Revisiting discourse boundaries: The narrative and non-narrative modes

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Abstract

The article has a programmatic aim, namely to critically review the main assumptions of research on discourse boundaries and propose a viable way around current pitfalls. Discourse distinctions by mode can be a useful antidote to text classifications based upon genre, text-external or text-internal factors, or the spoken versus written dichotomy. While narrative figures in all classifications by mode, studies of modes other than narrative have so far remained fragmented and artificially separated. Furthermore, although classificatory frameworks assume a symmetrical relation between modes, the primacy of narrative in communication needs to be taken into account. Our proposal for a systematic treatment of the narrative and non-narrative modes rests on the conceptualization of mode as a level above that of genre that serves as both a text- and context-organizing tool, providing speakers and writers with rhetorical resources that can be strategically drawn upon in discourse. This view avoids the polarization that has led to a depreciation of non-narrative and overvaluing of narrative texts, and allows us to recognize the relative importance of each mode by reference to textual analysis. In particular, the distinction can be operationalized in terms of prototypical features relating to configurations of spatial, temporal, and personal relations, as well as aspects of interpersonal management. Prerequisites for the further systematization of the distinction include the exploration of the respective prototypical cases and the study of their hybridization and interaction in such contexts as computer-mediated communication or institutional discourse.

Keywords: *narrative–non-narrative; mode; genre; discourse.*

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1. Beyond genre

The endeavor to understand the complexities of discourse and the multiplicity of factors involved in language use has given prominence to the notion of genre (especially in the frame of Systemic Functional Grammar, e.g., Halliday 1985), and, to a lesser extent, to the related notions of text type, preferred in the continental literature (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981), discourse type (Cook 1989; Fairclough 1989), and activity type, in the frame of conversation analysis. Despite differences in their scope and emphasis, all of these concepts have grown out of the need to account for well-attested, systematic co-patternings between discourse form, content, function, and overall context. Depending on the analytic framework in which they occur, they have variously been employed as useful classificatory devices for the analyst or as points of entry into as analysis of what participants orient themselves to during discourse construction. By its latter definition, genre is in tune with Bakthin's much quoted remark that

> we learn to cast our speech in generic forms, and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words ... from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole. (1990: 956)

In line with Bakhtin, it is nowadays a truism that the boundaries of a genre are determined not only by content and form (e.g., lexical and grammatical patterns, features of organization, etc.), but also by socio-cultural and cognitive criteria, such as norms, conventions, rules of use, and schematic expectations (Paltridge 1995: 288).

There are, however, a number of well-known limitations to the concept of genre, mainly stemming from the fact that it defies exact definition. As Biber finds, descriptive frameworks are 'not sufficiently explicit to be used for a situational taxonomy' (1994: 38). As a result, the identification of individual genres or their sub-genres is, in practice, groundless, if not arbitrary. Groupings of discourse activities by genre tend to multiply into hundreds of minutely detailed, fragmented, and merging categories. In order to avoid constantly multiplying and indeterminate lists or categorizations of genres, analysts have recognized the need to establish some binding principles that cut across the multiplicity of sub-groupings and organize these into larger categories. Such attempts have mainly drawn on the contextual dimension of medium, thus identifying the dichotomy between spoken and written as a major organizing principle of discourse (e.g., Halliday 1985; Hymes 1996). Proliferating research on spoken and written classifications of genre has, however, cast serious doubt on the analytic validity of this dichotomy. In particular, a picture of complex interrelationships has emerged, in which features cut across spoken and written discourse activities, as opposed to a neat association of genres with sets of textual and contextual features (e.g., Biber 1986, 1988; Gee 1990; papers in Tannen 1982, 1984). As a result, it has by now become apparent that spoken and written discourses should be seen as different ways of using language, called for by different sociocultural practices, which cannot form unitary and independent links with the practices of speaking and writing, respectively (Biber and Finnegan 1994). Furthermore, the recent explosive development of information technologies has revolutionized well-established conceptions about spoken and written taxonomies. For example, computer-mediated texts present features conventionally associated with the media of both speech and writing (e.g., Herring 1996).

