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A NARRATOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF EYEWITNESS REPORTING: how a journalistic mission affects narrative structures of the text

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Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

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ABSTRACT – Drawing upon the tenets of discourse narratology, this essay identifies and discusses the various narrative and rhetorical features typical of literary journalism/reportage that have evolved from the classical tradition of first-hand observation/eyewitness reporting. I give examples of narrative patterns that have influenced literary journalism throughout the 20th century and up until today, and argue that they differ from structures found in comparable ways of narrating in fiction as well as in autobiographies. I highlight four consequences of a rhetorical “position of witnessing”: a narrative perspective directed from the outside and inward, and an illusion of simultaneity of a reporter being present on the spot and seemingly witnessing and narrating at the same time. Furthermore, the essay explores how realism, in terms of mimetic (scenic) form and scrutinized details, works differently in literary journalism than in realistic fiction. In this article, I attempt to demonstrate how narratology can open new doors to our understanding how literary journalism works in its single structures and how these structures in turn affect the reader’s experience.

Key words: Discourse narratology. Eyewitness reporting. Mimetic representation. Afferent narrative perspective. Illusion of simultaneity.

UMA INVESTIGAÇÃO NARRATOLÓGICA DO RELATO DE TESTEMUNHAS OCULARES: como o papel de um repórter pode afetar as estruturas narrativas do texto

RESUMO – Com base nos princípios da narratologia do discurso, este ensaio identifica e discute as várias características narrativas e retóricas típicas do jornalismo literário/reportagem que evoluíram a partir da tradição clássica de observação em primeira mão/relato de testemunhas oculares. Dou exemplos de padrões narrativos que influenciaram o jornalismo literário ao longo do século XX e até hoje, e argumento que eles diferem das estruturas encontradas em formas comparáveis de narrar na ficção, bem como nas autobiografias. Destaco quatro consequências de uma “posição de testemunho” retórica: uma perspectiva narrativa dirigida de fora para dentro e uma ilusão de simultaneidade de um repórter estando presente no local e aparentemente testemunhando e narrando

ao mesmo tempo. Além disso, o ensaio explora como o realismo, em termos de forma mimética (cênica) e detalhes minuciosos, funciona de maneira diferente no jornalismo literário do que na ficção realista. Neste artigo, tento demonstrar como a narratologia pode abrir novas portas para nossa compreensão de como o jornalismo literário funciona em suas estruturas únicas e como estas, por sua vez, afetam a experiência do leitor.

Palavras chave: Narratologia do discurso. Relato de testemunha ocular. Representação mimética. Perspectiva narrativa aferente. Ilusão de simultaneidade.

UNA INVESTIGACIÓN NARRATOLÓGICA DEL RELATO DE TESTIMONIOS OCULARES: cómo el papel de un reportero puede afectar las estructuras narrativas del texto

RESUMEN – Con base en los principios de la narratología del discurso, este ensayo identifica y discute las diversas características narrativas y retóricas típicas del periodismo literario/reportaje que evolucionaron a partir de la tradición clásica de observación de primera mano/relato de testigos oculares. En el siglo XX y hasta el presente, se dan ejemplos de patrones narrativos que influenciaron el periodismo literario a lo largo del siglo XX y que se diferencian de las estructuras encontradas en formas comparables de narrar en la ficción, así como en las autobiografías. Destaco cuatro consecuencias de una “posición de testimonio” retórica: una perspectiva narrativa dirigida de fuera hacia dentro y una ilusión de simultaneidad de un reportero estando presente en el lugar y aparentemente testificando y narrando al mismo tiempo. Además, el ensayo explora cómo el realismo, en términos de forma mimética (escénica) y detalles minuciosos, funciona de manera diferente en el periodismo literario que en la ficción realista. En este artículo, intento demostrar cómo la narratología puede abrir nuevas puertas para nuestra comprensión de cómo el periodismo literario funciona en sus estructuras únicas y cómo esas estructuras, a su vez, afectan la experiencia del lector.

Palabras clave: Narratología del discurso. Relato de testigo ocular. Representación mimética. Perspectiva narrativa aferente. Ilusión de simultaneidad.

1. Introduction

Literary journalism/reportage is often described in terms of style (Anderson, 1987; Hartsock, 2000), the reporter’s attitude (Carey, 2003; Bech-Karlsen, 2000), and the genre’s ability to respond to a chaotic world (Eason, 2008; Hellmann, 1981). Much has also been written about single reporters and their impact of society and public of their time. Some researchers have focused on specific subjects or themes in the texts, such as war or crime. An interesting study in reporters’ ways of expressing themselves is Christine Isager’s dissertation about Günter Wallraff’s and Hunter S. Thompson’s rhetorical strategies in strengthen their ethos by creating profiled personas (Isager, 2006). It is also worth mentioning Anna Jungstrand who, in her dissertation about the literariness of the reportage (among other aspects), discusses dissonance in reportages from the 20th century (Jungstrand, 2013).

However, research with a narratological focus on literary journalism remains rare. An exception is Nora Berning’s *Narrative Means*

to *Journalistic Ends: A Narratological Analysis of Selected Journalistic Reportages*. Bernings uses the categories Voice, Mood, Temporal Order, Narrative Space and Characterization to describe and catalogue twenty-five award winning German reportages (Berning, 2011). Her main conclusion is that literary journalism/reportage should be considered as a hybrid genre, midway between journalism and literature, and that it is fruitful to study literary journalistic texts with a narratological point of departure. While I agree with Berning's conclusions, I believe that they can be taken much further than she has done.

