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"Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield": Rhetorical Analysis of Virginia Woolf's 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind'

Margarita Esther Sánchez Cuervo

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Abstract This article proposes a rhetorical analysis of "A Terribly Sensitive Mind", an essay by Virginia Woolf that reviews Katherine Mansfield's diary and praises her figure after her death. The argumentative nature of Woolf's essay can be assessed following a rhetorical model of analysis in which I examine (1) the inventive level (inventio), related to the generation of arguments; (2) the dispositive level (dispositio), concerned with a specific arrangement of ideas devised to gain the audience's adherence; and (3) the elocutive level (elocutio), traditionally associated with the recognition of stylistic features such as rhetorical figures. The interaction among inventive, dispositive, and elocutive elements allows the identification of first-order effects in the form of arguments and rhetorical figures that can come together and result in an interpretation of presence. This form of presence can help to explain why "A Terribly Sensitive Mind" is expressive.

Keywords Virginia Woolf · Essay · Rhetorical analysis · Rhetorical figure · Argument · Presence

Introduction

'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' is an essay by Virginia Woolf written in 1927 that reviews Katherine Mansfield's diary after her death.[1] As the first lines of the text show, Woolf reveals that "it is not the quality of her writing or the degree of her fame that interest us in her diary, but the spectacle of a mind—a terribly sensitive mind—receiving one after another the haphazard impressions of eight years of

[1] See *Journal of Katherine Mansfield. 1914–1922*, edited by Mansfield's husband, John Middleton Murry, in 1927, and published by Constable & Co Ltd.

M. E. Sánchez Cuervo (✉)
University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Las Palmas, Spain
e-mail: margaritaesther.sanchez@ulpgc.es

life". In this, as in other reviews that Woolf wrote for the press, the essayist delves into Mansfield's work, and shares with us the writer's inner thoughts with quotations from her diary and Woolf's own commentaries about the short-story writer.

Virginia Woolf has been traditionally considered as a major figure of modernist literature. Although critics have mostly focused on her novels, her essays have become a subject of interest over the last two decades. Much of this research has been done in the light of feminist and novel-centred criticism of Woolf's writing.[2] In her essays, Woolf portrays the role that many men and women have played in history and literature. The author shows a special sensibility towards feminist concerns connected to the works and circumstances of both well-known and lesser-known women writers who could yet carry out their literary inclinations. In this line, Woolf is both a literary critic and a feminist interested in the study of women's condition as regards to their position in history, and their endeavours to succeed in a male-ruled society. However, Woolf also conceived the essay as a format used to solve artistic difficulties, and as a place where she could examine her qualms about herself as a writer and about the writing practice (Saloman 2012, pp. 5–6). The essay turns into a vehicle for "personal opinion", as when she affirms in "The Decay of Essay Writing" that "almost all essays begin with a capital I—'I think', 'I feel'—and when you have said that, it is clear that you are not writing history or philosophy or biography or anything but an essay, which (…) is primarily an expression of personal opinion (Woolf 1992, p. 6)." Woolf is influenced by Montaigne's idea of the dialogic in writing to give a conversational character to her non-fiction prose, and to praise a speech that fosters the use of the vernacular language as spoken communication between equals (Dusinberre 1997, p. 54; Gualtieri 2000b, p. 16). In this passage from the essay "Montaigne", she defends a fluid and dynamic quality of "our being" when she affirms that "movement and change are the essence of our being; rigidity is death; conformity is death: let us say what comes into our heads (…) (1984, p. 63)."[3] Woolf defends this idea by using several rhetorical figures that emphasise its importance: first, by means of *parison*, the repetition of a symmetrical sequence of clauses or phrases as in "rigidity is death; conformity is death", transmitting a rhythmical pattern that calls our attention; second, by means of *epistrophe*, the repetition of the same word at the end of a sequence of clauses or sentences. The reiteration of "death" emphasises the possibility of a terrible outcome if we do not react; third, by means of metaphor, since "death" also becomes the source domain in the attributive structure linked by the verb "be", thus identifying conformism with death. Moreover, these two

[2] For a recent treatment of critical studies on Woolf's essay writing, see Leila Brosnan (1997), *Reading Virginia Woolf's Essays and Journalism. Breaking the Surface of Silence*, Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (eds.) (1997), *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Elena Gualtieri (2000), *Virginia Woolf's Essays: Sketching the Past*, Anne Fernald (2006), *Virginia Woolf. Feminism and the Reader*, Judith Allen (2010), *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Randi Saloman (2012), *Virginia Woolf's Essayism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[3] The essay 'Montaigne' was written for the *TLS* in 1924, and was then reprinted for *The Common Reader. First Series*, in 1925. I follow an edition of 1984 with notes and introduction by Andrew McNeillie.

sentences oppose the previous "movement and change are the essence of our being", so *antithesis* could also be included as another figure by means of which syntactic structure underscores conceptual contrast, in this case confronting progress with stagnation (Gross and Dearin 2003, p. 128). Although I have chosen an isolated fragment inserted within a longer and more complex text, the conjunction of all these expressive figures transmitted in the present tense combines to create a clear image of an effervescent being that must be in constant change and speak its mind if it wants to stay alive; otherwise it will perish.

