, the power that no longer needed him.'⁹⁹

In other *crónicas*, various representations of the police show a large number of value positions. Based on all the contextual information from the narratives and also the detailed description of value types by Schwartz, I have placed all the police-related actants in the Schwartz value model. In order to give a wider perspective, not only do the Instrumental Value Positions acquire a universal value type, but so too do the Principal Value Positions. Of course, this kind of placement can only be verifiable to a limited degree, but this

⁹⁸ '[...] Francisco Molina Ruiz, primer jefe y amigo del comandante Minjárez, siempre ha sido de mal fario para quienes le rodean' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 94).

⁹⁹ 'Cayó asesinado por un poder que le rebasaba, y al que dejó de ser útil' (ibid., p. 97).

practice can still show tendencies or inclinations, which is exactly what would help us to determine the consistency of the actantial value positions on a universal scale. Along with the internal congruence of the police-related actantial group, we will also see how congruent the results are in our narrative's model compared to the results in Schwartz's model. And ultimately, the comparisons show referential information, or in other words, information about actors revealed by the actants.

Table 2 Table 2. Values and value positions in Schwartz's model compare with the Greimas-based axiological model of narrative analysis.

Crónica	Subject's value type (Schwartz's category)	Police-related actant^{>100}	>its actantial value position	>its value type (Schwartz's category)
<i>Caja</i>	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Officer Minjárez	Subject	Power-dominance Power-resources Face
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	The cohesion of [Minjárez's] police group. The authentic fraternity	Helper	X ¹⁰¹
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Special training	Helper	X
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Propaganda bulletins	Helper	X
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Prosecutor from Chihuahua, Arturo González Rascón	Helper	Face
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Attorney General	Helper	Face
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	El Animal, ex-commander of the police who was also a perpetrator of organized crime	Opponent	? ¹⁰²
	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Federal agents accused by Minjárez	Opponent	?

¹⁰⁰ This sign indicates the relation of the last two categories in the table to the group of police-related actants.

¹⁰¹ Because Schwartz's basic value types are in no way adaptable to inanimate actants or actions as such (although on the macro-level, there is the potential for adaptation in the case of institutional agents), I have marked with an x cases in which the actant is inanimate. See the previous section for an analysis of inanimate actants and actors.

¹⁰² The question mark indicates that there is no contextual information about this actant that would enable it to be placed in Schwartz's value category.

Instrumental Value Positions: Actors behind actants

	Power-dominance Power-resources Face	Francisco Molina Ruiz, the Subject's former superior	Helper and Opponent	Power- dominance Power- resources Face
<i>Alcalde</i>	Self-direction, action Achievement Power-dominance Face Security-personal Security-societal	Jorge Tello Peón, ex- director of CISEN ¹⁰³	Helper	Security- personal Security- societal
<i>Carta</i>	Self-direction, thought Universalism, concern Universalism, tolerance	El Rubio, ex-police officer	Helper	Security- personal Conformity- interpersonal Humility
<i>Pueblo</i>	Power-resources	Department of National Security	Opponent	Security- societal
	Power-resources	Police officer on the street	Opponent	Power- resources
<i>Alfombra</i>	Self-direction, action Hedonism Power-dominance Power-resources	throwing away disguise	Helper	X
	Self-direction, action Hedonism Power-dominance Power-resources	Police force	Helper	Self- direction, action Hedonism Power- dominance Power- resources
<i>Luto</i>	Benevolence-caring Universalism- concern Universalism- tolerance	Unit of Attention to Victims, PGR	Neither Helper nor Opponents	Benevolence- caring Universalism- concern Universalism- tolerance
<i>Teatro</i>	Universalism- concern Universalism- tolerance	Street patrol	Helper	Power- resources Humility
<i>Sicarios</i>	Self-direction, action Stimulation Power-resources	Municipal police officer in Apazingán	Opponent	Security, societal Conformity, rules
<i>Tribu</i>	Self-direction, thought Self-direction, action Security, societal Humility Benevolence, caring Universalism, concern	Guerrero municipal police	Helper	Self- direction, thought Self- direction, action Security, societal

¹⁰³ CISEN (Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional, or Centre for Research and National Security) is not a Mexican police institution in the strict sense. Yet its functions (espionage, counter-espionage, analysis, among other things) are directed to internal needs, and therefore it could be broadly considered as fulfilling the same goals as the police, namely those of internal security.

	Universalism, tolerance			Humility Benevolence, caring Universalism, concern Universalism, tolerance
	Self-direction, thought Self-direction, action Security, societal Humility Benevolence, caring Universalism, concern Universalism, tolerance	Federal police, especially Secretary of the Public Security Office, Genaro García Luna	Neither Helper nor Opponent	Face
[Muerte]		<i>no police-related actants</i>		

Table 2 shows the following: first, the police-related group of actants demonstrates inconsistency of values both in the axiological model and in Schwartz’s model; second, actantial value positions do not correlate with Schwartz’s basic values, either nominally or semantically.

Regarding the inconsistency of values in a ‘similar group’ of police actants, it can be observed that categories that are missing completely are Stimulation, Achievement, Tradition, Benevolence-Dependability, and Universalism-Tolerance. Yet the most often represented value types are Power-Resources, Face, and Security-Societal. On the Circular Motivation Continuum, Face stays on the side of Self-Protection and Anxiety-Avoidance in addition to being placed between Conservation and Self-Enhancement. Power-Resources represent Self-Enhancement, Self-Protection, and Anxiety-Avoidance. Security-Societal is a value type of Conservation and Self-Protection. And remarkably, both Power-Resources and Face are value types that have personal, and not societal, focus, which is surprising for such a societally-structured entity as the police. On the opposing sides of the continuum are some of the other value types found in the *crónicas* (although to a lesser extent), such as Universalism-Concern, Universalism-Tolerance, both variations of Self-Direction, Hedonism, Power-Dominance, both variations of Conformity, Humility, and Benevolence-Caring. Thus, the outcome is varied.

The fact that police-related actants show inconsistency in Instrumental Value Positions is mostly because of inconsistency in the Principal Value Positions to which they are tied, but this topic was covered in the previous chapter. A new finding shown in this table is that, as subtly hypothesized, Schwartz’s value types and axiological model for narrative analysis are not compatible and do not yield the same results, mainly, once again because of adding the dimension of the Principal Value Position. The actants are seen not only as having actions according to their own definitions, but also are defined by their place in the ‘bigger picture’ vis-à-vis other actants. Let us examine some examples for better understanding of this incompatibility between Schwartz’s value types and the axiological model of narrative analysis.

In *Pueblo*, both the police officer on the street, who demands bribes from human traffickers, and the human traffickers themselves, who are obliged to bribe the police, share the same Power-Resources value type in Schwartz's model. Yet in the axiological model of narrative analysis, these two groups have opposing value positions because they are not willing to share resources such as they are. In *Luto*, although both the thanatologists and the Unit of Attention to Victims share the same value types in Schwartz's model, in the narrative model, the latter is classified as Neither Helper nor Opponent, because its fulfilment of the values takes place on a much smaller scale and it refuses the collaboration that the other seeks. Even though according to the Schwartz value types the street patrol in *Teatro* is completely oppositional to the author, paradoxically, in the narrative model these policemen are defined as Helpers because the author gathers valuable information while observing their professional inadequacy.

To this point, I have analysed only the police-related actants, but the same comparison can be made with other groups, such as drug dealers, politicians, victims. And even when we compare discursive accounts of only one theme and perhaps even in just one *crónica*, 'similar' actants still often lack consistency and can appear in various value positions throughout the narrative.

What can be concluded from this analysis is that Schwartz's value categories might not be enough to analyse the value positions in a narrative. Furthermore, the actantial value positions might not be sufficient to make assumptions about the realities to which the narratives refer. For instance, it is not possible to state that the values in Mexico's police-related social actors are well-represented in either Schwartz's or the actantial model. One lacks nuance and the ability to translate the narrative's creative context, while the other lacks the capacity for generalization and deduction on a social scale. Nevertheless, to analyse texts with both models is a rewarding activity because it helps to reflect the value delivery through discourses that are reflections of reality itself. In other words, we obtain a fuller picture.

The Instrumental Value Positions enrich the palette of values in their own particular way. They help to reveal the controversial value relations and reveal social actors who are not mere institutional representatives. When reflected through the Instrumental Value Positions, the police force, for instance, does not appear to be some sort of unified societal structure with unified value systems, but rather consists of many actors all of whom have different sets of agencies, different kinds of behaviour, and different ways of expressing themselves, however normatively incomprehensive it may seem. Furthermore, the actors' agencies are transformed into complicated networks of desire whereby actors can simultaneously enforce and hinder the same kinds of core values.

Given these considerations, I am tempted to discuss, however briefly, the inconsistency of value positions with respect to social theory by Pierre Bourdieu. In his view, social practice is equivalent to the concurrence of

habitus and capital (Bourdieu 1979, p. 112). *Habitus* could be described as a system of structures that constantly recreate themselves. The individual's *habitus* depends on the surrounding environment. Field, according to Bourdieu, is a network of objective relations or configurations between positions. The position is the individual's placement in a social room. Field is a notion highly dependent on the battle for capital, mainly economic capital, and the place on a field is dependent on the closeness to that capital. Every field has its rules, principles, and logic. According to Käärik (2013, pp. 284-289), in Bourdieu's view the field and the *habitus* determine, to a large extent, an individual's life.

Bourdieu has sometimes been criticised for the deterministic nature of his theory of *habitus* and field, as if they dominate the individual and make change impossible (Bohman 1999; Butler 1999).¹⁰⁴ Based on the results of my analysis, it would actually be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the *habitus* and the field in the first place. The word 'police' will not work because the behaviour and agency of individual policemen vary widely and do not show any 'field-related' consistency, at least when discussed from the perspective of values. It could even be said that the initial definition of the actantial group of police as 'actants of a similar kind' is not applicable once we know their individual value positions because there is nothing similar in the values of that group. But this impossibility to determine the field might just as well be explained by the simple fact that the police in Mexico and their representation in the *crónicas* are not the same thing, nor do they operate in the same field, for that matter.

Then again, Bourdieu does not talk only about values. Even if nominally the value types and value positions of the actors in the *crónicas* seem to vary, after more careful examination we may still discover that the root of agency of the police-related actors stems mostly from the battle for resources, or in Bourdieu's terms, economic capital. And the discourses around the battle for resources do not indicate any turn towards change, but instead are largely oriented to explaining the relations of domain.

For example, the fact that we find lucrative interests and deals generating illicit earnings among organized crime group should not surprise anyone. But the indication that an equally strong lucrative interest is shared by the Mexican authorities, and especially the Mexican police, gives us the basis for yet another paradoxical result: although the value-related discourses around the field of the Mexican police are inconsistent, there is a certain field-related logic in the overall value spectrum around economic capital. In other words, even if we find actors in the *crónicas* in various value positions, most of the value positions are centred around the battle for economic capital. Luis Astorga's (2012, p. 181; my translation) analysis concurs:

¹⁰⁴ It should be added that Bourdieu himself criticised rigid determinism in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977 [1972]). See also Bouveresse 1999 for clarification of some of the misconceptions regarding Bourdieu's *habitus* theory.

From the North to the South, from border to border, from the beginning of the century to the end of it, and continuing in the new millennium, from the governors to the presidential family – what have remained are constant accusations about the relationship between the political or/and police forces and drug trafficking¹⁰⁵.

Does this mean that the Mexican criminal sector is actually legitimized by the simple fact that the authorities also have lucrative interests in the illicit drug trade? Or is it rather that the foundation of the Mexican authorities' legitimacy is undermined by their interest in such illicit activities? These are just two of the potential additional questions that arise from my analysis and that are left unanswered for now.

In addition to field-related logic around economic capital, the concept that Bourdieu describes as being different in the social space and therefore meaningful makes perfect sense in the current framework (Bourdieu 2003, p. 26). After all, the actors in this study are all unique cases with independent agencies, but their desires are formulated in relation to the desires of others. What the analysis of value positions also makes apparent is that describing the field and the *habitus* of the Mexican police-related actors in reductionist terms can be very problematic; thus, careful attention to detail is needed.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the actor has been defined through the actant's real-life reference. However, the actant's agency and the respective actor's goal might not correspond. Instrumental Value Positions, and in the bigger picture, the differentiation between actant and actor, bring out the complex relations between value positions. For instance, sometimes the actor is not even aware that he is helping to fulfil someone's goal. And inanimate actants can never be actors, yet can still be instrumental in some actors' value goals.

The comparison between the analysis of police-related actants' value positions on the axiological model with Schwartz's universal values model yields dissimilar results, which makes clear that actantial value positions and actorial value positions are not the same and moreover, embody inconsistency. Rather than hurriedly assuming that this inconsistency is simply due to different methodologies (which is partly true, of course), the fact that discursively, the police-related actors are presented and present themselves in such different evaluative stances means that the variety is real: it exists and should not be ignored or reduced forcefully to less variability.

¹⁰⁵ 'De norte a sur, de frontera a frontera, de principios de siglo a finales del mismo y en lo que va del nuevo milenio, de gobernadores hasta la familia presidencial, lo que ha permanecido es el señalamiento constante de la relación entre el poder político, policiaco, o ambos, y el tráfico de drogas.'

The analysis of Instrumental Value Positions shows that actants can have controversial values and oppositional agencies. This indicates that the search for clear-cut answers about respective actors' goals and values could easily lead to a dead end, first, because it can be hard to separate the actor's agency in the narrative from the so-called agency of value positioning (how the narrator has positioned the values), and second, because just as in the narratives inconsistency and unwillingness are represented in the actantial value positions, the same can reflect back on actorial (or their real-life counterparts') value positions. Actors are not robotic or systematic value bearers; their values fluctuate and change according to shifts in the situation and an actor's roles.

The analysis of the Instrumental and Principal Value Positions also clearly showed that the author's or narrator's role in the narrative and discursive elaboration is extremely significant. This will be the focus of the following chapter.

7 THE AUTHOR AS ACTANT/NARRATOR AND AS WRITER: THE CRONICA AS A PRISM OF ITS AUTHOR

*I could compare my music to white light which contains all colours.
Only a prism can divide the colours and make them appear;
this prism could be the spirit of the listener.*

Arvo Pärt

In discussing the authorship of the *crónicas*, it is worthwhile to begin with the question: why is it even important to discuss authors? After all, there has been a moment when the author pronounced ‘dead’ by one of the twentieth-century’s leading intellectuals – Roland Barthes.¹⁰⁶ Contrast Barthes with another scholar who also reflected on the essence of the author – Michel Foucault – for whom the author was not necessarily ‘dead’; yet Foucault did not much care about the author’s existence either. As in every kind of discourse study, Foucault was interested in the space that was hidden or left empty of textual expression, the textual expression of the author’s name included (Foucault & Rabinow 1984 [1969]).

Despite the opinions of Barthes and Foucault, when it comes to literary criticism few things have been discussed more extensively than the appearance, roles, and habits of authors. The abundance of author-centred visions of literature irritated Barthes (2006 [1968], p. 189), who grumbled, ‘The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions [...]’. In comparing literature studies to journalism studies, authorship emerges from the latter as the prime topic in debates about objectivity, framing, watchdog and citizen journalism, agenda setting, media ideologies, and journalism ethics (Waisbord 2000; Starkey 2006; D’Angelo & Kuypers 2010).

Crónicas are often described as a liminal genre, one that straddles literature and journalism, so discussing authors has not escaped the research on *crónicas*. And just as in other areas, the author’s role creates controversial standpoints. Bielsa (2006, p. 39) says that ‘[the] author – the *cronista* – occupies a central position in his or her writing’. Reguillo (2002, p. 55) counters, ‘The chronicle is a text without an author, or one that aspires to

¹⁰⁶ In the essay called ‘The Death of the Author’ (originally published in 1968) Barthes argued that in writing, the subjectivity and identity of the author are lost. The author is nothing more than a mere *scriptor* who exists only at the moment of producing the text. Here Barthes described the text as a multidimensional space, a collection of quotations from different contexts. In a situation in which the author’s person is so insignificant, Barthes saw no point in trying to *decipher* the text.

become a text without an author'. Some have tried to define the genre of the *crónica* through the author. Angulo (2013, p. 8), for instance, sees the genre as the 'author's macrogenre.'¹⁰⁷ Camilo Jiménez (2014, p. 1) shares a quotation from Boris Muñoz: 'the *crónica* does not exist; what exists is the author.'¹⁰⁸ Jiménez (ibid.) adds that there has been talk about the author's journalism (*periodismo de autor*), which in itself sounds like boasting. There is a wider dispute about authorship in narrative or literary journalism, where, for instance, Kapuscinski gets entangled in his own ideas because he first declares that journalists, while working, should succumb to their work and forget their own existence, but later demands that journalists be especially intentional and look for some sort of change (Kapuściński 2002 and Kapuściński 2003).

So it goes without much disagreement: in journalism and in literary studies, the author has been a central focus. But does this mean that the current study needs to dwell upon this issue? My answer is rather firm and persistent: indeed, it is necessary yet again to expound upon the author – for two reasons. First, as writers, the authors of the *crónicas* possess and expose a variety of possibilities for value positioning that is conveyed through narrative-discursive means, as will be discussed in the last part of this chapter. But before going into the writers' value positioning, I want to address the subject of authors who also position themselves as actants as they narrate events and story accounts. In order to discuss the various value positions of narrators, I use the concept of a prism as a tool to illustrate the author's presence in the *crónicas*.

INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF PRISM

The analytical tool for this part of the analysis has an interdisciplinary nature, combining linguistics, semiotics, and optics. It is a many-layered outlook on meaning. The inspirational starting point is, in fact, that both my mother tongue (Estonian) and the language of the *cronistas* (Spanish) include the word *prisma* in their vocabularies. In optics and in geometry, this word signifies the same thing as the English word 'prism'. In geometry, the prism is solid with bases or ends that are parallel, congruent polygons, and sides that are parallelograms (Gorse, Johnston, & Pritchard 2012). In optics, a prism is a transparent solid body used for dispersing light into a spectrum or for reflecting rays of light (Menn 2004). But there is also an added meaning of prism, that is, a point of view, a perspective, a subjective vision.¹⁰⁹ I find that

¹⁰⁷ In the original, 'macrogénero de autor'.

¹⁰⁸ In the original, 'la *crónica* no existe, lo que existen son los cronistas'.

¹⁰⁹ The dictionary *Real Academia Española* defines *prisma* ('prisma' 2017), among other things, as a point of view or perspective (*punto de vista, perspectiva*). The Estonian word *prisma* ('prisma' 2009) involves subjectivity, a vision or influenced way of seeing things (*subjektiivuse, millestki mõjustatud suhtumise, nägemise jms. kohta*).

there is a small but significant fissure between the optical and figurative meanings of *prisma* that provides a metaphorical key for explaining the role of a *cronista* and the function of a *crónica*.

First, however, let us turn to the concrete meaning of prism in optics, where it is considered a transparent object whose purpose is to refract light. A dispersive prism can be used to break light into its constituent spectral colours (or rainbow colours).

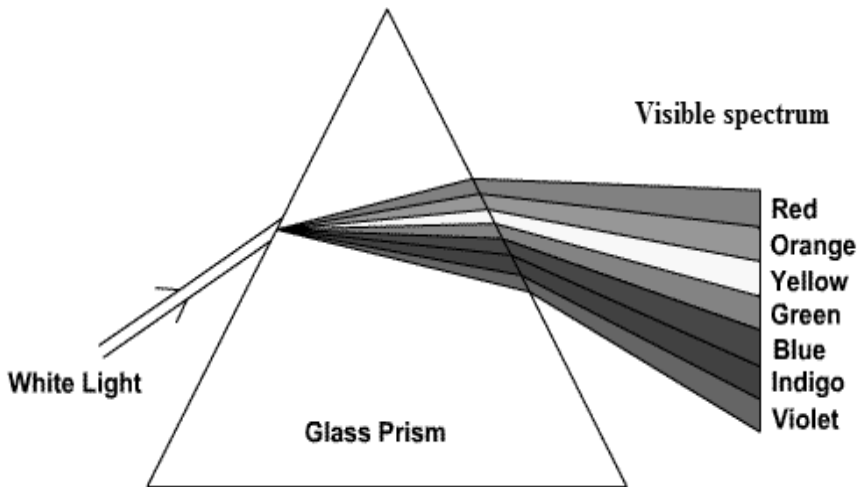


Figure 5 An optical prism (Source: Personal collection).

