«I AM MYSELF THE MATTER OF MY BOOK»: THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE ESSAYISTIC-ARGUMENTATIVE GENRE[1]

«Yo mismo soy la materia de mi libro»: la evolución histórica del género ensayístico-argumentativo

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ABSTRACT: The current work seeks to explore the development of the essay in western culture as a means of reflecting the identity of the author. In order to analyse said evolution, we draw on a model of literary text which establishes a basic distinction between the «world of the author» (encompassing the lyrical and argumentative literary genres) and the «world of the characters» (embracing the narrative and dramatic literary genres). The proposed model allows us to analyse the evolution of the essayistic-argumentative forms based

on traditional rhetorical discourse, and draws a distinction between essayistic-argumentative forms which may be attributed directly to the author and those which may not due to their being expressed through fictional characters.

Key words: Evolution of the essay; World of the author; World of the characters; Rhetorical discourse; Fictional essay; Non-fictional essay.

RESUMEN: En este trabajo se pretende analizar el desarrollo del ensayo en la cultura occidental como una manera de plasmar la identidad del autor. Para analizar dicha evolución, nos serviremos de un modelo del texto literario que establece una distinción básica entre el «mundo del autor» (en el que se incluyen los géneros literarios lírico y argumentativo) y el «mundo de los personajes» (donde se inscriben los géneros literarios narrativos y dramáticos). El modelo propuesto permite analizar la evolución de las formas ensayístico-argumentativas a partir de los discursos retóricos tradicionales, así como distinguir entre las formas ensayístico-argumentativas que pueden ser atribuidas directamente al autor y las que no le son atribuibles al ser enunciadas por personajes ficcionales.

Palabras clave: Evolución del ensayo; Mundo del autor; Mundo de los personajes; Discurso retórico; Ensayo ficcional; Ensayo no ficcional.

The present work seeks to offer an overview of the historical development of the so-called essay or essayistic-argumentative genre in western culture as a means of reflecting the author's identity. In order to explore said evolution, we draw on a model of literary text developed in previous works together with contributions from the theory of possible worlds. The first part of the work thus explains the proposed textual model whilst the second section applies the model to analysing the historical evolution of the essayistic-argumentative genre, whose origins date back to the rhetorical discourse of Antiquity.

1.   Textual model of literary genres

In other works, I have proposed a textual model of literary genres (figure 1) which encompasses the categories of the *world of the author*, the *world of the characters* and the joint representation of the *world of the author* and of the *world of the characters*, as well as other textual and extra-textual features involved in literary communication (Martín-Jiménez 2004, 2015, 2015a).
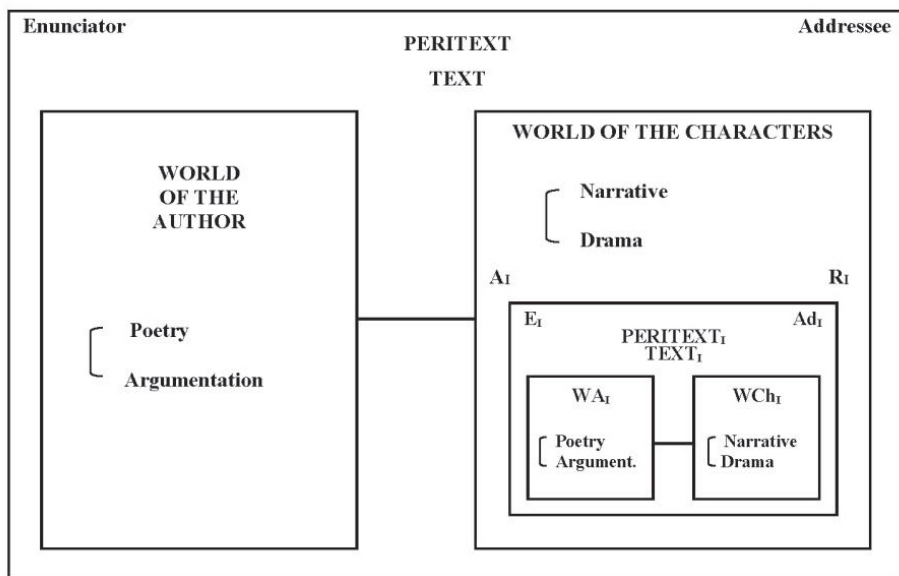
Figure 1: Textual model of literary genres

The *world of the author* includes *poetry* (in other words, all forms of lyrical, elegiac or heroic/satirical poetry) and *argumentation* (all forms related to persuasive argument [Hernadi, 1972]), whereas the *world of the characters* includes *narration* and *drama*. Likewise, the horizontal line which unites the two categories symbolises the fact that both may be present in a single text (for instance, a novel which develops the narrative component of the *world of the characters* and that also includes frequent reflections by the heterodiegetic narrator, which may be included in the argumentative component of the *world of the author*).

In an attempt to explain so-called hybrid or mixed genres, such as dialogues, eclogues or ballads, which at the same time evidence features from both or more genres (Huerta 1992), the possibility of including a new text within the category of the *world of the characters* should be considered. Just as the empirical author creates the primary text (by this, we understand the actual text that reaches the recipients), a fictional character may build up a new text within the *world of the characters* of the original text. In this way, the so-called hybrid genre may be explained as the initial creation of a character who later constructs a new text. In dialogues and eclogues, characters who thus populate the *world of the characters* are created, jointly constructing an inserted text, and developing the argumentative stream (in

the case of dialogues) or the poetic stream (in the case of eclogues) of the *world of the inserted author*.

