

Reporting formulae and turn-taking devices in Romancenovels

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ABSTRACT: A stereotyped and recurrent defining feature which can be recognized in sentimental or Romance novels is a prototypical dialogical style. The aim of this paper is to analyze the verbal interaction between the characters in the novel *The Explosion of Love* (1982) by Barbara Cartland. It shows the following features: a) an abusive use of verbal diction processes; b) an extensive use of verbal processes that denote a gestural content; and c) a limitation of both forms to a very restricted dialogue scheme. We believe that the frequency of use of these particular structures is a defining characteristic of a discourse that attempts to approach a certain type of average reader, consumer of this narrative genre.

KEYWORDS: Romance novels; dialogue exchanges; reporting formulae; turn-taking devices; projection of locutions and ideas

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I. INTRODUCTION

The genre of the romantic or romance novel, as it is called, is a genre that has traditionally been written by women and for women (like Corín Tellado, Victoria Holt, Barbara Cartland, Emma Darcy or Johanna Lindsay).

. Hence, it has also been called "women's fiction".

These novels typically deal with a great diversity of stories which can be read by different types of people, but all of them tend to have common characteristics.

If we study the language of scientific or technical articles, and we are interested in knowing how they are articulated from a linguistic point of view, there must also be an interest in studying how novels that are "devoured" by the general public are structured linguistically. If we are interested in a specific language aimed at minorities or specialized groups, we must also consider that this is also a language for a group, although for a very large group. Where does its success reside? What are its language strategies?

Walter Nash's *Language in Popular Fiction* (1990) is a classic and very interesting book on this topic. According to him, some of the main characteristics of the genre of sentimental novel are:

1.- The **availability** of this type of fiction: Once a narration of this type is read, "we do not want it again, although we may want more" (1990: 2). To a classic book, Nash explains, you can come back again and again; to this type of fiction, however, the way to return is to acquire another novel.

The amount of sales is astonishing, incredible, which in itself justifies the need to analyze a genre so required by such a wide audience.

Perfection does have its merits ... They are shown in the ability to tell a tale, to devise its episodes with such skill that the reader often cannot bear to put the book aside, to touch on common sympathies, to understand the judgements and desires of ordinary people, to offer the keen experience of danger, of anxiety, of love, of sorrow, of triumph, but all without the intruding shadow of the actual, without obliging us to quit the Illyrian trance, so to speak, or the hermetic fold of the airport lounge. (Nash, 1990: 2-3)

2.- Unlike other works of greater pretensions, this type of fiction has **few philosophical pretensions**. It is aimed at all types of readers and, therefore, does not entertain itself in terrible complexities that have to make the reader/receiver reread or reason thoroughly: "It can be quickly read and almost as quickly forgotten" (Nash, 1990: 3)

3.- In popular fiction there are rather **fixed, simplified conventions**, as opposed to other types of narratives that make use of conventions, but present different levels of complexity and originality in the treatment of the elements. In other words, the readers almost always expect what will happen, as in the case of soap operas, which are totally predictable; there is not much inferential work left for the reader to make.

Román Gubern (1977: 144-145) explains that, in "information theory", the more likely a phenomenon is, the less informative it is, and vice versa. Quoting Gillo Dorfles, he explains that the unexpectedness of the message will diminish its aesthetic (but also 'informative') value. In spite of this, the success of the romance novel is absolutely predictable and psychologically simple, quite possibly due to the reader's tendency to

identify with the protagonist, or, in Bertold Brecht's terms, the reader's empathy. In these novels the reader is pleased thinking that she/he is like the protagonist or will have that success.

II. ROMANTIC STORIES FOR WOMEN

In Romance stories the reader meets the image of a conventionally true womanliness or true femininity. What is more, the reader "must" recognize through the protagonist of these stories the role traditionally assigned to women. She is typically active, intelligent, etc., but obedient and submissive, and finally marries and creates a home.

There are thousands of variations, but all roads lead to Rome, or in Nash's words: "All roads lead to Home" (Nash, 1990: 4).

In these novels a portrait is made of women in society, of their place in human relationships and of the aspirations that are legitimate and desirable to them (1990: 22).

