ISSA Proceedings 2014 ~ Story Credibility In Narrative Arguments

Abstract: Recent work on narrative-based arguments has insisted on the importance, for assessment, of construing a theory of story "credibility" or "believability". The main tenet of most approaches is the idea that a credible story should resemble "reality". However, "narrative realism" is a rather problematic concept. The paper proposes a more nuanced, multi-dimensional and explicitly meta-argumentative approach to the assessment of arguments involving narratives, that would not prejudge their argumentative form or function.

Keywords: argument assessment, narrative argument, narrative rationality, narrative realism.

1. *Introduction*

Narrative argumentation, narration in arguments or the inherent narrativity of arguing and debating, are, no doubt, trendy topics in the field of argumentation theory. We heard several papers on these issues in last year's OSSA 10th Conference and here in ISSA 2014, we have two complete panels labelled "Narrative argument". Of course, this implies a certain variety of approaches and some clarifications as to the referents and the scope of my own paper are required.

First of all, even if I take W. Fisher's narrative paradigm of rationality (1989 [1987]) as a truly attractive philosophical stance, that could yield interesting insights regarding the cognitive basis of our reasoning, I claim some of its assumptions may turn our attention away from the particularities of real discourse. If we assume that:

regardless of genre, discourse will always tell a story and insofar as it invites an audience to believe it or act on it, the narrative paradigm and its attendant logic, narrative rationality, are available for interpretation and assessment (Fisher, 1989, p. xi) there would be nothing specific to arguments involving explicit narratives as obvious parts or as a manifest linguistic strategy. Again, Fisher insists "When narration is taken as the master metaphor, it subsumes the others" (1989, p. 62). So my first clarification is that here I don't mean to use "narrative" as a metaphor (however insightful) of what's happening when we argue and listen

to or interpret arguments; nor as the cognitive key (however revealing) to the widespread features of our species' argumentative practices (as allegeddly *Homo narrans*). I will focus, instead, on the straightforward recognition of a variety of argument types and argumentative discourses in which the particular linguistic features and genre-specific qualities of narration play a significant role.

2. *Narrative arguments*

There are a number of widely acknowledged argument types in which narratives may be involved in significant ways. Certain explicitly "narrative-based argument schemes" have been presented and discussed in recent literature (Walton, 2012; Govier & Ayers, 2012) and there is also interest in pure "narrative discourse" as a possible way of arguing for a thesis in the adequate pragmatic contexts (Plumer, 2011; Olmos, 2014).

Not trying at all to be exhaustive in any sense and just for the purposes of this paper, I will mention four broad categories of arguments for which an exploration of "narrative credibility" would be of interest.

i. First of all, as it comes to everybody's mind, arguments presenting parallel, *digressive* stories (cf.: Cic. *De inv*. I 27), i.e. not directly related and causally and historically independent, be them fictive or not, to the circumstances referred to in the thesis, as reasons, nevertheless, for its acceptance (although not necessarily through an argument by analogy, cf. Olmos, 2014b). They would typically conform (and I refer here to Walton, Reed and Macagno's 2008 catalogue): arguments from example (*WRM* 2008, p. 314), arguments from "analogy", especially "practical reasoning from analogy" (*ibid*. pp. 315-316) or arguments from precedent (p. 344).

ii. In second place, arguments in which the data, or part of the data are presented in narrative form; i.e. arguments which involve narrative premises which have something to do with the particulars and circumstances referred to in the thesis (they are not *digressive* but they are not *core* narratives either "which contain just the case and the whole reason for a dispute", *De inv.,* I.27). For example, practical inferences from consequences (p. 323), or from goal (p. 325), arguments from sacrifice (p. 322) and waste (p. 326), arguments from interaction of act and person (p. 321), pragmatic inconsistencies (p. 336), arguments from memory (p. 346).

The argument types so far mentioned do not necessarily always represent what I would call a narrative argument – especially not when they just involve a one-step consequence supported or supportable by a simple warrant. I would restrict the concept of narrative argument to cases that explicitly involve a more complex, sequential chain or compound of events that should be assessed as a whole. In any case, the credibility of the narratives endorsed as reasons or parts of reasons in these two categories of arguments would be essential to their interpretation and assessment. But then, we may also think of:

iii. Arguments *about* narratives, i.e. about versions of events (these would be what I call *core* narratives, cf. Olmos, 2014), with usually partly narrative claims or conclusions (typically global assertions regarding narrative accounts of disputed facts: "what really happened is…") supported by a variety of reasons (typically involving source reliability) when facts themselves are under discussion or are unknown to the audience. Such cases would typically involve arguments from position to know (p. 309) or arguments from witness testimony (p. 310).

These are usually *not* narrative-based arguments (the key reasons involved are not typically narrative, although they could be), but theories about story credibility may be part of their analysis, understanding and assessment as the critical questions presented by Walton Reed and Macagno (2008, p. 310) concerning "arguments from witness testimony" reveal:
CQ1: Is what the witness said internally consistent?
CQ2: Is what the witness said consistent with the known facts of the case (based on evidence apart from what the witness testified to)?
CQ3: Is what the witness said consistent with what other witnesses have (independently) testified to?
CQ4: Is there some kind of bias that can be attributed to the account given by the witness?
CQ5: How plausible is the statement *A* asserted by the witness?

iv. And finally, we have what we could call credible "pure narration", that I have elsewhere treated as some sort of self-standing and self-referring "argument" (Olmos, 2014), and perhaps could be better understood in terms of assuming certain argumentative qualities –rhetorical and others– in a discourse that does not explicitly present an argument. In such cases we could have a manifestly credible narration as a discursive way to *implicitly* support the veracity of an account. The story's veracity would be the (usually implicit or just suggested)

conclusion and its manifest narrative plausibility, its only justificatory measure. We can imagine that a particular theory or a principle of story credibility could act as such conclusion's warrant, if challenged in subsequent interchange.