In view of the preceding, there has been a recent upsurge of interest in discourse distinctions on the basis of rhetorical mode (or stance), a strategy which is as old as any metalanguage on discourse, and traceable to Aristotle's *Poetics*. This interest is mainly evidenced in the recent dramatic turn to narrative; in discourse instances like fly-on-the-wall documentaries, talk shows, autobiographies, and life stories, which nowadays constitute salient genres in Western societies, the power of narrative is constantly being (re)discovered. Treasured for its authenticity and testimonial value, narrative is at the center of attention in numerous disciplines. It is thus no surprise that narrative analysis is one of the best and most extensively researched areas in the multi-disciplinary study of discourse (Mishler 1995; van Dijk 1993). It is, nonetheless, currently tantalized by questions pertaining to the scope and specificity of narrative. Having been contracted and expanded to suit individual research needs, the concept of narrative itself is now recognized to be far from well defined. The proliferation of theories on narrative has blurred discourse boundaries, by threatening to subsume all texts within the category of narration. As a result, agreement is lacking as to what—if anything—narrative stands in contrast. For this reason, any attempt to explore the usefulness of rhetorical mode as a discourse analytic concept is seriously hampered by the area's fragmentation and lack of systematization, as well as by the uncritical application of terms.

Our aim in this article is critical and programmatic: we attempt, first, to outline and critically review what we see as the main standing assumptions of research on discourse boundaries and, subsequently, to propose a viable way forward and around the current pitfalls. We suggest that such a way can be found in the notion of mode as a level above that of genre which applies to the distinction between narrative and non-narrative discourse. Mode is seen as a means of organizing text and context

and as prototypically enacted in textual and contextual configurations. Finally, we hope to address the implications of our suggestions relating to the narrative and non-narrative modes.

2. Narrative and other modes

Most research on discourse boundaries by mode recognizes a distinction between narrative and other modes but varies greatly as to what and how many those other modes are considered to be. The grey area of other modes has in different models included description, argumentation, exposition (e.g., Chatman 1991; Kinneavy 1971; Longacre 1976; Werlich 1976), explanation (Britton et al. 1975), and instruction or procedure (Werlich 1976). Mainly developed for pedagogical purposes, these classifications have relied on intuition, thus shunning the formulation of precise linguistic criteria. Alternatively, they have failed to indicate the relative importance of each mode and explore the interrelations between them. For instance, in Longacre's (1976) classification, procedural and hortatory texts are placed alongside narration and exposition. It is, however, telling that narrative figures in all classificatory frameworks. This is not only an implicit recognition of the primacy of the narrative mode in discourse construction, but also reflects the fact that studies of modes other than narrative have remained fragmented and artificially separated at a time when narrative has attained the status of an autonomous, unified object of analysis.

Binary distinctions between narrative and non-narrative are well established, even if underspecified and unformalized, in several disciplines, such as film and media studies, art history, biblical studies (Foley 1995), historiography (Burke 1991), psychology, and literary and cultural studies, while they remain latent or unexplored within linguistics. Specifically, research into the teaching of writing has indicated the fundamental gap separating narrative and expository texts and the opposing demands they make on students' abilities (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987; Martin 1985). The existence of a category of non-narrative texts seems to be taken for granted in fields such as ESL research (e.g., Laube 1991), although it is not further specified. Similarly, recent multi-feature statistical analyses of texts have included the narrative versus non-narrative distinction in their dimensions of text classification, either explicitly (Biber 1988) or implicitly, in the form of fictional versus informative text types (Grabe 1987). A final use of the distinction between narrative and non-narrative operates in the opposition drawn between narrative events and discursive comments or descriptions made by the narrator *within* narrative texts (e.g., Longacre 1995).

The explicit recognition of narrative and non-narrative as two fundamentally different ways of discursively (re)constituting and interacting with reality is largely traceable to Bruner's recent work (1986, 1990), which distinguishes between the 'narrative' and the 'paradigmatic' (or logico-semantic) modes. According to Bruner, the former is a way of encoding and interpreting human reality, experiences, beliefs, and emotions, while the latter deals with natural (physical) reality, truth, observation, analysis, proof, and rationality. Bruner's insights have given rise to a proliferation of studies in narrative psychology. These have advocated the inseparability of human experience and the fabric of self from narrative. In these terms, our very selves are the by-product of storytelling, of our ability to 'story' ourselves (Kerby 1991; Polkinghorne 1991).