Discourse narratology, I will argue, can help us to look at literary journalism from a new angle. It can help us to reveal exactly how a single text is constructed, what the reader will experience and why, and how the architecture of the text works in its single parts. It also enables a discussion about how the reporter's professional role may affect narrative structures of the text. In so doing, it can at the same time illuminate similarities but also differences between literary journalism and fiction as well as other kinds of non-fiction.

In this essay, I will focus on the relationship between the reporter's role as a witness and the rhetorical and narrative features of eyewitness reporting. My tools will come from theories by Gérard Genette, Dorrit Cohn, Käte Hamburger, Monika Fludernik and Göran Rossholm, and I will use reportages from different times and different countries to illustrate my observations. A reportage, written in 1915 by Swedish Gustaf Hellström, and another one, written in 1992 by American Alex Kotlowitz, for instance, will help me to highlight an "eyewitness aesthetics," consisting of mimetic representation, environmental details and a special type of inward, so-called *afferent* narrative perspective. They will also help me to point out that this perspective functions in the same way, irrespective of whether the story is told in the first person (Hellström) or in the third person (Kotlowitz).

Furthermore, the essay will look closer at a construction that could be deemed "an illusion of simultaneity". I exemplify this by a classical eyewitness reportage, written in 1903 by Norwegian Knut Hamsun, and also by a modern reportage, written in 2015 by Swedish Johanna Bäckström Lerneby. The latter belongs to the tradition of The New Journalism, and the scenes are reconstructed second-hand, but still it shows signs of "a position of witnessing" in the text. Both of these examples illustrate the narratological concept *consonance*. A fifth reportage, written in 1974 by Günter Wallraff, will help me to highlight narrative consequences of a position mixed of witnessing and participating.

Recent and past genre- and style-based studies of literary journalism have consolidated the form's function within an emerging academic discipline. I hope in this article to build upon these scholarly inquiries, not only by stimulating new ways of reading and discussing literary journalism/reportage, but, more specifically, by demonstrating how narratology can help us to understand how literary journalism works in its single structures and how these structures in turn affects the reader's experience.

2. Narratology and the *Experiencing/Narrating Reporter*

In his theory of representation and narrativity, Gérard Genette revisited Plato's notions of the mimetic and diegetic, where *mimesis* means to mimic/imitate, and *diegesis* to indicate that someone is telling someone else something (Genette, 1980). To imitate an event directly, without retelling it in words, is only possible in forms such as film or drama. In this sense, all texts become more or less diegetic. However, an author can write in a way that imitates mimesis. This can be done by means of mimetic representation, in the form of "scenes" with action and dialogue. The reader may thus be taking part in a story's external events, often in the characters' inner lives as well, without any visible, mediating instance. Here, the narrator is covert. When the representation is diegetic, however, the narrator is overt and narrates in his or her own words, and the impression of a "scene" has disappeared. These conditions are the same, irrespective of the text's first-, second-, or third-person narration².

With mimetic representation, the focus of the text lies on the continual and the contiguous – that is, on the here-and-now, and the ongoing – the style mediates a sense of experience in the form of "somebody experiencing something". In a reportage, this "somebody" can either be the reporter or some other character in the story who is currently undergoing said experience. As in fiction, the implied reader of a reportage imagines herself being that person, sharing time and place with the characters inside the story³. Käte Hamburger's term for this is the *I-Origo*, a kind of "here-and-now" personal reference point from where the plot, the events and the actions inside the story proceed (Hamburger, 1973). She has found that the logic of this I-Origo in fictional narratives affects the language so much that the tenses of the verbs lose their function to signal time. This means that it is possible to combine expressions of time for the present or the future with verb

tenses that otherwise signal past time (Hamburger, 1973, p. 64): “Now he *understood* what was going on” and “*Tomorrow* she *would* know everything.” While Hamburger posits that these combinations are typical of fiction⁴, I would add that they are typical of mimetic representation in general and, consequently, can thus be found in literary journalism.

Two other concepts of relevance for this essay that I wish to discuss are *consonance* and *dissonance*. The self in first-person narration may be divided into an *experiencing self* and a *narrating self*. Both consonance and dissonance may exist within this self (COHN, 1983). Consonance prevails if the narrator identifies to a great extent with his experiencing alter ego and the focus of the story lies on the perceived events, (i.e., the observation). The self becomes dissonant if the focus is on the ex-post perspective, while the narrator is reevaluating, criticizing or otherwise distancing herself from her former self. In literary journalism written in the first person, we may talk about *the experiencing reporter* and *the narrating reporter*. Dissonant first-person narration is characteristic of David Eason’s modernist type of New Journalism (EASON, 2008), for example in texts by American writers Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer and Joan Didion and Polish writers Hanna Krall and Wojciech Tochman. Consonance and dissonance can even be found between narrators and characters in third-person narratives (COHN, 1983).

In my analyses that follow, I will refer to different ways of narrating reportages based on a division of the genre into five subcategories. This division, a development of earlier research of mine, contains the following subcategories:

1. *Reconstructed reportage*: The reporter was not present in the reality. The scenes are built on reconstruction. Narrated in the third person.
2. *Emended reportage*: The reporter was present in the reality but has intentionally been edited out of the text. The scenes are built on observation. Narrated in the third person.
3. *Reductive reportage*: The reporter was present in the reality but has been reduced to an eyewitness role in the text. The scenes are built on observation. Narrated in the first person.
4. *Reactive reportage*: The reporter was present in the reality and is clearly visible in the text, both as an eyewitness and as a participant in the depicted events. The scenes are built on observation and participation. Narrated in the first person.
5. *Empowered reportage*: The reporter was not present in the reality. The scenes are built on reconstruction, and the text “gives voice” to someone other than the reporter. Narrated in the first person. An example of this rare form is literary journalism by the 2015 Nobel Prize winner, Svetlana Alexievich (Aare, 2016, pp. 133-134).