The categories of the intra-textual *enunciator* and what is *enunciated* by them should also be included in the model, these being concepts well established in contemporary literary theory (Benveniste 1966; Greimas and Courtés 1979; Genette 1989). The natural general categories of the *world of the author* and of the *world of the characters* (as well as the joint representation thereof) constitute what is *enunciated* in the text. What is said is expressed by an intra-textual *enunciator*, who may address an intratextual *addressee.*

In order to cover all of the general possibilities of expression, the literary text model also needs to include the category of the *peritext*, proposed by Gérard Genette to refer to the series of elements situated «around the text, in the space of the volume, as a title or preface and sometimes inserted into the interstices of the text, like the chapter titles or certain notes». Said elements, together with the *epitext*, or set of «all the messages situated, at least in principle, outside the book: generally through some medium (interviews, conversations) or in the shape of private communication (correspondence, personal diaries and the like)», constitute the *paratext*, whose formula would be as follows: «*paratext = peritext + epitext*» (Genette 2001, 10). Clearly, the category of *peritext* should be included in the literary text model since its elements form part of the actual book and appear closely related to the text itself, but not to the *epitext*, whose constituent parts share no actual physical space with the text nor are directly related to it.

In this model, the *author* and the *recipient* are at the pragmatic level of communication, and represent the empirically existing person who creates the work and the person who receives it. The two categories may be plural (since there are cases of multiple authorship), and the author may also prove to be the only recipient of their own text (as is the case of personal diaries or similar texts). The intratextual *enunciator* and *addressee* are related both with the actual *text* itself, or textual core, and with the *peritext*, since the enunciator may be responsible for enunciating the text itself as well as other peritextual elements, such as the prologue or notes, whereas the addressee may figure in the actual text or in the peritext. Enunciator and addressee may be plural or absent or diminished in certain types of works. There may be several enunciators should the work involve a number of prologues from different authors, or the enunciator may play a small role or no role at all in dramatic works that lack any stage directions. In addition, there may be no intratextual addressee or the enunciator may address several addressees.

The actual enunciated text itself comprises the generic natural categories of the *world of the author* and the *world of the characters*, which are linked by a horizontal line reflecting the possibility that the two categories develop together in the text. Within the *world of the characters* is included a new textual design, which seeks to mirror the previously mentioned possibility that the characters may create new texts inside the original text. The *inserted text* in the *world of the characters* displays identical features to the primary text and encompasses the extratextual categories (with regard to the inserted text, although clearly not with the primary text) of the *inserted author* (A_I) and the *inserted recipient* (R_I), as well as the intratextual categories of the *peritext* and *inserted texts* ($PERITEXT_I$ and $TEXT_I$) and of the *inserted enunciator* and *inserted addressee* (E_I and D_I). Their enunciated text comprises the *inserted world of the author* (WA_I), the *inserted world of the characters* (WC_I) and the possibility of joint representation of the two categories (reflected by the horizontal line which links them). As in the case of the primary text, the categories of the *inserted author*, the *inserted recipient*, the *inserted enunciator* and the *inserted addressee* may be singular or plural, and some may be absent (thus, in certain texts there may be no *inserted recipient* or *inserted addressee*).

In order to distinguish the different types of texts developed by the *world of characters*, the theory of possible worlds expounded by Tomás Albaladejo (1986, 1992) proves extremely useful. Said theory considers the existence of three types of models of the world which govern the creation of all narrative works: *type I of the model of the world is of what is real*, corresponding to which are models of the world whose rules are those of the real objectively existing world (autobiographies, travel books, memoirs…); *type II of the model of the world is the verisimilar fictional*, corresponding to models of the world whose rules, whilst not those of the real objective world, are constructed according to said rules (realist novel, naturalist novel…); and *type III of the model of the world of the non-verisimilar fictional*, which corresponds to models of the world whose rules involve transgressing the norms of the real objective world (science fiction novels, tales…).

These three types of model of the world, put forward for narration, may be extended to the category of the *world of the characters*, such that they serve to explain the composition of all works included in said category. Distinguishing the three types of model of the world implies that not all literary texts included in the *world of characters* are fictional. Whereas texts constructed in accordance with type II and type III models of the world are, the same cannot be said of those governed by the norms of type I, as is the case of biographies, autobiographies, travel books, confessions, diaries or memoirs (Doležel 2010).

2. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE ESSAYISTIC-ARGUMENTATIVE GENRE
   IN WESTERN CULTURE

Argumentation falls within the category of the *world of the author*, one of its most characteristic forms being the so-called *essay* or essayistic-argumentative genre. When seeking to explain its origins, one should bear in mind its close link to rhetoric and how it has set itself aside from oral discourse and consolidated its position as a genre destined to convey in a written form. Although the genre was to acquire said denomination with the publication in 1580 of the first volumes of Michel de Montaigne' *Essays*, literary forms of an argumentative nature distinct from rhetorical discourse had already previously been in existence. Plato's *Dialogues*, in which the latter sets down the conversations held by his master Socrates with other real people, generally consist of texts that develop the *world of the characters*, such that through their philosophical conversations Socrates and his interlocutors create inserted texts which develop the inserted world of the authors into their argumentative stream. Given that in said *Dialogues* there tends to be a conversation between Socrates and other people, the inserted texts that are constructed are of multiple authorship, although in some (such as *The Republic*), Socrates himself directs the argument, asking questions of his interlocutors, who merely confine themselves to answering either in the affirmative or negative. It is thus Socrates who is mainly responsible for the inserted text created. Since these were neither narrative nor dramatic texts (types of works which Aristotle included and analysed in his *Poetics*), the Platonic *Dialogues* could not actually be deemed poetic as such, although the Greeks and Romans held them up as stylistic models worthy of imitation even by poets, as can be seen in Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which proposes Plato as an example to be followed by poets[2]. This was due to the close relationship that existed in Antiquity between all disciplines. Furthermore, in Book III of the *Republic*, Plato distinguished amongst three modes of enunciation, depending on who was speaking in the literary works: it was either the poet who spoke (simple narrative mode), the characters (imitative mode), or both the poet and the characters who spoke at the same time (mixed mode). In his *Poetics*, Aristotle in part reworked this classification which his master had laid down, distinguishing between