On the other hand, the ideology that underlies these novels is evidently reflected in the dialogues. And, according to Nash (1990: 23), this ideological vision of the domestic, obedient and successful woman is predominant in the stories and controls the construction of the narrative through recurring stylistic resources. Among the resources, dialogue is one of the key pieces in this kind of fiction.

Amorós in *Sociología de unanovelarosa* (1968) devoted a special attention to this type of popular romantic novel in which sentimentality predominates and which is typically addressed to a female audience. In the introduction to his book he justified the need to study this genre not only for the literary interest it deserves, but also for its sociological interest, given the large mass of people who approach this type of reading. He cited as an example the fact that Spanish author Corín Tellado's romantic novels were published once a week, or the fact that a photo-novel was published every fifteen days and each edition had a hundred thousand copies. It is a very important amount, if we take into account that novels by established authors (such as *The Time of Silence* by Luis Martín Santos or *Three Sad Tigers* by Carlos Cabrera Infante) had 5,000 copies.

Their popularity, among other things, justifies the approach to this type of works. As Amorós indicated, the seriousness or not of an issue depends on the person who considers it and in literary criticism, discourse analysis, etc., the seriousness does not depend so much on the author or the chosen subject as on the way of treating it.

The well-known author Guillermo Cabrera Infante participated in a course held at the Complutense University of Madrid in which authors of sentimental novels such as Corín Tellado or Delia Fiallo, author of famous soap operas, participated. According to him, a "romance" is a romantic situation that is often brief but intense. It is the name that was applied in Great Britain in the seventeenth century to what was later called a novel. Curiously, it was originally cultivated by a woman, Aphra Behn. Her novel, *Oroonoko* (1688), shared the characteristics of the most violent Elizabethan theater. A romance is also the first British modern novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe.

The Romance novel (or "pink novel" in Spanish) arises clearly from romanticism, and not only for the subjects, but for their modes of expression. The sentimental novel is nothing more than a scion of the delivery novel or pamphlet. It originated in France and its most obvious cultivators were Balzac and Dumas, and in Britain, not the Brontë sisters, but Dickens and Thackeray. These are its top authors.

The pamphlet owes its boom to modernized reproduction techniques in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, its direct heirs are the radio and the television.

Consequently, this massive phenomenon is called "the romantic revolution".

III. ANALYSIS OF THE EXPLOSION OF LOVE (1982)

Barbara Cartland's *The Explosion of Love* (1982), like thousands and thousands of such novels, tells the adventures and misadventures of a girl who obviously ends up in a very convenient marriage bond. The beginning of the novel is very eloquent: "Princess Marie-Celeste walked through the long passages of the Palace towards the Music Room". (p.7) Almost immediately, and as seems to be the rule in these novels, the first dialogue appears.

The protagonist is far from being vulgar; this fact is reflected in her name, which perfectly suits her 'high' personality. Her name, "Princess Marie-Celeste" (p.7), becomes the main theme, since they are the first words of the novel.

The name is in turn related to the idea of the protagonist's virginal innocence (celestial = heaven). A few pages later (p.9), the reader is informed that she was baptized as Marie-Celeste Adelaide Suzanne. However, her sister and friends call her Zaza (an original and alliterative name that reminds us of protagonists such as Mimi, Lulu, Fifi, etc.).

The lover is presented to us as an idealist symbolist poet named Pierre, Pierre Beauvais; however, in this type of novel the protagonist's counterpart cannot be at a lower level in hierarchy and turns out to be Prince Aristide de Valoire.

As can be seen, the names are used as labels showing the characters' main traits. It is the case of Countess Glucksburg, who is in charge of attending to the princess. She is "autocratic, arrogant and rude to inferiors, and submissive, subservient and obsequious to her superiors" (p.7). Thus, her hardness is reflected in her name, which comes from German.

III.1. The role of Women.

This novel shows how the protagonist tries to escape the typical role of the woman of her time. She is an active, very intelligent as well as beautiful woman, who thinks that women must escape the typical servile and submissive role.

There are several passages claiming for equality.