It is even possible to combine all five forms with *consonance* and *dissonance* to create additional subcategories.

Narratological theories and research focused on historical texts (Hayden White, for example), autobiographies and even narrative patterns in oral narrating have allowed scholars over the years to penetrate the narrative fabrics of fictive and, perhaps to a lesser extent, journalistic texts, untangling their complex web of narrative perspectives and realities and exploring the effects of those strategies on writers and readers alike. Drawing upon these narratological theories and constructs, I will turn now to an investigation of the eyewitness tradition and its narrative structures in literary journalism.

3. Eyewitness aesthetics

Long before the emergence of Tom Wolfe's New Journalism, American and European reporters were using realism's and naturalism's techniques to represent a given reality: a mimetic (scenic) form informed by scrutinized details of a particular environment. This classical kind of reportage is built on the reporter's personal experiences as an eyewitness. In the text, this usually results in a narrative structure that could be deemed "a position of witnessing."

Depending on whether the experiencing reporter is visible or not, the resulting narrative corresponds to either Type 3 or Type 2, sometimes even Type 4 of my aforementioned subcategories. The oldest known Swedish example is a reportage from a trial in 1819 (Oscarsson & Rydén, 1991), and I would add that this realistically inspired style still influences literary journalism today, in Sweden as well as in other countries.

When Peter Brooks described XIX century realism in his *Realist Vision* (2005), he emphasized the visual sense. Sara Danius interprets Brooks's theory as if realism in art and fiction is building on "a kind of eyewitness aesthetics": "Someone who has seen something with her own eyes, and who also is able to describe the concrete circumstances, especially in sensible detail, is in close relation to truth and knowledge" (DANIUS, 2013, p. 67)⁵. She distances herself from an understanding that such descriptions convey reality. Rather, she writes, they entail a certain technique for representation, where "description, concretion and visible, single details" are central (Danius, 2013, p. 67).

Let us consider Danius's interpretation of *Realist Vision* as a possible manifesto for classical reportage. Unlike a novel by Balzac, which is characterized by its "eyewitness position" in style and rhetoric, the narrative perspective and the depicted details in a reportage are a product of both rhetorical choices and the reporter's methods working within a specific, verifiable reality. In other words, narrated events and depicted environments are both based on and represented as an activity of witnessing.

For example, in his reportage from the French trenches during the First World War, Swedish reporter Gustaf Hellström describes what a witnessing reporter can see in front of him:

I put the periscope in front of my eyes. All I see is a charred castle ruin on the left, a park with fire damaged trees to the right, a half-meter high lime bank in front of them – German trenches – and between them and us a green, where the barbed-wire fence extends from our battlement to theirs, an impenetrable, meter-high methodically arranged clutter of poles and iron thread and long pointed barbs.

That's all!

No, that's not all. For, in the barbed-wire fence ten meters from us, the corpses of three soldiers are hanging. Their uniforms have been torn by the barbs and their faces – their faces have been pecked away by ravens (Hellström, 1915).

The representation style here is mimetic, and the implied reader is invited to share time and place with the experiencing reporter (i.e., the I-Origo is situated inside the story). No narrator stands in the way of the impression of immediacy. The focus of the text is on the perceived moment, not on the narrator, who afterwards tries to remember what everything was like. Compare this passage with an example of a diegetically narrated phrase: "Even today, I can remember the feeling of panic that struck me when I noticed that the bodies had no faces".

Certainly, some linguistic markers indicate reflections that a narrator may have made afterwards (the expression "methodically arranged", the exclamation mark on the sixth line, the emotional repetitions in "No, that's not all" and "their faces"). But this would as well be connected to the feelings of the experiencing reporter in the moment. Regardless of interpretation, the represented "now" rather than the narrator's "afterwards" characterizes the section as a whole.

An interesting difference may be noted when compared to a (perceived) factual genre such as autobiography⁶. Although the "I" in the scene experiences something and emotionally reacts to his experiences, he is primarily an observer. The memoir writer usually

makes himself a participant and filters most of what is happening through his own thoughts and feelings. The eyewitness, on the other hand, can make personal reflections, but with the purpose of highlighting the subject of, or the characters in, the text. This has to do with the reporter's professional role, I would argue; it is a reporter's job to report on the world, not on the self.

In the example by Hellström, the real reporter was present on the scene, observing, but did not participate in the hopeless stalemate which the story as a whole depicts. This may seem to be a difference of nuance, but I would argue that it is of importance. In the text, the witness's position has been transformed into a viewer's mainly external narrative perspective. Expressed differently, it is the perceived description of a reality which is central to the text, not the reporter's emotional response to it. An implied reader "sees" what the text wants us to see. The gaze of the experiencing reporter, which we are invited to share, seems to be reduced to the function of viewing; the "I"/the witness becomes an extension of the periscope put before his eyes.

4. A narrative perspective of witnessing

Let me now introduce an example where the experiencing reporter has been expunged from the text. Alex Kotlowitz's *There are No Children Here* (1992) tells the story of two brothers, Lafayette and Pharoah, who live with their mother and siblings in a poor and violent housing project in Chicago. The reporter follows the family for several years. Some scenes in the book must be reconstructed, since they represent moments before the reporter got to know the family, but most scenes could be categorized as Type 2, the emended reportage. At one point the children and their mother, LaJoe, visit an older brother, Terence, who is in prison:

As LaJoe and the children crowded around the one free stool, Terence walked into the room on his side of the glass. He spotted his family, and broke out into a huge grin. So did Lafayette, Pharoah, and the triplets. Terence, who wore his long hair plaited tightly against his skull, stood still for a moment, reared his head back, and then pointed at each of his brothers and sisters *as if to acknowledge their presence*. They all pointed back. Then Terence sat down. Beaming.