In her essays, Woolf expresses these and other opinions through an argumentative prose that contains schemes and rhetorical figures (Sánchez-Cuervo 2004, 2007, 2013).[4] So in addition to critical approaches to her essays such as her focus on feminism, her writings about literary criticism, or her views on the essay as a genre, among others, Woolf's non-fiction prose can be assessed following a rhetorical model of analysis. In her texts, her particular points of view about writers and their literature are expressed through arguments, defined here as linguistic patterns that transfer acceptability from premises to conclusions (Tindale 2004, p. 63). Similarly, rhetorical figures can also serve as arguments because of the ways they are constructed to engage the audience thanks to their effective nature and their capacity for attracting attention (Tindale 2004, p. 63). In this article I propose an alternative reading of Woolf's essays based on a rhetorical analysis of 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' in Appendix. Through this model, some principles related to the invention of arguments (*inventio*), their arrangement (*dispositio*) and expressive manifestation (*elocutio*) are useful in the construction of argumentative texts like the modern essay (Arenas-Cruz 1997, p. 134).

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle refers to a semantic and pragmatic conception of logos immersed in a construction of the speaker, the spoken content and the hearer (Aristotle 1909, I.3). In a wide sense, Rhetoric is at the same time a general model for the production of texts and an instrument of textual analysis (Albadalejo 1989, p. 11; Lausberg 1983, pp. 83–84). The textual model of Rhetoric thus possesses a semiotic nature that includes the formal construction of the text (syntax) deriving from its referential elements (semantics) and that confers a relevant place to all intervening elements in the communication of the text (pragmatics): addresser, addressee, and the contexts of production and reception. In Woolf's essays, the pragmatic dimension is particularly important because of the explicit presence of the essayist wishing to concur with a common reader who "reads for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others (Woolf 1984, p. 1)." Rhetoric also becomes a theory of argumentation such as that devised by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), who emphasised both the rational and linguistic mechanisms present in argumentation and the effects of the text upon the audience. "Approach to the Essay Within a Rhetorical Context" section of this article discusses the essay within a rhetorical context, and offers an outline of the rhetorical levels encountered in Woolf's essay: *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*. In section "Rhetorical analysis of 'A

[4] See Sánchez-Cuervo, Margarita Esther (2004) *La argumentación retórica en los ensayos de Virginia Woolf. Tesis doctoral*, for an extensive account of schemes and rhetorical figures found in a corpus of 150 short essays.

Terribly Sensitive Mind'", I apply that outline to the particular exemplar of 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind'. In section "Presence in the Essay", I try to point out how my analysis of these levels can create a feeling of presence among readers that may transmit, as a result, the expressive value of the essay. I refer to the presence that derives from the accumulative interaction of different levels of analysis: inventive, dispositive and elocutive (Gross and Dearin 2003, p. 135).

Approach to the essay within a rhetorical context

Classical rhetoric identifies five operations or *partes artis* in the production of rhetorical speech: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio* [(Cicero) 1981, I.7; Quintilian 1920, III.3]. In argumentative texts like the essay, the levels of *memoria* and *actio* do not usually appear, for they are concerned with the memorisation of the text and its oral reproduction, respectively. The inventive and dispositive levels are represented linguistically by means of the elocutive or verbal manifestation of the text. Through *inventio*, the author selects those elements that comprise the referent of discourse, which allows different types of arguments to be chosen and constructed (Crosswhite 2011, pp. 200–201). In reviews like 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind', the main argument revolves around the act/person interaction. With this procedure, the reaction of the act that corresponds to the person's artistic output, judgement, or reaction, is meant to revise our conception of that individual (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, pp. 297–98). The essayist follows a similar perspective to the historian in the portrayal of a person through his/her endeavours (Perelman 1979, pp. 149–50). However, the essayist is allowed to hold a subjective and sometimes fictional viewpoint, full of nuances and subtleties, which the historian is not able to use. Woolf shows a penchant for focusing on personal facts to the detriment of more recognised facets. We thus obtain a different impression of the person under study, and interpret his/her actions against that newly established character (Fahnestock 2005, pp. 219–20).