It was Isaac Newton who demonstrated that light was not as colourless as had been believed. He was also the first physicist to use the word ‘spectrum’ (Topper 1990). The spectrum of rainbow colours is, of course, only the visible portion of the wide electromagnetic spectrum, and we can see those colours because of their specific wave lengths.

Knowing this, I keep wondering about the third meaning of *prisma* – a point of view or perspective. Even if the etymology of the word lies in physics, the figurative adaptation of it has been rather arbitrary. In optics, a prism has an instrumental function, but a person’s point of view is something characteristic, idiosyncratic, and distinctive. If the figurative meaning of prism were the same as in optics, **an author’s prism would not be the author’s perspective, but rather an instrument through which we see the author’s perspective.** And here is where I see a fissure in meanings and derivations.

I propose a way to combine the concepts of *prisma*, the author, and the *crónica* (or instead of *crónica*, any form of creative nonfiction writing), so that the original optical term and its metaphorical use would match. There will be substitutions for light, the prism, and the colours, but the relationship among the substitutes will continue to have the same congruity as in the original

optical prism. This process will serve to explain the relationship between authors, their visions, and their writings. Thus, instead of light, we shall picture the author as a whole (both in the flesh and also in mind). Instead of the spectrum of colours there are the constituents of the author. These could be several, but here, the spectrum will consist of the values of the author. And the prism is not the author's point of view, which we will instead find in the spectrum, but rather the prism is an instrument that 'refracts' or 'disperses' the author's values; it is a creative instrument, a narrative-discursive instrument – the *crónica* (or any form of creative nonfiction).

In the optical prism, light is not empty, as people had believed before Newton's experiments. But with regard to the author, our metaphor's variant of light, 'emptiness', has also been an issue. In particular, with regard to journalists, there have been normative understandings of how much journalists should reveal of what they 'are made of' or of their personality, ideologies, agendas. Journalists are assumed to have personal traits that ultimately make them human, but for some time, at least in some media cultures, it has been frowned upon to reveal these traits. Michael Schudson and Chris Anderson (2009, pp. 88-99) identified a link between the objectivity norm and the professional jurisdiction of journalists, who (especially in the US) claim to have a collection of knowledge gathered on the basis of expertise. The demand for this jurisdiction comes mainly from journalists themselves, who are seeking an opportunity to dominate with their expertise which, according to Schudson and Anderson, is itself 'discursively constructed out of various journalistic practices and narratives, including the claim to professional objectivity' (ibid., p. 96). For some researchers and journalists, the claim of objectivity is an artificial and context-based construction that has no bearing on real-life environments. Drawing on Hans Albert (1980) and Karl R. Popper (1977), Wolfgang Donsbach (2008, p. 66) admits that there are no solid criteria for the 'falsification' of the knowledge journalists obtain:

Other than factual decisions, evaluative judgements such as the news value of an event or the moral acceptability of a political actor's behavior lack, by definition, such objective criteria. They are always based on value judgements that can neither be verified nor falsified.

Many *cronistas* and teachers of narrative journalism, perhaps partly because of the inadvertent in-between status of their object of study and because they do not entirely participate in the struggle for professional jurisdiction, openly distance themselves from any aspirations towards objectivity or other form of journalistic 'invisibility.' For instance, Juan José Hoyos calls objectivity a 'false appearance' of the impersonal rhetorical style that is practised by so-called 'informative journalism' (Hoyos 2013, p. 343). In an earlier essay, Hoyos straightforwardly declared that there is no such thing as 'objective journalism' (Hoyos 2007, p. 186). Similarly, Juan Villoro (2002, p. 66) writes, 'The chronicler modifies reality by the simple fact of contemplating it. The chronicle combines journalism's sense of the facts with

literature's capacity for introspection. In this way, there is no objective chronicle.' Martín Caparrós (cited in Jiménez 2012, p. 3) points out that *crónica* might be one of the very few journalistic discourses that accepts a Subject in a story. Based on these statements, the *cronistas* embrace the opportunity to 'put themselves out there' for the public. Yet there are limitations, imaginary fetters that grip free thought. Authors can find themselves trapped in restraints that are technical (word limits), economic (their audience), or ethical (giving equal space to different voices). The restraints can also be larger, more general blocks that might not even be apparent at first glance, such as those of language (style, wording), structure (genre), or society (institutional ideologies). Even if *cronistas* admit to being acquainted with these constraints, the *crónica* is still potentially one of the most author-friendly forms of writing there is, if we base our judgement on the author's liberties. The *crónicas* in my corpus are of very different lengths and styles. There are *crónicas* that are more informative and others that are quite belletristic. There are *crónicas* with many sources and others in which the main source is the author. There are *crónicas* in which the authors are the main protagonists and others where the author does not appear at all. There are *crónicas* in which the author declares personal beliefs and others in which the author is merely an observer. There are *crónicas* in which the author employs slang and others with a highly refined use of language. Authors' choices have been almost limitless.

To return to the metaphor of the prism, the *crónica* could be described as the discourse-narrative device that refracts or disperses the spectrum of authors' values of all kinds. In the frame of reference for this research, the spectrum does not connect two extremes, but rather showcases variety. The author's actant position is one of the 'colours'¹¹⁰ of the value spectrum. As I have emphasized before, this research has not studied the range and extent (or modality) of the actants' value positions. I compensate for that with a special focus on one actant group – the author in the position of the narrator. As shown in Figure 6, the analysis of the value spectrum includes a special focus on the author-actant interplay. Additionally, in order to grasp better the discursive formations of the *crónicas*, it is important to analyse **the ways** in which all actant positions have been presented, which brings us back to questions of narrative and its stylistic elements and also to the number of sources and the number of voices in the narratives.

¹¹⁰ For clarity, it should be mentioned that the colours of the so-called value spectrum have nothing to do with the fact that in Latin America, narrative forms of journalism have sometimes, in a derogatory way, been referred to as *de color* (see, for instance, Esquivada 2007, p. 129).

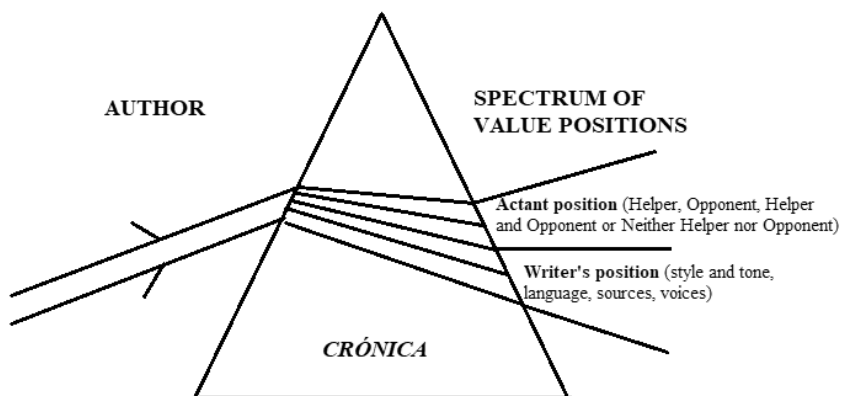


Figure 6 Spectrum of author's value positions through the prism of the *crónica* (Source: Personal collection).

THE AUTHOR AS ACTANT/NARRATOR

In the *crónicas*, the authors are not inaudible voices. As narrators of the events or accounts of the stories, authors have been coded on both Principal and Instrumental Value Positions. In fact, authors crop up on every actantial value position. It is important, though, that the Principal Value Position (the Objective included) always varies, and therefore, the variance of the actant position of the authors is expected. Another thing to keep in mind is that there is one *crónica* (*Sicarios*) in my corpus in which the author does not present herself as an actant at all, so this *crónica* will not be discussed in the current section. The following section on the Narrator (from here on in upper case when I specifically refer to an actant) in Principal Value Positions is in some respects an extension of chapter 5 on the Principal Value Position's contradictions and (ab)normalities. The second section below will concentrate fully on the Narrator in the Instrumental Value Position, while the third section considers how the interplay between the author as a writer and the Narrator as an actant is created and developed.

NARRATOR IN THE PRINCIPAL VALUE POSITION

The analysis of the author's actantial role in the Principal Value Position will focus on the following: both *crónicas* in which the Narrators are the Subjects of the narrative show a strong tendency to express **emotion**, and one of them provides the grounds for a general discussion of the relation between **fiction and nonfiction** or for a debate on whether the *crónica* can be classified as one or the other.

The two *crónicas* in which I have identified the Narrator as the Subject of the story are *Carta* and *Teatro*. A logical question that could arise in every reader's mind is this: if the Subject of a text is a literary journalist, then might there be a predetermined expectation for the Subject to have an Objective related to their professional calling, such as finding an answer to a problem or investigating a particular topic? Indeed, the Objective of the Narrator in *Teatro* is to find a reason for the growing number of murdered women in Juárez. In other words, through analysis and observation, the Narrator wants to solve the mystery of *feminicidios*.¹¹¹ Right at the beginning, the Narrator identifies himself as 'not a journalist,' which is understandable if we consider that in the original anthology where the piece was published, the Narrator travels around his country as a pilgrim-tourist throughout the whole book. Another reason for the author to point out that he is not a journalist might be fear, because journalists have been, and still are, persecuted in Mexico. Yet even if the Narrator does not position himself as a journalist, his reason to be in Juárez is investigative. The Narrator's mission is to find a reason besides 'chance' to explain why so many girls in Juárez have been 'sacrificed,' as he metonymically refers to the killings (Mejía Madrid 2012, p. 266).

The Narrator of *Carta*, on the other hand, does not reveal the precise reason for his stay in La Laguna. We learn that he has been brought there by a colleague, and the Narrator is quickly overwhelmed by the violent struggle between two organized crime groups: the Zetas and the Sinaloa Cartel. The conflict negatively affects the inhabitants of La Laguna. The Narrator is eager to find out about the latest developments in the region and the circumstances that have brought the city to its present state at the moment of the Narrator's arrival. This *crónica* is a description, an observation, or a letter. Yet the Narrator's immediate Objective is not expressed or accentuated in any of the textual units. So when it comes to *Carta*, the Narrator's Objective is contingent and based on the patterns that are generated by the repetitions of the Narrator himself. And based on what is most often repeated, the whole piece is a volitional act of emotionality, with the most prominent sentiments expressed by the Narrator being disgust and fear or synonyms for these. This is apparent from the very beginning. The Narrator calls the place 'a hell' where 'the neighbourhoods are worn-out shacks on the slopes of the hill, spreading around obscenely like cockroaches.'¹¹² Later, the Narrator calls Gómez Palacio, one of the cities in the La Laguna region, 'the capital of hatred.' He brings in the sense of smell by pointing out that in the local hospital 'it does not matter how much chlorine they use to disinfect: here the smell of rotten meat never

¹¹¹ *Feminicidio* is a neologism for murdering women simply on the basis of their gender.

¹¹² '[...] los barrios son casuchas apeñuscadas en las laderas del cerro, reproduciéndose obscenamente como las cucarachas' (Almazán 2013).

ends.¹¹³ And he finishes the *crónica* with the allegory that when night falls, the place looks like ‘an immense pool of dry blood.’¹¹⁴

The weight of the evidence shows that being in La Laguna is uncomfortable for the Narrator, but the lack of an expressed alternative pursuit converts the verbal account of emotions into the story’s Objective. The *crónica* becomes a platform for strong negative feelings. The Narrator works at reaching the audience with several types of information and leaves critical judgement of the information’s adequacy and the connections it creates for readers to decide. At the same time, he leaves very little space for free emotional interpretation and rigorously dictates a specific palette of sentiments with which to digest his report.

Emotion is strongly apparent in both *crónicas* in which the author converts into the Narrator or the narrative’s principal actant. But rather than channel the emotions towards the place of his investigation in *Teatro*, the Narrator feels powerless and paralyzed by the unanswered questions. He is ‘obsessed’ by the topic. He is ‘sleepless in Juárez,’ so to speak, as he shuts himself in his room, an insomniac who is clueless about why the situation in that city has rapidly become insupportable, unacceptable, and incomprehensible. His emotions are directed to questions for which he desperately seeks answers, and he is lonely in his misery, as there is no one to clear up his doubts. The Narrator has tried to find explanations. Yet in reflecting on these, he is not satisfied. He does not agree with an owner of a pharmacy who thinks that people who walk down the street at three o’clock in the morning are looking for trouble, because the Narrator knows that most murders actually happen during the day. Neither can the Narrator accept the local perception that young, unemployed people are hired as ‘table dancers’ or hitmen. To the Narrator, it would be absurd to blame the victims for the societal crisis and for causing the very thing they are victims of – a common (and wrongful) accusation, he adds, since the student movement of 1968.

In *Carta*, by contrast, the Narrator seems to have unfiltered emotions and all the answers, and his didacticism spreads all over the writing, which is mostly in the form of unvocalized dialogues with himself. He declares:

- ‘all Mexican cartels are the same: they practise every synonym for the verb “to kill”, without any feeling of guilt.’

- ‘I did not tell her, but in La Laguna, every policeman has his price.’

- ‘Since then, I have believed that Rocio will accept the offer made by the governor.’

- ‘You’ll see now that god does not feel here.’

- ‘I am not a psychiatrist, but I believe that very soon nothing will be left of his brain.’¹¹⁵

¹¹³ ‘[...] por más cloro que utilicen para desinfectarlo, aquí nunca deja de oler a carne podrida’ (ibid.).

¹¹⁴ ‘[...] un inmenso charco de sangre seca’ (ibid.).

¹¹⁵ ‘[...] todos los cárteles mexicanos son iguales: practican todos los sinónimos del verbo matar, sin sentimiento de culpa;’ ‘No se lo dije, pero en La Laguna todos los policías tienen un precio;’ ‘Desde

However, emotion is evident not only in the *crónicas* in which the Narrator is the Subject (although it is somewhat more visible in these), but emotion is palpable in other *crónicas* as well. In *Luto* and *Sicarios*, the underlying attitude is worry. In *Tribu*, what lies beneath is admiration and solemnity. In *Alcalde*, despite the controversial topic, it is possible to sense playful mirth. In *Caja*, there are various emotions on display, some of which I will discuss in the next section. On the other hand, *Alfombra*, although the most essay-like *crónica* in the corpus and icentred on the Narrator's ideas, it does not strike one as an emotional piece of writing.

In *Carta*, the Narrator's position as a Subject is noteworthy, as this is the only *crónica* that has ever made me consider the fictionality of the *crónicas*. And that in itself is remarkable, because the topic of fiction and nonfiction is usually one of the most crucial in discussions of literary journalism. The term 'fiction' is an ambiguous term, and in studies on writings, it is almost a technical term. In texts that convey everyday realities, what I believe is more relevant to study than fiction yet is also more difficult to deal with is *truth* and *facts* in contexts in which the information has been given under circumstances defined as 'factual' and 'truthful' by the authors and editors. I will not expand my discussion of truth here, but I will elaborate on some aspects of it in the next chapter, which deals with the *crónica's* form and function. Yet, as already mentioned, I have not been able to resist dwelling briefly on the Narrator's choices in the delivery of facts after reading one particular paragraph in *Carta*, which I will analyse here.

The paragraph begins with a subtitle, 'Exterior.' After declaring that the city of Gómez Palacio spreads downhill, both geographically and allegorically, the Narrator continues with a description of consecutive images that he envisions, as he puts it, 'in sepia colours', which evoke bleakness and desolation.¹¹⁶ Each

entonces he pensado que Rocío tomará la oferta que hace poco le hizo el gobernadora,' [...] comprenderás que Dios aquí no se siente [...];' 'No soy psiquiatra pero creo que muy pronto no quedará nada en su cerebro' (Almazán 2013).

¹¹⁶ An excerpt of the Narrator's envisioning: 'Entonces las imágenes en color sepia empiezan a encimarse: Ora vemos a un par de chicos, flacos y secos como una rama, tumbados sobre la banqueta: han inhalado tanta piedra que desde hace tiempo viven en el olvido. Ora una gasolinera está en llamas. Ora un carro explota. Ora una turba de chicos saquea los negocios. Ora en pleno basurero apreciamos a un joven sicario al que no sólo lo cosieron a balazos, también le arrancaron toda la piel del rostro. Ora un centenar de policías municipales son desarmados violentamente por un batallón de soldados; tarde o temprano alguien iba a acusarlos de estar en la nómina de los Zetas. Ora se observa una manta en la que, a pesar de las faltas de ortografía, se lee que los soldados cuidan las espaldas del cártel de Sinaloa. Ora cinco comandos roban igual número de bancos con una sincronía de relojero. Ora truenan los cuernos y en el patio de una primaria los niños se tiran al suelo. Ora unos encapuchados asaltan una camioneta de valores y todavía, con parsimonia, se dan el lujo de contar ahí mismo el dinero. Ora a un sicario le estallan la cabeza cuando sale del casino; uno de los paramédicos pensará que el tipo parece un doberman con lesión cerebral. Ora en uno de los laberintos, aquellos de calles ciegas, violan a una niña

textual ‘image’ starts with the word *ora*, a word that, according to the *Dictionary of Mexicanisms* of the Mexican Academy of Letters is, among other things, a colloquial term for *ahora* or ‘now’ in English (s.v. *ora*, *Diccionario de mexicanismos* 2010). The paragraph depicts drug addicts, a robbery, a rape, the kidnapping of two journalists, a protest by prostitutes, and many more goings-on, all of it *ora* – now. This series of images is obviously meant to convey a certain reality all at once. But the fictional element and less the type of history storytelling comes from placing this description in the middle of an immediate, on-the-spot report. To some readers, it might seem delusional, since it would have been literally impossible for the Narrator to engage in everything that he describes, much less do so in a single moment in time. The sepia images are envisioned by the Narrator at the moment he is either writing, experiencing, or otherwise articulating his experiences in La Laguna. There is no spatial or chronological gap, and the description is an imaginary, albeit, realistic journey. The sepia images are a notable attempt to alter physical time and space. Are these descriptions excerpts from local news? Are they stories told by local citizens? The reader is left uncertain. As a literary detail, these pictures are noteworthy, but they raise questions about how to interpret them in the framework of information validity.

Jørgensen (2011, p. 21), theorising about the concept of ‘fact’, refers to the word’s etymology. Its Latin root, *factum*, meant something done or made and therefore was directly connected to agency or the will of someone to alter something constant; a fact is not a constant, but is alterable. According to Jørgensen, who cites Hayden White and Linda Hutcheon (ibid.), a fact could just as easily be a discursive construct, a composition of representations of reality and thus could just as easily be considered an act of fiction-making. I have no reason to doubt this reasoning to the extent that the author’s responsibility in the process is recognized. Readers have different expectations of nonfiction and fiction, or, to paraphrase Jørgensen (ibid., p. 15, 19), readers expect the writer of nonfiction to have ‘a debt to the real.’

Albert Chillón, resisting the term *nonfiction* and not considering it a valid category for any type of literature while using George Steiner’s term *postfiction* to illustrate new discourses, introduced the neologism of *factitious writing* (*la escritura facticia*). Discussions or discourses that he conditionally calls *factitious* are those in which the ‘real’ has been reconfigured, yet remains verifiable; it should represent events and experiences that have been possible to observe and compare both personally and intersubjectively (Chillón 2011, p. 32). And yet Chillón (ibid.) admits that even if the writing is *factitious*, it is hard to obtain sufficient proof or evidence to call a given pronouncement verifiable. So we are left with an idea of veracity that can only materialize in the form of making sense: if the story that claims to be *factitious* makes sense, then it might as well be *factitious*. Earlier, this explanation of a verifiable essay

que apenas tendrá siete años. Ora unos narcos secuestran a dos periodistas que en su vida han cubierto la nota roja’ (Almazán 2013).

might have worked just fine. Blurring the already invisible lines between fictional and factual seemed an inevitable process for terminologists. But after the crucial year of 2016 when the term *post-truth* (Sismondo 2017) was introduced, the incompleteness of previous theories of fiction may have left many researchers and readers longing for terminologies that would either bring us back to a better understanding of referentiality and truth or substitute new, but nevertheless intelligible concepts.