Tiffany pulled herself onto the countertop and pressed her lips against the metal grate. "I love you," she told her brother. (...) Pharoah stood on the other side of his mother. He fought to restrain Timothy, Tammie, and Tiffany, who, in their excitement, clamored for space on the countertop. Once Pharoah calmed

them down, though, **he found himself distracted by all the commotion in the room. He heard little of what Terence had to tell him and his siblings that morning.**

Most distracting to Pharoah was a young girl, perhaps seventeen, who sat perched on the stool next to theirs. She was dressed in a denim miniskirt, which exposed a pair of *shapely* legs and which, *one suspects, had the intended effect of teasing her incarcerated boyfriend,* with whom she *obviously was not at all pleased.* She held a letter up to the glass. 'This is bullshit', she said, loud enough so that Pharoah turned his head to see what was going on (Kotlowitz, 1992, p. 108-9, my italics and bold markers).

The representation style here is mainly mimetic, with a focus on the perceived moment. Although there is no trace of an experiencing reporter, the text is characterized by the same eyewitness aesthetics as in the scene by Hellström. An implied reader is invited to share an external gaze in the form of visual impressions, such as the sight of the characters' gestures and appearances. Some comments (italicized by me) may be attributed to a narrator and reinforce the impression of a personal witness, who has been present on the scene.

However, this passage even includes a reconstructed part (marked by me in bold), where the narrative perspective temporarily changes from external to internal. Here, we are invited to share the "here-and-now" with Pharoah; we get an inside view of his feelings and impressions. This must originate from what the boy has told the reporter on the same or a separate occasion. In the text we can speak of "a narrative empathy", since the implied reader may imagine herself being Pharoah. Consequently, the passage as a whole consists of both observation and reconstruction.

Interestingly enough, even the witnessing parts of the text offer a possibility to empathize with the characters. The comments from the narrator and the mimetic representation, together with the scrutinized details of gestures and appearances, help the reader visualize the scene and thereby fantasize about the characters. This opportunity is given to the reader in Hellström's reportage as well. To some extent, we are invited to imagine the reality of a horrible war from the soldier's point of view. Again, it is the mimetic representation style, in combination with the narrator's expressions, that make this possible. The reporter as a person is of no interest. He is just a messenger.

Such an aspect of the reporter's professional role relates to David Eason's discussion about the difference between a private and a professional empathy. A reporter, he argues, must remain distant from his subject and, at the same time, use a technique *in the text* that enables the reader's empathy: "The distinction between lived and

observed experience is a fundamental distinction for human interest-reporting” (Eason, 2008, p. 196). This can be compared to an actor in a tragic or melodramatic play. He himself cannot cry on stage, though he has to act in a way that evokes tears from the audience.

Let us return to the main perspective in the passage (the parts that are not marked with bold or italics). As with the Hellström example, I argue that the narrative perspective in this case is primarily the result of a rhetorical “position of witnessing”, and that it is typical of the scenes within the eyewitness tradition. The episode from the French trenches is narrated in the first person. The episode from the prison visit is narrated in the third person, but in a similar way; it is represented as it could have been perceived from the point of view of a real or hypothetical viewer. In practice, both techniques are constructed by means of a so-called *afferent perspective*. The term was coined by Göran Rossholm (Rossholm, 2004), from a term for eye movements, and it designates a kind of inward, narrative perspective, where something is “as perceived” by someone, either an invisible observer or a character inside the story⁷.

In classical discourse narratology, the former corresponds to an internal perspective and the latter to an external perspective. Such a division, though, fails to recognize that a witnessing position is external with respect to narrated actions and events, while still being situated inside the story. Consequently, we have to deal with a narrative perspective that can be something as unusual as either internal in common sense (the viewer, like Hellström’s reporter, is a character in the story), or external (the viewer, like Kotlowitz’s third-person narrator, is a hypothetical observer). When the perspective is conventionally internal, the afferent position may even sometimes be combined with its opposite, coined by Rossholm as an *efferent perspective*, which designates an outward narrative perspective (Rossholm, 2004). This combination is produced when the experiencing reporter is both witnessing and participating in the perceived events, and I will return to this phenomenon later in this article.

In the scene by Kotlowitz, the afferent perspective is representing the real reporter’s impressions, which linger in the text. In both examples, I interpret the afferent perspective as an expression of a witnessing mission, to which the reporter has obliged himself to be present, to observe and then to convey his observations to the readers.

5. The reality effect in literary journalism

An important element of the realistic style of representation is the scrutinized, environmental details. In Hellström's scene, we encounter such details in the form of a charred castle ruin, fire damaged trees, the barbed-wire fence and corpses with missing eyes. In Kotlowitz's scene, we find the carefully described gestures and appearances belonging to the characters. Roland Barthes named this kind of detail in fiction *The Reality Effect*. It denotes when external details, which are insignificant to the plot, are depicted as a means of establishing adherence to reality (Barthes, 1980). Barthes claims that realism's literature changed the rules for signification. In the literature of older times, single, concrete details designated something larger than themselves. For example, animals could symbolize certain traits, that is, they usually carried a symbolic meaning. With realism, we are confronted with what Barthes calls the "dissolution of the sign". Some things should appear to refer to reality in direct form, seemingly without denoting anything, thus creating a "referential illusion" (Barthes, 1980, p. 33). They should simply create an *illusion* of reality. The reader should be invited to imagine that the depicted places were or, rather, *could be* real. This has to do with fiction's "as if" nature; fiction feigns actions and events *as if* they really happened⁸.

