Relationships between narrative and argumentation. In defence of a functional account

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The objective of this investigation is to study the relationships between narrative and argumentation. These are apparently very different objects, but overlaps are frequent in literary works. The proposed classifications are based on the notion of speech-act, and are defined according to two different criteria: one is of a structural nature and generalizes some previous outlooks, while the second one is based on functional accounts. We defend our functional approach over the structural ones.

KEYWORDS: speech-act of arguing, argumentative text, narrative speech-act, narrative text, rhetoric, fiction, non-fiction.

1. INTRODUCTION

At first sight, it is easy to think that narratives and argumentations are communicative objects of a quite different nature. Through narratives it is possible to describe certain series of events as well as tell stories while, in argumentations, reasons are presented in order to justify certain points of view. In that way, we might tend to identify narrative with imagination, as well as argumentation with reason.

However, let's quote a fragment of the story "The Owl who wanted to save Humankind", by the Guatemalan writer Augusto Monterroso:

> Years later, he developed a great facility to classify, so that he knew exactly when the Lion was going to roar and when the Hyena was going to laugh, […]
>
> So he concluded:
>
> "If the Lion did not what he does but what the Horse does, and the Horse did not what he does but what the Lion does […] and so on until Infinity, Humankind would save itself because

> everyone would live in peace and war would be again as it was in the times when there wasn't any war."

In this text we can easily see an argumentation —inserted between quotation marks—, despite its evident narrative character.

In a similar way, there are narrative pieces of work that present argumentative parts—appearing without quotation marks—. That can be seen in the following fragment, extracted from Montaigne's Essays, chapter I, II ("Of the Inconstancy of Our Actions"):

> […] for they [men] commonly so strangely contradict one another that it seems impossible they should proceed from one and the same person. We find the younger Marius one while a son of Mars and another a son of Venus. […]; and who could believe it to be the same Nero, the perfect image of all cruelty, who, having the sentence of a condemned man brought to him to sign, as was the custom, cried out, "O that I had never been taught to write!" so much it went to his heart to condemn a man to death.

We can note that Montaigne represents certain facts—associated to Marius, Pope Boniface VIII and Nero—that act as reasons trying to prove that his point of view ("[men] commonly so strangely contradict one another that it seems impossible they should proceed from one and the same person") is correct or valid. Another example of a narration acting in an argumentative process is the fable "The fox and the grapes", attributed to Aesop:

> A Fox one day spied a beautiful bunch of ripe grapes hanging from a vine trained along the branches of a tree. The grapes seemed ready to burst with juice, and the Fox's mouth watered as he gazed longingly at them.
>
> The bunch hung from a high branch, and the Fox had to jump for it. The first time he jumped he missed it by a long way. So he walked off a short distance and took a running leap at it, only to fall short once more. Again and again he tried, but in vain.
>
> Now he sat down and looked at the grapes in disgust.
>
> "What a fool I am," he said. "Here I am wearing myself out to get a bunch of sour grapes that are not worth gaping for."
>
> And off he walked very, very scornfully.
>
> Moral: There are many who pretend to despise and belittle that which is beyond their reach.

In this fable, the narrated facts are presented as reasons for the conclusion stablished by the moral, so it is easy to notice that the narrative constitutes a part of an argumentative process between the author and the reader.

In this way, it is not strange to find situations in which the distinction between narrative and argumentation vanishes. Although it is important to point out that this fact can happen in different ways: it is clear that Monterroso's text is of a different nature that the ones by Montaigne or Aesop.

The main objective of this paper is —focusing on literary texts,— to study which types of overlaps may arise involving narrative and argumentation, as well as present a systematic classification of them, according to different criteria.

2. NARRATIVE AND ARGUMENTATION: SPEECH-ACTS AND TEXTS

We understand argumentation as a second order speech-act complex, composed of the constative speech-act of adducing (i.e., the reason) and the constative speech-act of concluding (i.e., the conclusion) (Bermejo-Luque, 2011, pp.60-62).

According to this model, arguments are mere representations of the syntactic and semantic properties of the inferences underlying argumentations or inner reasonings.

Regarding the definition of narrative, Garrido Domínguez (1993, p.2) points out that:

> The difficulties that arise in offering an adequate definition of the narrative text get more complicated as 20th century productions are taken into account. It is known that the romantic ideal of mixing genres appears on them —specially on those in which the narrative mood changes, like Ulysses, The Magic Mountain or In Search of Lost Time—[…]. Inside them, dramatic, lyric and argumentative elements cohabit, as well as the strictly narrative ones, blended in a way that any attempt of isolation could success without attacking against the essence of this kind of stories.