Within this framework, however, there has been very little research into exactly what the discourse features, roles, and functions of the two modes are. Instead, the distinction has been based on highly controversial referential criteria, that is, on each mode's relation to the organization of the external world. From this point of view, the status of narrative with regard to time and experience has been debated ad infinitum. According to one view, experienced time is structured, configured, and as a result, narrative-like (Freeman 1998). An opposing view sees experienced time as basically meaningless; narrative imposes a meaningful structure and purpose on it, and may, even, draft a distorted and inauthentic view of reality (e.g., see White 1981).

Equally controversial is the view that narrative (re)creates or (re)constructs reality, while non-narrative displays it through a model of verifiable (analytic and synthetic) relations. This opposition frequently corresponds to the distinction between ficticity and factuality, which remains, however, largely underspecified and undeveloped in textual or discourse terms. For instance, it has far from become clear what kinds of genres the narrative and the paradigmatic mode are to be found in. Based on Bruner's paradigm, the underlying assumption of narrative psychologists has been that the paradigmatic mode is to be equated with science, whilst the narrative mode is haphazardly equated with oral stories, fiction, autobiography, etc. This rough classification results in inconsistent and methodologically misconceived comparisons between narrative as a whole and undifferentiated category and various kinds of scientific discourse (for a critique, see Herman 1998). The consistent finding of such comparative studies is that certain kinds of scientific discourse present elements or features that align them with narrative. Though as a rule unsubstantiated from a textual point of view, such verdicts uphold a polarized vision of the world as comprising the good (narrative) and the bad (non-narrative), and seem to be part of a mission to reinstate the significance of narrative

as a mode of thought and communication in the wake of a long-standing tradition of Western rationality that has privileged the paradigmatic mode (cf. Hymes 1996: 112). The result has been a mere reversal of polarization, which has depreciated non-narrative and overvalued narrative. It is necessary, then, to attempt to develop an approach that will not follow the value-laden, polemic polarization of the two modes. This approach will recognize the relative importance of each mode by grounding each view in textual analyses.

3. The primacy of narrative

A natural consequence of some of the studies already discussed is that narrative is classed as a primary mode, in fact, the only primary mode, since it forms a constitutive element of human experience and temporality. It is a common assumption that narrative is a universal and archetypical category, though it can be expected that different contexts and cultures will capitalize on its use in different ways. Nash (1990: xi) aptly summarizes current views, by stating that narrative is deemed to be

> central to our essential cognitive activities (Ricoeur), to historical thinking (White), to psychological analysis and practice (Lacan), to political critique and praxis (Lyotard).

Proponents of the primacy of narrative often appeal to the ontogenetic and historical preference for narrative. Fischer (1987) has even coined the term *homo narrans* to underline the importance of narration for human life. Traditional and modern societies have been shown to rely upon the narrative mode for children's socialization into a specific cultural reality (Heath 1983), while the making and appreciation of shared narratives has been widely attested to be the 'glue' of particular cultures (Lakoff 1997). In Hymes's words, 'humanity was born telling stories, so to speak' (1996: 119).

One consequence of narrative primacy seems to be the homogeneity of narrative as a category that plays host to an increasing number of genres (cf. Chatman 1991). On the other hand, non-narrative remains unspecified and its genres are studied in isolation from one another. In the face of this lack of systematic studies of non-narrative, it is arguable that the similarities between different kinds of non-narrative texts have yet to be brought to the fore. At the same time, it is also fair to assume that the homogeneity of narrative is, by and large, an idealization, an effect of the standardization achieved by the long tradition of the study of narrative. Furthermore, there is a glaring lack of convergence within the literature as to what exactly narrative is. The concept has variously

embodied a set of genres, a constellation of rhetorical features or strategies, a style, a discourse metafunction, or even the mother of all genres, an all-encompassing category that can be equated with discourse itself (see, e.g., Fischer 1987, Hillis Miller 1995: 76).

The asymmetrical distinction between narrative and non-narrative modes is also brought forth in a variety of studies which have pointed out that narratives can constitute some kind of pre- or meta-genre that cannot be put on the same level as 'ordinary' genres (Swales 1990; Virtanen 1992; Toolan 1996: 116–118; Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 139). As such, narrative can realize but not be realized by argumentation, description, or exposition. For instance, whereas we can tell a story to put forth an argument, the discursive metafunction of narrating cannot possibly be performed by argumentative texts. Similarly, science has been shown to use narrative methods to achieve factual constructions (Latour and Bastide 1986).