The selection of topics and its syntactic distribution are simultaneous inventive processes that depend on the notion of *superstructure*.[5] This is an abstract diagram that determines the organisation of the essay and its content. Through *dispositio*, the syntactic and semantic conceptual elements deriving from *inventio* are structured. The *partes orationis* are located in the *dispositio* level, which vertebrates the rhetorical organisation of the essay and its referent. The essay, which is a more spontaneous form than the classical rhetorical speech, can be organised into four *partes orationis*: *exordium* or introduction, *narratio/expositio* or narration/exposition, *argumentatio* or argumentation and epilogue (Barthes 1982, p. 66).[6] The

[5] T. A. van Dijk first mentions this concept in his work *The Structures and Functions of Discourse. An Interdisciplinary Introduction to Text Linguistics and Discourse Studies*. This was a series of lectures given at the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras, in 1978. I follow the Spanish edition (1991).

[6] In *Rhetorica ad Herennium* the following *partes orationis* are discussed: *exordium* or introduction, *narratio* or statement of facts, *divisio* or division, *confirmatio* or proof, *confutatio* or refutation, and *conclusio* or conclusion [(Cicero) 1981: I.3]. Quintilian distinguishes five main *partes orationis*: *proemium* or introduction, statement of facts, proof, refutation and peroration (Quintilian 1920: III.8).

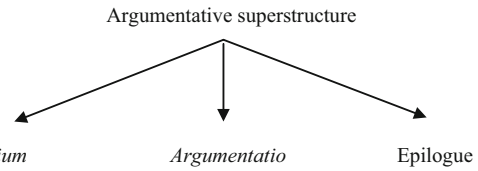

Fig. 1 Diagram of the argumentative superstructure

second and third categories in particular contribute to the syntactic organisation of the text. There are two main ways in which the argumentative superstructure can be ordered: the *ordo naturalis*, which follows the order of the four categories, and the *ordo artificialis*, which does not. In 'A Terribly Sensitive mind' an *ordo artificialis* prevails because *narratio* does not fulfil its classical function of illustrating some subsequent reasoning but rather merges with the author's observations. As a result, *narratio* becomes argumentation proper. The diagram below represents the order of categories in Woolf's essay (Sánchez-Cuervo 2004, pp. 265–266; 2010, pp. 269–70):

By means of *elocutio*, the reader recognises possible expressive devices such as rhetorical figures. The essayist, when building this *elocutio* level, activates the aesthetic function using *ornatus*. The component of implicit pleasure in the concept of elocutive *ornatus* is responsible for the reader's aesthetic experience and it is an important criterion for specifying the literariness of a text. In the literary essay, *ornatus* has a simultaneous double intention: aesthetic, due to a peculiar textual form that may cause literary specificity, and argumentative, in that it can lead a reader to reflect on the way he/she thinks (Arenas-Cruz 1997, pp. 361–362). This view of indissolubility between arguments and figures is supported by some scholars (Vickers 1988, pp. 314–315; Zulick 1998; Fahnestock 2005, p. 218; Plantin 2009, p. 327). Therefore poetic figures can contribute to propriety in public discourse, and even generate an "artful marriage of argument and style" that allows us "to reconcile our concept of the validity of rational argument with our need for emotional and stylistic magnitude" (Zulick 1998, pp. 490–491). As I aim to point out in the analysis below, Woolf makes use of the expressive potential of language without abandoning the reader's persuasive intent and the clarity of the conceptual content (Fig. 1).

Rhetorical analysis of 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind'

'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' was originally published in the *Nation and Athenaeum* on the 10th of September 1927, under the title of 'Katherine Mansfield', and was reprinted 10 days later in the *New York Herald Tribune* as 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind'. The majority of Woolf's essays, both the texts selected for collections and individuals, were first published as literary reviews in various periodicals or newspapers (Brosnan, 1997, p. 101). The essay was then collected in subsequent compilations, such as *Granite and Rainbow* (1958), *Collected Essays*, *Vol. I* (1966),

Women and Writing (1979), and *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. IV* (1994).[7] By the time Woolf published this review in both journals she had already achieved a style of essay-writing, and made minimal revisions when she turned her journal articles into books (McNeillie 1994, p. xiv).[8]

In the essay, Woolf refers to the division of the self that is devoted to the writing of the journal (Smith 1999, p. 19). The essayist met and befriended Mansfield and, in her portrait of the artist, Woolf reinvents a real life based on the person that she is writing about. In this and other reviews, as mentioned above, *inventio* is mainly generated through the person/act argument. The interaction between Mansfield and her diary becomes the main inspiration from which Woolf construes the writer's persona. In its praise of Mansfield, the essay also becomes an encomium reminiscent of the classical composition meant to describe someone's qualities before an audience that gathered outdoors (Reche-Martínez 1991, p. 236).