Genette, in his classic Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method (1980) clarifies the concept a bit more: "oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or series of events". He compares three common uses of the world narrative, to finally differentiate in the following way:

> I propose […] to use the word story for the signified or narrative content […], to use the word narrative for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the word narrating for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which the action takes place.

According to that, we may say that a narrative is a representation of certain events, that might be real or fictional, in a sequence of time. This representation is made by means of certain speech-acts that constitute the narration of the events or, in Genette's, words, the narrating of the story.

In order to illustrate that, let's consider the following text, "The Black Sheep", by Augusto Monterroso:

> In a far-off country many years ago there lived a Black Sheep.
> They shot him.
> A century later, the repentant flock erected an equestrian statue of him, which looked very good in the park.
> From then on, every time Black Sheep appeared they were promptly executed so that future generations of common, ordinary sheep could also indulge in sculpture.

Let's consider the following declarative sentence: "In a far-off country many years ago there lived a Black Sheep". (1)

García-Carpintero (2007) considers fictioning as uttering a sentence with the communicative intention of putting certain addressee in position of imagining this proposition. Following Currie (1990), García-Carpintero states that fictioning can be considered as a speech-act that presents certain constitutive conditions regarding the truth of the expressed propositions.

Regarding the speech-act of non-fiction making, Romero Álvarez (1996) proposes an analysis. In her article, she points out that—in order to make a correct pragmatic interpretation—the considered speech-acts should be considered not only in its contextual frame, but in relation to the previous and successive speech-acts made by the addresser. In this way, a set of speech-acts turns out to be another speech-act, which Romero Álvarez names macro-act, following Van Dijk (1996). In consequence, we can assume that non-fiction narratives are, in a macro level, speech-acts.

According to these definitions of the speech-acts of fiction and non-fiction making, it is clear that the essential feature of narrative is

not the single kind of speech-act that generates it, because fiction and non-fiction making speech-acts may cohabit in the same narrative[1].

In relation to the expressions "argumentative text/discourse" and "narrative text/discourse", it is reasonable to understand them as the text or discourse mainly composed, respectively, by argumentative or narrative speech-acts. According to that, the concepts of narrative and of narrative text will be identified[2].

3. CLASSIFICATIONS

In this section, two different classifications about the relationships between narrative and argumentation are presented.

The first one, of a structural nature, is based on the "authorship" of the argumentative speech-act—within the frame of a narrative text. These "authors" will be some character of the story, the narrator or the proper author.

The second classification is based on the analysis of the roles that argumentative speech-acts play in narrative texts, or narrative speech-acts play in argumentative texts.

3.1 Structural classification

Following what has been settled, the first structural type, Type S1, is associated to situations where a character of the story is performing an argumentation, that appears, usually, quoted in the text. This is the case of the argumentation performed by the Owl in the fable by Monterroso that was exposed previously.

There is also an overlap between narrative and argumentation when a narrative text includes an argumentative speech-act, performed by the narrator of the story. This would be the case of the fragment from Montaigne's Essays (I, II: Of the Inconstancy of Our Actions), also previously included. This case will be labeled as Type S2.

Finally, the whole narrative text may be part of an argumentation. This happen when the narrative text is adduced as a

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1 Olmos (2013, pp.10, 11) also admits that the fictive character of a narrative is not a fundamental criterion in which basis a classification of the relationships between narrative and argumentation would be settled.

2 It might be tempting to define narrative through speech-acts as the product of performing exclusively fiction or non-fiction making speech-acts. However, given the presented theoretical frame, this wouldn't be correct: the representation of events that Genette and Prince mention may be performed through different kinds of speech-acts: expositives (describe, emphasize, affirm), commissives (promise, contract), etc. (Searle, 1979).

reason within the course of an argumentation. As the argumentative speech-act is conceived here as a second order speech-act complex, based on the speech-act of adducing and the one of concluding, it is possible to consider the macro speech-act that the narrative text constitutes as the speech-act of adducing, making it to act as a reason for some conclusion. The paradigmatic example of this situation is a classic fable, when the story is presented as a reason that justifies the conclusion settled explicitly through the moral. This one will be named as Type S3.