For instance, before an arranged marriage, Zaza's teacher advises her:

"Her life when she married him would be very much the same as it was now, with the exception that instead of having her father ordering her about, she would have a husband to do so "... **"You must strike a blow for freedom.** You are only a woman, but a woman as clever as you could unfurl the flag of freedom!" (p.15)

"It is intolerable"... "that women should still be treated as chattels! His Royal Highness says 'you must do this', and 'you must do that', and you obey him. Why? **Because you are a woman!**" (p.17)

"We will find freedom! Freedom even for a woman!" (p.36)

Anyway, that 'hint' of desire for liberation is framed within limits. In these novels there is a high level of moralization and the author at the end boasts about it:

HE (Pierre): "...if you love me, then love will make you understand that freedom does not consist only of rebelling against the order of things. Freedom exists in love because love gives willingly and wholeheartedly". (p.159)

SHE (Zaza): "All I want is your love", she cried, "and as long as you love me, I will do ... anything you want. **I will obey you,** but please ... never stop loving me... because that I could not ... bear".

"I shall always love you", Pierre said gently, "and because I love you, I have to protect and look after you".

"And because I love you", Zaza said, "**I will do ... whatever you tell to do**".

"...Oh, Pierre... teach me to be sensible and wise... teach me to be ... everything you want as your wife." (p.160)

It is quite obvious that a woman can be sensible without the need for a man to teach her.

III.2. The Rhetoric of Dialogue: reporting formulae and turn-taking.

Since the first English "romances", the first translations from their French sources, the authors have drawn their characters through word and action. In the following centuries, the characters of the romances continued to be presented largely by the words they used.

As Ann Dobyns points out when she talks about the rhetoric of dialogue in her book *The Voices of Romance* (1992), one of the discoveries by critics who use stylistic analysis has been that fictional characters are portrayed not only by actions, moral attitudes, etc., but also by the grammar and rhetoric they employ.

According to Dobyns (1992: 27), dialogue is potentially one of the most productive ways of developing ideas, since dialogue is one of the main means of causing credibility. What she points out as a characteristic of romance can also be applied to the fictional novel.

In this novel as in others similar novels of its kind, the dialogue constitutes practically the framework of the narrative (if we compare it with novels by authors of the literary canon such as Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973) or Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), to name but a few, the percentage of occurrence of this direct style in the form of dialogue interaction is vastly higher).

But, in addition, as Nash (1990) rightly pointed out, more than with dialogues, we find "duologues", since in the vast majority of exchanges there are exclusively two characters; for obvious reasons, on most occasions, the two protagonists:

EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE CHARACTERS:	
ZAZA-PIERRE	15 long dialogues
ZAZA-PROFESSOR	15
ZAZA-RACHEL	7
ZAZA-COUNTESS	3
ZAZA-PIERRE-PROFESSOR	3
ZAZA-PROFESSOR-DOCTOR	3
ZAZA-HER MOTHER	2
ZAZA-CONCIERGE	2
ZAZA-DUKE	1
ZAZA-DOCTOR	1
ZAZA-COUNT	1
ZAZA-CABBY	1
ZAZA-SOLDIER	1
ZAZA-WAITER	1
ZAZA-FRIEND	1
DUCHESS-DUKE	1
ZAZA-BARMAN	1
PROFESSOR-PIERRE	1
PROFESSOR-MEN	1
PROFESSOR-MEN-PIERRE	1

Table 1. Exchanges between the characters in *The Explosion of Love* (1982).

In the novel that concerns us, we find **827** interventions in direct style in just 150 pages of dialogical interactions.

The normal thing is that the two main characters (Zaza and Pierre) carry the weight of all the conversations, because, after all, in this novel what seems to be of interest is the resolution of their idyll; the rest is absolutely secondary in the plot. The other characters are a mere scenario; all the rest is a setting that other figurative actors walk, which is not relevant.

There is usually a third character a little more important than the rest of the characters, usually a relative or guardian of her. In this case it is his old and very educated teacher.

