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978-0-521-02735-9 - Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative

Anibal Gonzalez

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Journalism and the development of Spanish American narrative

The relationship between literature and journalism is an important element in the literary history of all Spanish America. The very first Spanish American novelist, the Mexican José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, was a journalist, and virtually all Spanish American writers, from Sarmiento through Martí, to Borges and García Márquez, have, at one time or another, been involved in journalism. This book explores the impact of journalism and journalistic rhetoric on the development of Spanish American narrative, from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century to the testimonial and documentary novels of contemporary authors, such as Miguel Barnet and Elena Poniatowska. González examines selected works from the Spanish American narrative tradition that exemplify moments in the history of the relationship between literature and journalism. He argues that Spanish-American narrative has sought to work in consonance with journalism's modernizing impulse, making strategic use of journalistic discourse to promote social or political change. In the course of the argument, González offers a broad historical panorama of the journalism–narrative interaction, and at the same time proposes an alternate theory of the development of the Spanish American narrative.

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To my father,
Aníbal González Irizarry,
on his 45th anniversary in broadcast
journalism

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Acknowledgments

This book is an extension – by no means a culmination – of my longstanding interest in the parallel histories of journalism and narrative fiction in Spanish America. It is an interest linked to my personal background: my father, Anibal González Irizarry, is a broadcast journalist, a news anchorman. Some of my earliest memories of what Derrida would call the “scene of writing” are of seeing my father at work in his office in the Puerto Rican TV network Telemundo (WKAQ-Channel 2), composing the reports he would read daily on-camera, as well as editing and translating the news that came over the teletypes.

Clearly, a discussion of the origins of this text could easily lead me into autobiography, a genre I enjoy reading but try to avoid writing. But a book such as this is also the end result of numerous readings, conversations, and consultations over the years, the residue of a textual as well as spoken dialogue with friends, colleagues, and total strangers near and far. Unlike journalists, who jealously guard their sources, scholars must publicly acknowledge them, and I do so with immense gratitude. The vast majority of those who have helped me in this enterprise are recognized in the notes and bibliography, but I would like to single out here a handful who may not have received their due in the pages that follow. First, I am grateful to my good friends Houchang Chehabi, of Harvard, and Frieda Brown, of Michigan State University, both of whom cheerfully volunteered for the thankless task of reading this work in manuscript form, and who helped purge it of many errors and infelicities (for those that remain they are blameless, of course). I would also like to thank Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, whose sensible suggestions about style and organization helped me bring my text into greater focus. I am grateful for the unfailing encouragement of Enrique Pupo-Walker, the general editor of this series. Among the many friends with whom I have shared ideas

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