Although Chillón's concept of factitious writing falls short in explaining the current general processes and changes in the field of journalism and writings on reality, his idea of 'seemingly real' could be used to expand the mindset of the Narrator in *Carta*. This Narrator is a character in his own story, and he describes what seems real to him. For him, veracity is proven with probabilistic logic – a logic of many variables whereby there are nearly infinite possibilities for determining truthful accounts. In writing an account of the region of La Laguna, the author chooses to deliver facts in a (semi)fictional way. Even if the Narrator himself has not seen prostitutes marching in the streets or banks being robbed, he finds it probable that such things have happened or that such things are valid assumptions about reality.

NARRATOR IN INSTRUMENTAL VALUE POSITIONS

There are seven *crónicas* in which the Narrator is set on an Instrumental Value Position. In *Pueblo* and *Alcalde*, the Narrators are positioned as Neither Helpers nor Opponents. This does not mean that the Narrator is an invisible actant, but rather that the Narrator consciously avoids taking any active stand with respect to the Subject's Objective. In one of these cases the Objective is to profit from the migration of an undocumented immigrant, while in the other case, the Objective is to fight crime in a rich municipality using controversial means. In *Pueblo*, the Narrator makes his stand known to the Subject when one of the *juntadores* or 'collectors', or traffickers of the undocumented twice asks for the Narrator's help to convince the immigrants to go with the 'collector' and make a deal about a border crossing. In both cases the Narrator shakes his head and refuses to give assistance of any kind.

There is one highly significant case of a Narrator clearly opposing the Subject's Objective: *Caja*. The opposition between the Subject of the narrative and the Narrator materializes in a physically violent expression of antagonism. This is a case in which the Narrator reminds us of the 'realness' of the narrative, the disappearance of barriers between the events on paper and those in real life. And it reminds us of the tense situation of Mexican journalists (whom the Narrator represents), who cannot be assured of their safety. The Subject of the piece is a corrupt police officer who denies all allegations against him and who, according to the Narrator, is probably behind an assault on the

Narrator, which occurred right after he interviewed this officer.¹¹⁷ In the *crónica*, the opposition between the Narrator and the Subject is not accidental or extraneous, but is the central relationship. The Narrator ties himself to the Subject's life and death right from the beginning with the following words: 'I never got to know Francisco Minjárez. However, my life has intertwined with his life. And with his death. During more than three years, I know he kept an eye on me.'¹¹⁸ In this specific Mexican (con)text the corrupt police officer and the journalist become archetypes of power abuse.

In contrast to other Instrumental Value Positions, Narrators make themselves almost invisible in positions of Helper or Helper and Opponent. The demonstration of their value positions is not prominent, and their role has been mostly portrayed as small and even insignificant in comparison to other actants. In *Alfombra*, the Narrator positions himself subtly, yet firmly as both the Helper and the Opponent of the Subject, which is the organized crime sector of Mexico. He does so by first making clear what is wrong with this particular social actor, but later the Narrator convincingly positions the rest of society as Helpers in organized crime in its attempt to dominate all areas of life. He does not exclude himself and repetitiously uses the first-person plural to indicate his own participation. It is a humble and efficient testimony of collective guilt.

The Narrator takes the Helper's stand in *Luto*, *Tribu*, and *Muerte*. In *Muerte* and *Tribu*, the Narrator's Helper role is especially small, confined to helping the Subject with a detail. In *Muerte*, the Narrator hands the Subject some magazines about worshipping the *Santa Muerte*, and in *Tribu*, the Narrator accompanies the Subject to a meeting. We can assume that, in these two cases, the Narrators help only in certain minor circumstances, which have but a negligible effect on the Subjects' Objectives. In *Luto*, by contrast, the Narrator's role as Helper has a bigger impact. The Narrator is an observer of thanatologists' workshops in the city of Juárez, where recently, along with the rise in death figures, there has also been a rise in the numbers of people in mourning. The Narrator does not actively participate in the work of the thanatologists. Yet one of their purposes is to convey the importance of their work and cut off discourses that deny any social crises in Juárez; thus the actively supportive act of the Narrator verge on helping the Subject.

The fact that in only ten *crónicas* we find such a variety of value positions is remarkable. It shows the potential of the *crónica* to go against the idea that a journalist-author in the form of a narrator should not even be a character in their own writing, and certainly not with a value position. Yet it is noticeable

¹¹⁷ For more information on the life experiences of Sergio González Rodríguez, the author of *Caja*, see his interview with Marcela Escobar in 'Domadores de historias: Conversaciones con grandes cronistas de América Latina' (Aguilar 2010, pp. 143-152).

¹¹⁸ 'Nunca conocí al comandante Francisco Minjárez. Sin embargo, mi vida se ha visto entrelazada a su propia vida. A su propia muerte. Durante más de tres años, sé que él estuvo pendiente de mí' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 83).

that value positions are sometimes presented extensively, while other times they have almost no effect of any consequence on the course of narrative.

WRITER-NARRATOR INTERPLAY

In *Luto*, it can sometimes be difficult to determine the dividing line between the Narrator as actant and the author as writer. The present methodological framework enables identification of frictions in different value positions, but we are not able to situate these frictions in specific situations. In order to determine the author's position in journalism, there is no need to re-invent the wheel, because much has already been studied and worked out. A feasible approach would be to consider the current study in the context of other similar studies.

Corona and Jörgensen (2002a, p. 4) claim that 'a characteristic of the chronicle's structure is the alternation in point of view between the authority of a first-person narrator-witness and the mediating distance of an omniscient narrator.' This characteristic is very well formulated although the moment of alternation between a 'first-person narrator-witness' and an 'omniscient narrator' is hard to detect. In my corpus, there are two *crónicas* (*Luto* and *Sicario*) which are not written in the first person and one (*Alfombra*) which occasionally turns into first-person plural (but never into singular). And whilst all *crónicas* are narrated, the 'omniscience of the narrators' extends to different degrees. In *Luto* and *Alfombra*, we come across a narrator's opinion that noticeably generates meanings and discourses. These two *crónicas* also show that the narrator does not need to be in the Subject position to evaluate or express opinions.

To compare this result to another study, consider Elizabeth Swain's (2013) SFL (systemic functional linguistics) analysis of linguistic indicators of subjectivity in the Italian press. Swain studied the distinction between 'facts' and 'opinion' in the discourses of Italian articles and concluded that there is no clear-cut distinction. Swain proposes that 'Italian journalistic discourse may accommodate too great a level of individualism on the part of journalists to permit labelling' a two-part typology of 'reporter voice' and 'writer voice.' She points out that Italian journalistic culture encourages journalists to be *opinionisti* and, furthermore, agreeing with the study of Gabriela Pounds,¹¹⁹ she states that this might have something to do with 'spontaneity and emotionality in Italian culture generally' (ibid., pp. 77-78).

Although the methodology in my research is not SFL and the research questions are not explicitly about the difference between 'facts' and 'opinions' (nor were the texts taken from the Italian press), the conclusions may turn out to be somewhat similar to Swain's. The opinionated voice of the author which reveals itself through the narrative's actant might have something to do with

¹¹⁹ G. Pounds (2010), Attitude and Subjectivity in Italian and British Hard-news Reporting: The Construction of a Culture-specific 'Reporter' Voice, *Discourse Studies* 12: 106-37.

the socio-cultural contexts from which the authors come. First of all, most of the authors in my corpus are not only journalists, but also known writers, columnists or opinion leaders. Second, these texts were never meant to be merely 'cold' observations, as indicated in the original editions of the *crónicas*, which were published in magazines or books where many, if not all texts, have a subjective seal. Third, the particular emotionality of the texts could also communicate something about the idiosyncratic environment from which the texts come.

With the rise of nonfiction in the works of Rodolfo Walsh and since Tom Wolfe's declarations on New Journalism in the United States and Latin America, we face shifts in written journalism that bring along new and more personalized forms. In the US, for instance, Gonzo journalism has emerged, which has influenced the Latin American journalistic scene as well as its literary scene. Gonzo texts are subjective, first-person accounts of literary journalism. The Gonzo pioneer was Hunter S. Thompson, best known for his autobiographical *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* (Thompson 1993 [1972]). Matthew Winston (2014, p. 10) theorizes the auctorial stand of Gonzo journalism within the frameworks of truth and subjectivity:

The mode of reading requested (or perhaps demanded) by Hunter Thompson's Gonzo journalism conceals the difference/distance between the narrative voice and the 'real writer'. The 'truth' or 'untruth' of the set of assumptions which the reader is thus called upon to accept is not [...] in fact relevant to the matter at hand. The fact that Gonzo can be read, however, as an unclassified, irreducible blend of both truth (objective and/or subjective) and non-truth (in this case, subjective 'truth' not referring to an objective, external reality) [...] remains very much relevant.

The main difference between the *crónica* and the Gonzo, as I see it, is that in the Gonzo, the strong auctorial presence is mandatory in order for the content to be transmitted. The *crónica*, and literary journalism in general, is more flexible. Yet literary journalism without a skilful narrator is unimaginable. When it comes to my corpus of texts, there is actually no urgent need to draw lines between the author as writer and the author as protagonist, because it is the whole of the auctorial parts that actually constitutes a new reality. A blend occurs, and both actant and writer become an original entity after one creates the other in a concrete narrative. The actant is part of the reconstructed subjective reality of the author. And with the help of this subjective reality as a prism (materialized as a *crónica*) the spectrum of values of both the actant and the writer emerges. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, reflecting on the social construction of reality, mention that society exists as both an objective and a subjective reality. According to them, 'the individual member of society [...] simultaneously externalizes his own being into the social world and internalizes it as an objective reality' (Berger & Luckmann 1991, p. 149), which makes the societal being dialectic. Curtis

Hardin and Tory Higgins (1996), on the other hand, see sharing realities as a means to make subjective realities objective again. Applying this to the work of *cronistas*, we can conclude that by sharing their subjective realities, the *cronistas* are also validating them.

Jørgensen (2011, p. 145) eloquently confirms the link between narrator and author as follows:

Readers of chronicles have in common with readers of essays the expectation that the narrator of the text is to be identified with the cronista or the essayist him- or herself. This is at odds with the assumption made for a novel or a short story that its narrator is a fictional entity constructed by the author for the purpose of telling the tale in a particular way. The identity between writer and narrator is characteristic as well of other forms of nonfiction, as we have seen in the study of autobiography. A chronicle's claim to factual status is supported by the authority of the one who signs the text [...].

What Jørgensen seems to say is that by no means should the narrator and the writer be considered the same; nevertheless, a unique kind of identity consisting of both the writer's and the narrator's positions is formed in nonfiction writings, which creates a distinct difference between fiction and nonfiction. My analysis of value positions further confirms that not only is the narrator-writer of the *crónica* expected to conflate, but this conflation is invariably done through the writer's desire to speak his voice in the narrator's value position.

Going back to the comparison between the *crónica* and a prism, or more precisely, considering the *crónica* as a prism of the author's actantial and the writer's value positions, the 'wave lengths' of value positions are only vaguely separated. The actantial spectrum shows great variety: we find Narrators in all possible actantial value positions, but in some *crónicas*, the actantial role is more prominent than in others. The next section will concentrate fully on the spectrum of the writers' positions and will simultaneously answer the question of how value positions are formed in the *crónicas*.

THE AUTHOR AS WRITER

Values, according to the definition used in this research, determine what is considered good or important for a certain individual or, on a more complex level, for a social agent or social actor. Values are investigated and discovered with the help of the expressions or activities of these actors. In the narrative structure, I have called such value-bearers actants. Yet the authors of the texts that form the corpus of this dissertation are value-bearers as well. But there is more to this question. Not only do the authors present their value positions as actants, they also make evaluative choices in the course of writing themselves as actants. But now we face a time factor: it is first the author-writers (figuratively speaking) who evaluate and create their own value scale and only

after that do they pick up a pen and start writing down the author-actantial (and other actantial) value positions. In effect, by analysing the author as a writer we can understand **how** the actantial value positions are composed. When I say 'how', I mean what is external to the actantial value positions, but I do not refer to what is external to the text itself. In the current research it is unimportant, for instance, whether the author was sitting at a table or lying in bed while writing. The 'how' here refers strictly to the moments when actantial value positions are formed in the text – everything that makes the actants presentable or that surrounds them.

The author as an actant turns into the persona doing the writing. In the narrative, the persona is not the same as its writer, but is created by the writer, so in a manner of speaking the author oscillates *simultaneously* between these two spheres. In any given *crónica*, the moment we read about the Narrator for the last time, the author does not disappear, but continues to exist. The choices that authors have to make while writing have many aspects, starting with the structural and ending with the ideological. Despite some of the limitations that the writing of *crónicas* might imply, there are still numerous possible choices left. Some are in the form of culturally embodied symbols, allegories, and metaphors.¹²⁰ There are also different modalities that shape meaning, professional discourses,¹²¹ intertextuality, or simply the selection of topics (or journalistic gatekeeping). In order to analyse the writers' choices, the analyst has to determine some of the principles and then see whether these apply to specific writings; otherwise, the work could potentially get out of hand owing to the enormous number of ways to tackle this task.

Here is my reasoning for the principles I have chosen to analyse the writer's value positioning. Although I recognize the *crónica* as an independent form of writing that does not necessarily need to be considered a sum of journalism and literature, given that the *crónica* has often been framed as a subgenre of literary journalism, I have chosen one principle (or evaluation criterion) from the journalistic discourse and one from the literary constellation of discourses. However, I affirm that even if one of these analytical principles is more closely associated with the journalistic and the other with literary discourses, both are central to journalism and to literature alike. The two principles I chose are **management of sources** and **the narrative's mood**. Why precisely these? Because it is the number of sources and the way author has

¹²⁰ In the *crónicas*, metaphors and metonyms are widely used as literary instruments. This can already be discerned in the titles (my translations): 'The red carpet of drug terror,' 'The theatre of crime,' 'The war on grief,' 'Officer Minjárez's black box,' or 'The tribe's voice.'

¹²¹ In *Luto*, there is clear use of medical discourse in the assertions such as (my translation): 'emergency cure for this city filled with those affected by the epidemic of violence' (*curación de emergencia para esta ciudad plagada de damnificados de la epidemia de la violencia*), 'sick with fear, hatred, or depression' (*enfermas de miedo, de odio o depresión*) or 'accumulated pain' (*dolor acumulado*).

incorporated these sources (or voices) that show how the author deals with expectations of verification in a nonfiction narrative, and it is the narrative mood that shows perfectly the author's personal preferences in assembling a story in a specific cultural context. With a closer look at both the author's source treatment and the narrative's mood, it is possible to investigate the discourses that define a writer's professional values. This is yet another 'colour' of the general spectrum of an author's values appearing through the prism of the *crónica*.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

While sources of information are important to journalism and in fact to any kind of nonfiction writing, writers treat sources in different ways. Some are very cautious not to be led astray from the original information, while others treat sources however they please. Daniel A. Berkowitz (2009, p. 102) introduces a cultural and semiotic dimension by claiming that 'the interaction between [journalists and their sources] represents a long-term, yet dynamic influence on society: the ability to shape ongoing meanings in a culture'. This has much to do with how journalists see the concept of evidence. Is a piece of information evidence right after a source has pronounced it so or is it evidence only after some validation by others? Or then again could anything be treated simply as noise until a journalist creates order out of the chaos (or presents evidence of their own)? And how much of what is uttered contains the author's personal voice?

Evidence and source information have also been linked by Jørgensen (2011, pp. 21-22), who sees evidence as 'a set of facts that have been deliberately assembled and placed into an interpretive context in the service of a claim.' She proposes that sources, like many other aspects of evidence, should be connected with the particularities of the claim; culturally, politically, or genrewise, the evidence functions in different ways, poses various kinds of expectations, and results in various degrees of satisfaction in a reader's mind.

In the following paragraphs, I will demonstrate that the sources of the *crónicas* show great variety in identity and details. By analysing the quotations from sources other than the authors themselves, we often face a kind of vagueness that could indicate a discursive intention to muddy the waters regarding the origins of information. Or the vagueness might be due to the urgent need to leave the source as anonymous as possible. I also claim that when authors paraphrase, they are taking the reader even further away from the original source; almost every paraphrase with its particular emphasis is a minor (although not necessarily significant) alteration of the original information given in a source. In order to mirror the common conceptual framing around the *crónicas* and the illicit drug trade, I will take into special consideration the female voice. I will also treat the subject of modalities of voices, because it is not only the fact that a voice exists that matters, but also the level of anonymity, concreteness, and certainty of a voice repays study. All

in all, based on the corpus of this study, I am firmly convinced that in terms of managing information, the *crónicas* are very author-centred. Yet, paradoxically, I also claim that this does not mean that the author's voice or actantial position prevails. Rather, it is the author who determines how the voices are supposed to sound together in order to avoid too much cacophony.

Quotations

When it comes to quotations, these sometimes come from known sources: interviews with people whose names we learn, conversations heard between individuals whose names the readers learn, quotations from well-presented sources such as newspapers or books. Others come from an unknown source: anonymous tip-offs, conversations heard between people who are not introduced by the author, or gossip. It is a common feature of journalistic discourses to quote in order to give a certain aura of validity to whatever has been discussed earlier (Craig 2006, pp. 83-112). In the *crónicas*, besides probably having partially the same rationale, the authors also prefer quotations when the sources use discursive formulations that illustrate a topic or make its description more vivid (for instance, by using slang or an unusual choice of words). I will illustrate this with some examples from the *crónicas* that have some of the largest numbers of quotations in the excerpts that define the actantial positions, namely *Alcalde*, *Sicarios*, *Carta*, and *Pueblo*.

In *Alcalde*, the daredevil mayor of Santa Pedro Garza García is talking about his passion for hunting. Referring to killing elephants in Africa (and recommending this experience to everyone), he is suddenly quoted as saying words that might not be literally about hunting: 'When you kill an elephant, you can do many things in life. You have no idea how many elephants I have had to kill in order to be myself.'¹²² The mayor uses symbolism to convey something of his difficulties in life and how overcoming them has made him the person he is. Killing an elephant is a powerful image, and by keeping this image intact and just as the source presented it, the author does a great deal to take the story beyond straightforward meanings. This image also creates a mystery, as readers might begin to wonder what 'elephants' (or obstacles/enemies) the mayor is actually hinting at. This quotation is exteriorized to demonstrate one of the Subject's Objectives, which is to be himself no matter what. In another quotation from the *Alcalde*, a Helper has been established with a touch of authentic everyday language when a businessman whispers the vulgar statement 'You've got balls' in the mayor's ear.¹²³ Again, besides the value position regarding the Subject's Objective and the mark of bravery, we also get some idea from this quotation of the type of conversations that frame the evaluative situations.

¹²² 'Si matas a un elefante, puedes hacer muchas cosas en la vida. Yo, no tienes idea de cuántos elefantes he tenido que matar para poder ser yo mismo' (Osorno 2012, p. 514).

¹²³ 'Ésos son huevos' (Osorno 2012, p. 509).

Making a show of real-life language from a story's characters is an easy way to 'spice up the text', although it can also serve as an ethnographic observation about the linguistic space a character inhabits. For instance, consider the police officer who writes letters to the author of *Carta* about the war between two organized crime groups. The author has decided to incorporate one of these letters fully into the *crónica* – such is the level of 'locality'. Here is an example of his style: 'The *chapos* [members of the Sinaloa Cartel] do not like the local police. The shitty thing is that the local police of Torreón are working for the *chapos* and those of the letter [the Zetas] are out killing the police. One was riddled while he was washing his car outside his home [...]'¹²⁴. In *Carta*, there are many sources whose use of language is idiosyncratic. One of them is a drug dealer who practises jargon mixed with Anglicisms: 'Wherever these kids take a crap, nobody passes, so I hope you have watched [in original: *watchado*] carefully how things are here'.¹²⁵ Considering that the Subject of the *crónica* is the author himself whose aim is to create emotions around La Laguna, these sources and their quotations do a nice job of helping him construct a certain kind of emotional atmosphere.