However, the conditions in literary journalism are different. My view is that the description of environmental details fulfills a double function, when the reality depicted is specific and authentic, not generalized and created, as in novels or short stories. These narrative details should not only situate the reader within a given reality but reinforce the text's and the reporter's credibility within the reader's eyes. Consequently, The Reality Effect takes on an extended significance for journalistic narratives. Swedish reporter Göran Rosenberg describes these kinds of details as if they do "not normally constitute the factual framework of a story": "Their function is to substantiate its credibility" (Rosenberg, 2000, pp. 92-93).

In other words, specified details reinforce what you may call "a journalistic author-reader contract" (Hellman, 1981, p. 33), irrespective of whether the details are ordinary, as with a certain car brand, or extraordinary, as with the devastation of a bombed-out quarter measured in statistics. In her reportage from Soviet-occupied Budapest in 1956, Swedish reporter Barbro Alving writes:

The street is situated in the quarters just beyond the Kilian barrack, where the worst battles raged – a simple street with small houses for small people. Twenty-seven tanks shot for four days here. One house had over thirty full hits, and several were on fire for a couple of days (Alving, 1956, p. 274).

The reader's sense of sharing the here-and-now with the experiencing reporter is simultaneously supplying the journalistic contract: the more specific the details, the greater the authority with which the reporter may claim: "You can believe me. I was there, in that neighborhood; just listen to my knowledge of the details."

6. Simultaneity and the historical present

The position of witnessing in a literary journalistic text goes hand in hand with the illusion of simultaneity. News articles report events as completed, something that is underlined by the preterit tense ("Yesterday a storm crippled large parts of the country"). In the classical tradition of reportage, events and actions are reported as ongoing. As John Carey writes, "Some definitions of reportage insist it should have been written in the heat of the moment, reflecting the rush and compression and ignorance of what is going to happen next" (Carey, 2003). What kind of narrativity, then, emphasizes this "heat of the moment"? To begin with, it can be indicated by the historical present tense. This tense creates the illusion that the reporter witnesses and narrates the events at one and the same moment. This is, for example, the case in the reportage by Hellström.

Many narratologists have discussed the kind of narrativity that seems to erase the difference between the characters' *story* and the narrator's so-called *discourse*. Such a narrative structure runs counter to the standard narratological rules that prescribe an event must always be told retrospectively, if even only minutes after it has occurred⁹. For the seemingly simultaneous, Monika Fludernik mentions one single context where she can think of this narrative style as "natural": a report from a sports game. But even then, it is mainly a matter of strict registration, which she will not refer to as a "real narrative" (Fludernik, 1996, p. 252). As soon as a reader visualizes a narrative situation, she argues, we imagine a narrator who is remembering something, who in her memory is recalling what is represented, and then the narrative tense ought to be the preterit. The historical present narrative – which she describes as "it narrates 'as if' in the preterit, but does so in the present tense" – is something she calls "a most peculiar form" (Fludernik, 1996, p. 252).

Hamburger investigates the same paradox as Fludernik but comes to a different conclusion. Her point of departure is fiction's capacity to make the past the present, to "presentify" a past "now."¹⁰ Hamburger associates this mainly with stories told in the third person and in fictional preterit (the kind of narrative tense that I have described earlier and that does not signal a past-ness but rather the characters' now). At the same time, she finds a non-fictional, first-person narrative, namely the autobiography, where the historical present possesses a function comparable with fictional preterit¹¹. With the help of *presentification*, an author depicts past events as if they occur here and now. He narrates in the first person about his earlier experiences in such a way that he lets himself visualize them anew (Hamburger, 1973, pp. 65 and 99-101). This visualization, or presentification, is easy to connect to the journalistic eyewitness. Although Hamburger only refers to autobiographical writing, her analysis is also relevant for a text with an experiencing reporter: "Indeed, the autobiographical account is the only narrative instance whatsoever where the consciousness of past-ness is retained, and it is retained precisely because the present tense here presentifies in a genuine sense" (Hamburger, 1973). I would add that it is precisely this kind of "now-sense" that characterizes historical present within the eyewitness reportage.

7. Simultaneity and consonance

The scenes by Hellström and Kotlowitz both have a focus on the perceived moment, but only the former is narrated in the historical present. So far I have stressed the connection between this tense and the narrative illusion of simultaneity. However, and as the Kotlowitz example illustrates, it is quite common to focus on the characters' now, even in literary journalism narrated in the past tense, at least in scenes where a position of witnessing is salient. Regarding *The New Journalism*, Sylvia Adamson writes that "the journalistic imperative" aims at conveying "a sense of events that is immediate, personal, close to the pulse of present history" (Adamson, 2001, p. 95)¹². She demonstrates how *The New Journalism* texts narrated in the third person correspond to this intention by a "was now" construction, that is, a construction similar to Hamburger's fictional preterit, where the narrative tense has lost its ability to signal time.