One of the ways that we can use to achieve emphasis in discourse is by means of repetition. This rhetorical principle is the most effective device in this essay. Terms such as 'self', 'mind', 'life', 'writing' and 'health' are tied together by means of their reappearance, lending coherence to the whole text. The recurring incidence of these concepts in *inventio* and *dispositio* is reflected through a group of rhetorical figures in *elocutio*, as I point out in the analysis of the *partes orationis*. In his *Topica*, Cicero (1949, p. 391) regards repetition as one of the arguments drawn from circumstances closely connected with the subject under consideration. In particular, he refers to "conjugate" as the term designed for arguments based on words of the same family. Quintilian (1920, IX.3) includes the figures of repetition in the *schémata léxeos* or figures of elocutio, granting them grace and expressive force as in the case of amplification. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, pp. 174–175) affirm that this rhetorical principle increases the feeling of presence, and its main intention is to attract the audience's attention.

When repetition occurs at the beginning and the end of phrases and sentences as in some of the examples below, patterns are created that the reader can detect in his/her experience of a text (Fahnestock 1999, p. 158). Other types of repetition that are also present in this essay do not occur in specific places within a sentence. I am

[7] See *Virginia Woolf. Collected Essays. Vol. I*, edited by Leonard Woolf. 1966. London: The Hogarth Press, and *Virginia Woolf. Women and Writing*, edited by Michéle Barrett. 1979. London: The Women's Press, Ltd.

[8] In this essay, some revisions do appear in the reprint of the American *New York Herald Tribune*. This is the version contained in book collections and used for this study. They basically affect some punctuation signs, and the suppression or addition of some sentences. For example, in the British paper edition, the last lines of the first paragraph read '(…) as the mind in its loneliness is wont to do, will divide into two parts and let one talk to the other'. For the American version, she altered the last sentence, '(…) as the mind in its loneliness tends to do, divide into two and talk to itself', and added the meaningful phrase 'Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield'. Another relevant change occurs at the very end. The final long sentence that concludes the essay was followed in the paper version by a shorter structure that includes some sort of conjecture: 'But her life was so short, her search so compressed that we cannot tell now how she have developed that conclusion had she lived'. This sentence disappears in American reprint, and she inserts 'those amusements and sensations' just before last 'which none had loved better than she'.

referring here, for example, to *ploche*, wherein a single word is repeated several times in one or more sentences. Due to its potential invisibility, in contrast to other more explicitly obvious forms of repetition, the argumentative value of this device may be more difficult to discern (Fahnestock 1999, p. 158).

In *dispositio* the following *partes orationis* can be found.

Exordium

The *exordium* or introduction contains an argument by an authority. The reference to Mr. Murry and his admiring words affirming that 'as a writer of short stories Katherine Mansfield was *hors concours*' initiate this review. This type of reasoning is usually influenced by the authority's reputation, and uses his/her words as a means of reinforcing the thesis put forward (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 305). This first praise is underscored by the following structure, a negative sentence that sets up the first of several parallel compositions that confer a rhythmical pattern to the whole text, and which are also part of the expressive force of this short essay: 'No one has succeeded her, and no critic has been able to define her quality'; this is the very task that Woolf wants to accomplish, concentrating not so much on the content of Mansfield's writing, but on the intricacies of a fascinating mind, as suggested by *epistrophe*. The essayist appeals to 'the spectacle of a mind—a terribly sensitive mind'. The identity of the terms shapes the identity of the reference, whose main qualifying feature repeats on this occasion the title of the essay. This mention of the title is also a semantic element in the organisation of the *exordium* as a category that tries to attract the reader's attention. She then focuses on Mansfield's diary and, after quoting her first words from this text, 'Come, my unseen, my unknown, let us walk together', another parallelism suggests the myriad impressions that the short-story writer might have wondered about: 'In it she noted facts—the weather, an engagement; she sketched scenes, she analyzed her character; she described a pigeon or a dream or a conversation'. The basic syntactic pattern of subject + verb + object resembles the second, though the following briefer, parallel sequence that summarises the quality of Mansfield's diary, which can be analysed as *parison*: 'nothing could be more fragmentary; nothing more private'. Indeed, this reflection develops Woolf's views on Mansfield's mind and, by means of *ploche*, this concept is repeated up to three times in an utterance, granting special emphasis on this word:

> We feel that we are watching a *mind* which is alone with itself; a *mind* which has so little thought of that audience that it will make use of a shorthand of its own now and then, or, as the *mind* in its loneliness tends to do, divide into two and talk to itself. Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield.