In this novel the percentage of interventions is as follows:

SHE: 45% of shifts

HE: 26% of shifts

Her Professor: 17% of shifts

TURNS TAKEN BY THE CHARACTERS:						
ZAZA (SHE)	366/827	44,25%	70,49% of the moves (583/827) by 2 characters	86,69% of the moves (717/827) by 3 characters		
PIERRE (HE)	217/827	26,24%				
THE PROFESSOR	134/827	16,20%				
RACHEL	29/827					
THE DOCTOR	20/827					
GRAND DUKE (Zaza's father)	7/827	12,45% of the moves				
COUNTESS G	6/827					
GRAND COUNTESS (Zaza's mother)	4/827	(103/827)				
EMILE POUGET (the bad guy)	4/827	by 35 characters				
COUNT	3/827					
CONCIERGE	3/827					
WAITER	1/827					
CABBY						
A FOOTMAN	8					
A FRIEND	6					
UNNAMED	5					

PEOPLE (someone, man...)	a	
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Table 2. Turns taken by the characters in *The Explosion of Love* (1982).

The two protagonists' turns together account for 71% of the character's interventions in the novel. Among the three main characters, the two protagonists plus her teacher, account for 87% of the turns. The rest of the characters, who are 35, have to share only 12% of the interventions, which amounts to a simple, usually very short phrase or sentence.

On most occasions, only two characters intervene in a verbal exchange. The weight of the novel is carried by the leading couple, Zaza and Pierre, and, thirdly, by Zaza's teacher. A rather curious fact is that the interlocutors await their turn correctly even if they are in the middle of a heated discussion or a hurried situation (**ordered turn-taking**) and rarely leave the phrases broken or express illogical or poorly organized phrases.

Despite imitating everyday conversation through the use of habitual expressions, a likelihood of dialogue and ordinary, real conversation is usually not achieved; it is "too tidy to be true".

Another relevant characteristic of these exchanges is the fact that, if the reader had something to infer, the author would give her/him the work done, because everything appears clearly explained. One of the most visible features is the persistent accompaniment of the interventions by a "speech-reporting tag" ("she told him full of fear; he muttered self-assured", etc.). They are used to endow the dialogue with vivacity and activity, although they tend to be rather excessive.

Virtually all the turns in the conversation are accompanied by these expressions, as well as in the beginning and end of the conversation. The characters' gestures, diction form, attitude, etc. are described in these turns.

In this novel there are almost 800 cases of "reporting formulae" with illocution verbs and 27 cases with thought verbs. In total, 62 different verbs are used to report words or thoughts.

NUMBER OF LOCUTIONS QUOTED WITH:				NUMBER OF IDEAS QUOTED WITH:	
SAY	393	INVITE	1	THINK	12
REPLY	97	PROMISE	1	TELL ONESELF	7
ASK	83	ADMIT	1	CALL (mentally)	2
ANSWER	26	BOAST	1	DECIDE	1
EXCLAIM	21	GROAN	1	SAY (a voice in her mind)	1
ENQUIRE	21	COMMAND	1	WONDER	1
AGREE	17	SNAP	1	MURMUR (thinking)	1
GO ON	16	ARGUE	1	ASK	1
CRY	13	RECITE	1	WHISPER	1
ADD	11	URGE	1		
QUESTION	11	SIGH	1		
WHISPER	8	FLASH	1		
MURMUR	8	BREATHE	1		
EXPLAIN	6	CONCEDE	1		
PROTEST	5	SOB	1		
REMARK	5	APOLOGISE	1		
BEGIN	4	HISS	1		
BEG	3	REASON	1		
RETORT	3	CONTINUE	1		
"SMILE"	3	INTERRUPT	1		
"LAUGH"	3	GIGGLE	1		
SUGGEST	3	INSTRUCT	1		
DECLARATION	3	BOOM	1		
INSIST	2	ECHO	1		
SHOUT	2	CALL OUT	1		
APPROVE	2	PARRY	1		
REPEAT	2	PLEAD	1		
		FIND thevoice	1		
		COME thequestion	1		
PROJECTION OF LOCUTIONS			TOTAL: 800	PROJECTION OF IDEAS	TOTAL: 27

Table 3. Projection of locutions and ideas by the characters.

On many occasions locutions and ideas (in terms of Halliday, 1985; 2004) are accompanied by adverbs and prepositional complements that still make the situation clearer. They could be compared to "stage directions."

Another remarkable fact is that all the verbs of thought for the projection of ideas are referred to the protagonist, Zaza, the only character of whom we know the thoughts and whose perspective is transmitted to the reader. In other words, the narration is presented from **Zaza's point of view**.