This observation led me to consider that the selected tense need not be the only way for literary journalists to create an illusion of

simultaneity in their texts. As mentioned earlier, Cohn states that either consonance or dissonance may prevail between the experiencing self and the narrating self in stories told in the first person. While Cohn identifies a maximum of dissonance in Marcel Proust, she finds the opposite, a maximum of consonance, in Norwegian author Knut Hamsun in his novel *Hunger* from 1890 (Cohn, 1983). It might be a little more than a coincidence that Hamsun was simultaneously an active reporter and novelist throughout his career. In an article about Norwegian reportage pioneers, Jo Bech-Karlsen elucidates the close connection between Hamsun's fictional and factual writing (Bech-Karlsen, 2013). One guess would be that *Hunger* was influenced by a style that Hamsun had acquired as reporter¹³. Here is a sample from Hamsun's travel book from 1903, *In Wonderland*:

Village after village. The road zigzags *because of the rise*, and Kornei, *who wants to spare his horses*, drives them *gently* and often waters them. At one watering hole we are overtaken by a foreign carriage that Kornei *quietly* lets slip past, causing the dust to become *unbearable for us* who are behind. We order him to stop a while, to allow time for the dust to drift away; on the whole, we do not appreciate his *somnolent* way of driving. Kornei, on the other hand, *seems to think it's going very well now*; he's humming. Evening is upon us. It's getting dusky, and it's *noticeably* colder. We throw the blankets around our shoulders. I notice that the spot of wax on my jacket is congealing again and turning white, *it's like a thermometer up here on the heights; we are at an altitude of 2,000 meters*. We are still winding our way between the mountains. Kornei waters the horses yet once more, *though it is so cold*. All fields cease; we have nearly reached the timberline (Hamsun, 2013, p. 29, my italics).

The reporter plays the main role in this book. Consequently, the text is an example of my Type 4 narrative. All focus in the scene above is on the experiencing reporter and thus on the perceived moment. In other words, the scene is consonant, and the tense is thoroughly the historical present. Furthermore, the passage is written with mimetic representation, told in the first person and rich in observations. Realism's typical details are mentioned in passing (the watering hole, that Kornei is humming, the blankets, a description of the weather, the stearn spot). A retrospective perspective cannot be discerned, and a questioning attitude is missing with respect to the experiencing reporter. The function of the narrating reporter's comments (italicized by me) is instead to reinforce the focus on the depicted moment. Thus, dissonance cannot be detected in the text.

Cohn argues that the strong consonance, which is typical of *Hunger*, is very rare in novels told in the first person (Cohn, 1983).

Fludernik also regards consonant first-person narratives as atypical: “most first-person texts typically foreground the dynamic interaction between narrating and experiencing selves” (Fludernik, 2001, p. 106). If an interaction is missing between a clear narrator and an experiencer, she argues that the boundary between the two instances becomes blurred, so that it is unclear where the reader should place the text’s here-and-now.

In *Hunger*, Cohn notes, Hamsun alternates between the preterit and the historical present. However, regardless of the tense, she finds that the narrating self is pushed into the background. It is possible to state the same about the quoted scene from *In Wonderland*. Would consonance consequently be a stronger criterion for the impression of simultaneity than the historical present? Cohn seems to confirm this when she writes about *Hunger*:

The absence of self-exegesis and of all references to the narrating self excludes from Hamsun’s text the entire temporal zone for which the present tense is normally employed by a dissonant narrator like Proust’s Marcel. (...) The ease with which this narrative present alternates with narrative past indicates the degree of consonance Hamsun has achieved in his text: he evokes the past as though it were present, no matter whether he uses the past or the present tense (Cohn, 1983, p. 157).

In other words, the sense of an extended “now” need not be dependent on the narrative tense.

Adamson’s observations of a particular “was now” construction are valid for examples of The New Journalism told in the third person, and Cohn considers, moreover, that consonance (respective dissonance) may also prevail between narrators and characters in third-person fiction (Cohn, 1983). A Swedish example of journalistic third-person narrating in the preterit tense can be found in Johanna Bäckström Lerneby’s *Att skapa ett monster* (“How to Create a Monster,” 2015), written within the tradition of The New Journalism. The story is a reconstruction of a crime and of the events leading up to the action when a young Nazi, Kevin, kills his former friend, Magnus. As in many similar texts, there are diegetic passages, where a visible narrator gives summaries and background information. However, in the scenes, the narrative technique is comparable to consonant first-person narrating, as in the following excerpt:

It was nearly midnight on Saturday, May 17, 2008. Rikard mixed another drink. Johnny fetched the camera and Magnus, Rikard and Kevin lined up in a corner. They performed a Hitler salute, screeched out a song and pretended to play air guitar with the pool cues. Magnus was dressed in a black hoody that bore Nazi symbols and a slogan on the back that read: ‘Better to die standing upright than to live a life on your knees’. Kevin and Rikard were also dressed in black hoodies, and their clothes, together with their shaved heads,

made them look like a team photo before a game. Johnny laughed and took the picture. (...) The hour-hand passed midnight. Drinks were mixed and thrown back. Anna went outside and smoked. Kevin was increasingly provoked by Magnus's presence. He thought Magnus walked around and talked shit about him to the others. Kevin had heard that, when he had been out of the room for a while, Magnus had come up with a plan to hold hands with Anna, when Johnny couldn't see them. Why couldn't he give up? Finally, he told Magnus that he needed to talk to him. Magnus pretended not to hear. Kevin said in an even louder voice that they should go outside and talk, just the two of them. Magnus looked up from the pool table, sighed and said okay. He leaned the cue against the wall, followed Kevin down the outer staircase and stood on the gravel walk. The others exchanged worried looks. (Bäckström Lerneby, 2015)

The scene is narrated in the third person, and the narrative perspective alternates between the afferent perspective (the well-known witnessing position) and the efferent perspective (something is as formulated – said or thought – by a character inside the story). If we study the passage closer, we can see that in the first and third paragraphs the perspective is afferent, external with respect to what is seen and heard. Despite the past tense, we find a focus on the perceived moment, and accordingly the text here becomes consonant. Since there is no witnessing reporter present, the scene is as perceived by an invisible observer.