In some instances, quotations are inevitable because the author could not possibly encapsulate the unusualness or even the absurdity of a situation with a paraphrase. In those cases, the original text says much more than any explanation could achieve. We read in *Sicarios*, for instance, the words of a ten-year-old boy whose life purpose is to become a hitman. At one point, after quarrelling with another boy, he reasons, 'Rodrigo just told me that by being a *narco*, I could earn seven thousand pesos a week. But he told me that I would need to be 'blue-blooded' because I could not care about people, and he asked me whether I came to killing, and I told him, yes, and he told me, "you are not up to it because you thought too long".'¹²⁶ Another example of how the original words were probably best comes from *Pueblo* when a human trafficker walks by a house and casually states, 'Oh, this is where a *narco* lives, but he is a very good man'.¹²⁷ Such words reveal an ambiguous evaluative statement about a situation in which the human traffickers in this *crónica* are living: they see *narcos* as opposing their aim to profit as much as possible from the undocumented immigrants on the Mexico-US border. And suddenly there is one man who is 'good', regardless of the fact that he belongs to the group that

¹²⁴ '[...] los chapos no quieren a los municipales. el pedo ahora es que los municipales de torreón trabajan para los chapos y los de la letra andan matando polis. a uno lo rafaguearon afuera de su casa, cuando estaba lavando su carro' (Almazán 2013).

¹²⁵ 'Por donde cagan estos morros nadie pasa, así que ojalá hayas wachado bien cómo está el rollo [...]' (Almazán 2013).

¹²⁶ 'Rodrigo me acaba de decir que siendo narco podría ganar 7 mil pesos a la semana. Pero me dijo que para eso tenía que tener sangre azul, porque no me importarían las personas, y él me dijo que si yo llegaría a matar, y me quedé pensando, y le dije sí, y me dijo: "tú no sirves para eso, porque lo pensaste mucho"' (Rea 2012, p. 179).

¹²⁷ 'Ah, en esa casa vive un señor narco, pero es muy buena gente' (Martínez 2012, p. 560).

is generally frowned upon. This is an example of how it only takes one quotation to capture the social complexity of values in the borderline areas.

Paraphrases

If technically the quotation should be complementary to exhaustive descriptions of situations, then paraphrases are also part of this scheme. Paraphrases are best used to convey ideas or general meanings (Nuwer 1992, p, 28). And even if it is a rule that during rewriting, the original message should not change, it is again the author who dictates the emphasis and the exact wording of the paraphrase. And with paraphrases the reader is left uncertain about how much of the wording comes from the sources and how much from the author. Some of the textual constructions created in the course of paraphrasing are loaded with additional meaning or intertextualities. For instance, in *Pueblo*, in paraphrasing the complaints of the human traffickers about the changing ‘market condition,’ the author employs a term that in usual conditions would not be suitable for human beings – raw material.¹²⁸ We do not know whether the human traffickers used this exact term, but in any case, with this term the absurdity, sadness, and cruelty of human trafficking is perfectly conveyed.

When paraphrasing occurs in the context of making a judgement, the combination can be illuminating. What happens here is that a *cronista*, having openly exposed personal attitudes about the object of judgement, is more likely to marshal statements to support that judgement. There is no reason to evaluate this kind of judgement (especially when the journalist makes it very clear why it is important to underline the harm of the actions being judged), but it is important to note this journalistic phenomenon. It can be observed, for instance, in *Luto*, when the author intentionally polarizes the damaged members of society (the grieving people of the city of Juárez) vis-à-vis the government and the president of Mexico (‘Felipe Calderón and his cabinet seem to live in another reality’). The author then paraphrases the government secretary who on one occasion blames the citizens (‘he blamed the people of Juárez for causing their own fate’) and on another occasion blames the media (‘he held the media responsible for making a big deal of the violence’). The last paraphrase is summed up by the *cronista* with the words, ‘The president’s office started a campaign that [...] Mexican violence is a problem of perception.’ In this paraphrase and the final conclusion, the *cronista* has decided to summarize the (often long and confusing) political statements and give a further interpretation in order to make a valid point: it is not a question of whether the politicians’ statements were right or wrong, but about the politicians dodging responsibility and lacking a supportive agenda.

The *crónicas* also demonstrate moments when paraphrasing serves as a kind of repetition or emphasis of a concept. In the opening and closing

¹²⁸ ‘[...] materia prima [...]’ (Martínez 2012, p. 572).

paragraphs of *Alcalde*, the author uses a paraphrase that repeats exactly the same words. First, he paraphrases the mayor who is determined to fight crime in his municipality using any means possible; the author describes the mayor as saying he would 'go above the law to fight crime'. At end of the *crónica*, paraphrasing the president of Mexico who is criticising the mayor, the author employs the same construct when the president says, 'no one can be above the law.'¹²⁹ By including exactly the same discursive construction in the paraphrases of the *crónica's* framing paragraphs, the author makes the idea of 'going/being above the law' the overarching topic of the whole piece.

Some paraphrases in the *crónicas* lead to vague concepts or vague objects of reference. Sometimes in mentioning certain people or certain phenomena, the sources do not make clear exactly who or what is meant. Inevitably, this leads to vague paraphrases (because it should not be the job of the author to guess what the sources mean). For example, in *Caja* the author conveys the words of a supposedly innocent convict who accuses the narrative's Subject, a corrupt police officer, of protecting the real offenders – the 'powerful people/people in high positions' – in the crime he is unjustly accused of.¹³⁰ The reader cannot help but ask, to whom is the source referring? This brings us back to the *crónica* about Javier Sicilia, who rather impulsively went against 'the politicians', 'the state', 'the government', 'the powers that be', 'the whole political class'. These linguistic substitutions can temporarily help when there is no specific name given, but like a boomerang they come back to the heart of the investigative work and weaken its very purpose – to provide new and solid information. It does not mean that the authors deliberately do something wrong by paraphrasing such statements; rather it serves as additional proof that it is always better to include as concise and exact information as possible in order to not support populist claims or cause even more confusion in an already confusing topic.

Building on this observation, let us take a closer look at what kinds of sources are represented in the current set of *crónicas* and whose information has been crucial in determining the value positions. In the *crónicas* that can also be considered profiles (*Alcalde* and *Tribu*), the sources for quotations and paraphrases are mostly the Subjects themselves, the 'profilees'. According to some parameters, *Caja* could also be seen as a profile, but considering that the person under investigation has died by the time the investigation begins, not many direct quotations or paraphrases come from him. There are six *crónicas* that can more or less be characterised as reportage-type *crónicas*; the sources in those texts show much more variety. Such variety is almost entirely missing from *Alfombra*, which is an essay-type *crónica* in which it is mostly the author who imparts information and interprets it.

¹²⁹ The original wording for 'above the law' is *encima de la ley* (Osorno, pp. 509, 529).

¹³⁰ In the original, *gente de poder* (González Rodríguez, p. 90).

Anonymous sources

There is one group among the various types of sources that is large and loud, but hardly palpable, namely the anonymous sources. The following part of the analysis concentrates on them.

In the *crónicas*, there are many sources that can be called anonymous. In the present context, this primarily means having no full name mentioned. Anonymity is expected in writings that concern the illicit drug trade. If the writer endeavours to complete a piece with up-to-date information, it is only ethical to take the anonymity of the sources into account. It is also a universally acclaimed practice in journalistic (or nonfiction) writing that in no case (and not just in dangerous settings) should the identity of a source be divulged if that was the journalist's agreement (Hargreaves 2003, pp. 230-231). In several instances in the *crónicas*, the sources make it clear that anonymity has been requested for reasons of safety. The author of *Carta* explains this without any sugar coating: 'I have known the guide for some years now and I know he would not lie to me. Publishing his name would be counter-productive. I have been advised that here informants get burnt in a pile of tires.'¹³¹

Anonymity in the *crónicas* is not, however, a clear-cut concept. In my corpus, anonymity can appear in many forms, and the range of actual anonymity (or, in other words, how much we know about the source) varies widely. If we imagine anonymity as a line with two extreme poles, then at the end that is closest to what is known, are people whose first name we know. Individuals who appear in the *crónicas* are those whose lives are significant to the story. It is either for their experience or for their message that we get to know them. Such sources are the *juntadores* Eliazar and René, and the mourners from La Laguna and Juárez, all of whom appear with first names only and who want to convey messages about their missing or dead relatives or friends. Moving closer to the unknown, we find sources whose names we do not learn at all, but we do learn something about their lives (mostly what they do for a living). Here as well, there is some diversity in the anonymity: sometimes we can identify a specific place where a person works or resides (the private secretary to the mayor of San Pedro Garza García or a convict in the Santa Marta Acatitla prison), but other times we are left with a rather vague or general idea of who makes up certain groups of individuals ('United Nations experts' or 'authorities of Chihuahua'). At the other end of the range of anonymity, the unknown end, are sources that might leave readers puzzled, and I would like to elaborate on these sources, as they relate directly to the nature of the *crónica* and its idiosyncrasies vis-à-vis other written accounts of actual or real-life information.

¹³¹ 'Conozco al guía desde hace algunos años y sé que no me mentiría. Publicar su nombre sería contraproducente. Aquí a los informantes, según me ha advertido, los queman en una pira de llantas' (Almazán 2013).

Modalities

I have repeatedly returned to the question of verification and how *cronistas* deal with it. Do readers in fact learn the sources of the information? Sometimes an author explicitly states that whatever the reader is learning comes directly from the author. Other times, no such clarification is given. For instance, with essay-like discursive nonfiction constructions in which the ideas are the property of the author, authors' task is to impart their own thoughts in a comprehensive and logical manner. But in reportage, profiles, and other kinds of literary journalism which depend on sources other than the author, identification of the sources contributes to verification of the material. Using this reasoning, I claim that as the *crónicas* contain quite a bit of information from unidentified sources, such information remains unverified. This situation is tied to the linguistic constructs that comment on the truth value or plausibility of information or modalities. Linguistic modality has to do with expressing possibility and necessity (Fintel 2006). Modalities have been categorized in highly complex ways. For this research, I have found Sulkunen and Törrönen's division (1997) to be relevant: in their model, drawn from Greimas and Courtés, enunciative modalities are placed in subcategories of veridictory and epistemic modalities, both of which are concerned with truth. Veridictory modality is about appearance and how people can be persuaded that appearance is truth. Epistemic modality, on the other hand, deals with belief and its convergence either with knowing, doubting, or imagining. All these qualities are embedded in the discursive means that help interlocuters pass on their meaning-laden ideas. For instance, in the case of the *cronistas'* unidentified sources, we can translate the analysis of linguistic modality into two conceptual opposites: **abstract vs concrete** and **assertion vs allusion**. 'Abstract' and 'concrete' concern the knowledge we have about the sources, while 'assertion' and 'allusion' indicate epistemic certainty: how sure can we be about the information?

A scholarly citation would indicate the author of the statement or, in the case of a written source, the title, author, and date of publication in which the statement appeared. Such certainty and specificity does not appear in the *crónicas*, which by definition set out to fulfil other discursive criteria. Yet some of the quotations and paraphrases are nevertheless relatively specific. For example, in *Luto*, there is a paraphrase that indicates both a primary and a secondary source, although we fail to learn the title, the author, or the publication date of the primary source: 'The [earlier introduced] Aguirre sisters say that, according to studies by the Mexican Institute of Thanatology, . . . [followed by a description of the results]'.¹³² Then again, even with rather specific identification of sources, a double reference may indicate, paradoxically, a certain level of linguistic doubt, because the information has not been put forward as an unquestionable assertion, but rather as a claim

¹³² 'Las hermanas Aguirre dicen que los estudios del Instituto de Tanatología de México arrojan que [...] (Turati 2012, p. 232).

made by someone else and delivered by others. Figuratively speaking, the author ‘washes his hands’ of responsibility for identifying the sources. Even if the information is used as a supporting argument, paraphrase distances the author from the statement. Such a position appears in two *crónicas*, *Teatro* and *Alcalde*, where insinuations are made about an unidentified source of information in the city. Both *crónicas* use the passive voice to frame the reference: ‘In the city it is said that...’ and ‘the local perception is that...’.¹³³ To say that something has been said in the city or in a community is an idiom of rumour and, therefore, highly abstract. We can only assume that during their fieldwork, the authors talked to people who responded with similar generalizations, but we have no certainty about the number of interviewees or the modalities the interviewees themselves used.

When it comes to the dichotomy between assertion and allusion, anonymity does not entail only one or the other; it also brings up all sorts of possibilities. The allusion or ‘alleged situation’ is established most often with adverbs and adjectives, such as ‘supposedly’, ‘likely’, ‘possible’, or ‘potential’. This allusion happens, for instance, in *Caja*, where the Subject is suspected of having ‘potential connections with a mafia of kidnappers.’¹³⁴ Both an abstract source and an allusion appear in this choice of modality from *Alcalde*: ‘[...] a former government secretary [...] who was publicly indicated as supposedly having ties with the narco.’¹³⁵ Here we never learn who made the accusation nor is there any certainty about whether there really were connections with organized crime.

Finally, there are statements in which the *cronistas* have claimed something without apparent need to specify the sources, delivering statements with an ‘earth being round’-like confidence: ‘it is a secret to no one that [San Pedro Garza García is the wealthiest municipality in the Monterrey metropolitan area]’ or ‘everybody says that [worship of *Santa Muerte* is extensively practised among convicts]’. Incidentally, neither of these statements sets limits on ‘no one or ‘everybody,’ which means that a common truth is being pronounced. But this ‘common truth’ is something that I, for example, as an outsider, learned for the first time only in reading the *crónica*. So the only thing that is actually certain about these ‘nobodys’ and ‘everybodys’ is that I, as a reader, was not one of them. This realization causes an epistemic ‘itch’ in my doubtful mind: where is the factual group of ‘everybodys’ and ‘nobodys’ that I am not part of? Or if it is not factual and this group does not really exist, then is the group just a literary construction? And most important, how do we differentiate between sources of factual information and sources of style?

¹³³ ‘En la ciudad se comenta que...’, ‘Dice la comunidad que...’, ‘La percepción local es que...’ (Mejía Madrid 2012, p. 268, 271, 270) and ‘[...] se dice en la ciudad [...]’ (Osorno 2012, p. 511).

¹³⁴ ‘[...] posibles nexos con una mafia de secuestradores’ (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 86).

¹³⁵ ‘[...] un antiguo secretario de gobierno [...] que fue señalado públicamente por supuestas ligas con el narco’ (Osorno 2012, 527-528).

In a discussion of modalities in the *crónicas*, it should first be taken into account that modalities in the media, just as in any linguistic forum, evaluate truth (Lawal 2016). But truth is connected with the amount of information we have on a given topic. The more proof, the more ‘truth-value’ we have, and the less proof, the less ‘truth-value’ we have and the more belief is required. So given this rough principle, modalities of any kind of factual informing should remain on the edge of certainty and assertion. It might also be that rules are looser in literary journalism where the author has the freedom to play with modalities for the sake of underlying meanings in the text. The context of reporting on the illicit drug trade also makes it very hard to be absolutely sure about the information presented; any illicit activity demands a certain level of concealment.¹³⁶ With such concealment, the little information that is in circulation is quickly converted into constrained propositions and, over time, even into legends and myths (Astorga 1995). And it all forms part of a shared and collectively constructed discursive reality.

Female voice

There is one aspect that this discussion of sources permits us to touch on, even if only briefly, namely the female voice in the *crónicas*. This matters because the lack of female voices in journalism (both as writers and as sources) has been a problem not only in Mexico, but also globally (Allan et al. 1998; Byerly 2013; Ross 2001). In Mexico, slowly but steadily, the increasing involvement of women in media coverage is becoming apparent. And not only in ‘soft topics,’ such as social care or culture, but also in covering the hard social realities of Mexico (Everbach 2013). Some of these women have formed part of a gruesomely long list of journalists who paid with their lives for their investigative work.¹³⁷

In the current corpus, two of the *crónicas* were written by women, *Luto* and *Sicarios*. In the masculine circumstances of the Mexican journalistic production and literary scene (Polit Dueñas 2013, p. 22), it is notable that these pieces even exist and have been chosen for anthologies. Even though in these pieces genders are represented in a balanced manner, paradoxically these are the *crónicas* in which the author’s actantial positions are relatively inaudible, or in the case of *Sicarios*, non-existent. Nor do other *crónicas*, written by male authors, compensate for the lack of female representation. Female sources are scarce, with only approximately every tenth testimony coming from a woman. In *Tribu*, no female sources are quoted or paraphrased, and the only women the *crónica* mentions are the Subject’s mother and a well-known Mexican journalist – Carmen Aristegui – who decided to help Sicilia in his quest.

¹³⁶ See the discussion of ‘Silence’ in chapter 6 on Instrumental Value Positions.

¹³⁷ See chapter 2 on the context of this study.

No females are quoted in *Teatro* at all. And yet the topic of females is central to *Teatro*, as the author has come to Juárez to investigate the reason for the murders of so many women in a short period of time. He observes women, and he talks about them – with men. Although the idea behind *Teatro*'s story is admirable, it remains unclear why the author chose not to ask any women for their impressions or opinions about a matter that so closely concerns them.

Nor does *Alfombra* have any vocalized female utterance, although once again this can be partly explained by the subgenre of this particular *crónica* (an essay) in which very few voices other than the author's are heard. In *Alfombra*, though, two significant female-related references are mentioned. One is a book by Julio Scherer based on the life of a famous female member of an organized crime group. The other, and the more significant, is a work of art called *Red Carpet (Alfombra roja)* by the Mexican artist Rosa María Robles, which supplied the main motif for the *crónica* and also inspired its title.

In *Caja*, there are very few female sources, although one of these is Isabel Arvide, a journalist, whose book about the disappearance of her friend made the author of the *crónica* aware for the first time of the Subject of his piece. In *Alcalde*, a female politician is one of the author's most prominent sources, and in *Carta*, a female politician interviewed by the author is one of the very few people who do not succumb to the author's 'provocation' to portray La Laguna as a place of horror. This ultimately makes her the only human Opponent (next to the inanimate actant of fear) to the Subject of the narrative, the author himself.

Overall, the sound of female voices in the *crónicas* is weak. And yet *crónicas* are expected to have female *cronistas* to provide some gender balance (Berkowitz 2009). As argued in the chapter on the conceptual framework for this dissertation, some scholars even define the genre of *crónica* through its capacity to generate a platform for different voices (Bernabé 2006; Bielsa 2006; Falbo 2007a). At least based on the set of *crónicas* under investigation here, the female voice does not seem to be one of these. One reason may simply be the topical focus of the corpus – the illicit drug trade, the activity mostly associated with men. Yet this does not make a very satisfactory excuse because most of the *crónicas* in my corpus deal with the subject of the illicit drug trade from a very general perspective and a wide range of social angles.

To close my discussion of the *cronistas*' sources and how they are quoted or paraphrased, I agree with Berkowitz (2009), who sees the relationship between authors¹³⁸ and their sources as a generator of meanings through the interpretative community that the sources represent, an interpretation that makes the author-source relationship a cultural phenomenon. According to Berkowitz, 'members of an interpretive community interact by internalizing

¹³⁸ Berkowitz talks specifically about reporters, but I see no obstacle to expanding the reasoning to all kinds of writing that demands sources.

taken-for-granted shared meanings and draw on those meanings as a guide to their values and interpretations of issues and occurrences (ibid., p. 106).’ This approach takes the sole burden from the authors’ shoulders and confirms the importance of interaction between different social agents in generating meanings based on values. The positioning of values in the *crónicas* is not only an action performed by the ‘almighty author,’ but also is a process whereby the sources, and through them, their interpretative community, take a stance. This could also be observed in the previous chapter on Instrumental Value Positions (it is clear that, to some extent, even if they exist in different analytical spaces, the sources and the actants on Instrumental Value Positions correspond); there it was made quite clear that the shifting value positions are not the author’s creative construction, but a reality that keeps repeating itself from one *crónica* to another. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, the author makes the final choice about the kinds of sources to be used, and through them, what Instrumental Value Positions shape the reality shared with the reader.