The reiteration of 'mind' in three consecutive clauses is by no means the result of a lack of synonyms, but an argumentative move that details the doings of Mansfield's mind in solitude. In fact, the ultimate division of this mind that sometimes 'talks to itself' is made explicit in the final phrase that seems to impregnate the diary essence: 'Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield'. I can analyse this utterance in two possible ways: first, as *epanalepsis*, a figure that repeats the same term at the

beginning and the end of a line in a sort of tautological definition, implying that Katherine Mansfield is really two different persons; or second, as *antanaclasis*, where a word is used twice or more in two or more of its senses, possibly with the aim of distinguishing the writer from the woman, one self from the other.

Argumentatio

After trying to define the quality of Mansfield's diary in *exordium*, the main argumentative thread revolves around the idea of life. The adversative conjunct 'But' counters Woolf's apparent confusion about a possible lack of unity in the journal, as reflected in the previous paragraph, and so she introduces a rhetorical question aimed at wondering about the writer's motives:

> But then as the scraps accumulate we find ourselves giving them, or more probably receiving from Katherine Mansfield herself, a direction. From what point of view is she looking at life as she sits there, terribly sensitive, registering one after another such diverse impressions?

The rhetorical question is a figure of communion that attempts to bring about or increase communion with the audience (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969); Tindale (2004); Graff and Winn (2006, 2011)). There is not a direct answer, but a series of reflections on Woolf's part about Mansfield's conception of life, and how she transmits this idea both in her fiction and in her journal. Woolf's commentary includes long quotations from the journal. It is a vivid instance of the interaction between Mansfield and her work, of how her life affects her literary production and vice versa. Indeed, the passages selected from the writer's diary bring together different topics that Mansfield wanted to write about, like a violin or lumbago pain. These citations reflect Mansfield's thoughts, and help to portray this personality that Woolf admired so much. Moreover, the use of attributed quotations reveals the use, once more, of a communion technique that evokes Mansfield's presence throughout the text.

> Let me remember when I write about that fiddle how it runs up lightly and swings down sorrowfully; how it *searches*', she notes. Or, '*Lumbago*. This is a very queer thing. So sudden, so painful, I must remember it when I write about an old man. The start to get up, the pause, the look of fury, and how, lying at night, one seems to get locked.…

In the following lines, the repetition of the word 'writer' suggests the force of her vocation: 'She is a *writer*: a born *writer*'. Once again, *epistrophe* is evident. The burden of claim stresses an occupation that becomes inevitable by the use of 'a born writer'. This categorical assertion is followed by *polysyndeton*, which involves the repetition of the additive conjunction 'and'. Woolf uses several perception verbs that attempt to capture Mansfield's simultaneous, unique vision of the things that she apprehends: 'Everything she feels and hears and sees is not fragmentary and separate: it belongs together as writing'.

The next paragraph continues the same concern for life. More lines from Mansfield's journal appear, this time including short narratives inside her diary. In

Woolf's words, 'we seem to be in the midst of unfinished stories', and the reiteration by means of *parison* indicates a space, 'here is a beginning; here an end'. Woolf selects some specific, incomplete quotations to demonstrate the fragmentation of the narrative contained in Mansfield's journal, as this parallel structure shows, along with the lexical opposition represented in 'beginning' and 'end'. But these stories 'only need a loop of words thrown around them to be complete'. In the metaphorical phrase 'a loop of words', 'loop' as source domain represents a connecting, decorative figure among scattered words. It is 'a loop of words' that tries to capture Mansfield's dispersed writing, for Woolf herself appreciated the short-writer's ability to create a coherent whole out of apparently disorganised scribble (Smith 1999, p. 18).

The topic of writing is manifest in the following paragraph. Once more, the adversative conjunct 'But' opens a contrast between Mansfield's personal self and her writing self. Two repetition figures that expand this new topic are worth examining: the most apparent is perhaps *polyptoton*, which repeats a word in a different form:

> But then the diary is so private and so instinctive that it allows another self to break off from their self that *writes* and to stand a little apart watching it *write*. The *writing* self was a queer self; sometimes nothing would induce it to *write*.