At first glance, the construction of these paragraphs seems to be similar to the Kotlowitz example. However, this scene is reconstructed and based on secondary sources (Type 1 narrative among my categories)¹⁴. It is the afferent perspective, together with the mimetic representation and the scrutinized details (the hoodies, the drinks, the pool cues, the gestures) – i.e., the rhetoric of witnessing – that mediates the (false) impression that a real reporter was actually present as a witness.

In the second paragraph, the perspective is internal and efferent. The implied reader imagines himself sharing the here-and-now with Kevin. We follow Kevin's reaction (he is provoked) and his thoughts, and we interpret "Why couldn't he give up?" as something he says to himself about Magnus. This last sentence is written in *Free Indirect Discourse*, which is a narrated monologue in the third person, where a person's thoughts or feelings are formulated directly, without the use of quotation marks or direct speech (cf.: "Why couldn't Magnus give up? Kevin asked himself"). This is a well-known technique for creating empathy with, and closeness to, characters in a story.

It is worth noting that an internal scene may be as mimetic as an external scene. In other words, the focus on the perceived moment is the same, whether we imagine Kevin from the inside (paragraph two) or when we see the situation with the eyes of an

invisible observer (paragraphs one and three). No reflections or a questioning attitude from a narrator can be discerned. Consequently, all three scenes are dominated by consonance.

In the reportage as a whole, the reader gets inside views from several characters, not only from Kevin's and Magnus's friends, but also from a policeman, who was responsible for an investigation many years earlier into events where Kevin was the victim, having been beaten by his mother and sexual abused by his stepfather. The narrator does not contradict the characters' views. Instead, the story is told layer by layer, so that the picture of Kevin becomes increasingly complex. Sometimes the narrator is visible in this process, but primarily it is the result of many different perspectives, forming a mosaic. Therefore, I would say that this reportage is problematizing its subject on a macro level, while still remaining consonant in its scenes, each one taken separately. The reader imagines herself in every scene sharing the here-and-now, either with a hypothetical viewer or with the character currently in focus.

One possible conclusion thus far is that an illusion of simultaneity in a reportage is constructed first with the help of consonance, and second with the help of the historical present. Adamson does not use the concept "consonance", but in practice she elucidates narrative techniques for creating an illusion of simultaneity when narrating in the past tense. She argues that this "was now" construction results in an "empathetic narrative"; it is a way of creating empathy with the characters (Adamson, 2001, p. 95).

Although the reportage by Bäckström Lerneby cannot be included in the tradition of eyewitness reporting, there are obvious elements of a rhetorical position of witnessing in external scenes (the afferent perspective, the mimetic representation and the use of The Reality Effect). Furthermore, both internal and external scenes are characterized by consonance, by a focus on the perceived moment. I consider all this to depend ultimately on the heritage of the classical eyewitness tradition.

8. When the reporter is both witnessing and participating

I would say that even a reporter like Günter Wallraff is narrating mainly through consonance. In his type of reportage, the reporter appears under cover, with the purpose of getting into environments that would otherwise be closed to journalists. Consequently, the reporter cannot be

reduced to a witness. On the contrary, many times he plays the main role of text (my Type 4 narrative). On one occasion in *Lowest of the Low* from 1974, Wallraff's Turkish alias "Ali" has got a job in a steelworks factory:

Scrambling over shaky leaders, we squeeze into cracks which are less than shoulder-width and try to knock free the layers of encrusted iron ore with crowbars, huge sledgehammers and shovels. But the crust is so hard that almost nothing comes away. Our ganger, Alfred, breaks into a rage when he sees that only fragments are breaking off. 'You bloody niggers, you shit-wogs, fucking Turks and garlic Jews!' He includes all the nationalities known to him in one rush abuse. 'You are all useless, you should be put against that wall and shot in the neck!' (...)

Compressors and hammers and cutters are brought up, together with long scrapes. They produce the thickest possible concentration of dust, and without masks, we have to loosen the compacted layers. Subjected to constant abuse, we crawl around inside the machine. The noise of the thundering pneumatic tools in the narrow steel passages hurts our ears. There's no protection for them (Wallraff, 1985, pp. 115-116).

The role of the experiencing reporter as a participant results in a narrative perspective that is partly internal. At the same time, there is no doubt that the reporter has given himself the mission of observing, witnessing. With awareness of Wallraff's working methods, we can interpret his purpose as "letting the world know" – in this case, what inhuman working conditions the Turkish workers are forced to withstand: the work is physically on the verge of being unbearable, the air is probably dangerous to breathe, their hearing is likely to be impaired, and the supervisor spits out racist epithets when scolding the workers.

However, we can also notice that the scene stretches into realism's narrative tradition. The presentation is mimetic and full of specific details (the perceptions, what Alfred is saying and, in particular, the tools and carefully stated tasks). Interestingly enough, the many descriptions enable an afferent perspective in parallel to the reporter participating in the depiction. Everything that can be seen and heard is "as perceived" by a character in the story, namely the experiencing reporter. In other words, the reporter present in the scene alternates between observing and participating. Even though he works and struggles like the other workers, he does not stop being a journalist in the form of a witness; he becomes a participating witness. Consequently, the narrative perspective becomes afferent and efferent at the same time. Focus on the perceived moment is also strong, both through consonance and the historical present. The narrator's final comment on ear-protection emphasizes the implicit message (i.e., how employers in West Germany in the 1980s exploited

the tenuous legal rights of Turkish workers).

Elsewhere in the text, this message becomes explicit when Wallraff's narrator interpolates short or long diegetic explications between the scenes that are linked to the reporter's self-imposed mission. At one point, he writes about the conditions for the Turkish workers:

There are some workers who go for months without a day off. They live like beasts of burden. They no longer have a private life. They're only allowed to go home because it's cheaper for the company if they pay for their lodgings themselves. Otherwise, it would be more practical if they just slept at Thyssen or Remmert. It is usually the younger ones who do that. Two years at the most in the Thyssen shit and they are worn out, used up, sucked dry, and sick – often for life (WALLRAFF, 1985, p. 77).