A large number of verbs of diction or "reporting formulae" curiously contain gestural information: "she moaned, she gave a little laugh ...".

The fact that the diction processes are accompanied by gestures serves, in turn, to reinforce the archetypal character of the characters.

-“she pleaded” (p.121)
-“she added pleadingly” (p.28)
“she said in a small/low/hesitating voice, in a voice that was hardly above a whisper, beneath her breath...with a (little) smile, with a little burst of conscience...” (pp. 13, 14, 29, 40, 41, 73, 85, 89, 92, 93, 106, 112, 126, 139...)
-“she said quickly” (pp. 40, 43, 70, 74 78, 83, 85, 92, 93, 106...)
“she said apprehensively /meekly/ wistfully/ lightly/ breathlessly/ admiringly/gratefully...” (pp.49, 63, 86, 97...)
-“she spoke with passionate intensity/ in a dreamy voice” (pp. 84, 133...)
-“she gave a little cry/laugh/exclamation/sigh... of excitement/ sheer happiness/ of delight/ of relief...” (pp. 21, 43, 153, 157...)
-“she exclaimed in dismay” (p.49)
-“she replied passionately” (p.110)
-“she asked tentatively/somewhat helplessly/in a frightened voice” (pp. 29, 46, 106)
-“she could hardly whisper the words” (p. 128), “she only whispered the words” (p.109)
-“she could hardly breathe his name” (p.152)
-“she cried without thinking what she had done” (p.111)
“she clapped her hands” (p.76)

-“he spoke in an ecstatic tone” (p.36). “he spoke the words almost as if they were a vow (p.160)
-“he replied in a normal voice” (p.39)
-“he gave a groan as he added...” (p.50)
-“he questioned raising his eyebrows” (p.55)
-“he said firmly/ quietly/ perceptively/ consolingly/ gently.../ in a quiet but clear voice” (pp.34, 59, 78, 85, 93, 160...)
-“he asked in his deep voice/ with an almost solemn note in his voice” (pp. 108, 109, 152, 156...)

-“**the professor said approvingly/ sharply/ in a reassuring tone**” (pp. 28, 39, 41)
-“**the professor asked a little cynically**” (p.55, 76)
-“**the concierge said in a fatherly manner...**” (p.122)

When the protagonist speaks, she does it according to what can be expected from a totally "feminine" lady: she speaks in a soft voice and almost whispering, in a broken voice, often fearful and also passionate as a little girl. She is also the one who whispers or murmurs softly: "she whispered, she murmured ...".

On the contrary, he remains serene and immutable in the face of problems.

All projected mental processes correspond to the protagonist (Zaza, or Princess Marie-Celeste).

Likewise, reinforcing the archetypal character of the characters, it is she who, according to these diction processes or gestures, acts submissively and supposedly "feminine", while the protagonist (or any other male character) intervenes in the scene; "she cried, she pleaded, she begged, she sobbed, she apologized" or "she giggled, she smiled, she laughed ...".

We also observe that she is attributed an inquisitive character, she is the one who asks (On 62 occasions with 'ask', 'enquire' or 'question', compared to 25 of the male protagonist).

All this is seen more clearly in the adjuncts (circumstances) that accompany the diction processes; normally in the form of participle clause or manner adverb.

Another characteristic worth mentioning is the excessive repetition, perhaps due to the type of readers the novel is addressed to, in an attempt to make the work more understandable.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although the boundaries between literature and subliterate, or between literature within the canon and outside it, is not clear (Amorós, 1974: 8 ff), because they tend to be relative and historical, however, we can perceive obvious differences in quality.

The breach between literature in and out the cannon for reasons of quality - and quality according to group criteria - has had curious rectifications over time. For instance, The Decameron was considered as subliterate, and Don Quixote did not seem to have had many access facilities to Parnassus in its time. In the fifteenth century, the Marquis de Santillana refers to romances as works with which "people of low and servile condition" are content.

Whatever our opinion, the truth is that a serious study of a more or less serious discourse (as each one thinks) will undoubtedly serve us to discover "historical techniques and mechanisms that will even make us understand better the "rhetoric" of very high quality works." (Nash, 1990: 12)

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