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2. «In order to write well, reasoning is the principle and the source. You could find this in the *works of Socrates*, the words coming effortlessly to join the subject presented before you» («Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons. / Rem tibi Socraticae poterunt ostender chartae, / uerbaque prouisam rem non inuita sequentur» [HORACIO 2003, 173, vv. 310-311]).

a narrative mode, divisible in turn into a simple narrative mode and a mixed narrative mode, and an imitative mode. This reworking of Plato's classification was aimed at highlighting the imitative mode as the most suited to imitation, whilst discouraging the simple narrative mode, since, by speaking himself, the poet distances himself from imitation. Plato's *Dialogues* drew on the imitative enunciation mode, the very kind which Aristotle had most extolled, which might also have influenced the fact that it was taken as a model for poets. In addition, it was a supposedly real imitation of what Socrates had done in his life.

In some of Plato's *Dialogues*, such as *The Symposium*, there are several characters who converse with one another, while there are certain characters who give rhetorical speeches. In the actual situation in which the banquet that gives its name to the dialogue takes place, each of the guests present therein (Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Socrates…) is asked to improvise a speech in praise of Eros or Love (in other words, it was the type of rhetorical discourse Aristotle would call *epidictic* or *demonstrative*). Aristodemus, who was present at the meeting, related the content of the speeches to Apollodorus, who in turn, years later, recounted these to others when requested to do so. Thus is created a *world of the characters* encompassing Apollodorus and his interlocutors, who evoke the speeches given by the guests at the banquet. In this manner, each of the characters giving a speech creates an inserted text in which they develop the *inserted world of the author* in the argumentative facet, and for which they are solely responsible.

Nevertheless, although the situation being transcribed did in fact take place, there is an awareness that the content of the speeches set down cannot hope to correspond exactly to those actually given. When readying himself to recall the speeches, Apollodorus says to his interlocutors: «well, they ran more or less as follows… But I would be better off telling you it from the start, just as Aristodemus told me» (Plato 1986, 188). Clearly, Aristodemus cannot repeat the speeches as they were given and nor is Apollodorus able to remember exactly what was said by Aristodemus. As a result, *The Symposium* does not aim to reflect the actual content of the speeches verbatim, but rather to provide an approximate transcript thereof. Having said that, the technique of attempting to reproduce the content of the speeches does not, in itself, endow the work with a fictional nature, given that the characters inhabiting the *world of the characters* in *The Symposium* are set out in accordance with a type I model of the world. The actions they experience might even reflect what in fact happened, if indeed the characters that appear in the work actually spoke the words attributed to them (should this not be the case, the actions would correspond to the

type II model of the world, such that the work as a whole would belong to said type). It is the actual content of the speeches that proves to be approximate, although said speeches constitute inserted texts of each character, developing the inserted worlds of the author in their argumentative stream. As a result, although we are certain that the speeches narrated by Plato are not exactly the same as those actually given, and if the circumstances described by Plato did actually occur, *The Symposium* is a text which fits the type I description of the world, since the *world of the characters* of the original text is governed by said type.

The first speech to appear in *The Symposium* is that of Phaedrus:

> Phaedrus began to speak from somewhere like this, saying more or less that Eros was a great God and wondrous amongst humans and gods in many respects, not least in point of birth.

> —Being by far the oldest God, he said, he is worthy of much honour and there is proof of this: parents of Eros, there are none, and they are not spoken of by anyone, either prose writer or poet […] and, likewise, being the oldest he is the cause of the greatest good for us. I, for one, cannot say what greater good there is for one new born into youth than to have a good lover, and for a lover to have a beloved. For that which should guide human beings who intend to live nobly throughout their whole life, this, and not kinship, nor glory, nor riches, nor any other thing can infuse as well as love can […] (1986, 199-200)[3].

As can be seen, this is a demonstrative type rhetorical speech given by a real character and written down on paper. In line with our model, the characters making speeches on the subject of Love create inserted texts, which are characterised by their developing *the inserted world of the author* in its argumentative facet, such that the content of the speeches cannot be attributed to Plato himself (even though he is, ultimately, the architect of the work), but to other real persons (Phaedrus, Pausanias, Socrates…). What we have, therefore, is a rhetorical-argumentative form similar to the essay, but that does not develop the *world of the author*, but rather the inserted worlds of the authors. It is not the author who speaks about himself, directly setting out his opinions, but rather other real characters who do so.

In other subsequent works, however, the *world of the author* in its argumentative facet is indeed developed, such that what is expressed is attributable to the empirical author himself. Such is the case, for instance, in

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3.   Author's translation.

the *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, written by Seneca (2013) in the 1ˢᵗ century. At the start of Book I of the work, the following is read:

> Continue to act thus, my dear Lucilius –set yourself free for your own sake; gather and save your time, which till lately has been forced from you, or filched away, or has merely slipped from your hands. Make yourself believe the truth of my words, –that certain moments are torn from us, that some are gently removed, and that others glide beyond our reach. The most disgraceful kind of loss, however, is that due to carelessness. Furthermore, if you will pay close heed to the problem, you will find that the largest portion of our life passes while we are doing ill, a goodly share while we are doing nothing, and the whole while we are doing that which is not to the purpose. What man can you show me who places any value on his time, who reckons the worth of each day, who understands that he is dying daily? For we are mistaken when we look forward to death; the major portion of death has already passed, Whatever years be behind us are in death's hands[4].