In *polyptoton*, a change of form and a change of function occur at the same time (Fahnestock 1999, pp. 168–177, 2011, p. 30). The lexeme 'write' appears as a full verbal form in 'writes', as an ing-form modifying the noun 'self' in 'writing', and as a bare infinitive in 'write'. All the instances of write have different syntactic functions, either as actions or attribute. The concept of writing reappears with a different morph that sustains the importance granted to this argument. The second figure is an *epistrophe* that emphasises the persistent occurrence of 'self' in 'the writing *self* was a queer *self*'. As in previous occurrences, 'self' carries the burden of the claim because it contains the same noun but different modifiers. In this definition, Woolf stresses the difficulty that is always present in the creative process and that Mansfield herself justifies when she asserts that 'Life would be almost perfect here if only when I was *pretending* to work I always was working'. This complex relationship between life and writing is further expressed in the text by means of a negation when Mansfield declares 'I don't want to write; I want to *live*'. This preoccupation with the divided self is also an important topic of modernism (Smith 1999, p. 19).

Woolf repeats Mansfield's quoted question, "what does she mean by that?" at the beginning of the following paragraph, but this time she provides no response. By way of commentary, the essayist describes the journal through a series of rhythmical structures that reflect Mansfield's occupation beautifully. For example, the short-story writer's attitude towards her work is 'admirable, sane, caustic, and austere'. These modifiers precede the *parison* that extends this notion that 'There is no literary gossip; no vanity; no jealousy'. This triple negation produces connections between the terms used to refer to Mansfield's attitude towards her work. And in Woolf's remarks about the author's writing, the same figure is used to note that 'Her own comments are always penetrating and disparaging. Her stories wanted richness

and depth'. The essayist's observations lead again to the idea that writing, which she defines as 'the mere expression of things adequately and sensitively', is not enough since 'It is founded upon *something* unexpressed; and this *something* must be solid and entire'. The vagueness of the pronoun 'something' is highlighted by means of *ploche*, and its unidentified referent serves as contrast between 'unexpressed' and 'solid and endure'. Even if no specific name is used, the adjectives selected help to give weight to the argument and the term 'something' is therefore emphasised.

Woolf then summarises the short-story writer's poor health in the last years of her life. She mentions Mansfield's fight against her malady, and even the therapeutic treatment that she received at the end of her life. Again, *ploche* stresses the importance of health if one is to write, in '*One* must have health in *one's* self'. Another indefinite pronoun functioning as a referent makes sense by virtue of the possession of a 'self'. The reflexive pronoun 'oneself' splits so that 'one' becomes two separate entities that have different needs. The last sentence of this paragraph links writing and health as the final topic of the essay: 'But before she went she wrote the summing up of her position with which the journal ends'. This time, 'but' seems to oppose the intricate relationship between writing and health, which are so present in the text.

Epilogue

The concluding section starts with a new question:

> She wanted *health*, she wrote; but what did she mean by *health*? "By *health* (…) I mean the power to lead a full, adult, living, breathing life in close contact with what I love – the earth and the wonders thereof – the sea – the sun…. Then I want to *work*. At what? I want so to live that I work with my hands and my feelings and my brain (…)".

In contrast with previous interrogations, we now read Mansfield's own reference about both health and work, in italics in the text. *Ploche* is present in the triple repetition of 'health'. The reiteration occurs first in the form of a wish, then as a query as to its meaning and, finally, as a definition of the word. As a result, the implication of health is not really apprehended until the reader understands Mansfield's real conception of the term, and only then can this term maintain the stability of the referent. The diary finishes with a positive note. Woolf includes the final words of the diary, 'All is well', and expresses a wish about the ultimate intention of Mansfield's private thoughts in accordance with the intense life that she was able to experience. The wish as a closing topic is a characteristic semantic element of the epilogue. In this yearning, the rush of words opposes the somewhat contained rhythm of the whole text. Whether to imitate either a thought pace or the energy encountered in the passage, only two noun phrases are paired by two commas at the end:

> And since she died three months later it is tempting to think that the words stood for some conclusion which illness and the intensity of her own nature drove her to find at an age when most of us are loitering easily among those appearances and impressions, those amusements and sensations, which none had loved better than she.

Presence in the essay

After considering the inventive, dispositive and elocutive levels that are present in 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind', I will discuss how the interaction of these levels can generate a feeling of presence in the audience and produce expressive force. Presence thus conceived "is a superordinate concept, a second-order effect that relies on a synergy of first-order effects—those achieved, one by one, at the level of invention (*inventio*), arrangement (*dispositio*), and style (*elocutio*)". Presence can also play a persuasive role insofar as it increases or decreases the audience's admiration (Gross and Dearin 2003, 136). The antecedents of this rhetorical principle can be found in Aristotle (1909, III.11) who, in his *Rhetoric*, distinguishes between metaphors with *enárgeia*, which can bring an inanimate object to life, and metaphors without *enárgeia*. Similarly, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, pp. 115–120) refer to presence as the consequence of a rhetorical technique that implies the deliberate choice of one element over another in such a way as to affect the audience.