All of these strands of research, firstly, point out the primacy of narrative as a mode. For this reason, it would seem appropriate to apply the term 'non-narrative' rather than any other (such as 'paradigmatic' [Bruner 1990], 'technical/formal' [Hymes 1996], etc.) to genres other than narrative, so as to focus attention on the relevant asymmetry of modes. Secondly, there is a lack of agreement on the scope and nature of narrative in contrast to non-narrative that is, in our view, due to (*a*) an ideologically driven tendency to promote narrative at all costs, (*b*) insufficient exploration of the discourse features and roles of both narrative and non-narrative texts, and (*c*) a conflation of analytical levels which mistakenly equates mode with genre or with individual texts. In our view, mode is situated above and beyond the two layers of text and context, i.e., in systemic terms, above the context of situational variables and above language metafunctions (e.g., the ideational, interpersonal, or textual, as in Halliday 1985). It thus serves as both a text- and a context-organizing tool. As such, it provides speakers with rhetorical resources and strategies that can be strategically drawn upon in the on-line, negotiatory process of discourse activities.

4. Narrative versus non-narrative: Towards a systematic distinction

Our conceptualization of mode allows us to account for the finding in the literature that non-narrative texts frequently exhibit properties of 'narrativity' (e.g., Butler 1990; Herrnstein-Smith 1980), and, vice versa, that narrative texts may be produced which perform functions commonly associated with the non-narrative. More specifically, accepting the meta-discourse role of mode enables us to formulate the following assumptions. The concept of mode is archetypical and universal, even though

socioculturally grounded and specified. At the level of mode, narrative is a primary category, which is constitutive of human experientiality and temporality. Because of its primacy, any distinction posed at this level between narrative and other, non-narrative modes is bound to be asymmetrical. Its function of mode can be accounted for with the necessary abstraction, provided that this abstraction is not abused in the interests of a polarization that sanctions the role of narrative in discourse, as has already been mentioned, or misused, as in the conflation of mode with genre, or even with actual texts.

The following discussion will attempt to suggest ways to take advantage of the insights that can be offered by mode in studies of texts. The first question to ask is to what extent it makes sense to pose a distinction between narrative and non-narrative texts, as opposed to accepting that different texts constitute instances of narrative in different forms and shapes. This latter view, however attractive, does not seem to have been borne out by text-linguistic or discourse research. To begin with, as already seen, typological studies have always documented discourses other than narrative. Furthermore, as will be shown in the following, there are significant similarities between texts that can be labelled as narrative and texts that are simply non-narrative. It is true that the unifying threads of narrative texts are more substantial and better documented while those of non-narrative texts tend to be more fragmented and less acknowledged. This should not prevent us, however, from working towards a systematization of the distinction. Our suggestion is that narrative and non-narrative texts are associated with clusters of prototypical features of textual make-up and contextual use. Nonetheless, in actual practice, those features and the resulting discourses are drawn upon, negotiated, and even transgressed, to a varying extent and in different ways, by participants. Thus, the analytic justification for postulating, and having insights into the roles of, these functions is that they serve as points of entry into a consideration of what participants attend to or deliberately ignore during discourse. We have argued elsewhere that the prototypical features of narrative and non-narrative modes tend to cluster around three basic kinds of properties, namely the referential, the textual, and the contextual (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997a, to appear). In the following, we will focus on what we view as the prototypical discourse-level features of these two modes and suggest ways of further exploring their uses.

The main differences between the textual instantiations of narrative and non-narrative can be encapsulated with reference to configurations of temporal, personal, and spatial relations. Specifically, the chronological dimension (i.e., temporal transition from one state of affairs to another) constitutes the uncontentious common denominator of all narrative texts (Ricoeur 1988). Narratives may concern past, present, future, hypothetical, or habitual events, every one of which is defined as 'an occurrence in some world which is encoded in a proposition which receives an instantaneous rather than durative interpretation' (Polanyi 1982: 510). In a nutshell, the narrative mode presupposes reference to some temporally instantaneous events, thus presenting a double temporal logic. As Chatman (1991: 9) explains, narrative entails movement through time not only externally (through the presentation of the novel, film, play, etc.), but also internally (through the duration of the sequence of events that constitute the plot). The former operates in the dimension of 'discourse' (*suzhet*) and the latter in that of 'story' (*fabula*). Non-narrative texts do not have an internal time sequence, even though, obviously, they take time to read or listen to. Their underlying structures are static or atemporal, whether synchronic or diachronic. Thus, whereas the narrative mode focuses on the re-creation of what happened, the non-narrative mode focuses on how things are, either with a view to state what these need to or should be (e.g., instructional, argumentative, hortatory texts) or without (e.g., iconic and descriptive texts).