The presented way of considering narratives and argumentations as speech-acts, and the narrative and argumentative texts as sets of speech-acts mainly composed by narrative or argumentative speech-acts allows the possibility of analysing each of these structural types as follows:

In Type S1 situations, a character of the story is performing an argumentative speech-act. According to that, what actually appears on the text is the representation of an argumentative speech-act.

In Type S2 situations, the narrator of the story is performing an argumentative speech-act, along with the rest of speech-acts that compound her narration.

In Type S3 situations, the author is adducing the set of speech-acts that compound the narrative text as a reason, with the conventional illocutionary force of trying to justify certain conclusion, that may be explicit or not. As it was mentioned before, the more evident examples of this type are classic fables including an explicit moral. But there are more subtile examples. The compilation of stories The Red Notebook, by the writer Paul Auster, is composed by certain autobiographical stories. As an example, a fragment of chapter 7 is presented:

> Twelve years ago, my wife's sister went off to live in Taiwan. Her intention was to study Chinese (which she now speaks with breathtaking fluency) and to support herself by giving English lessons to native Chinese speakers in Taipei. That was approximately one year before I met my wife, who was then a graduate student at Columbia University. […]
> It is scarcely possible for two cities to be farther apart than Taipei and New York. They are at opposite ends of the earth, separated by a distance of more than ten thousand miles, and when it is day in one it is night in the other. As the two young women in Taipei marveled over the astounding connection they had just uncovered, they realized that their two sisters were probably asleep at the moment.

In an interview that the journalist Roberto Careaga made, for the Argentinian newspaper "La Tercera", to Paul Auster, he declared the

following: "That's why I wrote The Red Notebook: to show, through examples from my own life, how strange life is. We would have to be really stupid and blind to affirm that chance doesn't play a role […] There are happy consequences, and terrible ones. But we also have the ability of reasoning, taking decisions, have goals and plans. I'm interested in this tension"[3]. (Careaga, 2014) That is, Paul Auster would have narrated a series of facts in his book, adducing it as a reason to justify that the influence of chance is a key point in the development of our own life.

On the other hand, as the author and the narrator's voices often coincide, structural types might get overlapped sometimes. In order to illustrate this phenomenon, a fragment from Michel de Montaigne's Essays (I, I, XXX: Of Cannibals) where types S2 and S3 get overlapped is presented:

> When King Pyrrhus invaded Italy, having viewed and considered the order of the army the Romans sent out to meet him; "I know not," said he, "what kind of barbarians"[…] "these may be; but the disposition of this army that I see has nothing of barbarism in it."

Until this moment, the text has seemed exclusively composed by speech-acts of non-fiction making, which makes it a purely narrative text. However, it continues as follows:

> By which it appears how cautious men ought to be of taking things upon trust from vulgar opinion, and that we are to judge by the eye of reason, and not from common report.

Montaigne, as narrator, is adducing the first narrative piece of text in order to try to justify "how cautious men ought to be of taking things upon trust from vulgar opinion, and that we are to judge by the eye of reason, and not from common report". In a more explicit way: he is concatenating speech-acts: in the first place, speech-acts of narrating, and then, a speech-act of concluding. The compound of those two speech-acts makes the second order speech-act complex of arguing—where the speech-act of adducing is of a narrative nature.

3.2 Functional classification

As it was settled at the beginning of section 3, the proposed functional classification is based on the study of the roles—the functions—that

3 In Spanish in the original version. Translated by myself.

speech-acts of arguing play in narrative texts, and that speech-acts of narrating play in argumentative texts.

3.2.1 The role of narrative speech-acts in argumentative texts

On the basis of the previous definition of the argumentative text as the one mainly composed by argumentative speech-acts, the discussion about the roles that narrative speech-acts play in relation to these texts is discussed. This first functional type will be named as type F1.

Given the fact that it is modelled as a speech-act, argumentation presents, along with its illocutionary force (that is, trying to show that some conclusion is true), a perlocutionary force, as a function of the actual perlocutionary effect it provokes on its addressee, that is based on its capacity for inducing the same addressee to make the inferences associated to the argumentation. In order to reach this perlocutionary effect, the addresser has to make the addressee believe both the reason she is adducing and the inference that leads to the desired conclusion from the reason.

Narrative speech-acts in an argumentative text might act as rhetorical devices that provide dynamism, plausibility and vividness to to both the reason and the inference, and, as a consequence of that, increase the justificatory force of the argumentation. A narrative that presents an example about something that is been discussed may assure the existence of something by showing it within the frame of the story.