We have observed how the *cronistas* position values through their selection and interpretation of sources. The analysis and discussion of this process has been deliberately presented in journalistic setting in order to expand on the informative and, above all, the original aspects of the information in the *crónicas*. But given the special condition of the *crónica* as a narrative type of journalism, the author also has to make choices of a literary nature. These choices are many, but among them, the mood of the narrative is one of the most crucial. The narrative’s mood demonstrates the writer’s evaluations, and this is the focus of the next section of the study.

NARRATIVE’S MOOD

To avoid later confusion, it is beneficial to define clearly here what is meant by narrative’s mood. For almost any narratologist, one of the first works that comes to mind when narrative mood is mentioned is Gérard Genette’s narratological criticism in *Figures I-III* (2014 [1967-70]) and *Nouveau discours du récit* (1983). Although Genette’s work should be emphasized because his contribution was significant to understanding the underlying structure of narrative with its linguistic composition (Guillemette & Lévesque, 2006), the narrative’s mood discussed in the current study is not the same as that posed by Genette. First, there is a mismatch in the terminology. Genette’s French *mode* vacillates between the English words *mood* and *mode*, while I would like to differentiate their meanings. Second, whichever term is used, Genette’s conception of mood does not point to narrative as much as to the narrator: it is the narrator’s presence that defines the narrative’s mood. Starting from the second difference between my view and Genette’s, the narrator’s presence certainly cannot be denied, and I agree with Genette that the narrator is never really absent from the narrative (after all, this is one of the main postulates of this chapter), yet Genette’s narrator and the author in

my treatment are not the same entities. The narrator has more to do with a structural approach to narrative, while the author brings additional social and cognitive aspects.

Regarding the difference between mode and mood, mode in my view is a more general term, one that indicates a structure and form of an act of communication (such as a verbal mode or a non-verbal mode, for instance), while I understand mood as a literary device for creating a certain atmosphere through **settings, tone, theme, and diction** ('mood', *Literary Devices* 2013), and goes a long way towards clarifying the narrative seen here as a literary narrative. Leaning on notions discussed earlier, we could even define mood as writing constructed in a literary mode (which the *crónicas* certainly are). To define the four principal assets of creating mood as literary devices (ibid.), settings are 'drawn' from the physical or geographical background, tone refers to the writer's personal approach and attitude, theme is the underlying main idea of the narrative, and diction is the choice of words that the author (or the actants) use. In effect, narrative's mood creates emotion, and the fact that I have even considered analysing mood as a way in which the authors of the *crónicas* convey value positions means that creating emotions has been one of the main impulses.

Most important, I argue that in the settings, themes, tones, and dictions of the *crónicas* in the current research corpus, there is a palpable pattern of repetition in certain figures of speech, genre-like implications, and sentiments, which after systematization can be elaborated as four types of narrative's mood – **ironic mood, suspenseful mood, worried mood, and melodramatic mood**. These categories are not only evident in the utterances of the narrators (and I will mainly concentrate on those), but also in the accounts of other actants in the narrative.

Irony

Irony is commonly seen as a statement of something contrary to the message that is actually conveyed. 'Ah, funny!' is what one might say without any amusement at all. In understanding irony in a communicative context, I draw on Kenneth Burke (1945), who identified irony as one of the master tropes of rhetoric (along with metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche). A rhetorical device is useful in creating literary mood, especially in the case of irony, which differs from the other tropes (all of which can be and are employed in various genres and settings). Irony largely forms part of humorous discourses (although it is often interwoven with serious notes or even tragedy). As I have argued before,¹³⁹ I see irony as very appropriate to the cultural production of Mexico and an almost autochthonous expression of that production. Irony

¹³⁹ See my rationale in *Pleasures of the Prose: Journalism and Humour* (ed. Richard Lance Keeble & David Swick), entitled 'Humour in Mexican Illicit Drug Trade-Related *Crónicas*: A Way of Pointing the Finger at Injustice' (Ungro 2015).

'suits' the social reality of Mexico, where the dominant discourses are reserved for the elite (Bartra 2005, p. 14), and the fact that a majority of people are being left out of the public discussion is easily (yet sadly) converted into self-protection through humour. Irony is reflected most eloquently, for instance, through the popular Mexican tragic-comic fictional character Cantinflas, who is poor, a bit naïve, but always honest, the type of character who makes fun of himself while simultaneously offering a critique of Mexican social injustice (Garizurieta 2005, p. 124). The use of irony as a means of dissolving social hierarchies was also confirmed in the study by the Mexican scholar María Eugenia Flores Treviño (2009), conducted in the city of Monterrey. Flores Treviño interviewed the town's citizens and concluded that they construct an ephemeral world of equality when they use irony to describe their economic situation, crime, or the authorities (ibid., p. 98). In a framework of humour, irony is complementary to sarcasm, parody, and other forms, but for the aforementioned reasons and because my research results strongly support doing so, I will concentrate here on irony.

In the *crónicas*, irony is by no means scarce. The authors express it almost as literally as Literary Devices plants it ('mood', *Literary Devices* 2013): through settings, tone, diction, and theme, and sometimes through all of these together, as happens in *Caja*. There the author, in giving a seemingly dry overview of the efficiency of the narrative's Subject, namely the corrupt police office Minjárez, states that, according to Minjárez himself, his success as a police officer lies first in the cohesion of the group of men around him and secondly, in the technological devices that permit him to overhear all telephone conversations and register the calls. Everything seems to be exactly as it should be; after all, as a police officer whose task it is to catch kidnappers, Minjárez has not really said anything unusual. But it is in the setting of this conversation that we know Minjárez is also secretly the head of a group of kidnappers. And suddenly everything he claims becomes ironic: he can be a very successful kidnapper because he has a loyal group of men in his service (we cannot assume that the policemen around him were also corrupt; we can only assume the existence of a cohesive group of kidnappers) and because he has all these technological devices in his office. It is a bitter irony – a successful tracker of kidnappers who is himself a successful kidnapper. In the middle of the paragraph, the author slowly, walking verbally 'step by step' through repetitions, starts to lead the reader to an understanding of the irony of this situation: '[Minjárez] could track down those he kept an eye on. Through his contacts with other policemen, he could follow them in whatever part of the state [they were in] or outside of it. He could catch them.'¹⁴⁰ The author makes this figure complete in the earlier section of the *crónica* where he points out that Minjárez had zeroed in on him as well.

¹⁴⁰ 'Podía ubicar a quienes vigilaba. Hacerlos seguir en cualquier parte del estado o fuera de éste a través de sus contactos con otros policías. Atajarlos' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 92).

An example of the author's ironic tone is shown clearly in *Sicarios*, whose author describes youngsters whose goal for the future is to become hitmen. For that purpose, they practise not only shooting, but also a lifestyle: 'They are all dressed up in jeans and T-shirts; girls with flowery sandals, and make-up on their faces, boys with too large shoes, and sunglasses, although it's seven o'clock in the evening.'¹⁴¹ The author's tone leads us to assume a situation very familiar to anyone who has children – how they test adults' life, put on their mothers' make-up or dresses, try driving, imagine being free. Ironically, all of this happens in a similar way here, and therefore in an ironic way these children make sense, although by all the rules of 'the adults', they should not make sense at all.

In *Muerte*, the author frames his argument with irony, while also using another of Burke's master tropes, the metaphor. In a prison, where the author is having a conversation with a convict who worships *Santa Muerte* (the enigmatic religious saint who was thoroughly discussed in the first analytical chapter), a medallion and some tattoos on the convict's chest become powerful, yet ironic symbols of Mexican criminal society. The author observes the convict's tattoos and mentions the Virgin of Guadalupe, Jesus Christ, an elf, a witch, *Santa Muerte*, and in the midst of these, a couple kissing, who later turn out to be the convict and his wife. A great deal of love and magic is etched on the convict's chest. The fact that the author considers it appropriate to point out the tattoos is a reference to the structured, yet confusing ways of finding hope and consolation in hopeless conditions. Furthermore, these tattoos point to the human side of a person who would ordinarily be described as without sentimental discourse, a person who, in the same *crónica*, is said to be the head of a dangerous criminal group. The irony is not directed against the convict, but against the society that has 'produced' him and later 'boxed' him in.

Of all the *crónicas*, it is *Alfombra* that stands out for resorting to the ironic literary mood. And similar to *Muerte*, metaphor is widely used. To the reader, the irony of living in Mexico is made clear by the collection of metaphorical comparisons to surprising, yet fitting objects, situations, and people. The irony begins with the title, which could be translated as 'The red carpet of drug terror' – a reference to the glamorous red carpet of fame (as later becomes clear through the reversed axiom of everyone's right to fifteen minutes of impunity in Mexico). At the end, a comparison is made with an artistic installation in which the artist snatched a blood-stained carpet from the police inventory to show the ease of infiltrating its facilities. Irony and metaphor meet throughout the piece when corruption and organized crime are depicted in settings that refer to cinema ('the illicit drug trade usually rings twice'¹⁴²),

¹⁴¹ 'Todos están vestidos con pantalón de mezclilla y playeras de tonos pastel: ellas, con sandalias de flores y maquillaje en el rostro; ellos, con tenis que les quedan grandes y lentes para el sol, aunque sean las 19:00 horas' (Rea 2012, p. 177).

¹⁴² 'El narcotráfico suele golpear dos veces [...]' (Villoro 2008).

virtual reality ('in this Second Life of the real life'¹⁴³), theatre ('the theatricality of the narco'¹⁴⁴), television ('Los Sopranos is already a reality show offered by neighbours'¹⁴⁵), and sex ('in the narco-world, the present supremacy is fulfilled through a *ménage à trois* between quick money, criminal high technology, and the power of the secret'¹⁴⁶). The society that looks away has also been compared to a theme park, a festival competition, and the Fantastic Four franchise, all quite ironically, since none of this is actually amusing or entertaining. *Alfombra*, along with other *crónicas* that use irony as a literary device to create mood, exhibits a bitter perspective on a world that functions as if everything were in order, as if the problems were not real. In a search for the positioning of values, it becomes apparent that, on many occasions, through the prism of the *crónica* one of the 'colours' refracted through the writer's spectrum is irony.¹⁴⁷

Suspense

In texts dealing with corruption and criminal activities, like the corpus for this study, it is not surprising to find the literary mood of suspense. But the *crónicas* are not made-up, and they are not meant to be entertaining *per se*. Nevertheless, in almost all the *crónicas*, while positioning values, the authors employ techniques and strategies to build tension, which is highly characteristic of suspense. In order to define suspense, some genre boundaries should be drawn, as suspense is often related to a type of fiction writing that engages the reader by building tension. Joyce Saricks (2009) classifies suspense as one of the adrenaline genres together with adventure, romantic suspense, and thrillers. But she also sees similarities between suspense and horror and between suspense and mystery. While horror is often filled with anomalies, suspense remains on the periphery of real life. Mystery tends to be more intellectual, and its principal questions revolve around solving a puzzle. Adventure generates lots of amusement, and thrillers lots of action. And romantic suspense, just as its name suggests, leans towards romantic affection between the main protagonists. Suspense, in Saricks's definition, is all about creating tension and a sense of menace.

¹⁴³ 'En este Second Life de la vida real [...]' (ibid.).

¹⁴⁴ 'La teatralidad del narco [...]' (ibid.).

¹⁴⁵ 'Los Soprano es ya el reality show que ofrecen los vecinos' (ibid.).

¹⁴⁶ 'En el mundo narco, la supremacía del presente se cumple a través de un *ménage à trois* del dinero rápido, la alta tecnología delictiva y el dominio del secreto' (ibid.).

¹⁴⁷ Sometimes irony demands a certain ironic disposition from the reader, as not every trope comes off as plain and clear-cut. In *Pueblo*, I had a moment of unexpected irony (unexpected perhaps even from the author's point of view) when I read that one of the traffickers of the undocumented, or *pollos* (literally translated, 'chickens') made extra money by selling roasted chicken on the street.

George N. Dove (1989) viewed the reader as a defining element in the suspense genre. According to him, it is most important that the reader develop a strong interest and even concern about what happens next, because when readers lose interest in the story, the suspense loses its function. This is an accurate, yet too general, observation, as it might be countered with the point that the reader's engagement is crucial in any literary genre. But as we will soon see, most of the qualities that Saricks ascribes to suspense as a genre of fiction are also demonstrable for suspense as a literary mood in the *crónicas*.

A true sense of suspense infuses the entire plot of *Caja*, where the narrator is twice threatened by the villain of the *crónica*, Officer Minjárez. And indeed, the readers probably immerse themselves in the description of the situation, where the narrator is attacked by two men hired by Minjárez as a warning. Readers might breathe easier when it appears that, although the attackers have taken his tape recorder, they did not know that the tape had already been removed and was in the narrator's pocket. All these situations could also imply mystery and a thriller, but the most suspenseful is when readers learn the facts about Minjárez and anticipate the coming episodes in his life only to discover at the end of the narrative that he was violently killed, probably by his own partners in crime. All the devices of creating suspenseful mood, tone, setting, diction and theme have been explored by the author in this sinister account of antagonism between the narrator and his persecutor. As Saricks (2009) puts it, there has been 'an intricately developed cat-and-mouse-game.'

A calculated use of words, or diction, leads to a suspenseful mood in *Sicarios*, where the author joins paragraphs together with what could be called tension-builders, or, as Saricks writes, 'suspense at low ebb' (ibid.). The intentionality of the author is demonstrated by the use of almost the same discursive construct twice, a construct around the moment that supposedly changed the course of events. After describing a violent conflict between the military and drug traffickers, the narrator sums up by saying, 'this day stayed imprinted in the minds of [the people in the place], even though violence drifts around this place every day'.¹⁴⁸ Thus, we learn that in this violent and perilous place there was a moment that marked a difference, the outcome of which could not possibly have been something positive, were it not for the following events. And after only a few paragraphs we learn the outcome, one that once again leaves loose ends: 'since that day, the kids started to play the game of small pistols.'¹⁴⁹ We know now that a terrible adaptation of 'adult games' has been taken up by the children, but as this is how the whole paragraph ends, we are left not knowing exactly how, what it means, or what will be the outcome – a textbook formula for suspense.

¹⁴⁸ 'Esa fecha quedó grabada en la mente de los apatzingueños, a pesar de que la violencia se pasea a diario por el lugar' (Rea 2012, p. 178).

¹⁴⁹ 'A partir de ese día, los niños comenzaron el juego de las pistolitas' (ibid.).

The tone of suspense has the added value of mysticism (and maybe even a hint of horror) in *Muerte*, when the narrator receives a gift from a friend in the form of a figurine of Our Lady of Holy Death (*Santa Muerte*), which he finds difficult to accept. In the course of investigating the social practices around this deity, the author encounters a certain reluctance to deal with her forbidding presence. He wants to get rid of the figurine and nervously leaves it in the street. Later, when his friend warns him that *Santa Muerte* is not something to fool around with, the author protests the impossibility of continuing his investigation under such a threat.

In fact, it is the creation of settings and the special attention given the atmosphere that contribute to the suspenseful mood of the *crónicas*. In *Traffic* (2000), a Steven Soderbergh film whose plot revolves around the illicit drug trade, the atmosphere is created through colour-coded locations, Mexico being depicted in sepia yellow. Sepia yellow in the form of dust found in the deserts of Mexico comes off as a symbol of the suspenseful events that take place in those deserts. Something of this yellow is also present in the description of Eliazar, a human trafficker, and Altar, the place he lives.

The first encounter with Eliazar was on a cold winter afternoon, in the village of Altar, which is the last Mexican village in the Sonora Desert before arriving in the state of Arizona. While I was walking along a dusty street of this village, a place split in two by a highway, covered by a carpet of dust about five centimetres thick and with half-finished brick houses, I heard the hiss of this 45-year-old man. [...] Eliazar looks older than he actually is. His parched face is covered with the dust that seems to have eternally settled on the faces of those who live in Altar.¹⁵⁰

Even though nothing has happened yet, there is something about the atmosphere the author depicts that creates a mood of unease, restlessness, perhaps even a wish to warn the author to get away from the place as quickly as possible. Such descriptions of location are far from scarce in the *crónicas*. Both in *Teatro* and *Luto*, we learn about places that create fear in the town of Juárez, either because of unfinished houses or bridges that seem perfect for hanging people. And both authors, for some reason, draw special attention to unpaved roads. Almost nothing is left to the imagination in the atmospheric descriptions of *Carta*, where the author uses every possible literary resource to create anguish about La Laguna, a place where, according to the author, ‘the

¹⁵⁰ ‘El primer encuentro con Eliazar fue una tarde fría de invierno en el pueblo de Altar, la última población mexicana del desierto del Sonora, antes de llegar al estado de Arizona. Mientras caminaba por una polvorienta calle de ese pueblo, un sitio partido en dos por la carretera, con una alfombra de polvo de unos cinco centímetros de espesor y casas de ladrillo a medio terminar, escuché el siseo de aquel hombre de 45 años. [...] Eliazar se ve más viejo de lo que en realidad es. Su rostro reseco está cubierto por un polvo que parece haberse instalado para siempre en la cara de los que viven en Altar’ (Martínez 2012, p. 558).

only thing that runs free is death'.¹⁵¹ No doubt suspense creates mood and through mood, emotion.

Worry

Suspense may be a literary mood that is volitionally integrated into the *crónicas* for the sake of engagement. But with the next literary mood under discussion – worry – things are more complicated and in certain circumstances might even be considered an accidental expression by the author. Worry is an emotion seldom discussed in cultural studies, even less in the framework of nonfiction writing. One of the very few such treatises is Francis O’Gorman’s (2015) *Worrying: A Literary and Cultural History*. He defines worry as ‘a set of anxieties about an unknown future usually predicated on “what if...?” questions’ (ibid., p. xi). O’Gorman introduces the concept “the Zeitgeist of worry,” which he attributes to the twentieth-century Anglo-American world (ibid., p. 36):

Other writers in the early twentieth century, however, didn’t think only of the individual mind of the individual worrier. They saw that there was something larger than a single man or woman’s problem and something different from that individual’s relationship with God. These writers on worry looked to apply an antidote not to an individual but to the new twentieth century. Worry was not only in the moment. Worry belonged to a particular stage of human culture, here and now.

After reading carefully all the *crónicas* in my corpus, I cannot help but wonder whether something similar to what O’Gorman describes about early twentieth-century American writers could also be applicable to the Mexican literary journalists of the twenty-first century? In the *crónicas*, worry is mostly expressed through expressions of the protagonists, and in the setting of the current study, through actantial value positions other than those of the authors. The most outstanding case is *Pueblo*, which could easily be classified as a ‘*crónica* of worry’. Almost everyone worries here. It is as if there were a cascade of worrying that affects anyone caught beneath it. And a significantly large portion of the worry revolves around money. The *juntadores* (a segment of those who traffic in immigrants, the ones who ‘collect’ people together) worry that if there are not enough *pollos* (slang for ‘undocumented immigrants’), they will soon to be obliged to pay the police to round up would-be immigrants on the main square. The *polleros* (people who take the immigrants to the border in exchange for money) worry that if the immigrants are treated badly, soon there will be no one to take to the border. The *polleros* also worry about the threat from drug traffickers who likewise assemble at the border to send out their *burreros* (carriers of illicit substances) at the same time the *coyotes* (guides for the immigrants through the desert) are deployed,

¹⁵¹ ‘[...] la única que tiene paso libre es la muerte’ (Almazán 2013).

a situation which may end up in the killing of the immigrants. And drug and human traffickers both worry about the US border patrols, which make their lives miserable and deny them the profit they so long for. But the poor undocumented immigrants have much more to worry about; above all, their lives are at stake during this dangerous journey to a promised land. All these social actors seem to be living in a constant situation of ‘what if...’.