This fundamental difference runs through the organizational devices prototypically associated with narrative and non-narrative texts. The telling of a story with a beginning, middle, and end inevitably leads to an emphasis on sequentiality and on temporal as well as spatial relations. In addition, the importance of actors (characters) in the world of the story leads to an emphasis on the linguistic devices that follow their lines of activity. As a result, temporal adverbials, participant, and tense shifts are particularly important signals of the narrative mode (Georgakopoulou 1997a) that have been found to be instrumental in the participants' imputation of narrative connectivity, or, in other words, in their recognition and interpretation of a text as a story. In contrast, non-narrative texts are mainly developed on the basis of lexical patterning that involves the provision of new lexical information, in conjunction with a repertory of grammatical items, the multiple lexical relations between adjacent and remote items (e.g., cohesion and anaphoric nouns), and the use of prediction pairs or other dialogic structures (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997a: chapter 4). Thus, the identification of non-narrative units, rather than relying on time, place, and character markers, rests on more explicit devices such as paragraphing, meta-linguistic expressions, and encapsulating cohesion (Goutsos 1997).

Even a brief example should suffice to illustrate the ways in which configurations of textual features and organizational devices match the distinction between narrative and non-narrative modes. Take, for

instance, the following two paragraphs from the introduction of Stephen Hawking's bestseller *A Brief History of Time*:

(1) a. A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: 'What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.' The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, 'What is the tortoise standing on?' 'You're very clever, young man, very clever', said the old lady. 'But it's turtles all the way down!'

b. Most people would find the picture of our universe as an infinite tower of tortoises rather ridiculous, but why do we think we know better? What do we know about the universe, and how do we know it? Where did the universe come from, and where is it going? Did the universe have a beginning, and if so, what happened *before* then? What is the nature of time? Will it ever come to an end? Recent breakthroughs in physics, made possible in part by fantastic new technologies, suggest answers to some of these longstanding questions. Someday these answers may seem as obvious to us as the earth orbiting the sun—or perhaps as ridiculous as a tower of tortoises. Only time (whatever that may be) will tell.

Paragraph (a) is clearly organized around the chronological dimension of the events constituting the anecdote with the old lady. The organizational devices present in the paragraph precisely reflect this concern: there is a clear temporal segmentation ('once', 'at the end of the lecture', 'before replying') and a prominence of participant chains ('a well-known scientist', 'he', 'the scientist', 'a little old lady', 'the old lady'), foregrounded by the placement of characters in thematic sentence positions (in Halliday's 1985 terms). By contrast, paragraph (b) is not concerned with what happened but with the exploration of how things are or could be. Organizational devices again follow this concern: thematic positions are in this case filled with question items ('what', 'how', 'where', 'did', etc.), while there is a prominent role for far-ranging lexical patterns such as anaphoric nouns ('these longstanding questions') which encapsulate larger portions of text.

Structural patterns differ prominently in the narrative and non-narrative modes. The main unifying threads emerging from the literature relate to the concerns of plot development (frequently manifested as the disruption and re-establishment of an equilibrium), in the case of narrative, and the establishment of a generic truth about a specific discourse entity, in the case of non-narrative. The narrative mode has been prototypically related to a structural pattern involving the basic parts of orientation, complicating action, and resolution (Labov 1972). Similar patterns are found in story-grammar paradigms (e.g., Stein 1982) or van Dijk's superstructural schema (1980), as well as in earlier structuralist description such as those of Propp (1968) and Barthes (1977). This basic structural pattern is found microscopically in (1a), in which the orientation section is clearly demarcated from that of the complicating action ('got up and said'), and the climactic interchange between the scientist and the old lady ('But it's turtles ...!') provides the resolution. By contrast, non-narrative texts, as a rule, revolve around a problem (with its related effects and causes), its solution and evaluation (i.e., the assessment of solutions) (Hoey 1983), or, alternatively, around an argument, which requires explanation, proof, or refutation. Numerous variants of these patterns have been pointed out in the literature (e.g., Hatim and Mason 1990). In the case of (1b), structural development is achieved through the predictive pair of question and answer, which constitutes a dialogic version of the problem–solution pattern.