The first fragment of the work already clearly shows the effort to persuade which is common to rhetoric and essayistic-argumentative forms, yet no rhetorical speeches are reproduced, as in the example seen of Plato's *Dialogues*, nor is the form similar to that of the modern essay, since use is made of the generic structure of the epistles. This case is not a text which imitates fictional characters or presents real people (as occurred in Plato's *Dialogues*), nor is there any reproduction of the *world of the characters*, but of the *world of the author*, its mode of enunciation being simple narrative in which it is the author who speaks. The literary nature of this work might thus prove more doubtful, since it tends to be deemed more philosophical rather than literary.

It should also be remembered that Seneca was author of a particular kind of *Dialogues*, thus relating his argumentative type of work to those of Plato. This is the genre of the «Consolations» *(Consolation to Marcia*,

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4. Translation by Ben R. Schneider, Jr., available at: http://www.stoics.com/seneca_epistles_book_1.html (9-10-2015). The Latin text reads thus: «Ita fac, mi Lucili: vindica te tibi, et tempus quod adhuc aut auferebatur aut subripiebatur aut excidebat, collige et serva. Persuade tibi hoc sic esse, ut scribo: quaedam tempora eripiuntur nobis, quaedam subducuntur, quaedam effluunt. Turpissima tamen est iactura, quae per neglegentiam fit. Et si volueris adtendere, magna pars vitae elabitur male agentibus, maxima nihil agentibus, tota vita aliud agentibus. Quem mihi dabis, qui aliquod pretium tempori ponat, qui diem aestimet, qui intellegat se cottidie mori? In hoc enim fallimur, quod mortem prospicimus: magna pars eius iam praeteriit; quidquid aetatis retro est, mors tenet» (http://www.gottwein.de/Lat/sen/epist.001.php [9-10-2015]).

Consolation to his mother Helvia, or *Consolation to Polybius)*. Seneca places objections in the mouth of an imaginary interlocutor only to then refute them. He thus tries to console his mother, grief stricken by her son's exile to Corsica. For this, he introduces sentences which his mother would supposedly say to others who might wish to evoke the hardship of exile («Being far away from one's homeland is unbearable […]; yet, this land is neither rich nor pleasant […]; those exiled must miss their clothes and their homes […]»), to then later refute those words. These are not real dialogues between two or more characters, but dialogues between the author himself and an imaginary interlocutor, such that they fit into the *world of the author*, who is the person that imagines both the objections as well as the answers thereto. Yet, their being referred to as *Dialogues* coupled with their pseudo-dialogued structure relates them to Plato's *Dialogues*, which, nevertheless, did not represent the *world of the author*, but the *world of the characters* and the inserted worlds of the authors, which would bring them closer to literary texts that drew on the imitative enunciation mode.

In line with our textual model, Seneca's *Moral Letters to Lucilius* and *Consolations* developed the *world of the author* in its argumentative stream, such that they are clear precursors of the essay.

Between 397 and 398, Augustine of Hippo wrote his *Confessions*, a work considered to be the first intimate autobiography (Bajtin 1989, 237-409), since it not only recounts events involving the author, but also the intimate feelings and thoughts the latter experienced when actually undergoing or when recalling and recording them. As it is an autobiography, the events experienced by the author belong to the *world of the characters*. And these events, in consonance with the theory of possible worlds, fit in with a type I model of the world. Yet, in addition, Augustine frequently expresses the feelings or thoughts that come into his mind when writing his work, thus forming part of the *world of the author*, whether in its rational-argumentative or its emotional stream. Indeed, the author's vital experiences are narrated in the early books of the autobiography and, above all, after the tenth and up to the thirteenth and last books, Augustine presents a series of clearly argumentative reflections. Taken as a whole, the *Confessions* thus develop both a *world of the characters* and the *world of the author* (in its twin argumentative and emotional stream). The part related to the *world of the author* in its argumentative strand, expressed particularly in the final books of the work, constitutes an essayistic-argumentative component that can be related to the evolution of the essay. Augustine's purpose was not only to narrate his life but to set himself up as an example of religious conversion to Christianity of someone who had led somewhat of a dissipate lifestyle. Portraying himself as a licentious soul who finally, like

Paul the Apostle, finds the road to salvation is a persuasive technique related to the rhetorical recourse of the *example* that (together with the *signs* and the *arguments*) formed part of the artificial proof of the rhetorical *inventio* (it should be remembered that Augustine himself possessed a sound knowledge of rhetoric, as he states in his autobiography). Indeed, when an orator makes it clear that he too held the same view as those he is seeking to persuade, he establishes a link with his audience and, by showing the error of his ways, hopes he might convince his recipients that they too might be on the wrong path and that they should follow the example of one who, like them, has seen the light. The *Confessions* thus contain an autobiographical element that utilizes the *world of the characters*, although its true *raison d'être* involves developing the argumentative strand of the *world of the author*, through which Augustine intends to persuade his recipients to embrace the Christian faith and lead a life in consonance with it. And it is this persuasive aspect of the work which bears a close link to the essay.

Moreover, as Seneca had done, Augustine draws on the epistolary format, since the confessions emerge as a kind of letter to God, whom the author praises or questions as if he were addressing a relative or acquaintance. At the start of the work, we thus have the following:

> You are great, Lord and greatly to be praised; great is your power, and your wisdom knows no bounds. And does man dare to praise you; man who is but a small part of your creation, and, draped in his mortality, carries with him the testimony of his sin and the testimony that *you oppose the proud*? You excite man to pleasure in praising you because you made us for yourself and our heart will remain restless until it rests in you.