Yet the *cronistas*’ tone is often worried as well. They worry about the journalists who live and work in unbearable conditions under constant threat or for the victims of the ‘war on drugs’ who the government tends to refer to as ‘collateral damage’. In many *crónicas* the authors worry about the social values and the *status quo*. In *Teatro* ‘what happens now in Juárez is worrisome in itself.’¹⁵² But the authors are careful in their worry and in the expressions of it. Even though frequent, the worried literary mood is subtle and barely noticeable. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that worry creates negative emotions. O’Gorman writes that ‘worry’s hard to make interesting. It can be remorselessly uninteresting. Worry has had a long courtship with tedium. [...] Worry’s patterns are not obviously dramatic but, usually, tiresomely circular’ (p. 40). Perhaps because people worry for the same reasons as the authors do, it seems redundant to keep bringing up more reasons to worry. But perhaps there is also some sort of disengaging element involved in emphasizing worry; just as we somehow lose concentration the moment someone begins to tell us about their worries, the readers might also lose interest in a literary piece involving worrying. Despite these caveats, worry is apparent in the *crónicas* on the illicit drug trade, and perhaps readers, while digesting the authors’ accounts, would be worried if it were not.

Melodrama

The last of the literary moods under discussion, the melodramatic mood, serves as a quintessence of emotion-evoking in the *crónicas*. Along with the textual connotations, melodrama has many contextual and cultural associations. As many researchers have pointed out, melodrama’s first and most essential function is to create emotions. But as a discursive mode, melodrama in the Latin American context is much more than just a sensational plot with musical interludes, as it was in its early days (Sadlier 2009, p. 2) or a weepy soap opera such as those on present-day television (Benamou 2009; Sadlier 2009). As Matthew Bush puts it (2014, p. 11), melodrama is ‘a narrative structure that facilitates an understanding of the social’ in a most active way, as it is melodrama’s performative power to evoke understanding and meanings at the moment of its appearance either in literature, film, music, or other forms of cultural production. Bush (2014, p. 14) also sees melodrama ‘as a basic building block in the foundation of Latin American literature as it

¹⁵² ‘Lo que ocurre ahora en Juárez preocupa en sí mismo [...]’ (Mejía Madrid 2012, p. 273).

emerges concurrently to the inception of the Latin American nation states and, therefore, serves as the first narrative mode through which the tales of the new Latin American nations are told'. Rossana Reguillo (2002), specifically analysing the *crónica* and its borderline status, strives to see past melodrama to discover in the *crónica* a new form of narrative for testimonies of the past and present. She argues that melodrama survives today in 'complex and contradictory' (ibid., p. 52) forms (including the *crónica*), whose aim is to respond to the needs of the 'emerging social scene' (ibid.). However, she also claims that there is no recipe nor even a need to define clearly or settle the new narrative forms, which in themselves are similar to the irreducible and complex social realities these narrative forms attempt to grasp.

In the *crónicas* of the current study, melodrama manifests yet again through the tone, diction, settings, and themes of the narratives. In *Alcalde* the author testifies that the protagonist of his story (a controversial mayor) is like the crucible of Monterrey, and telling about him is like telling about the birthland of the author with all its peculiarities and contradictions. The author willingly succumbs to emotional expression in giving the reasons for choosing the theme of his story, and the way in which he clarifies his positions is sentimental. Nor is there any lack of sentiment in *Caja*, which starts with a cryptic description of a symbolic object in the hands of the author – the 'black box', which is about to reveal its secrets or they will fall into oblivion. The story's black box is in fact a tape recorder containing an interview with the story's main protagonist. The author also writes that oblivion will follow unless he saves the black box and brings it to 'this side of the shadows where light shines every day'.¹⁵³ The box is metaphorical, poetic and, above all, heroic as the author depicts himself as someone who could rescue an important piece of information for the sake of others.

Diction is also strong and powerful in *Carta* where the authorial voice states, after having visited a local hospital, that the whole city of Torreón needs its heart to be 'stapled together',¹⁵⁴ as if the heart of the city were falling to pieces and ceasing to function, and symbolically, as if sentiments were lacking in the city. In *Luto*, once again an author's metaphorical and sentimentally loaded statement relates to the industrial realities of the city of Juárez, where death comes continuously as if from a factory belt, leaving countless families without mothers, fathers, and spouses. The only hope for the people of 'zone zero' lies in the women from the centres of thanatology, even though they too are helpless in the face of death, which always comes sooner than expected. And then there is the *crónica* about Javier Sicilia, a poet with a story so sentimental that even if the *cronista* tried, he could not escape melodrama; here, a poet whose son is killed by drug traffickers finds strength in the midst of grief to rally along with thousands of people to protest injustice and demand

¹⁵³ 'Tengo en mis manos la caja negra. [...] A menos que lo rescate y lo salve en este lado de la línea de sombra, donde brilla la luz de todos los días' (González Rodríguez 2004, p. 83).

¹⁵⁴ 'engrapara el corazón' (Almazán 2013).

that impunity cease in the country he loves deeply. The story carries elements of revolution, a time the whole nation was asked to re-define its existence. Given the religious connotations, this is also a story about sin, salvation and, in a symbolic sense, resurrection.

These are just some of the numerous examples of melodramatic literary moods in the *crónicas*. They demonstrate that, at least when it comes to Mexican literary journalism, melodrama is a long way from dying out; instead, it is blossoming with pride that might seem odd to an observer from a cultural background in which nonfictional information is rarely delivered in the melodramatic mood.

Bush (2014, p. 18) reflects on melodrama and sees it as ‘a paradigmatic case study of postcolonial Latin American aesthetics’. He says that Latin American melodrama differs from other culturally embedded melodramas in ‘its refusal to neatly tie up the loose ends of its narratives’ (ibid.). Latin American melodrama thus serves as a reflection of a society in which people are flawed, and even though there is never an entirely happy ending, the people are hardly ever endlessly tragic either. Latin American melodrama finds a place in between, such as the *crónica*, to deliver information and emotion simultaneously.

We have now seen many ways in which authors choose an ironic, suspenseful, worried, or melodramatic literary mood. But it is not always a case of either one or the other. Sometimes the authors decide to use several moods simultaneously. And sometimes, all four moods are on display, as happens in *Pueblo*, for example, in the author’s statement about the kidnapping of a huge number of undocumented immigrants by a group of drug traffickers. Some of the kidnapped are later released. None of them testify about what happened, because they are in extremely vulnerable social positions. So the author states with a certain resignation that the liberated immigrants

faded away in the village, and with them their testimony [melodrama]. This kidnapping, the biggest that the villagers of Altar had ever heard of [suspense], was not reported or published in any of the national media [worry, irony]. [...] Perhaps, without anyone knowing it [suspense, irony], there was a massacre [suspense] a few metres from the US border [irony], and that ranch is now a cemetery [suspense].¹⁵⁵

Obviously, in such a statement the element creating the literary mood is subtle. Yet it does not take away the overall effect of emotion, but rather strengthens it.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Volvieron a perderse en el pueblo, y con ellos su testimonio. Ese secuestro, el más grande de que los habitantes de Altar han escuchado, no fue denunciado ni apareció publicado en ningún medio de comunicación nacional. [...] Quizá, sin que nadie se enterara, hubo una masacre a pocos metros de territorio estadounidense, y aquel rancho es ahora un cementerio’ (Martínez 2012, p. 567-568).

In the discussion of the literary mood in the *crónicas*, how do we classify the position of the writer? First of all, it is the writer who decides whether a certain mood is necessary. Second, the writer decides which mood to employ in specific situations (including positioning the values). For the *cronistas*, it is not enough 'just' to provide information. They borrow emotion from the literary to add it to the journalistic – all for the purpose of engaging a readership. It is not only about engaging for the purpose of aesthetic pleasure; there also seems to be a greater purpose involved. Jody Santos, in her book *Daring to feel: violence, the news media, and their emotions*, builds on the opinions of experts who see emotion as an important attribute in knowledge production. She states that it is equally important for the sources and the journalists to explore their emotions by detaching from the old journalistic model, which demands emotionless coverage; with a full emotional commitment, they help to overcome the legacy of negative societal phenomena, including violence (Santos 2009, p. 14). Perhaps here too lies the mission of the *cronistas*, who see their position as beyond reporting. They see themselves as writing 'lighthouses' that by 'flashing' the topics, the sources, and the value positions warn readers of harmful realities and their potential for replication if left unnoticed.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the authors' role in the *crónicas* has been conducted here using the metaphor of an optical prism. An optical prism may seem transparent, but the light that it refracts is not. In the same way, realities are 'distorted' as they pass through textual prisms. They are splintered. Thus, the *crónica* is a threshold of many subjective realities, values being part of these. But above all, the *crónica* 'refracts' and 'distorts' the subjective realities of the author. And even if the author as a person changes over time, the *crónica* creates a spectrum of a precise time, place, and cultural context. Bakthin (1987 [1937]), borrowing from Albert Einstein, designated this axis of variables as a 'chronotope' (something of a narrative's equivalent to the real-life time-space continuum). Thus, in contrast to light, which always consists of the same colours, the *crónica* only 'refracts' the 'palette' of the moment it is being written. The 'palette' of value positions speaks of authors' perceptions, points of view, their styles, and literary preferences. It speaks of the cultural idiosyncrasy the author represents. Even more, the above-mentioned professional limitations that could haunt the author before starting the writing, such as length, structure, or sources, become part of the value spectrum as we learn how the author deals with these parameters. Ultimately, while the author is outlining the story, the story is simultaneously outlining the author.

Through the prism of the *crónica*, the spectrum of an author's value positions can be divided into two segments: the author's values as an actant

(Narrator) and the author's value positions as a writer. As an actant/Narrator, the author in the current corpus is found on all actantial positions, including that of the Subject. There is one *crónica*, though, where no actantial position was found. In the two *crónicas* in which the Narrator was identified in the Principal Value Position, a strong tendency to express emotion was prominent in all aspects of the Objectives of the Subjects or the Narrators. Additionally, in the one *crónica* in which the Narrator is also the Subject, it is possible to discern utterances and accounts that could, in some frameworks, be interpreted as fictional. Narrators in Instrumental Value Positions are occasionally presented as having a high impact on the Subject's Objective, but in some cases they only appear episodically and have almost no impact on the course of action. The fact that Narrators appear with value positions at all might have something to do with the idiosyncrasies of the *crónicas*. These are texts written by people who are opinionated and whose task is to comment on the realities around them, and one way of doing that is to place themselves in value positions.

In addition to the authors' actantial values, authors also position values as writers, which help to reveal how the value positions are formed. How the *cronistas* treat their sources of information is somewhat journalistic. The results of the present study show that among the sources used by authors, many are anonymous and very few are female (factors that can be at least partly explained, although not entirely, by the subject matter – the illicit drug trade). The analysis of modalities employed for the unknown sources shows that much of the information the reader learns from the *crónicas* remains unverified. To be more precise, many of the sources are abstractly presented, and the information we receive from them is very often given in the form of allusions. The quotations from the sources serve mostly to make the general descriptions more vivid or to emphasize overarching ideas. Paraphrases, on the other hand, make it possible for an author to load the quotations with additional meanings or intertextuality. Among the ways writers position values, are literary devices, such as settings, tone, theme, and diction in the narratives. The combination of these can be called a narrative's mood. In the *crónicas*, the principal moods of the narratives are irony, suspense, worry, and melodrama, all of which, yet again, are 'dosed' with a high level of emotionality.

8 THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF THE CRÓNICA

*Ughh so much text. Not spending my time reading...
Put a video here or something (welcome to the 21st century)*

Anonymous Internet commentator about a *crónica*

So far, there has been extensive analysis and discussion about the kinds of value positions found in the *crónicas* and how these positions have been construed discursively in the narratives. These value positions are valuable in themselves. They help to frame the very genre in which they exist: the *crónica*. In other words, through the actantial value positions it is possible to identify a *crónica*.

However, the project of identifying the *crónica* through the discursive value positions is not the main task of this study; rather that project could be described as an interesting exercise whose purpose is to add yet another original definition of the *crónica* to a vast pool of existing ones. More precisely, one of the inquiries of this investigation is to determine the form and function of the *crónica* via the current textual corpus, based on the methodological considerations of this investigation. Under these restrictive terms, what follows here is a reflection on the *crónica*'s design and the elements of its formation, patterns, and purpose. Ultimately, these deliberations will be placed in dialogue with previous studies. This inquiry also corresponds to the methodology chapter (4) of this dissertation, where I explained that critical reasoning about the *crónica* should focus on its essence, root cause, and the society to which it belongs, as well as contradictions within the phenomenon and ultimately its ability to generate change (Bhavnani, Chua, & Collins 2014).

In the first section here, the form of the *crónica* will be defined through its ability to mediate values both auctorially and circumstantially. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that the function of the *crónica* to represent the marginalized, as many have claimed, is not the most accurate of its functions and does not do justice to all the evaluative possibilities of the genre. I propose instead that the *crónica* can be seen as a genre whose purpose is to evaluate contradictory and inconsistent realities. Furthermore, the *crónica*'s evaluations function in four ways: as a description, as an analysis, as an explanation, and as criticism.

THE FORM OF THE CRÓNICA

I began my discussion of conceptualizing the *crónica* (chapter 3) with a famous quotation from Juan Villoro, who called the *crónica* 'the platypus of

prose'. This metaphor alluded to the many-sided nature of the *crónica* – a type of text in which the literary and the journalistic (and occasionally other characteristics) go hand in hand. And indeed, when it comes to the form of the *crónica*, this study has demonstrated that the genre incorporates many of the features introduced by Hoyos (2013, pp. 28–30), such as one or several narrative climaxes, attention to significant and symbolic details, a close-up of the protagonists, a description of the space where events occur, and transmission of dialogue. Unlike Hoyos, I would not list the chronological order of events as one of the *crónica*'s main attributes, although chronology is not entirely missing. Some narratives follow events with chronological precision; others shift them slightly, while some create layers of events in which something from the 'past' occasionally enters the 'present'. Some simply present a continuum – abstract timing not clearly connected with a particular event.

In addition to the contextual amplification that the *crónicas* provide, I place special emphasis on the presence of the narrator as one of the main components of the *crónica*'s build-up. Compared to Bielsa's view (2006, p. 39), the *crónicas* indeed seem to put special emphasis on style, with the author having a central position. In the following, I would like to go beyond simply pointing out some of the formal elements of the *crónica* and concentrate on its characteristics from the angle that has been central to my enterprise – value positions.

The form of the *crónica* has never been too normatively determined, which allows its authors to explore some of the ideational territories that are out of reach of practitioners of other textual genres. In journalism, the *crónica* openly explores subjectivity and does not claim to be an objective account of events. Unlike many other journalistic expressions, the author's voice is not deleted nor is it reduced to a plain and dry description or voice-over. And in considering the *crónica*'s axiological opportunities in the literary sphere, the advantage here is afforded by the notion of nonfiction. The contemporary *crónicas*, at least according to the *cronistas* themselves, do not contain anything does not refer to real life.¹⁵⁶ Literary devices are used, but the stories are not claimed to be made up from imaginary settings just for that reason. Therefore, value positions represented in these texts can be considered not only as the authors' creations, but also as belonging to the story the author is telling. Both the author and the story (including all its components) are bearers of values, and this is what the actantial positions eloquently demonstrate. Yet this much has to be added: it is not possible to divide the actantial value positions between the auctorial and circumstantial; rather, they are a combination of both.

In fiction the author and the circumstances mediate values as well, but the author's input to the value compound of the text is also much stronger than in nonfiction (nonfiction is interpreted here as texts with a high level of

¹⁵⁶ See chapter 3 on the conceptualization of the *crónica*.

referentiality). Paradoxically, the position of a *cronista* is balanced, levelled, or reduced and imposed at the same time, because the *crónicas* are both literary and informative. The fact that the *crónicas* belong to the territory of journalism introduces circumstances/value mediators, while the *crónicas* as creative nonfiction literature make the *cronistas* much more determined to use their position as an author/value mediator.

THE AUTHOR AS A MEDIATOR OF VALUE POSITIONS

The author as a mediator of values takes a stand in several ways. First (and this is a partly humorous and rather playful assumption), authors themselves have value; they are also value bearers. The authors can therefore mediate the value they possess simply by adding their name to the text. The value of the author can be found in institutional recognition (criticism), audience acclaim (sales, Facebook or other “likes”, and other numeric measures) and societal impact (cultural references and citations). Second, the author promotes values. Some do it subtly and some openly. The level of transparency can also vary from one paragraph to another. And the values that the author promotes can also vary from the stylistic (for instance, emotion as a tool to engage the reader) to the societal and universal human values (emotion as a cognitive act of liberation or as an idiosyncratic aspect of the Mexican temperament). This is where, for instance, the comparison and differentiation between the actantial and writer’s value positions in chapter 7 has been beneficial. Third, the authors’ values are mediated through their discursive choices in the narration of an event. These choices could be taken as a construction of an author’s identity as shown in the compilation of articles *Choice in Language: Applications in Text Analysis* (O’Grady et al. 2013). Some of the choices authors make are 1) the storyline and events, 2) the settings, 3) formal characteristics, such as length, style, headings and more, 4) and the protagonists and their utterances. I will briefly elaborate on these four types of choices.

The storyline and events highlight situational values. The events also provide perspective on the concept of the everyday. The events that are chosen colour the values associated with them. They mark the everyday in the same way as milestones mark the distance from one location to another. The highlighted events are like chronological milestones, and they represent values. Hypothetically, for instance, it is one thing to focus on the graduation day of students in a poor neighbourhood and another thing to describe the violent robberies youngsters commit in the same place.

The settings of the texts are selected by the author and can mediate values. The settings possess atmosphere. They are constructed in a way to build up features, many of which are evaluative by their very nature. To give an example, from the evaluative perspective it is completely different to describe a city as a place ‘with a high level of criminal activity’ than to describe a place

that ‘inspires fear simply by mentioning its name’, as Almazan says in *Carta*.¹⁵⁷ In this story, the author clearly gives us a key by naming a negative value (fear) that we should associate with the city.

The length of paragraphs dedicated to particular topics, style, micro- and macro-structures, and other formal features of the text show what the author has valued and highlighted and also measures the depth of the story’s analysis. Values reside within the symbolism of language or in the details of descriptions.

The choice of protagonists and their utterances could seem to be quite limited, but it is actually very significant, as voices other than the author’s can provide evidentiality in the texts. This means that when we read an informative piece, even one in a literary style, we expect to learn about the situation as thoroughly as possible, and the author can help us by adding additional voices. What complicates things is that we almost never learn who is left out and what quotations are left unused. We learn only a fraction of the reality, but even this fraction shows us the evaluative inclinations of the author.

CIRCUMSTANCES AS MEDIATORS OF VALUE POSITIONS

In the previous section, we examined the possibility of mediating values through the author’s position. But given that the author of the *crónicas*, which are nonfictional texts, does not control every detail of the story, but rather attempts to provide ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,’ value positions are also mediated through the factual data the author includes in the narrations. Circumstances could be described by using primary sources or secondary sources. Primary sources are materials cited by the author (they also include events narrated by the author, such as the incident of the women running in *Teatro*) or people interviewed by the author (the mayor in *Alcalde*, the drug dealer in *Carta*, the prison guard in *Muerte*, and many more). Secondary sources are materials or voices quoted by the primary sources (such as the events from Javier Sicilia’s past that were narrated by his friends in *Tribu* or the data quoted by the Aguirre sisters in *Luto*).

Circumstances are something the authors cannot change if they want to stay true to the claim of not being fictitious. Therefore, the only choice the author has here is whether or not to include certain events; otherwise, all the circumstantial material has to be delivered accurately. In a given circumstance – what happened, when did it happen, how did it happen, what were the consequences – the entire range of discursive value positions are drawn from comments either by people in the street or from newspapers, magazines, books, celebrities, and so on. Yet it is important to keep in mind that, even if the circumstances mediate value notions, circumstances are always abstractions brought out through different primary and secondary sources. Circumstances have no will of their own, and they do not evaluate the

¹⁵⁷ ‘Inspira miedo el puro hecho de llamarlo’ (Almazán 2013).

environment around them. From the value-positional perspective, circumstances are just a composition of a great number of interpretations.