Another point of divergence between the narrative and non-narrative modes arises in the encoding of interpersonal relations and the related expressive devices. Stories are regarded as discursively constructing and evaluating experience: they encode the storyteller's selection and interpretation of what happened, his or her subjective views and attitudes towards that which is narrated. Subjectivity, however, seems to be less pervasive in non-narrative texts. These are, instead, characterized by specific details of categorization regarding the ways in which different parts of the world (entities or categories) are perceived. In crude terms, narrative seems to be prototypically associated with subjectivity, affectivity, and imageability, but non-narrative with processes of information giving, analysis, and rationalization (Witten 1993). As happens with other textual mechanisms, the main devices by which the process of evaluation is realized are, as a rule, different in the two modes. In narratives, it is mainly encoded by repetition patterns, tense shifts, speech presentation and (other) dramatization devices, whereas in non-narrative texts it relies heavily on explicit or implicit lexical signalling. Furthermore, non-narrative texts are more likely to activate detachment strategies, while narrative texts opt for a specific set of devices (such as speech presentation, expressive sounds, etc.) that achieve involvement through dramatization (Tannen 1989). These distinctions also apply in fairly broad terms to the paragraphs in example 1. In paragraph (a) the

speech presentation achieves an animated portrayal of the story, which aims at involving the reader, whereas in paragraph (b) there is a step back from the involving anecdote into a detached presentation of questions and answers.

The textual differences just discussed are related to differences in the ways in which participants manage themselves and their relationships with one another, once they enter the narrative or non-narrative pact. The key to narrative self-presentation and construction of identities is held by the interaction between the two deictically distinct worlds of the tale (the reconstructed 'reality') and the here-and-now of the narrative's telling. More specifically, the deictic disparity between the two worlds can be manipulated by storytellers so as to laminate aspects of their selves (Goffman 1981), by appearing both as tellers of the tale world and as characters in it. Goffman's (1974, 1981) model of dramaturgical action and personae in our interactions is crucial in understanding this process of self-lamination. As Schiffrin (1990) has explicated with reference to oral (conversational) narratives, storytellers can present themselves in all four capacities of *animator* (the person who produces talk), *figure* (someone who belongs to the world that is spoken about), *author* (the aspect of self responsible for the content of talk), or *principal* (the aspect committed to what is said). Alternatively, they can delegate any of the aspects of author, principal, and/or figure to other characters in the tale world. Through such manipulations, they can diffuse their agency or responsibility in the social field, create a widened base of support for their views and beliefs, or, generally, cast these in a positive light. In contrast, positioning in the non-narrative mode misses out on the deictic shifts of the story world but can afford to be presented as more objective, tested, or universal, holding for all situations and states of affairs, or, in similar vein, as being subject to analysis and argumentation. In Schiffrin's terms (1990), when individuals make statements about an external world, they are usually seen as displaying themselves in the capacity of a principal. They can manipulate their aspects of self and modify commitment to what is said. Consequently, in the non-narrative mode speakers/writers can modify the display of the aspects of principal and author, by, e.g., decreasing commitment through the expression of opinion ('that's my opinion'), or increasing commitment ('everybody thinks so'). In these terms, we can briefly notice the resourceful manipulation of the presentation of the self and others in example (1). In paragraph (a) the writer sets up a conflict between two figures, which are related to stereotypical characters ('a well-known scientist', 'a little old lady'), whereas in (b) he exploits the aspects of principal and author to create an alliance with the reader ('most people', 'we', 'us').

In the light of the above discussion, it is fair to suggest that narrative has by now secured for itself the status of the mode par excellence for the construction of the self. This view has emanated from psychological research on self and identity that tends to approach narrative schematically and to work with an idealized notion of texts. The same view is, nonetheless, increasingly explored in discourse-oriented studies of social constructionism that examine the ways in which identities are actively constituted in situated interactional practices (e.g., Edwards and Potter 1992). By contrast, non-narrative has not been discussed in these terms, neither at the level of mode nor at that of the individual text, although there has been some exploration of issues of authorial stance and responsibility. This disparity weakens the claims of research on narrative identity, since it is not clear with what kinds of identity this is to be contrasted. It is interesting, however, to note that the non-narrative mode of scientific exposition may be interspersed with narratives such as that in (1a) for various strategic purposes. The fact that paragraphs (a) and (b) immediately follow one another at the very beginning of Hawking's book emphasizes the motivated intermingling of the narrative and non-narrative modes (for a detailed discussion see Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997a: 159ff.).