> Allow me, Lord, to know which I should do first, whether to invoke you or praise you. For, who can invoke you that does not know you first? For, not knowing you, who can rightly invoke you? Should you not be invoked in order to be known? (Augustine 2012, 3)[5].

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5. Agustinus Hiponnensis (no date): «agnus es, Domine, et laudabilis valde: magna virtus tua et sapientiae tuae non est numerus. Et laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitatem suam, circumferens testimonium peccati sui et testimonium, quia superbis resistis; et tamen laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae. Tu excitas, ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te. Da mihi, Domine, scire et intellegere, utrum sit prius invocare te an laudare te et scire te prius sit an invocare te. Sed quis te invocat o nesciens te? Aliud enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens» (http://www.augustinus.it/latino/confessioni/index2.htm [9-10-2015]).

The expressions Augustine uses to directly address God are repeated throughout the work, highlighting its epistolary nature. Yet, the work contains numerous reflections of an argumentative nature such as the fascinating disquisitions on time that emerge after book XI in which Augustine seeks to provide an answer to a question raised by the Manichees: «What did God do before making heaven and earth? Because if he was unoccupied, they say, and was doing nothing, why didn't he remain like that for ever as he had been before, doing nothing?» (Augustine 2012, 289)[6]. He thus ascribes time itself to having been created by God:

> Because, how could countless centuries have passed when you had not yet created them, author and creator of the centuries? Or, what times could exist that were not created by you? And how could they have passed if they had never existed? Thus, you being the creator of all times, if time did exist before you created heaven and earth, why is it said that you ceased *to work*? Because you created time itself, time could not have passed before you created it (Augustine 2012, 291)[7].

Such considerations, which extend throughout the final three books of the work, evidence a clear link to the argumentative component which is characteristic of the essay. As a result, even if the *Confessions* are not a purely essayistic work, they do considerably develop the argumentative facet of the *world of the author*, adding to the narrative strand of the *world of the characters* so as to jointly structure its persuasive content.

Yet, the clearest indication that the argumentative genre serves to reflect the author's own identity is to be found in the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne (1580), which were written for domestic and private use, and intended for the private solace of friends and relatives. Their domestic and family nature clearly links them to the *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, which were also intended for someone close, such that Montaigne's essays, whilst lacking a strictly epistolary format, might be considered as an evolution of Seneca's *Epistles*. Yet, it should not be forgotten that as much in one case

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6.   «Quid faciebat Deus, antequam faceret caelum et terram? Si enim vacabat, inquiunt, et non operabatur aliquid, cur non sic semper et deinceps, quemadmodum retro semper cessavit ab opere?».

7.   «Nam unde poterant innumerabilia saecula praeterire, quae ipse non feceras, cum sis omnium saeculorum auctor et conditor? Aut quae tempora fuissent, quae abs te condita non essent? Aut quomodo praeterirent, si numquam fuissent? Cum ergo sis operator omnium temporum, si fuit aliquod tempus, antequam faceres caelum et terram, cur dicitur, quod ab opere cessabas? Id ipsum enim tempus tu feceras, nec praeterire potuerunt tempora, antequam faceres tempora».

as in the other, there are two kinds of audience: those addressed directly (Lucilius and Montaigne's relatives) and another wider addressee, the general readership. This can clearly be seen in the case of Montaigne's essays, in the introduction to which, addressing «The Reader», he says that he has written his work for friends and relatives:

TO THE READER:

This is a book of good faith, reader.

It warns you from the outset that I have set myself no other goal than a domestic and private one. I give no consideration to either your service or to my glory. My powers are not capable of such a design. I have dedicated it to the private convenience of my relatives and friends, such that when they lose me (as they soon shall), they may recover herein some features of my habits and temperament, and by this retain the knowledge they have had of me more complete and alive. Had I written to seek the world's favour, I would have garlanded myself better, and have presented myself in a studied posture. I wish to be seen here in my simple, natural, ordinary fashion, without strain or artifice; for it is myself that I portray. My failings will here be read as they are, as will my natural form, as far as respect for the public has so allowed me to do. Had I been amongst those nations said to live still in the sweet liberty of nature's first laws, I assure you I should very gladly have portrayed myself here entire and wholly naked. Thus, reader, I am myself the matter of my book; and you would be ill-advised to spend your leisure on a subject so frivolous and vain. So, farewell.

Montaigne, this first day of March, fifteen hundred and eighty (Montaigne 2003, 47)[8].

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8. «AU LECTEUR: / C'est ici un livre de bonne foi, lecteur. Il t'avertit dès l'entrée, que je ne m'y suis proposé aucune fin, que domestique et privée. Je n'y ai eu nulle considération de ton service, ni de ma gloire. Mes forces ne sont pas capables d'un tel dessein. Je l'ai voué à la commodité particulière de mes parents et amis: à ce que m'ayant perdu (ce qu'ils ont à faire bientôt) ils y puissent retrouver aucuns traits de mes conditions et humeurs, et que par ce moyen ils nourrissent plus entière et plus vive, la connaissance qu'ils ont eue de moi. Si c'eût été pour rechercher le faveur du monde, je me fusse mieux paré et me présenterais en une marche étudiée. Je veux qu'on m'y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans contention et artifice: car c'est moi que je peins. Mes défauts s'y liront au vif, et ma forme naïve, autant que la révérence publique me l'a permis. Que si j'eusse été entre ces nations qu'on dit vivre encore sous la douce liberté des premières lois de nature, je t'assure que je m'y fusse très volontiers peint tout entier, et tout nu. Ainsi, lecteur, je suis moi-même la matière de mon livre: ce n'est pas raison que tu emploies ton loisir en un sujet si frivole et