The form of the *crónica*, described here as a compound of auctorial and circumstantial evaluative positions, would be just a shell if it did not have a proper function. In the next section, I will concentrate on the *crónica*'s function, especially in light of what has been said by other scholars or by the *cronistas* themselves, and a new idea will be developed, which besides mirroring these earlier definitions, takes into account the results of this study.

THE FUNCTION OF THE CRÓNICA

The function of the *crónica* According to some *cronistas* and analysts, the *crónica*'s main function is to 'give voice' to the marginalized and under-represented sectors of society or even to 'become the voice' of those sectors (Bernabé 2006, p. 12; Bielsa 2006, p. 53; Falbo 2007a, p. 12). In the chapter on conceptual framing, I discussed the difference between giving a voice and being a voice, the latter being less selective in its sources and more focused on the ideological or social representativeness. Let us pose the question now: how many voices can be discerned through value positions and how well do the value positions represent different voices? The ultimate question here is whether the analysis of the value positions proves the claim that giving voice to the marginalized and under-represented is one of the main functions of the *crónicas*. My claim is that, based on the results of the current study, 'giving voice' or 'becoming the voice' in the sense of representing marginal social groups is overshadowed by another important function of the *crónicas* – to address evaluative contradictions, frictions, and inconsistencies by either describing, analysing, explaining, or even criticising them.

VOICES IN THE CRÓNICAS: REFLECTING THE VALUE POSITIONS

In order to discuss the representativeness of the *crónicas* and the social sectors that the *crónicas* cover in light of the value positions, it is beneficial to start from the Principal Value Positions. In the methodological framework of this dissertation, it is the Principal Value Positions that significantly 'dictate' the composition of the entire narrative, and all other value positions gravitate around those. In other words, by analysing the Principal Value Positions, we can see who the *cronistas* have selected to be the main voices of their stories. It is not a question of whether these positions are presented as positive or negative; it is simply about the space that has been granted to these voices. And again, it must be taken into account that the corpus of this study was selected according to theme of the illicit drug trade, so by definition these voices reflect the main theme.

In the Principal Value Positions, it is possible to find a mayor of a wealthy city who disregards the law, human traffickers, the whole sector of organized

crime, people (mostly women) who comfort the grieving in the city of Juárez, children who act out being hitmen, a corrupt police officer, a poet and peace activist, worshippers of *Santa Muerte*, and twice, the narrators themselves. The first thing to notice is that this list consists of much more than just marginalized voices. Along with the inferior voices, the elite are also represented; along with adults, there are also children; along with victims, there are also the victimizers; along with the righteous, there are also the corrupted. In that sense, the *crónicas* offer a broad spectrum of Mexican society, which is to be associated with the theme of the illicit drug trade, but not with that theme only. The ‘voice’ of the actants is not always heard directly. For instance, in *Alfombra*, it is the *cronista*’s voice that articulates the value positions of Mexican organized crime. Thus, strictly speaking, the value positions do not equal voices. Nor does the *cronista* of *Alfombra* ‘become the voice’ of organized crime when he tries to explain its positions. Nevertheless, we can conclude that the social spectrum of the actants in Principal Value Position (and their respective social actors as shown in chapter 6) is extensive.

What picture do the Instrumental Value Positions portray? It is impossible to count all the actants in the Instrumental Value Positions here, but the appendix, in which they are all listed, shows clearly that similar to the Principal Value Positions, there is ample representation of social groups from different backgrounds, geographical locations, genders, ages, professions, and more. Some of the groups are repeated (for instance, with the group I have categorized as ‘police’); some appear only once, but without doubt, the scope is broad.

Yet considering what has been discussed here about the author’s role in the *crónicas* and given that narrators can be found on all actantial value positions, I would claim that the ‘voice’ which is most often represented in the *crónicas* is that of the *cronistas*. This might sound like an accusation, but it is not. I think it is perfectly logical that in evaluative texts with a high level of personality in style, composition, or technical details, it is the author’s voice that sounds the loudest. This fact, however, does not concur completely with the widespread assumption that the *crónicas*’ purpose is to be a platform for unheard voices. Not that the *crónica* does not offer that platform, but rather this does not seem to be its main function. Based on the results of my study, the true function of the *crónicas* lies elsewhere. In the next section, I will present this alternative view.

THE PROPOSED FUNCTION OF THE CRÓNICA

My analysis of the Principal and Instrumental Value Positions has shown that there is one common factor that unites all the *crónicas*: a recurrent element of contradiction and inconsistency. In the Principal Value Position, we observed how actants and their respective Objectives were seemingly incompatible, but only for the purpose of revealing particular unknown or unrecognized normalities. The ‘normal’ in different realities could easily be a summary of

the entire essence of the Principal Value Positions. With regard to the Instrumental Value Positions, it was possible to conclude that inconsistency was found in similar actants when they appear in oppositional actantial positions. What also contributes to the idea of contradictions and inconsistency is that actants are often unaware of their value position in the narrative; actants can even be inanimate. The function of the *crónica* to demonstrate the normality of the unexpected resonates with Darío Jaramillo Agudelo's idea (2012): he claims that the *crónica* covers extreme situations or unexpected social situations. He sees one of its functions as the need to make explicit the 'unexpected form of being distinct' (Jaramillo Agudelo 2012, p. 40) and make it possible to accept difference naturally.

In order to reveal the contradictions and inconsistencies, the *crónicas* in this dissertation's corpus are mainly functionalized by **description, analysis, explanation, and criticism**. These functions appear randomly, although this much can be said: all the *crónicas* describe contradictory value positions, but only some analyse them, and even fewer take on the task of explaining them, while very few dare to criticise. And yet neither explanation nor analysis is a prerequisite for a critical approach, as we will soon see. Why I specifically state that it is the *crónicas*' way of functioning, and not the *cronistas*, is because the descriptions, explanations, analyses, or criticisms are delivered through different kinds of narrative actants. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, there is also a circumstantial level to the construction of value positions in addition to the auctorial level.

Roberto Herrscher (2016, pp. 57-90), building on general instructions for young journalists, reminds us of the important 'wh'-questions. He concentrates on 'what', 'who', 'where,' and 'when'. In addition, he sees 'how' and 'why' questions as being relevant for *crónica*. In the context of my proposal for the function of *crónica*, description is meant to answer the 'what' question. Analysis goes a bit further and along with 'what' incorporates information on 'in what way' or 'in comparison to what'. Explanation attempts to discuss reasons and answer 'why is it so?' But to add to the most used 'wh'-questions, I suggest that the *crónicas*' critical function answers the wider question of 'what is wrong with...?' In the following, I will expand on the idea of these four functions and provide examples to illustrate my points.

Description

All the *crónicas* describe. They describe situations, and they construct descriptive narratives in which the value positions have a central role to play. The fact that the *crónica* is descriptive by nature is also confirmed by Bielsa (2006, p. 39), who sees this quality as one of the *crónica*'s main features. Yet what is described is very carefully selected and composed. Far from being mere reportage, a *crónica* is a selection of circumstances, described in a way that would reveal a contradiction or inconsistency. In this study, it is the value positions that make this strategy clearly observable.

One of the *crónicas* that is essentially descriptive (and not explanatory, analytical, or critical) is *Muerte*. All value positions are presented in a detailed way, yet we get to know very little about other aspects of these positions. We learn that the worshippers of *Santa Muerte* borrow from Catholicism and are criticised by its practitioners (therefore, the Catholic Church is identified as Both Helper and Opponent). But we do not learn in what way, why, or how the people should or should not support or oppose the cult of *Santa Muerte*. We also learn from this *crónica* that ‘many people’ are against *Santa Muerte* (consequently, ‘many people’ are recognized as Opponents), but again no reason for this opposition is given. We can only deduce the reason from other descriptions, one of these being a laconic reference to the fact that *Santa Muerte* is mostly worshipped in the violent areas of the city. In order to grasp the significance, importance, and extension of this practice, it would be necessary to examine materials other than this *crónica*. Description is a function essential to all forms of informing. Yet what makes description particular in the *crónicas* is its potential both to describe and to position values.

Analysis

The analytical function of the *crónicas* enables different pieces of information to be compared, thus revealing inconsistencies and contradictions. Actants are also in comparative positions which create epistemic fissures: they make us contemplate realities from different perspectives. The *crónica* becomes a platform for demonstrating the perspectives of different social actors (including the author), but in a way that makes us realize the inconsistencies or relations of these perspectives vis-à-vis each other. It is not only the comparisons, however, that make certain *crónicas* analytical in function. It is also the fact that information is delivered with a certain fundamental idea, which frames the circumstances. To elucidate, compare functionalist ethnography, where data are presented with a hypothesis or a framing theory instead of being simply described (Fortes 1970 [1953], p. 130).

As an example of such a ‘widening of the horizon’ is *Alfombra*. The first analytical moment in this piece takes place in connection with the Subject’s Objective. The fact that the purpose of Mexican organized crime has been construed to reveal a nefarious scheme is nothing that would surprise in itself, but it is good starting point for a whole new perspective. We learn that organized crime wants to be everywhere and involved in every level of society. With such a broad starting point, the text could go in any direction. What follows is a careful series of annexes to the original idea until slowly the composition grows into a vast network of accomplices (Helpers) to accomplish this purpose. Among these accomplices are not only people, institutions, and human entities, but also inanimate actants such as violence and silence.

We saw in chapter 7 on the author that the ironic mood of *Alfombra* makes it difficult to determine the exact position of the author, and the essay-like

structure makes all the actants auctorial creations. Here, everything seems to serve the purpose of analysing the complex problems around the illicit drug trade by means of evaluative standpoints, yet without providing either explanations or criticism. This does not mean that the combination of irony and essay constitutes analysis; it is just a way in this case to make the *crónica* function analytically. *Tribu*, another of the analytical texts, carefully compares past and present. The element of careful deconstruction and reconstruction of information makes both stories essentially analytical.

Explanation

Explanation along with criticism is a much more rare function of the *crónicas* compared to description and analysis. The fact that explanation appears provides a basis for the assumption that not only are the *crónicas* subjective, but also they can be didactic. But far from being academic or instructional pieces, they tend to reflect the questions that all of us have about the problems of everyday realities and in a simple and down-to-earth manner. Angulo (2013, p. 9) also describes this as the *crónica's* reflexive potential.

A good example of such an approach is *Teatro*. The Subject here is the author, whose intention is to find an answer to a certain question. Not that this in itself makes the piece explanatory; after all, a quest for answers does not necessarily mean finding them – at least not at first. But on the way, the author indeed manages to explain many realities. For instance, we learn that the idea of Juárez as being especially dangerous at night is utterly erroneous, because most murders happen during the day. We are also shown how absurd it is to blame youngsters, when they are in fact the victims in this situation. Paradoxically, the *crónica's* main question is left unanswered, even if bitter and ironic explanations are offered.

The explanatory function of the *crónica* does not seem to answer the questions we ask before reading the piece, but rather directs us to the core of the topic. And often enough, the core is introduced by an actant. This is the case, for instance, with the school principal in *Sicarios*, who makes the reader contemplate the fact that games should help children distinguish between good and bad rather than making this distinction even harder, as happens when the children play at being hitmen. The explanatory function of the *crónica* is therefore not necessarily to answer all possible questions, but rather to see the right reasons for the real problems.

Criticism

The critical function of the *crónicas* can truly be a two-edged sword: it can fill the reader with criticism, or it can make the reader critical, only not about the things being criticised, but about the criticism itself. Either way, the story initiates a reaction.

Criticism in the *crónicas* can be softened by an analysis or explanation, as in *Luto*. The thanatologists in this piece, before criticising the institution of the president, explain that, based on their own observations, the official discourses do not correspond to reality. They criticise because they want to improve public information. Along with the thanatologists, we find the narrator taking the same critical position, and thus the narrator becomes a Helper in the Subject's cause. To some readers, this might seem like a violation of the journalistic jurisdiction of the *cronista* to remain distant and not take a personal stand (Angulo 2013, p. 14; Carrión 2012, p. 18), but it might also elicit compassion and empathy for the Subject's cause, all due to the earlier introduction of the reasons for the criticism.

A somewhat different case is *Carta*, where the author, while on the side of the Subject's position in the narrative, is also critical. What we see here is a very particular function of criticism, as it mostly serves the cause of emotionality. The author criticises different developments in the region of La Laguna in order to evoke the emotions of fear, disgust, and anguish in the readers. For instance, he claims that he only heard one of the undertakers talking about dignity, and none of those he addressed disguised their need to 'make their living from the death of others.'¹⁵⁸ The author rather explicitly accuses the undertakers in his narrative for not having dignity, the exact meaning of which is left unexplained. Yet in the framework of the value positions, these 'undignified' undertakers serve perfectly the Subject's Objective to create emotion, with the Subject of the piece this time being the critical author himself.¹⁵⁹

Obviously, with the illicit drug trade as the theme it is understandable that incomprehensible and contradictory realities bring out critical stances. But as we have seen, the actantial value positions demonstrate many functional ways of using criticism.

CONCLUSIONS

Although suggestions by different researchers for the *crónica's* form (the narrator's presence, style, or simply the concentration on its liminal character of being both journalistic and literary) and its function (a genre whose aim is to give voice or become the voice of the marginalized) are generally applicable, they fall short of perceiving the *crónica's* potential to do much more, especially from the perspective of mirroring the discursive value positions.

¹⁵⁸ '[...] vivir de la muerte ajena [...]' (Almazán 2013).

¹⁵⁹ Treating violent realities with emotion and functional criticism is not an unusual strategy in the narrative. There is even an account of Torreón, one of the cities of La Laguna (the same place *Carta* is about), which does just this. See Carlos Velázquez 2013, *El karma de vivir al norte* (Sexto Piso, Mexico City).

When it comes to the essence and root causes of the *crónica*, then based on the meticulous inquiry into actantial value positions in this study, I have concluded that the *crónica* is **a textual genre of literary journalism whose aim is either to describe, analyse, explain, or criticise the inconsistencies and contradictions of everyday reality in the form of auctorial and circumstantial narrative-discursive evaluations.** Such a definition comes with limitations. First of all, it is rather expansive, and other genres might also fit this description. Then again, it is important to recall that the *crónicas* chosen from anthologies and from award-winning texts to make up the corpus were very different. This is another thing that distinguishes the **contradiction within the genre**, which is that the *crónica* tries to fulfil many tasks at the same time and not succumb to pre-set rules. It is a form of writing in which changes in society are not only depicted, but also manifested in the narrative structure.

Above all, this exercise in identifying a general and overarching form and function of the *crónica* proves that overall, it is not a fruitful activity to define the *crónica*; there are just too many definitions already and too many ways to approach the topic. But perhaps this attempt at least serves to show that the evaluative character of the *crónicas* is precisely marked and emphasized.

9 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The overall aim of this study has been to investigate the evaluative potential of the Latin American *crónica*. In order to achieve the main goal, the objective has been to analyse the positioning of values in the *crónicas*, values being defined here in broad terms as whatever is considered good, bad, important, or not important. The textual corpus of the research was chosen to reflect this aim. The geographical focus was on Mexico because the thriving Mexican journalistic and literary scene provides plentiful material for analysis. The exact pieces were chosen according to their ability to mirror the realities around the illicit drug trade, which has been one of the most controversial and topical societal issues in Mexico for decades.

This research has been driven by three important questions. First, what are the value positions in the *crónicas*? Second, how are these value positions formed? And third, based on the study results, what are the forms and functions of the *crónica*? The answer to the last question is dependent on the first two and is also based on the limited possibilities this study allows, which is within the framework of discursive value positions in the narrative. In disparate places and not very systematically, the study has also answered the question of why these value positions emerge, but only in cases where the context or the study results allow such reasoning.

In order to answer the question of what value positions are found in this dissertation's textual corpus, an adapted coding model was created – a Greimas-inspired axiological model for narrative discourse analysis. This model is based on the actantial model and the semiotic square by Algirdas Greimas. The model divides the discursive accounts into six main categories of value positions: the Subject, that is, the main actant in the narrative; the Objective, that is, the Subject's value goal; the Helpers, or the actants that join, assist, or aid the Subject in achieving its Objective; the Opponents, meaning the actants that oppose or act against the Objective of the Subject; Both Helpers and Opponents (HO) or the actants whose position is both to assist and oppose; and Neither Helpers nor Opponents (NHO), the actants whose value position is completely neutral in reference to the Subject's positions. The combination of the Subject and its Objective is called the Principal Value Position. Other value positions are called the Instrumental Value Positions.

In general, it can be said the value positions in the contemporary *crónicas* dealing with Mexico's illicit drug trade have these characteristics: **variety, inconsistency, and contradiction**. It is possible to find all kinds of social actors in all kinds of positions. In the value positions across the corpus, it is

possible to find entities from several societal groups, including children, adults, the marginalized, and the elite. There is also wide coverage of sectors that the actants represent (culture, politics, business, medicine, police, religion, to name a few). On the Subject's position, there are not only the heroic actants, but also the actants whose Objective might cause harm to others. Gender-wise, the actants are more likely to be male, but that can be explained by the thematic focus of the whole corpus – the illicit drug trade. The least voluminous actantial category turned out to be the NHO, because there was only one *crónica* in which this category was prominent, and in two *crónicas* there were no actants at all in the NHO group. These were also the only two cases in which the actantial category was completely empty.

The analysis of the Principal Value Positions has shown that, with one exception, there is a certain irregularity or contradiction embodied in the Subject's value goal. In the cases where the Subject is not the author, the contradiction is largely manifested in one of three ways – through paradox, antagonism, or an oxymoron. Paradox emerges in Objectives that demonstrate a contradictory nature of truth; in other words, the Principal Value Position consists of several acceptable truths that mutually exclude one another. Contradictory antagonism in the Principal Value Position reveals itself in two ways: by merging the value positions between legitimate and illegitimate social agents, and by antagonism that should not exist between a government and its citizens. The oxymoron appeared mainly in one *crónica*, although it was sometimes mentioned in others, and it involves contradictions around the concept of death.

Contradiction in the Principal Value Position does not simply remain a contradiction. I suggest that this contradiction is purposely used to create understanding of different kinds of normalities in Mexican society. The contradiction also serves to make it clear that value positions are never meant to concur; there can in fact be several kinds of normalities around values. This is especially apparent in such complex societal issues as the illicit drug trade.

In the two *crónicas* in which the author is also the Subject, the contradiction in the Principal Value Position lies in the Subject's (or the narrator's) inability to relate fully to their Objective, or, to put this more accurately, it is partly due to a difficult writer-actant interplay. In other words, it becomes difficult for the author to separate the actantial from the auctorial. This happens when 'anomalies' occur about which the narrators start to feel a strong disgust or when they act and speak in contradictory ways, or when their discursive accounts, however captivating, do not furnish answers to the questions posed.

The analysis of the Instrumental Value Positions has shown that the Instrumental Value Positions, even if the narrative's model is closely tied to the Principal Value Positions, have a capacity to disclose the social entities to which the actants refer. I decided to call them actors partly because 'social actor' is already a familiar term in social theory. Yet what differs in my

approach to actor is that it always appears in the narrative, and then it transcends its real-life reference.

With regard to the volition of the Instrumental Value Positions, it is possible to conclude that some value positions are volitional, but some are not, a circumstance that can be compared to the possibility of these actors' unawareness of their respective actantial value positions. Some actants are inanimate and are not seen as actors, but rather as means (or instruments) with which the Subjects can achieve their goals of value. Yet it is remarkable that the value positions of the inanimate actants (such as abilities, feelings, principles, activities, objects, or features) even exist, and this aspect further confirms the conclusion about the extensive variety of the value positions. The analysis of the shifting of actantial value positions shows that the value positions of actants do not entirely correlate with the actors' values, and an inconsistency is ascribed to the value positions of similar actants. This was confirmed with a comparison to Schwartz's model of universal values and the axiological narrative discourse analysis when the value positions of police-related actants were placed in these two models. Even if the universal values and actantial value positions did not correspond to each other nor were they supposed to, both confirmed that police-related actantial goals, behaviours, and relatedness to other actants were not consistent. This could indicate that there is no 'logic' in value positions; the positions appear randomly. Knowing the value position of one specific actant (or its respective actor) is no reason to believe that similar actants (or actors) share the same value positions.

