

SYLVIE PATRON

The Death of the Narrator and the Interpretation of the Novel The Example of *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo

Is there a narrator in all fictional narratives or only in some of them (implying that some narratives may be considered ›narratorless‹)? This is a controversial issue for ›communicational theories‹ which claim that communication between a narrator and a narratee is central to the definition of the narrative, and ›non-communicational‹ theories – or ›poetic‹ theories – of the fictional narrative which consider that a fictional narrative, or a certain kind of fictional narrative, and communication are mutually exclusive. In this paper, I shall test communicational and non-communicational or poetic theories of the fictional narrative against an empirical micro-reading. The text I selected to this end is Juan Rulfo's novel, *Pedro Páramo* (1955), which I shall examine in Spanish and in its English translation by Margaret Sayers Peden (1994). I shall explain why I selected this work in the first part of the article and summarize the reasons for this choice at the beginning of the second. Given that the character Juan Preciado is seen by all critics as the fictional narrator – i. e. the character endowed with the role of narrator in the fictional world – who, then, is the fictional narrator of the second part of the novel? Is the fictional narrator of the second part of the novel also Juan Preciado's narrative's ›reporter‹ in the first part of the novel? In other words, does he assume responsibility for the whole novelistic *montage*, introduced as the assembling of real-life material? Answers to the first question will be sought in the available critical work on of *Pedro Páramo* with the conclusion that this critical corpus offers no answer to the second one. I

shall then examine the problems raised by the presentation of the second part of *Pedro Páramo* as issuing from a fictional narrator, just like Juan Preciado's narrative in the first part of the novel, which I shall divide into: 1) problems about the inner consistency of the critical discourse; 2) organizational problems concerning interpretive work; 3) problem of the falsification of erroneous interpretations. In the third part of this paper I shall suggest a possible critical reading of *Pedro Páramo* inspired from non-communicational or poetic theories of the fictional narrative, and detail its advantages.

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