Montaigne's Essays provide again an example of this usage of narrative resources. As typical structure among the different essays collected on his books, Montaigne use to present, at the beginning of each piece, some topic he will try to justify through the stories he presents after that. This strategy can be seen in the following fragment, from chapter I, I, XXXI (That a man is soberly to judge of the divine ordinances):

> The true field and subject of imposture are things unknown, forasmuch as, in the first place, their very strangeness lends them credit, and moreover, by not being subjected to our ordinary reasons, they deprive us of the means to question and dispute them […]
>
> In a nation of the Indies, there is this commendable custom, that when anything befalls them amiss in any encounter or battle, they publicly ask pardon of the sun, who is their god, as having committed an unjust action, always imputing their good or evil fortune to the divine justice, and to that submitting their own judgment and reason.

In this fragment, the topic of discussion is presented, at first, through the title—then, it is explained along the first paragraph. It could be reconstructed in an argumentative form in the following way: "their very strangeness lends them credit, and moreover, by not being subjected to our ordinary reasons, they deprive us of the means to question and dispute them, therefore it is good to judge soberly of the divine ordinances". Across the following parts of the chapter, Montaigne provides examples in order to try to justify the conclusion of his argument, by doing so to the reasons and the inference.

3.2.2 The role of argumentative speech-acts in narrative texts

With respect to the function that argumentative speech-acts perform in narrative texts—that will be labelled as type F2—, two options can be considered. As introducing this kind of utterances in narrative texts, the author can wether try to represent them with rhetorical and non-argumentative intentions (type F2-a) or to try to induce the reader to perform certain inferences (type F2-b). Type F2-a is paradigmatic in relation with representations of argumentations by any character the author want to present as, for instance, evil, weak, ridiculous, eccentric, etc. An example of this usage can be seen on The Magic Mountain, by Thomas Mann, chapter 6:

> On the contrary, Naphta hastened to say. Disease was very human indeed. For to be man was to be ailing. Man was essentially ailing, his state of unhealthiness was what made him man. There were those who wanted to make him "healthy," to make him "go back to nature," when, the truth was, he never had been "natural." […] They talked of "humanity," of nobility — but it was the spirit alone that distinguished man, as a creature largely divorced from nature, largely opposed to her in feeling, from all other forms of organic life.

The conventional intention with which Thomas Mann introduced Naphta's argumentation is not to convince the reader of that that Naphta is defending, but to help her to create an idea of how Naphta must be: cynical, morbid, complicated, etc.

On the other hand, as it has been shown on Montaigne's Essays, the distance between the author of the text and its narrator can vanish, so the first one is in a position that allows him to argue directly through the text. In these cases, as argumentative speech-acts are not represented, but performed, they keep their typical perlocutionary force: being a tool to try to induce the addressee to make the same inference that the addresser is making on his speech-act. This inference is where the rhetoric import appears, as also happens when the author himself,

without any narrator-overlap, argues through the story, as was mentioned before in relation to classic fables or the quoted text by Paul Auster.

3.3 Alternative proposals

On his article "On novels and arguments", Gilbert Plumer (2015) presents some results about the relationships between narrative (in the particular form of novels) and argumentation, with which he tries to justify his proposal about the process of reading a novel.

Despite his main interest concentrates specifically on novels, Plumer distinguish two different types of "narrative arguments", extracted from the work of Ayers (2010), which are a story offering an argument (P1), and a structural type of argument (P2).

Plumer explains that P1 is based on narratives through which creation its author argues, and defends that the argument that constitutes the product of this argumentation can be extracted from the novel. With respect to type P2, it consist on narratives that, despite the fact that arguments and narratives are different kinds of objects, their external structures coincide.

The proposed structural classification of the relationships between narrative and argumentation contains Plumer's distinction. Likewise, Plumer doesn't consider any functional feature in relation with his classification of the relationships between narrative and argumentation—any mention to functions performed by argumentative or narrative speech-acts (or a similar concept) appears on his work. Situations like the presented in Montaigne's Essays, where a narrative is adduced as a reason in an argumentative process (functional type F1) couldn't be described through his model.