That the work should be presented in the form of a written text addressed to those close (as was the case with the *Moral Letters to Lucilius*) seems designed to anticipate the likely lack of understanding of the general readership, who might not be prepared to assimilate the novelty of the proposed work. As regards the remainder, Montaigne clearly explains that what is set out in his work may be directly ascribed to him: «it is myself that I portray. My failings will here be read as they are, as will my natural form»; «I should very gladly have portrayed myself here and wholly naked»; «I am myself the matter of my book». Montaigne makes it clear that the author may not only represent himself through lyrical texts, and that expounding personal ideas is also a way of portraying oneself. In accordance with our textual model, the various essays that make up Montaigne's work develop the *world of the author* in its argumentative strand. Yet, unlike the *Moral Letters to Lucilius* or the *Consolations*, the Montaigne's work is not based on the structure of the epistle.

This type of work in which the author sets out his ideas does not imply imitation in the Aristotelian sense, such that it can scarcely have been considered in its time as poetic or literary. Yet, Montaigne repeatedly suggests the link between his text and poetry (or with what we refer to today as *literature*). Indeed, the verb «portray» («portray me as I am») associates his work with the poetic tradition in which the link between painting and poetry had been highlighted. In his *Poetics,* Aristotle likened the work of artists to that of poets, and Horace, in his *Epistula ad Pisones*, approved of such a connection with the well-known formulation «Ut pictura poesis [as is painting, so is poetry]» (Horace 2003, 176-177). This is thus an innovative text and one linked to the poetic tradition by the author. As a result, and although the essay has always struggled and indeed continues to struggle for recognition as a literary genre since it only represents the *world of the author* in its argumentative strand, in its origin, it emerged as a type of text that was related to literature.

In 1789, José Cadalso published his *Moroccan Letters*, a work which brought together letters written to two fictional characters, Gazel Ben-Aly and Ben-Beley. In said letters, both characters express their ideas or opinions. The work thus develops a *world of the characters* corresponding to type II of the model of the world, and the characters create inserted texts –the letters addressed to each other– in which they utilize the inserted worlds of the author in the argumentative stream. This work thus bears a

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si vain. Adieu donc; de Montaigne, ce premier de mars mil cinq cent quatre-vingts» (MONTAIGNE 1965, 49).

certain resemblance to Plato's *Symposium*, since the two develop the inserted worlds of the author, yet differ from it due to their clearly fictional nature, as opposed to Plato's intention to reflect actual events. The fictional nature of the characters created by Cadalso, as well as the use of imitative enunciation (in which two characters speak), has led to the work instantly being deemed as literary and to its being the subject of study in the history of literature.

As can be seen in the work's very title, Cadalso links his work to the epistolary tradition instigated by Seneca, yet attributes authorship of the epistles to the fictional characters. Moreover, Cadalso resorts to another typically literary resource, namely that of having come across a manuscript that was in the possession of an acquaintance. In the «Introduction» he says the following:

> Fate would have it that, on the death of an acquaintance of mine, a manuscript should fall into my hands bearing the title: *Letters written by a Moor called Gazel Ben-Aly to Ben-Beley, his friend, concerning the uses and customs of both ancient and modern Spaniards, with some replies by Ben-Beley and other letters related to these.*
>
> My friend's life came to its end before he could tell me whether these were indeed letters written by the author whose name appeared, which might be inferred from the style, or whether it was merely a past-time of the deceased, to the writing of which he had devoted the final years of his life. Both explanations are possible: the reader will be left to judge whichever of the two he considers to be more likely[9].

Such a literary resource (linked to the *metalepsis*, since the author comes into impossible contact with the fictional world of his characters) seeks to bring the universe of the fictional characters and that of the actual author together, in an effort to endow it with truthfulness (Martín-Jiménez 2015, 247-263). Clearly, the letters do not belong to the deceased but to Cadalso himself, yet are attributed to the deceased or to the characters. And yet, despite the intervention of the fictional characters, at another point in

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9.   «La suerte quiso que, por muerte de un conocido mío, cayese en mis manos un manuscrito cuyo título es: Cartas escritas por un moro llamado Gazel Ben-Aly, a Ben-Beley, amigo suyo, sobre los usos y costumbres de los españoles antiguos y modernos, con algunas respuestas de Ben-Beley y otras cartas relativas a estas. / Acabó su vida mi amigo antes que pudiese explicarme si eran efectivamente cartas escritas por el autor que sonaba, como se podía inferir del estilo, o si era pasatiempo del difunto, en cuya composición hubiese gastado los últimos años de su vida. Ambos casos son posibles: el lector juzgará lo que piense más acertado» (CADALSO 1984, 78-79).

his «Introduction» Cadalso intimates that what is expressed in the letters is ascribed to him:

> the friend who left me the manuscript of these letters and who, in my prudent opinion, was the actual author thereof, was so much me and I so much him, that we were one and the same; so familiar was I with his way of thinking and he with mine, his being in every way my contemporary, having been born the same year, month day, and instant as me; such that, for all these reasons, and for some others that shall remain silent, I may without offending the truth call this work my own[10].

