

What role does the narrative voice play in the creation of a text's meaning?



This essay will discuss the important role that has the narrative voice in the meaning of a text using as a point of reference two important works from two different authors. The first work will be the poem, 'The Rape of the Lock', written by the Augustan famous poet, Alexander Pope; and the short fiction, 'Araby', written by James Joyce. Moreover, they will be analyzed in order to have a conclusion about the role that has in different types of literary genres and how the narrative voice helps to develop the whole work. This aspect creates a different way of perspective depending on the different way in which these texts are written.

Firstly, the narrative voice is considered as a process and result of telling about something. Another relevant aspect founded in the narrative voice, that is, the person who tells about the facts that are happening, it is considered the narrator who is the most important figure of a narration. Every narration is modified and ruled by a narrator, also in which it can differ from different sort of narrators. The narrative voice is, in this case, the voice of the narrator. The perspective of the narrator modified through the narrative voice the way in which the reader accesses to the story. In addition, throughout this voice, the narrator could be the protagonist of the story or only a testimony of the facts that tell about, for instance, without entering the story. Depending on the sort of narrative voice the story can be seen from a side or another point of view. Sometimes, when the narrative voice is inside the story the audience see another perspective of the story. Also, in some cases the importance of a narrator in a text is more relevant than the content of the story, that's why the way in which the narrator's voice is telling the story can give us her point of view. Another relevant

factor that it is pointed out is that the importance of tone of this narrative voice, because of that this satire makes us think about the emotional behavior's narrator between the argument and the characters of the story. This tone makes an empathic effect in which we see the thoughts and feelings; in addition, it can change the story and the point of view from the author wants to write about.

These two works are narrated by someone because of that, it is so relevant the narrative voice here. They have some similarities between them because the first one is a short story fiction and the second one, is a story narrated in the structure of a large poem. The mock-epic poem consists of a large poem written with some aspect of epic style. This factor makes that the narrative style provokes the reader the knowledge about the consciousness and the style of writing, therefore the reader feels how the facts are told because these people have experience on it. The main important thing to highlight here, it is that is a narrated poem and it is unusual in a poem style. The way of writing and expressing the topic about the poem is about, gives the author a higher position as a consolidated poet. In the case of, ' The Rape of the Lock', by Alexander Pope, it is written in a mock-heroic narrative that the author uses to criticize the society of the 18th century. In particular, he analyzed the social conventions of the aristocracy, ' the beau-monde', that it means the fashionable world and the society of the elite. The poem is constituent by 5 cantos or parts in which the story is distributed. Then this word gives us the meaning of this narrative because canto means the song, a narrative song, beyond a doubt, it is a short story as the other one but in this case, it is in a poem style. In addition, the use of descriptions during the

<https://assignbuster.com/what-role-does-the-narrative-voice-play-in-the-creation-of-a-texts-meaning/>

whole poem shows the reader the different way in which this author wrote this sort of mock-epic poem, for instance, in forth canto when he is describing the palace and showing the ' power' of the society. He also highlights the epic poetry and his cantos, speeches of the characters, epic similes, descriptions of the battles and supernatural elements trying to help the reader to enter in the story. This poem uses some classic works in order to satirize them; for example, the comparison between the Helen of Troya's rape, here is the rape of the lock; Enea's journey to the Tiber river is like Belinda's journey to the Tamesis river and the way in which the Aquiles' shield is described is represented by the Belinda's dressing.

On the other hand, ' Araby', employs a first-person narrator being closed in order to portray the describing the surrounding world. According to Joseph Kestner, '[...] is a retrospective autodiegetic narrative by the adult whom the young man of the story became', (Kestner, 2010) it clarifies that it is a testimony of a real story told as an excellent use of a first-person narrative. He tells about the passage of the childhood to the adolescence when new interests begin to draw attention to him. Also, it is written in the past because he is telling about his feelings, especially his bad and good memories at the same time. They could be some thoughts and impression that confuses the character and later he found it the love, his first love. The main character of the story that the reader does not ever find out his name. The protagonist was in love with his neighbor's sister and he tries his best to show her his love, but it is impossible. He suffers a series of disappointments and through the narrator, it can be seen the value that the protagonist gives to everything that happens around him. The main character, acting as the

narrator, shows her way of seeing things, since a romantic way of life and also a religious influence that affects him.

Taking into account some aspects comparing the two works, the narrative voice of the poem gives the reader an end, a closed end because it tells the whole story during the five cantos finishing when the curl is going to the sky. The author tells the story from the beginning and with a closed ending since he is reproducing a story that has been told to him. In the short fiction, it has not a close ending, because of that, the reader feels freely in order to imagine what will happen next. This makes invent things without knowing beyond what the work presents at the beginning. As it has been said before, sometimes the way in which the story is told, it is more important than the plot itself, for example, we do not find a complex plot in the story, in contrast to the way of telling the insignificant story by the narrator showing the audience his feelings and thoughts. James Joyce does not want to make a happy ending in the short fiction since he wants to show the reality of life and the suffering of a person. Furthermore, this technique can make the reader imagine how he wants to finish the story, it depends on us if we want the character to end his suffering or not. The author ends the story with an epiphany in which the protagonist discovers his disillusion; he does not like the place where he has arrived to, everything is 'closed' for him, he does not keep the promise, then he finds himself in an uncertainty and furious moment. I will use this quote from the short fiction, 'Araby', to discuss this last thought, 'Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger', (Joyce,

1914). In both works, many times the reader feels free to interpret in his own way thanks to the narrative voice.