Although it shares with Plumer's proposal a Platonic concept of argument, Olmos (2013) distinguish different types of relationships between narrative and argumentation, following a more pragmatic approach. In this way, Olmos explores the possible ways of attributing argumentative character to certain narratives. The first type of relation between narrative and argumentation that she presents is: narratives in which eventually explicit arguments are exposed. The second type of relation between narrative and argumentation refers to narratives "within a context in which, there being facts under discussion, the only visible support or evidence presented for a certain version of them, would be the manifest plausibility of the narrative sequence"(Olmos, 2013: p.13). Distinction based on distinguishing between reproducing an argumentation or performing it, nor presenting an argumentation with rhetorical intentions or just using it to invite to infer certain conclusions couldn't be considered by using Olmos' model.

4. IN DEFENCE OF A FUNCTIONAL ACCOUNT

The thesis defended here doesn't state that a functional analysis — based on the study of the functions performed by narrative or argumentative elements acting in relation with argumentative or narrative structures; in our approach that corresponds to narrative speech-acts in an argumentative text, or by argumentative speech-acts in narrative texts — is, by itself and in solitude, more accurate or preferable than a structural one—that is, one based on form relations among narrative and argumentative elements—. As opposed to that, what is defended here is that structural analysis in exclusive are not able to describe properly all the plausible relations that can hold between narrative and argumentation—and, as it has been illustrated in section 3.3., historically, this one has been the predominant account in which analysis have been based. But a precise functional analysis, combined with form appreciations provided by a structural one, may present the scope and precision needed to successfully describe and analyse these relations.

The perviously mentioned "virtues of functional accounts" take relevance in a particular context: literary analysis, in relation with both literary criticism and hermeneutics. The bottom line that is being pursued in this article consist on being able to get the whole meaning of a certain narrative literary text, in the more integral way—through exploring the relationships of the narrative text with argumentation.

4.1 An application: analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita

It has already been stated that the functional account allows a finer and more precise argumentative analysis of narratives, specially in relation with literary ones.

For instance, and depending on certain pragmatic factors, a type S1 situation, in which an argumentation performed by a character is quoted inside a narrative text, may function as a speech-act indirectly performed by the author (through the character) or as a rhetoric device trying to produce a specific effect on the attendee. An example of that phenomenon is based on Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita. A fragment of chapter 13 is shown then:

> As she strained to chuck the core of her abolished apple into the fender, her young weight, her shameless innocent shanks and round bottom, shifted in my tense, tortured, surreptitiously laboring lap
> [...]

> The implied sun pulsated in the supplied poplars; we were fantastically and divinely alone; I watched her, rosy, gold-dusted, beyond the veil of my controlled delight, unaware of it, alien to it, and the sun was on her lips, and her lips were apparently still forming the words of the Carmen-barmen ditty that no longer reached my consciousness. Everything was now ready. The nerves of pleasure had been laid bare. The corpuscles of Krause were entering the phase of frenzy. The least pressure would suffice to set all paradise loose. I had ceased to be Humbert the Hound, the sad-eyed degenerate cur clasping the boot that would presently kick him away. I was above the tribulations of ridicule [...]

Nabokov is playing with the duality between the author and the narrator. By making Humbert narrate the reader how Lolita moved on his lap as she threw the apple, etc. he uses the narration of these facts in order to try to justify Humbert's own conclusion: "I was above the tribulations of ridicule". The first interpretation for this procedure is that Nabokov is intending to make the reader believe that it is justified that Humbert feels this way (1), while the second one consists on creating a sort of ambivalence between the closeness that may arise between the reader and Humbert as she follows his reasonings and experiences, and the rejection that it may provoke us to know it (2).

This distinction could not be made by using only a structural account—according to the presented model, both interpretations correspond to type S2 overlapped with S1—, but it would be done by using functional criteria: the interpretation (1) can be identified as a case of type F2-b—the author is preparing the reader a solid ground in which basis she can infer conclusions about Humbert—, while interpretation (2) as a case of type F2-a—the rhetorical effect of presenting the argumentation enhances the rhetorical force of the piece—.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has been written with the first objective of presenting a study, as systematic as possible, of the relationships between narrative and argumentation.

In order to do that, two classifications have been developed. The first one is based on structural criteria, i.e., formal features attending to the way in which an argumentative speech-act can appear on a narrative text. The second classification is based on functional features. The rhetorical dimension that representations of certain argumentations in certain context may exhibit is studied.

The second objective of this paper consists on defending the pertinence of using functional classifications in order to properly understand narrative texts in relation to its argumentative character. This thesis shouldn't be understood as a defence of the exclusive pertinence of using functional classifications, but to the one of combining functional and structural —that has been, from an historical point of view, the most predominant in academic literature—criteria.

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