Cadalso thus suggests that the letters were written not by the characters but by his dead friend, who is indeed Cadalso himself, thereby indicating that the opinions expressed in the letters are his. It can thus clearly be seen that the device of ascribing the letters to fictional characters seeks to endow the work with a fictional and therefore literary nature, whilst continuing to warn readers in the peritext that they may take the opinions expressed in the letters as belonging to the author himself. Cadalso thus shares Montaigne's intention of «portraying» himself, whilst endowing his work with the literary character which proved so debatable in the *Essays*. Like Montaigne, Cadalso also deems that expressing opinions serves to mirror the personality of whoever is stating them: «I have not dwelt on describing the character of those who wrote them [the letters]. This should be drawn from their reading»[11]. And if Montaigne described himself as an author of good faith («This is a book of good faith»), Cadalso says the following of himself: «I am no more than a good man who has given birth to words written on paper»[12]. Cadalso clearly had Montaigne's *Essays* very much in mind.

In any case, and because it uses the device of attributing the letters to fictional characters, the work of Cadalso develops the *world of the characters* (the Moors Ben-Beley and Gazel), who create new inserted texts in

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10. «[…] el amigo que me dejó el manuscrito de estas cartas, y que, según las más juiciosas conjeturas, fue el verdadero autor de ellas, era tan mío y yo tan suyo, que éramos uno propio; y sé yo su modo de pensar como el mío mismo, sobre ser tan rigurosamente mi contemporáneo, que nació en el mismo año, mes, día, e instante que yo; de modo que por todas estas razones, y por alguna otra que callo, puedo llamar a esta obra mía sin ofender a la verdad» (CADALSO 1984, 80).

11. «No me he detenido en decir el carácter de los que las escribieron [las cartas]. Esto último se inferirá de su lectura» (CADALSO 1984, 79).

12. «No soy más que un hombre de bien, que ha dado a luz un papel» (CADALSO 1984, 82).

which they elaborate the inserted worlds of the authors in its argumentative stream. In other words, the procedure closely resembles that of Plato's *Dialogues*, with the difference that Plato's characters are real while Cadalso's are fictional. Cadalso's text is thus not only related to the epistolary tradition of Seneca and Montaigne, but also to Plato's *Dialogues*. Yet, unlike the works of Plato, Seneca or Montaigne, Cadalso's has also been considered to be literary, evidencing the fact that creating fictional characters ensures the literary nature of the text in which they appear.

An interesting parallel to Cadalso's attributing texts of an argumentative nature to fictional characters may be found in *The Book of Disquiet* by Fernando Pessoa (written between 1910 and 1935, and published for the first time in 1982), attributed to the «semi-heteronym» or fictional character Bernardo Soares. Written in prose, the work is composed of a large number of fragments, many of which constitute reflections of an argumentative nature, such as the following:

> If there is one thing in this life for which we should thank the Gods, besides thanking them for life itself, it is the gift of not knowing ourselves and of not knowing each other. The human soul is a murky and slimy abyss, a well on the Earth's surface that is never used. Nobody would love himself if he really knew himself, and without the vanity which is born of this ignorance and which is the blood of the spiritual life, our souls would die of anaemia. No one knows anyone, and it is just as well they do not, for if they did, they would discover in their mother, wife or child, the intimate metaphysical enemy (Pessoa 1991, 312)[13].

Yet, the work also contains numerous fragments of a markedly emotional nature, and on many occasions the argumentative and the lyrical interweave in a single section, as can be seen in the «Introduction» by Bernardo Soares himself:

> To be a pessimist is to see everything tragically, an attitude that is both excessive and uncomfortable. It is true that we give no value to the work we do. We produce it to keep ourselves busy, yet not like the prisoner

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13.   «Se alguna coisa há que esta vida tem para nós, e, salvo a mesma vida, tenhamos que agradecer aos Deuses, é o dom de nos desconhecermos: de nos desconhecermos a nós mesmos e de nos desconhecermos uns aos outros. A alma humana é un abismo obscuro e viscoso, un poço que se não usa na superfície do mundo. Ninguém se amaría a sí mesmo se deveras se conhecesse, e assim, não havendo a vaidade, que é o sangue da vida espiritual, morreríamos na alma de anemia. Ninguém conhece outro, e, aínda, bem que o não conhece, e, se o conhecese, conhecería nele, ainda que mãe, mulher ou filho, o íntimo, metafísico inimigo» (Pessoa 1986, i, 128).

who busily weaves straw to distract himself from his fate, but more like the girl who embroiders pillows for no other reason than merely to keep busy […]

For me, life is like a roadside inn where I must stay until the coach from the abyss arrives […] Night will fall on all of us and the coach will arrive. I enjoy the breeze and the soul I was given with which to enjoy it, and I no longer question or seek. If what I write in the book of travellers can, when read by others at some future date, also entertain them on their journey, then fine. Should they not read it, or not be entertained by it, then that is fine too (Pessoa 1991, 30)[14].

The work thus develops a *world of the characters* which belongs to the type II model of the world in which Bernardo Soares is to be found, the latter creating an inserted text in which he develops the *inserted world of the author* in the argumentative and lyrical strands. The two strands of the *inserted world of the author* (the rational-argumentative and the lyrical-emotional) are expressed by the same inserted enunciator, thus favouring the transition from one to the other, and indeed it proves difficult to distinguish between them at times.

Through the works we have considered, we see how the essayistic-argumentative genre has evolved in two ways: either independently (in which case its literary nature would be called into question) or by forming part of works that are deemed literary, thus becoming works of literature within the other works.

A natural progression to Montaigne's *Essays* may be found in the *Essays* written by Francis Bacon between 1597 and 1625, and in many other essayistic works published since then in various European countries, and which have flourished in recent times. These are argumentative texts which develop the *world of the author*, and are thus attributable to the empirical author but whose literary character may be called into doubt.