In the essay, arguments and rhetorical figures become isolated first-order instances that appear interweaved in the different levels of analysis. In this respect, the person/act interaction is the main argument generated by *inventio* that allows Woolf a particular reading of Mansfield's diary. In arrangement or *dispositio* a certain ordering of arguments and rhetorical figures is followed: in *exordium*, an introductory argument by an authority reveals a compliment to Mansfield; some quotes from her diary show the reader the admiring tone of the text and predispose him/her favourably. In *argumentatio* the essayist continues the mentions of Mansfield's diary that help her shape her review. Both the quotations from the journal and many of Woolf's comments appear in the present tense, together with several instances of the "I" pronoun taken from the journal. The epilogue summarises Mansfield's cravings for life, writing and health, three of the topics that are prevalent in the essay. A conjecture as the final argument closes the essay and may leave the reader pondering on Mansfield's opinion of life and her premature death.

This form of arrangement can become persuasive if readers perceive the following conditions, enumerated by Gross and Dearin (2003, pp. 99–113): (1) the expected order of arguments developed through an introduction, the further progression of ideas in *argumentatio* and their culmination in the epilogue. (2) The psychological order of arguments, because Woolf tries to attract her readers' disposition to accept her views with a particular treatment of data in the present tense that is intended to praise Mansfield's figure and bring her to life. (3) The self-referential nature of the essay that is concerned with the audience's perception that Woolf tries to redefine Katherine Mansfield in a positive way. Self-reference is also related to one conception of the Woolfian essay that is intent on exploring new possibilities of the essay genre by connecting objective and subjective truths that distinguish the sequential account of events reflected in Mansfield's diary from those more personal moments (Gualtieri 2000a, p. 357).

Finally, the stylistic features that are found in *elocutio* are also represented in the verbal representation of the text. As mentioned above, the argument by the act-person interaction unfolds by means of the comments on several fragments from Mansfield's journal throughout the whole text. The inclusion of these quoted

passages and Woolf's rhetorical questions are regarded as figures of communion with readers. The initial argument by an authority, the final wish in the epilogue, and some figures of repetition like *parison*, *epistrophe*, *epanalepsis*, and *polysyndeton* give prominence to aspects such as the fragmented content of some parts of the diary, and the treatment of those topics that were significant for her: life, writing, and health. The persistent use of *ploche* in the essay reveals the different senses attributed to mind, self and health, or the new meaning given to pronouns like "something" and "one". Similarly, *polyptoton* highlights Mansfield's importance of writing in her life.

All these first-order effects encountered in *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* through the construction of arguments that are reinforced by a variety of rhetorical figures follow a specific order that results in the interpretation of presence and helps to emphasise the emotive force of the essay. Woolf thus hopes that readers will be able to perceive Mansfield's 'spectacle of a mind—a terribly sensitive mind' through an account of quotes from her journal, her love for writing and life, and her final longing for health. Hence, second-order presence is revealed, one that presents a lively image of Katherine Mansfield now that she is gone.

Conclusion

This article has proposed a rhetorical analysis of 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind', a short essay by Virginia Woolf that praises the writer Katherine Mansfield. The argumentative nature of the essay allows a study of the rhetorical operations that can be found in the text, such as invention, arrangement and style. Furthermore, said rhetorical analysis can provide an additional reading of Virginia Woolf's non-fiction as regards its persuasive and emotive value.

At the inventive level, Woolf explores new boundaries for the subject of writing within the essay by means of the argument through act-person interaction, which revises the conception of a person through his/her acts. At the dispositive level, the progressive distribution of topics by means of arguments and figures is organised into *exordium*, *argumentatio* and epilogue in order to offer a persuasive arrangement that can gain the adherence of the audience. At the elocutive level, Woolf emphasises these ideas by using several figures of repetition that also try to influence the reader through their expressive value.

The conjunction of these specific first order-effects creates a second-order presence where Woolf makes the reader aware of Mansfield's views on life and the mind at work, and of how her personal circumstances run parallel to the writing of the journal that she is reviewing. I have tried to demonstrate how the creation of this presence helps to define the expressive force of this essay by offering a kind image of Mansfield, one that produces admiration for her creativity and awakens compassion for her suffering.

This rhetorical model of analysis can be applied to other Woolf's literary reviews in order to determine a possible pattern for the study of rhetorical operations and *partes orationis*. Similarly, a study of rhetorical presence could establish whether Woolf always exalts the characters that she writes about or, by contrast, whether the

creation of presence is sometimes consciously built upon qualities not normally singled out as praiseworthy for a definite purpose.