As for the authors, there was only one *crónica* in which the author did not have an actantial value position as a Narrator. In all other *crónicas*, the author value positions appeared in all possible actantial categories. This demonstrates yet again the great variety in the *crónicas*. It also shows that an author can appear in the somewhat expected neutral NHO actantial position, while also making an evaluative stand within the narrative, positioning themselves as Subjects, and even taking a stand regarding the Subjects. Such positioning takes place in *crónicas* in which the author is the 'first-person' narrator, as well as in those in which the author is a distant observer or reporter. With regard to the way the author's actantial values are presented, the most important conclusion here is that this presentation is usually accompanied by a great deal of emotion. Especially apparent are the emotions of fear, disgust, or denial, but also emotions of compassion and empathy are found.

The question of how the values are positioned in the *crónicas* goes hand in hand with what I have called the 'writer's value positions through the prism of the *crónica*.' In selecting the contents of the narrative, the author is managing and manipulating the value positioning. Out of many possible aspects to analyse here, I have chosen two in order to demonstrate the authors' choices, namely the sources of information and the selection of the narrative's literary mood.

The results show that among the sources used by the *cronistas* many are anonymous. This choice, as well as the lack of female voices, can be explained by the thematic focus, the illicit drug trade, since for the sake of safety, many people prefer to remain anonymous whenever they are providing information. Also there are not many females in the field of the illicit drug trade, nor are there many females among the *cronistas* (in this corpus, only two).

The quotations in the *crónicas* seem to appear mainly for two reasons: to verify information and to make the discourses sound authentic (which ultimately adds to the pleasure of reading them). The paraphrases are used to add an element of judgement to the quotations or to emphasize certain important points. Some paraphrases are so vague that it is hard to understand where they come from or what exactly is meant by them, but almost always such vagueness comes with a certain literary appeal. As for the truth-value modalities of the claims, then on the axes of abstract vs concrete and assertion vs allusion, it can be said that the ***crónicas* use the abstract and allusive modalities extensively.**

I have also examined the literary mood of the *crónicas*. By literary mood I mean a certain kind of atmosphere that is created for the narrative. With respect to value positioning, the literary mood frames the value positions and helps to correlate these with the narrative's aims, which only the author knows. Literary mood also creates emotion, something that can surely be said to be one of the main purposes of the *crónicas*. I identified four principal kinds of literary moods in the *crónicas*: **irony, suspense, worry, and melodrama.** All four are also culturally embedded and reflect Mexican writing and cultural production in general.

I have also assumed the task of defining the *crónica's* form and function. I place such deliberation in dialogue with other analysts because the attempt to define the *crónica* has been seen as complicated, and yet, given the need to separate them from other genres and forms of writing, the *crónicas* have frequently been defined. My definition of the form and function of the *crónica* are based strictly on the textual corpus of the present research (which consists of only ten *crónicas*); it is also based on the results of the questions about the kinds of value positions found in the *crónicas* and how these positions are developed and construed.

Based on the study results, I suggest that analysts are right to claim that the form of the *crónica* is author-centred, stylized, or concentrated on details. Yet I also believe that these general characteristics do not reflect the evaluative potential of the *crónica*. In form, the *crónica* can readily be described as the mediator of the **author's value positions**, and also as mediators of other kinds of value positions not connected with the author (**circumstantial value positions**). I also claim that researchers who have viewed one of the main purposes of the *crónicas* as being the voice of the marginalized or to give voice to the marginalized grasp only some of the genre's potential functions. Rather I see the *crónica's* function in four modes: as a **description, an analysis, an explanation, or a criticism of the value positions.** In

other words, all the *crónicas* describe events, but they also show the value positions that originate in those events. Some *crónicas* take on the task of justifying how such value positions arise (they analyse), and some give the reasons for the positions' origins (they explain), while some have the courage to judge or criticise the value positions.

The main contribution of this study has been to demonstrate the considerable evaluative potential of the *crónicas* and how this potential has been put into discursive practice. The ability of the *crónica* to deal with understanding the good, the bad, the important, and the not important seems almost infinite. By having a variety of value positions and an in-depth approach with which to deal with them, we can show how the *crónica* as a genre is open to unorthodox ways of informing readers about reality. Yet we also see that the genre is in the vulnerable position of not being able fully to corroborate the evaluative claims. Still, this vulnerability can be one of the biggest strengths of the *crónica* in depicting assessments of reality in the way its authors reveal it to us – full of emotions, contradictions, inconsistencies, and above all, without any way of verifying the true, the good, or the bad.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This research has been done with the best of intentions to answer comprehensively the pre-set questions and solve the research-related problems. Yet it has not been able to cover all possible angles in investigating the *crónica* or the value positions in it. In the future, it would be important to go more deeply into the modalities and extensions of the value positions. In the current study, I had no opportunity to investigate the certainty of the value positions or their influence and effect on the principal events or actions. Nor could I focus on measuring these positions in the overall narrative, as, after all, many value positions that I identified had almost no major influence on the narrative development. It would be very interesting to see how such an investigation could, besides ascertaining the existence or main structure of the value positions, reveal their patterns of operation.

Although the *crónica* as a little studied topic needs all the attention it can get, I would especially appreciate a study of its reception. Given that readers around the world are changing due to advances in technology, a study of the *crónica*'s reception could indicate how the genre is adapting to the changes and who could be or, for that matter, who currently is the main audience for the *crónica*. A study of the *crónicas*' reception would also imply investigating how readers relate to them, how they react to them, and how they reflect the information obtained from them. Additionally, and in connection with the study of values, it would be interesting to know how readers reflect on the dimensions of values in the *crónicas*.

Considering that much of the research on literary journalism is still focused on the Americas, especially the North-American production,¹⁶⁰ I would also encourage scholars to study nonfiction from regions other than the Americas in order to contribute more to the analysis and research of narrative forms of journalism or nonfiction in general. This way the studies of nonfiction would not be mainly concentrated on a genre-based inquiry, but also would contribute to understanding the different cultural backgrounds of nonfictional writing.

¹⁶⁰ The best overview can be obtained from the webpage of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies and its peer-reviewed journal *Literary Journalism Studies*; see <http://ialjs.org>. As examples of research on European literary journalism, see for instance Bak & Reynolds 2011 and Eberwein 2014.

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APPENDIX

The coding results of the *crónicas* that constitute the corpus of analysis

Abbreviations:

H- Helper

OP- Opponent

HO- both Helper and Opponent

NHO – neither Helper nor Opponent

‘Un alcalde que no es normal’ by Diego Osorno

	Actant
Subject	Alcalde Mauricio Fernández Garza
Objective	Fight crime, especially extortion and kidnapping in the municipality of San Pedro Garza García
	‘Arreglar el país y cambiar las cosas’ (‘to arrange the country and change things’)
H	Bodyguards
	‘Asesor israelí’ (‘Israeli consultant’)
	Hiram de León, a lawyer
	Fernando Canales Stelzer, government secretary
	‘los empresarios más importantes de San Pedro Garza García’ (‘the most important entrepreneurs of San Pedro Garza García’)
	Jorge Tello Peón, ex-director of Cisen
	Silence
	‘Poder’ (‘Power’)
	<u>Supporters</u>
	A lady
	‘un dirigente de empresarios locales’ (‘a leader of local entrepreneurs’)
	Gilberto Marcos, ex-television host and president of one of the main civic groups in town
	Jorge Treviño (PRI party), the representative of Nuevo León and ex- governor of PRI
	Natividad González Parás, ex-governor of PRI

	Rogelio Cerda, a previous secretary of state and currently (at the time of the events in the <i>crónica</i>), member of the Federal Parliament
	‘el coro de voces’ (‘a choir of voices’) // support received in blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and emails
	An elderly lady
	The family of the mayor
	A man from the Hunters' Club
OP	Héctor <i>El Negro</i> Saldaña
	‘Los otros criminales’ (‘the other criminals’)
	‘Elefantes’ (‘Elephants’)
	Felipe Calderón
	‘los analistas nacionales’ (‘the national analysts’)
HO	Law
	Arturo Beltrán Leyva
	Tatiana Clouthier
	‘Escuadrones de la muerte’ (‘Death squads’)
	General Cuauhtémoc Antúnez
NHO	‘los que iban en la corriente’ (‘those who go with the flow’)
	Head of the Bank of Mexico, Guillermo Ortiz, to date a friend of the Subject
	Narrator

‘Carta desde la Laguna’ by Alejandro Almazán

	Actant
Subject	Narrator
Objective	The general aim would seem to be to relate to the region of La Laguna, to understand the situation there, and explain it to readers. But the real and palpable Objective appears to be to create an atmosphere of fear and disgust around La Laguna.
H	The guide
	Undertakers
	Undertakers >Hospital of the university
	Xoili García, manager of the Del Pueblo funeral parlor

	The colleague who brought the Subject to Gómez
	An anonymous councillor
	A colleague of the author, other reporters, Siglo de Torreón, reporters from Torreón, journalists in general, an editor from the local newspaper, colleagues from La Laguna
	Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos ('United Forces for Our Missing') > Ángeles, María Elena, Oscar, Blanca, Amelia
	El Rubio, a former municipal policeman in La Laguna
	The writers Carlos Velázquez and Daniel Herrera
	Fernando Vallejo, a writer (known only for his quotations)
OP	Mayor Rocío Rebello
HO	Cartels (of Sinaloa, los Zetas, Cabrera)
	'Drug Dealer'
NHO	(nothing here)

'Un pueblo en el camino a la frontera' by Oscar Martínez

	Actant
Subject	The citizens of Altar who are involved one way or another with human trafficking. The main groups are <i>juntadores</i> , <i>polleros</i> , <i>conductores</i> . The main characters are Eliazar and Paulino.
Objective	To profit from the undocumented. Or as said in the text, the undocumented are the 'raw material' (<i>materia prima</i>).
H	The parish priest Prisciliano Peraza (if we take into consideration that there were citizens of Altar among the kidnapped and that the <i>pollos</i> returned to the <i>polleros</i>)
	Paulino (who is also part of the Subject but stands out solely because of his favours to the community)
	The mayor, the town council
OP	Border patrol
	The <i>narcos</i> , organized crime, 'six narcos' (indirectly also El Chapo Guzmán)
	(Department of Internal Security) <i>Departamento de Seguridad Interna</i> (opponent both to the <i>polleros</i> and <i>narcos</i>)

	The Boeing company
HO	The police (because they only help if paid; otherwise, they kick the <i>juntadores</i> out of the squares)
	Silence
	The US government
NHO	Church ('El albergue que la iglesia ha habilitado para los migrantes')
	A drug dealer ('un señor narco')
	A female citizen of Altar who is a cocaine dealer
	A drug dealer who drives a white Toyota
	Narrator
	The <i>burreros</i>

'La Alfombra Roja del terror narco' by Juan Villoro

	Actant
Subject	Organized crime (<i>narcos</i> , including the Queen of the Pacific or <i>La Reina del Pacífico</i>)
Objective	To establish their presence everywhere in Mexico (<i>Installarse el narcoterrorismo' en Mexico –y con tremenda puesta en escena, al punto de borrar la inútil barrera que pretendía separar 'ellos' de las 'nuestras'</i>)
H	PRI
	Violence
	Squandering armaments ('desperdicio de armamento')
	Squandering f camouflage/disguise ('desperdicio del disfraz') (both explicitly and metaphorically in talking about the police)
	clergy in Jalisco
	PAN
	Felipe Calderón
	Latin America's biggest labour union for education workers ('el sindicato de trabajadores de la educación, el más grande América latina')
	The monopolies ('los monopolios')
	<i>Narcocorridos</i>
	Technology
	'easy money' ('dinero rápido')
	Secrecy
	Judicial power /the police

	Mario Villanueva, governor of Quintana Roo
OP	The installation artist Rosa María Robles
HO	The media
	Narrator as a revealer, but also as a collaborator
NHO	'Our' law ('la otra ley, la "nuestra"')
	'Past and future, the values of tradition and planned hopes' ('El pasado y el futuro, los valores de la tradición y las esperanzas planeadas')

'Guerra contra el luto' by Marcela Turati

	Actant
Subject	A network of people who help the mourners in the city of Juárez ('una red de redes donde confluyen psicoterapeutas de la UACJ, tanatólogas de la universidad y de las iglesias, rehabilitadoras corporales y terapeutas alternativas.')
	Subcategories of the Subject
	Thanatologists
	A Catholic parish church
	The psychologist Marisol Aguirre and her sister Silvia, the founders of the thanatologists' initiative
	The sociologist Teresa Almada
	A medical centre ('el Centro de Salud y Bienestar Comunitario Sabic) and Dora Dávila, director of the neighbourhood clinic
Objective	To overcome the grief of those who have lost loved ones through violence
	To avoid the negative side affects and results of grief that could cause violence and therefore even more grief in the end > in that sense to combat the vicious circle of grief
	To obtain acknowledgement and support for their work
H	Different therapies to fight fear ('terapias de contención, reiki o remedios florales para no enfermar por el miedo')
	Narrator (for the subcategory of getting an acknowledgement)
OP	Felipe Calderón and his cabinet

	A secretary of the state, Fernando Gómez Mont
	The writer Héctor Aguilar Camín
	Fear of violence
HO	The people of Juárez
NHO	Unit of Attention to Victims ('la Unidad de Atención a Víctimas de la PGR')
	Plan de Reconstrucción por Juárez ('Reconstruction Plan for Juárez')
	A governmental strategic plan called We Are All Juárez ('Todos Somos Juárez')

'El teatro del crimen' by Fabrizio Mejia Madrid

	Actant
Subject	Narrator
Objective	To analyse the data and observe the city in order to understand the reason for the many homicides in Juárez
H	The young people ('Los jóvenes')
	Rumour
	César Martínez
	<u>From observation:</u>
	A housewife
	People on a bus
	The people of Juárez ('los juarenses')
	'The ephemeral character of Juárez' ('carácter de territorio pasajero de Juárez')
	A woman in a miniskirt
	Highway police
	A van with an Arizona license plate
	A female walker
	<u>From the data</u>
	An informer with the federal police
	A lady who came to identify the informer
	257 official deaths ('257 muertas oficiales')

	Rumour, local perception ('persepcion local')
	(the story of) Henry Lee Lucas and his 'friend-lover' ('amigo-amante'), Otis Toole
OP	Panic, fear
HO	Denial
NHO	José Luis Rueda, owner of a pharmacy
	Rumour, local perception ('persepcion local')

'Juegan a ser sicarios' by Daniela Rea

	Actants
Subject	Children who act out being hitmen
Objective	To become hitmen
H	Objects that make playing out more realistic such as toy guns, big trucks, brand-name clothes
	A boutique
	'Noble blood' or 'sangre azul' (in the sense of having what it takes to become a hitman)
	Children's parents
O	Beatriz Hernández, the director of a school (Colegio Valladolid)
	The municipal police of Apatzingán
HO	A neighbour
	A homosexual
NHO	(nothing here)

'La caja negra del comandante Minjárez' by Sergio Rodriguez Gonzalez

	Actant
Subject	Officer Minjárez
Objective	Preventing disclosure of the truth about Minjárez, who organizes kidnappings in Juárez ('el capo de los "narcolewantones" y la industria del secuestro en Chihuahua'); metaphorically, to prevent his 'black box of secrets' from being opened.
H	the men who attacked the author

	Technology
	A telephone company in Mexico
	Police network ('cohesión de su grupo policiaco, una auténtica fraternidad')
	Local judges ('los jueces locales')
	Special training
	Institutional propaganda bulletins ('los boletines de propaganda institucional')
	The authorities of Chihuahua ('las autoridades de Chihuahua')
	A senator of that time
	The attorney from Chihuahua, Arturo González Rascón
	The general attorney of the republic (La Procuraduría General de la República)
	las federal police
OP	Narrator
	Mario Silva Calderón, el Animal, ex-policeman, but also collaborator with the Juárez Cartel
	The journalist Isabel Arvide
	Experts from the UN
	Abdel Latif Sharif Sharif
	The National Committee of Human Rights (la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos)
	Three federal agents ('un trío de agentes federales')
HO	Francisco Molina Ruiz
	Media
NHO	Valentín Fuentes Téllez

'La voz de la tribu' by Emiliano Parra

	Actant
Subject	Javier Sicilia
Objective	To convert the violent death of his son into a call to unite people against insecurity and the wrongdoings of 'war on drugs' and to give dignity back to its victims. Metaphorically, to turn into the voice of the people (or a medium). To go against President Felipe Calderón, the state, politicians, and above all, the 'official narrative' that all victims of the 'war on drugs' were <i>narcos</i> .

	<u>Helpers from the past</u>
H	Iván Illich
	Tomás Calvillo, a Mexican ambassador
	A friend, Fabio Morábito
	Francisco Rebolledo
	Carlos Castillo Peraza, Catholic thinker, ex-president of the PAN party and mentor to Felipe Calderón
	The father, Óscar Sicilia
	The mother
	San Juan de la Cruz/ Saint-John Perse
	Poet and philosopher Pierre Souyris
	<u>Helpers during the time of the protest</u>
	Pietro Ameglio, a friend
	Narrator
	Alejandro Solalinde
	Miguel Concha, a symbolic priest
	A Mormon leader, Julián Le Barón
	The Zapatista movement—an advisor to Marcos, Sergio Rodríguez Lascano
	The farmers from San Salvador Atenco
	Guerrero community police
	An entrepreneur, Alberto Núñez Esteva
	Victims
	Activists
	Edward James Olmos
	The novelist Francisco Rebolledo
	Jean Robert
	Rocato Bablot
	Ignacio Suárez Huape
	The priest José Antonio Sandoval
	A former priest, Alberto Athié
	An editor, Andrés Ramírez
	Carmen Aristegui
	Emilio Álvarez Icaza
	Eduardo Gallo
	Olga Reyes
	Bishop Raúl Vera

	credibility lies in his resignation ('ahí reside su credibilidad, en la renuncia')
	Love of Christ ('amor de Cristo')
	Sense of humour ('el gozo')
O	Anguish, panic
HO	The Catholic Church
	Media
	<i>The list of NHNO consists only of actants Sicilia himself opposes, but we have no information about the inclination of the actants themselves. Some of the following actants could also be understood as part of the Objective, especially the ambivalent denominations of the ruling class.</i>
NHO	The secretary of public security ('el secretario de Seguridad Pública'), Genaro García Luna / federal police
	Parties
	Syndicates
	Businessmen ('empresarios')
	Politicians ('los políticos')
	López Obrador
	Leaders of the church
	The new bishop of Cuernavaca, Alfonso Cortés
	Elba Esther (Gordillo)
	Enrique Peña Nieto
	the <i>narcos</i>
	Carlos Slim
	Governor Marco Antonio Adame
	Felipe Calderón
	'the political class' ('la clase política')
	The state
	'The powers that be' ('los poderes fácticos')
	The government

'Santa Muerte' by Guillermo Osorno

	Actant
Subject	Certain (groups of) people in Mexico City
Objective	Worshipping, believing in or being involved with <i>Santa Muerte</i> (Holy Death)
H	Ministry

	Sacrilegious objects of <i>Santa Muerte</i> ('Figuras y esculturas de Santa Muerte, altares particulares')
	Rosary and prayers
	Víctor Varela
	Narrator
	1 November, Day of the Dead
OP	'Many people' ('Mucha gente')
HO	The Catholic Church
	(under the auspices of the Catholic Church) Pedro Guillén
	(under the auspices of the Catholic Church) Rosary and prayers
NHO	Media
	A friend of the author
	Alfredo Ornelas, in Santa Marta Acatitla prison
	A custodian