5. Implications and further research

It is hoped that the foregoing discussion has shown that, despite the fragmentary distribution of studies, there is no lack of text-internal specification which points to constellations of prototypical features for narrative and non-narrative texts, respectively. However, the prerequisite for any advances in this kind of research is the establishment of prototypical cases of narrative and non-narrative in given speech events. So far, the underlying assumption of discourse linguistic studies of narrative has been that the prototypical narrative text is that of storytelling. While no such prototypical text has been explicitly identified for non-narrative, an equally tacit assumption is that storytelling is contrasted with or complementary to a dialogic expression of opinion with or without an argumentative edge. The sequential management of the interaction of the two has mainly been put under the lens in research focused on self-presentation and participant alignments (e.g., Schiffrin 1996). As a result, the entries into and exits from or responses to narrative within a conversational context have been adequately illuminated (e.g., Jefferson 1978). So have the ways in which storytelling can be strategically employed in such contexts to serve interactional goals and functions associated with non-narrative texts, e.g., argumentation, explanation (Antaki 1994), etc. What

is nonetheless missing is a systematic study of cases of hybridization and intermingling of the narrative and non-narrative modes, not just in informal conversations but also in a variety of other contexts such as the one illustrated in this article.

In our view, the main analytic foci of such research should cover (*a*) new and emerging genres, especially in the electronic media, and (*b*) institutional and public contexts. The former constitute a unique point of entry into the exploration of how traditional or prototypical narrative texts are reworked or drawn upon whilst being mingled with numerous non-narrative structures. Research so far has attested to an unprecedented bricolage or pastiche in such contexts (e.g., see Georgakopoulou 1997b), without, however, exploring the various interminglings of genres from the point of view of rhetorical mode. At the same time, the oft-used argument that these are essentially instances of postmodern discourse that temporally mark the end of 'grand narratives' (Lyotard 1984), or, more generally, the loss of narrative, has been left virtually unexplored at the level of discourse choices. For instance, there has not been adequate discussion of how the alleged loss of narrative is textually marked, nor exactly what kind of non-narrative discourses have taken its place.

Lately, the institutional and public contexts of these interactions have been at the center of attention in studies of uses of narrative outside the prototypical frame of everyday informal conversation. The assumption that forms the point of departure for such studies is that narrative is a marked and/or depreciated choice in such strongholds of the non-narrative mode. Other tacit assumptions that follow from this are related to prototypical associations of the narrative and non-narrative to spheres and types of activities as well as to modes of knowledge and legitimacy. More specifically, narrative is proposed as the primary mode of communication within the private sphere, associated with experiential and anecdotal evidence (Maranhão 1993). It is also presented as akin to Bernstein's (1971) restricted code that typifies the voices of disenfranchized groups with restricted access to dominant and powerful discourses. Non-narrative, on the other hand, is associated with the public sphere and its accompanying processes of rationality, proof, and factual evidence. This strand of research has succeeded in advocating, even though not always demonstrating, the increasing power of narrative as an alternative epistemological and symbolic resource in institutional discourse (e.g., Mumby 1993). It has also documented certain ways in which narratives invoke and constitute institutional processes at work (e.g., Hall 1997). There is, however, much scope for inquiry into the textual strategies and interpersonal resources that are specifically employed in narratives in such contexts, as opposed to the more powerful or unmarked types of non-narrative texts. Once again, non-narrative texts have here remained the invisible 'other'. Cases of interaction across and straddling of the narrative–non-narrative divide have far from been adequately explored. In a similar vein, attention has not been paid to the ways in which uses of narrative are responded to, negotiated, or resisted in those contexts.

A good illustration of the relative absence of work problematizing the above issues is to be found in studies of media discourse. These have drawn attention to a prototypical association between the use of the narrative mode and lay participants in television talk shows (Scannell 1991; Livingstone and Lunt 1994). Stories and accounts in which lay participants express and validate their individual experiences appear in contrast to opinion-expressing (i.e., non-narrative) discourse, which characterizes the contributions of expert participants. This unprecedented legitimation of lay experience and its narrativization have been accounted for by a shift in the balance of the voices that are given access to the public sphere, the traditionally preferred site for a rational exchange of opinions (Habermas 1984). In this strand of research, the interactions between the narrative and the non-narrative as situated practices have also been little explored, neglected in favor of over-theorizing and a simplistically celebratory tone about yet another hurdle overcome by narrative on its progression to dominance. Similarly, there is little research on how narratives are, in such contexts, appropriated and re-worked to constitute power roles, official identities, and institutional agendas and ideologies.