Analyzing the content of the poem's parts, during the first and the second canto, the orator makes a series of questions to the girl that he wants to be answered. The following cantos the orator uses the method of descriptions to show the reader how appearances are more important than moral principles in this society. Meanwhile, in forth canto it can be shown Belinda's anxiety because of the loss of her curl, she also shows symbols of anger and also hopelessness, it is shown in this quote of the poem,

" Forever cursed be this detested day, Which snatched my best, my favotire curl away! "

At the final point of the poem in the fifth canto, Belinda makes a discourse in which she wants to highlight his intentions. The way in which this poem is written that it's the rhyming heroic couplet affects the reader in order to provoke to the reader a very pleasant and melodious reading and listening experience. At the end of the poem in the fifth canto, the woman says some words criticizing what the author wants to transmit throughout the whole poem since a ' hidden' perspective. It could be seen as a reflection of the author's voice represented by the woman's monologue. Comparing the two works, the first one was created in his wits, that is in Pope's mind, not in his soul. He wanted to not expose his soul, he wanted to write having a public rather than a private function. The way of telling facts of the stories of the two works expresses that they could be real facts, it does not to be something invented. ' The rape of the lock', is based on real events that

pope had related to him by a friend, problems that a family has with another family because of a love affair of the two sons. This poem was written by the author after a request to achieve the reconciliation of the two family's fight. In this case, we also have to pay attention to the narrative voice since in some aspect it provokes an erroneous interpretation, reason why it did not obtain what it was proposed with this one. On the other hand, the author of the poem wants to transmit by the orator of the text how the text is made by a representation of the first-person narrator as the protagonist of the story, in which he also represents a local figure presented of the context where the author was living.

Through the poem, it is demonstrated a clear social protest that can't be appreciated in such a clear way in the other work. However, when the character arrives at the fair, everyone shows superiority to him, that is, the same difference between classes that we find in the poem. It is shown by this part of the text 'Araby', 'They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder', (Joyce, 1914). During some moments, the narration of the poem shows us a fun part of the work, there the title gives an advance saying that it is going to be a comic-heroic poem but on the other hand, it might give the impression that the importance that women gives to the loss of the beauty, in this case, the loss of the lock. In Canto IV, it can be expressed how the orator highlights the annoyance of the girl,

" E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,

As thou, sad virgin! for thy ravish'd hair. "

This factor makes the reader see the feelings of Arabella, her annoyance, and also the problems that families of those times have.

Another factor of this assumption poem theme could be that the use of a prologue before the beginning of a story. This poem also has a prologue directed to Arabella Fermor that is the female character that suffered the cut of her hair; in contrast of that in, 'Araby', it can not be seen any prologue, then the story is introduced in a direct way. The prologue is written for the purpose of orientating the reader into the reading. The prologue of the poem is written in a direct way by the author, we can deduce that he is writing in a first-person narrative voice as in Joyce's short fiction. The first-person orator shows the audience his purpose and intention with this whole poem.

Furthermore, he is asking for woman's permission in order to explain some themes that are inside the poem and he says goodbye her considering himself like as a server. In this poem, he tells about the value that has the poem and he also highlights that it is only written to Arabella. One of the important aspects that help the narrative voice when narrating an event, in this poem, in particular, is the use of an opulent language. This element elevates the poem significance as it tells an event that has little importance and therefore needs another resource to counteract. Contrast to last work, it will be different since sometimes the narrator uses a complex language and it does not usual in a child language. This poem was written by the author after a request to achieve the reconciliation of the two family's fight. In this case, we also have to pay attention to the narrative voice since in some aspect it provokes an erroneous interpretation, reason why it did not obtain what it was proposed with this one. The same title of the poem may cause

confusion because of the use of the word, 'rape', it is suggesting a sexual meaning for some readers.

According to the aforementioned arguments, it can realize with the short fiction that this is no importance the longitude of a work to be a relevant piece of art that readers love it. In contrast of that, the poem is too long compared with the normal style of a poem, but in this case, we notice that the author uses a poem to tell the audience a problem of love criticizing the society in a way. The narrative voice in both works is one of the main aspects to understand the whole stories, it can be impossible to understand a work without perceiving the role of the narrative voice.

References

- *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (9th or 10th ed.)
- Coulthard, A. R. "Joyce's 'Araby.'" *The Explicator* 52. 2 (1994): 97. Web.
- Skau, Michael, and Donald L. Cassidy. "Joyce's Araby." *The Explicator* 35. 2 (1976): 5-6. Web.
- Kestner, Joseph. "James Joyce's "Araby" on Film." *Joyce Studies Annual*, vol. 2010, 20120, pp. 241-246. *Project MUSE*, doi: 10.1353/joy. 2011. 0002
- Sharma, K. N. "The Rape of the Lock by Alexander Pope: Critical Analysis." *BachelorandMaster*, 2 Sep. 2014, bachelorandmaster.com/britishandamericanpoetry/the-rape-of-the-lock-critical-analysis.html.