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14.   «Ser pesimista é tomar qualquer coisa como trágico, e essa atitude é um exagero e um incómodo. Não temos, é certo, um conceito de valía que apliquemos à obra que produzimos. Produzimo-la, é certo, para nos distrair, porém não como o preso que tece a palha, para se distrair do Destino, senão da menina que borda almofadas, para se distrair, sem mais nada […]. / Conidero a vida uma estalagem onde tenho que me demorar até que chegue a diligência do abismo […] Para todos nós descerá a noite e chegará a diligência. Gozo a brisa que me dão e a alma que de deram para gozá-la, e não interrogo mais nem procuro. Se o que deixar escrito no libro dos viajantes puder, relido um dia, por outros, entretê-los também na passagem, será bem. Se não o lerem, nem se entretiverem, será bem também» (Pessoa 1986, I, 48-49).

With regard to the argumentative component included in literary texts, these are mainly expressed in two ways in contemporary literature, both of which are linked to narration: both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration may be accompanied by the essayistic element. In contemporary literature, it is common to find a kind of novel with a heterodiegetic narrator who not only develops the *world of the characters* but also the *world of the author*, such that these novels narrate the events involving the characters, whilst also expounding the author's own opinions (Martín-Jiménez 2015, 162-163). Said technique is also to be found in works such as *The Magic Mountain* (1924) by Thomas Mann, in which there are numerous argumentative digressions by the narrator/author (on occasions spanning whole chapters), in *The Man Without Qualities* (1930-1943) by Robert Musil, which contains numerous and extensive opinions by the narrator/author, or in the works of Milan Kundera (such as *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 1984), felt to be a combination of essay and narration (Martín-Jiménez 1993). In these works, the *world of the author*, developed in its argumentative stream, does not appear as fictionalised, such that the ideas may be attributed directly to the authors (Martín-Jiménez 2015, 103-151).

Novels containing a homodiegetic narrator and with an essayistic component resemble more closely the resource used by Cadalso of ascribing argumentative content to fictional characters. In this kind of novel, the character-narrator creates an inserted text in which the *inserted world of the author* in its argumentative strand and the *inserted world of the characters* are developed. In fact, this form of the novel emerged in Spain shortly after the publication of Montaigne's *Essays* in 1580, being used in so-called *picaresque* novels such as the two parts of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599 and 1604) by Mateo Alemán and the apocryphal continuation by Mateo Luján de Sayavedra (1602), in which the narrator's digressions were common. These novels, as with what was to happen years later in the *Moroccan Letters*, developed the *inserted world of the author* in its argumentative facet, although not independently as Cadalso did, but rather in conjunction with the *inserted world of the characters*.

The type of novel whose autodiegetic narrator frequently expresses opinions was continued by other later novels and is also characteristic of Marcel Proust's renowned contemporary work *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927), whose main character-narrator, Marcel, is a fictional character (although he does have much in common with Marcel Proust himself) who expresses extensive argumentative fragments. Thus, when recalling what happened to Gilberta, the narrator gives a whole series of reflections on lovers being apart and how effective this can prove in rekindling love. On other occasions, the text includes lengthy reflections on art or other matters

dealt with in the novel, such that argumentative digressions abound in *In Search of Lost Time*.

Moreover, and given that since its origins it has been closely linked to rhetoric, the essayistic-argumentative genre may be defined in relation to the purpose of the three traditional rhetorical genres established by Aristotle. As explained elsewhere (Martín-Jiménez 2015, 177-189), and in accordance with a thematic-referential definition, the argumentative genre is characterised by its developing a kind of persuasive argumentation linked to judgements of past behaviour, in an attempt to influence future decisions, either by praising or condemning such behaviour.

CONCLUSION

Essayistic-argumentative forms have existed since the origins of western culture. There is a tradition of creating purely essayistic-argumentative texts which stems from Plato and spans authors such as Seneca and Montaigne, this subsequently being developed by many other essayists, such as Daniel Defoe in Britain or the authors of the Generation of 98 in Spain, and which remain current today. In origin, these argumentative forms were closely linked to rhetoric (as can be seen in Plato's *Symposium*), although they soon began to become independent from rhetoric, such that they were not written to be pronounced before an audience but to be conveyed in written form. In order to achieve this, it initially proved useless to try to use the epistolary format, until the latter began to fade and give way to essayistic forms that were totally independent from letters. By initially being related to rhetoric, and not poetics, these argumentative forms were only circumstantially considered to be literary, and were so deemed due to factors not related to their own thematic-referential nature, but to their form or style.

In any case, essayistic-argumentative forms are part of literature, since they are deemed to be literary when included in other kinds of texts that are unquestionably literary. As a result, literary studies should take into account the existence of these argumentative forms as an important part of literature.

Since its origin, the essayistic-argumentative genre has been used by authors to try to convey or reflect their own identity. Since the times of Romanticism, the lyrical genre has been considered as the means *par excellence* for authors to express their own subjectivity, although it could be conjectured that such an identity has a twin emotional and argumentative side. If poetry is deemed the natural way for authors to express their

emotional side, the argumentative genre provides the ideal channel for them to convey their rational and persuasive side. Expressing their own opinions, as well as seeking to have these embraced by others, forms an intrinsic part of personal identity, such that the essayistic-argumentative genre provides a particularly suitable way to construct the image of themselves which authors wish to transmit. The argumentative component may be used either independently or in conjunction with lyrical or narrative forms, and plays a key role in literature. In this sense, the sentence which appears in the Prologue to Montaigne's *Essays* «I am myself the matter of my book» constitutes a paradigmatic expression on the conscience of the essay to construct and reflect on one's own identity.

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