6. Conclusion

Our starting point in this article has been a well-recognized need for a new approach to genre that will offer tangible solutions to the various problems that have accumulated around the notion. As suggested at the beginning, descriptive frameworks that reflect the multiple minute differentiations in text-external or text-internal features result in a long list of indeterminate categories. This does not mean that notions like genre are not useful at describing the contextual fit of texts, as Swales (1990) suggests. It means, instead, that they lack taxonomic power and may obscure the actual relations between different texts. Our critical discussion of the literature has indicated that current tendencies are aimed at exploring the usefulness of discourse distinctions by mode as an antidote to classifications based on genre, text-external or text-internal features, or on the spoken versus written dichotomy. We have attempted to review critically the main assumptions of such research and propose ways around the

pitfalls it presents. As we have argued, whilst narrative figures in all classifications of discourse by mode, studies of modes other than narrative have remained fragmented and artificially separated. Similarly, traditional classificatory frameworks seem to have been based upon the assumption of a symmetrical relation between modes, whereas a notion of dominance is necessary to be able to account for their differential roles (cf. Virtanen 1992). Furthermore, these frameworks narrowly define narrative and non-narrative 'text types' either as idealized, abstract categories or as parts of texts embedded in text-externally defined genres (e.g., Werlich 1976; Virtanen 1992, following Enkvist 1987). On the other hand, well-standardized, binary distinctions between the narrative and the non-narrative are to be found in linguistics' neighboring disciplines, where they lack formalization.

Our discussion of the relevant literature suggested the primacy of narrative as a mode of discourse, a thesis which, in its strong version, tends to subsume all genres under narrative, and in its weaker version acknowledges the asymmetrical relation between narrative and non-narrative as symbolic modes of (re)constituting reality, making claims about knowledge and constructing theories about the world, ourselves and others. Further, we have argued that both modes have been primarily defined in schematic terms rather through textually substantiated studies. With regard to the lack of specificity of conceptions of the non-narrative, our contention has been that this is partly due to the non-existence of a unified discipline, like that of narrative analysis, as well as to the current ostracization of the non-narrative by dominant paradigms that have fetishized narrative.

Our proposal for a systematic treatment of the similarities and differences between narrative and non-narrative rests on the conceptualization of mode as a level above genre. This level serves both as a text- and context-organizing tool, providing speakers with rhetorical resources that can be strategically drawn upon in the online, negotiable process of discourse. This allows us to understand how both narrative and non-narrative modes play host to numerous genres and text types, notions that describe discourse boundaries on a fundamentally different level. We further suggested that the distinction between narrative and non-narrative can be operationalized in terms of prototypical features of textual make-up and contextual use. In particular, our discussion of such features grouped them as configurations of space, time, and personal relations, as well as aspects of interpersonal management. Subsequently, we specified that the prerequisites for the further systematization of the distinction between narrative and non-narrative include the exploration of their respective prototypical cases within given speech events, and the study of their hybridization and interaction in contexts such as computer-mediated communication or institutional discourse. It follows that further research is needed to shed light on the conventional associations between the narrative and non-narrative modes in particular speech communities and cultural contexts.

How many different types and what kind of texts can serve narrative or non-narrative demands seems to be a historically and culturally defined issue. Our research (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997b) indicates, for example, the validity of studying mediated discourse in Greek in the light of the narrative versus non-narrative distinction, as well as the narrative bias of informal communication in Greek (Georgakopoulou 1997a). This suggests the scope for further exploration of narrative and non-narrative textual practices in terms of dimensions of cultural variability. Such explorations could draw upon and benefit from studies that have already attested to the cultural variability of certain styles of argumentation (e.g., Hatim and Mason 1990) and narration (e.g., Gee 1990). In effect, a systematic study of the dynamic interplay between narrative and non-narrative could only advance our understanding of the symbolic, socioculturally constituted resources that actively participate in the making of discourse.

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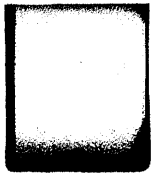

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