Wallraff's text here becomes an example of the "reportage with tendency" of the 1960s and, above all, the 1970s; in other words, texts that have a pronounced political/ideological message and were common, especially in Scandinavia. The contrast may be biting sharp between the narrator and the people the text surveys and accuses of various social abuses. Nevertheless, I regard reportages of this kind as more or less consonant but never dissonant, just because the narrating reporter, although potentially quite visible, does not question his alter ego, his mission, his methods or his way of narrating.

Finally, we may once again compare reportage writing with autobiographical writing. What are the differences between the narrative perspective of texts whose reporter, like Wallraff, is present as a participant and the narrative perspective of an autobiography? The answer to this question lies in the narrative differences between, on the one hand, solely participating in an event and, on the other hand, simultaneously participating in and witnessing said event. This, in turn, depends on differences between writing a story about oneself and using the self to write a story about the world. One journalistic mission thus affects the narrativity of the text.

9. Some conclusions

The main purpose with this essay has been to demonstrate how discourse narratology can open new doors to our understanding of how literary journalism/reportage works and affects the reader. In my analyses, I have focused on narrative structures within a tradition of eyewitness reporting and how a heritage from this tradition is still

noticeable today. I have found that the classical tradition of first-hand observation/eyewitness reporting has stylistic and rhetorical similarities with realism in fiction: the mimetic representation and the scrutinized details of an environment are due to the same technique. However, there is also a difference depending on the depicted reality, which in reportage is specific and authentic – not generalized and fabricated as in fiction. This means that Barthes's Reality Effect fulfills a double function in reportage: it should not only situate the reader within a given reality, as in novels and short stories, but at the same time reinforce the reporter's credibility within the reader's eyes. In doing so, it reinforces a journalistic author–reader contract.

In eyewitness reporting, narrated events and depicted environments are both based on and represented as an activity of witnessing. Where a rhetorical “position of witnessing” is salient in the scenes, the narrative perspective becomes afferent; it is directed from the outside inward. This kind of perspective works the same, irrespective of whether the reporter is visible or has been excised from the text – that is, irrespective of whether the story is told in the first or in the third person. I would say that an afferent perspective is typical of the eyewitness tradition, where a witnessing mission in reality affects the narrativity of the text, so that the reader's gaze is directed away from a witness (visible or not) and towards the (other) characters. Thus, narrative empathy is created.

An afferent perspective is often combined with an illusion of simultaneity. An experiencing reporter seems to be present on the spot, witnessing and narrating at the same time. This runs counter to the rules of discourse narratology. Nevertheless, classical reportage insists on this conspicuous simultaneity, of this illusion of a journalist reporting “in the heat of the moment”. It could be constructed either by the historical present tense joined together with consonance or by consonance alone. The focus of the text in both cases is on the perceived moment. If a narrator is visible, it is with the purpose of reinforcing the moment, not of stressing the narrator's own “afterwards”.

Consonance may even be noted in third-person narrating and in reconstructed scenes, as in the realism type of New Journalism. This is possible both in external scenes, where we recognize an afferent perspective, and in internal scenes, where the narrative perspective is efferent; it is directed from the characters' inside outward. The reader then imagines herself sharing the characters' thoughts and feelings without any intermediary instance.

When an experiencing reporter is both witnessing and taking part in the narrated events, he becomes a participating witness – and the narrative perspective may alter between afferent and efferent, unlike in an autobiography, where the experiencing self is primarily a participant. Once again, the difference has to do with the journalistic mission. The reporter herself is only a means to investigate and report on the world.

In summary, we can see that the heritage from classical eyewitness reporting is still present in today's reportage. The mimetic representation, the specified environmental details, recurring elements of afferent perspective and the illusion of simultaneity are all features that can be found in early as well as in contemporary literary journalism.

NOTES

- 1 I will use the terms *literary journalism* and *reportage* interchangeably. The word *reportage* will be used as in Sweden, where it sometimes designates the genre and sometimes a single text.
- 2 See Booth (1983, pp. 3-22), who, among others, uses the terms *showing* and *telling* for the mimetic and diegetic representation
- 3 “Implied reader” is the model reader enrolled in a text. The term corresponds to the audience to which the text is directed (Prince, 2003, p. 43).
- 4 Hamburger means that her conclusions are only relevant for narratives told in the third person, but later researchers have argued that the same patterns may also be noted in fiction narrated in the first person.
- 5 Unless otherwise stated, all translation from Swedish that appear in this text are my own.
- 6 I am aware that an autobiography may consist of intentional (autofiction) or incidental (memoir) elements of fiction, but that fact does not affect my discussion here.
- 7 Fludernik identifies this same construction as a narrative perspective connected to the human activity of “viewing” (Fludernik, 1996, pp. 9-38).

- 8 See for example Ricoeur, 1981, p. 17.
- 9 See, for example, Genette 1980, pp. 215 – 231.
- 10 Hamburger uses the German word “Vergegenwärtigung,” or “presentification” in English (Hamburger, 1973, p. 65).
- 11 According to Hamburger, all first-person narratives are considered to be told in a form as if they were non-fictional, see my note 3.
- 12 Adamson’s formulation comes from M. L. Johnson.
- 13 Bech-Karlsen considers Hamsun’s travel books, despite their containing some fictional elements, to be reportages (Bech-Karlsen, 2013, pp. 20-22).
- 14 The reportage is based on personal interviews and reports from the police investigation.

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