Appendix

'A Terribly Sensitive Mind'

The most distinguished writers of short stories in England are agreed, says Mr. Murry, that as a writer of short stories Katherine Mansfield was *hors concours*. No one has succeeded her, and no critic has been able to define her quality. But the reader of her journal is well content to let such questions be. It is not the quality of her writing or the degree of her fame that interest us in her diary, but the spectacle of a mind—a terribly sensitive mind—receiving one after another the haphazard impressions of eight years of life. Her diary was a mystical companion. 'Come my unseen, my unknown, let us walk together', she says on beginning a new volume. In it she noted facts—the weather, an engagement; she sketched scenes; she analyzed her character; she described a pigeon or a dream or a conversation; nothing could be more fragmentary; nothing more private. We feel that we are watching a mind which is alone with itself; a mind which has so little thought of that audience that it will make use of a shorthand of its own now and then, or, as the mind in its loneliness tends to do, divide into two and talk to itself. Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield.

But then as the scraps accumulate we find ourselves giving them, or more probably receiving from Katherine Mansfield herself, a direction. From what point of view is she looking at life as she sits there, terribly sensitive, registering one after another such diverse impressions? She is a writer; a born writer. Everything she feels and hears and sees is not fragmentary and separate; it belongs together as writing. Sometimes the note is directly made for a story. 'Let me remember when I write about that fiddle how it runs up lightly and swings down sorrowfully; how it *searches*', she notes. Or, '*Lumbago*. This is a very queer thing. So sudden, so painful, I must remember it when I write about an old man. The start to get up, the pause, the look of fury, and how, lying at night, one seems to get locked.'….

Again, the moment itself suddenly puts on significance, and she traces the outline as if to preserve it. 'It's raining, but the air is soft, smoky, warm. Big drops patter on the languid leaves, the tobacco flowers lean over. Now there is a rustle in the ivy. Wingly has appeared from the garden next door; he bounds from the wall. And delicately, lifting his paws, pointing his ears, very afraid the big wave will overtake him, he wades over the lake of green grass.' The Sister of Nazareth 'showing her pale gums and big discoloured teeth' asks for money. The thin dog. So thin that his body is like 'a cage on four wooden pegs', runs down the street. In some sense, she feels, the thin dog is the street. In all this we seem to be in the midst of unfinished stories; here is a beginning; here an end. They only need a loop of words thrown round them to be complete.

But then the diary is so private and so instinctive that it allows another self to break off from their self that writes and to stand a little apart watching it write. The writing self was a queer self; sometimes nothing would induce it to write. 'There is

so much to do and I do so little. Life would be almost perfect here if only when I was *pretending* to work I always was working. Look at the stories that wait and wait just at the threshold…. *Next day*. Yet take this morning, for instance. I don't want to write anything. It's gray; it's heavy and dull. And short stories seem unreal and not worth doing. I don't want to write; I want to *live*. What does she mean by that? It's not easy to say. But there you are!'.

What does she mean by that? No one felt more seriously the importance of writing than she did. In all the pages of her journal, instinctive, rapid as they are, her attitudes toward her work is admirable, sane, caustic, and austere. There is no literary gossip; no vanity; no jealousy. Although during her last years she must have been aware of her success she makes no allusion to it. Her own comments upon her work are always penetrating and disparaging. Her stories wanted richness and depth; she was only 'skimming the top—no more'. But writing, the mere expression of things adequately and sensitively, is not enough. It is founded upon something unexpressed; and this something must be solid and entire. Under the desperate pressure of increasing illness she began a curious and difficult search, of which we catch glimpses only and those hard to interpret, after the crystal clearness which is needed if one is to write truthfully. 'Nothing of any worth can come of a disunited being' she wrote. One must have health in one's self. After 5 years of struggle she gave up the search after physical health not in despair, but because she thought the malady was of the soul and that the cure lay not in any physical treatment, but in some such 'spiritual brotherhood' as that at Fontainebleau, in which the last months of her life were spent. But before she went she wrote the summing up of her position with which the journal ends.

She wanted health, she wrote; but what did she mean by health? 'By health', she wrote, 'I mean the power to lead a full, adult, living, breathing life in close contact with what I love—the earth and the wonders thereof—the sea—the sun…. Then I want to *work*. At what? I want so to live that I work with my hands and my feeling and my brain. I want a garden, a small house, grass, animals, books, pictures, music. And out of this, the expression of this, I want to be writing. (Though I may write about cabmen. That's not matter.)' The diary ends with the words 'All is well'. And since she died 3 months later it is tempting to think that the words stood for some conclusion which illness and the intensity of her own nature drove her to find at an age when most of us are loitering easily among those appearances and impressions, those amusements and sensations, which none had loved better than she.

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