There exists, on the other hand, a rather extended impression that the way we go about assessing the credibility of the stories we hear is something extremely basic within our cognitive capacities. Thus, Fisher talks about our "inherent awareness of *narrative probability*" (1989, p. 5) or even our "natural capacity to recognize the coherence and fidelity of stories" (1989, p. 24). In fact, our everyday experience somewhat matches this confidence, but this doesn't mean that we cannot try to be more specific as to the way we assess such narrative *probabilitas*. In fact, there have been numerous attempts at that, and many of them from the ranks of the rhetoricians, concerned with argumentative issues and the specific problems posed by argumentative settings (Olmos, 2012).

3. *Criterial theories of story credibility*

As early as in Isocrates (4th c. BCE), we may find the well-known classical triad of the virtues required by a narrative discourse to be persuasive, i.e. rhetorically effective. Narration employed in persuasive processes and rhetorical settings should be clear (*safēs*), brief (*suntomon*), and convincing (*pithanon*). In the subsequent Latin tradition this "convincing" (*pithanon*) was alternatively translated for *probabilis, credibilis* or *verisimilis.* Fortunatianus (4th c. CE), in his *Artis rhetoricae* (II.20), supports the relevance of these three virtues by identifying the argumentative benefits expected from each one of them: "Brief, so that the audience may enjoy listening to us; clear, so that we be fully understood; verisimilar, so that our story serve as evidence" ("Brevis, ut libentius audiatur, manifesta, ut intellegatur, verisimilis, ut probetur"). According to Fortunatianus' formula, then, it is the third virtue what allows us to use narratives as supporting reasons for our claims. But how do we attain such verisimilitude that would result in the credibility or believability of our stories and, therefore, in their usefulness as assessable reasons? The main tenet of most of approaches to "story credibility" is the rough idea that a credible story should resemble "reality" or "what we know about reality". But usually this main rough idea is complemented and developed by identifying more concrete requirements. We will take a look at several of these "criterial" theories of story credibility starting with some apparently simple distinctions and advancing towards a more complicated panorama.

There has been a long-standing tradition in locating criteria for "story credibility"

in, at least, two distinct realms: one *intra-diegetic* (inside the story itself), the other *extra-diegetic*. This is very clear and straighforward in Gilbert Plumer's characteristically *diadic* account of the novel's *believability* (2011, pp. 1554-1555) which would be attained by means of its:

1. "internal coherence": that events in the narrative be fully connected, and

2. "external coherence": that they also "cohere with our widely shared assumptions about how human psychology and society […] work".

W. Fisher also presented, in principle, this kind of *diadic* approach to the evaluation of communicative discourse (which, in his view, is always narrative). However, while developing his criteria throughout his book, Fisher finally introduces certain ideas that point to somewhat different evaluative sources. Fisher calls "coherence" or "probability" what's roughly Plumer's "internal coherence", and "fidelity" Plumer's "external coherence". Here is a summary scheme of what Fisher says about these two testing qualities of "human communication" in different parts of his book (1989: pp. 47; 75; 88; 175).

A.

PROBABILITY /COHERENCE: whether a story "hangs together"

A.1. Probability is assessed in three ways:

– by the story's *argumentative* or *structural coherence* (i.e. its involving a "coherent plot");

– by its *material coherence*, that is, by comparing and contrasting it to stories told in other discourses;

– and by *characterological* coherence.

A.2. These features (which Fisher calls formal) result in the narrative satisfying the demands of a *coherence theory of truth*. The idea is that the story be "free of contradictions".

A.3. "Knowing something about the character of the speaker and his or her actual experience, one can judge whether his or her story 'hangs together' and 'rings true'." (p. 88).

B.

FIDELITY: truthfulness and reliability.

B.1. Fisher calls features of fidelity *substantive* (vs. *formal*) features, which result in the narrative satisfying the demands of a *correspondence theory of truth.*

B.2. Narrative *fidelity* concerns the soundness of its internal reasoning: Does the message accurately portray the world we live in?

B.3. Narrative *fidelity* also concerns the value of its values: Does it provide a reliable guide to our beliefs, attitudes, values and actions?

This more lengthily developed and in principle more sophiticated account is ultimately only apparently *diadic*. Considerations presented in A.1. about "material coherence" rely on a comparative approach between available stories (even, reading through the text, between available "competing" stories) which is not so much an *intra-diegetic* criterion and which may have to do with a wider assessment of the pragmatic circumstances and discursive background in which a story is uttered and interpreted –we'll see more of that later, in other authors, but as a relevantly distinct criterion, with its own weigh.

More unexpected is probably the mention, in A.3., of the speaker's known or attested character as supporting the story's coherence when, for example, in Walton's considerations on "arguments by testimony" it is exactly the other way around: the story's apparent coherence would be part of the assessment of the testifier's performance that would finally support the plausibility of an argument in which the assessable reason would be that there is a witness testifying for a certain claim. In any case, I suggest that this and other ethotic questions would require a better fit as they conform a criterion or a set of criteria that go beyond the story's "coherence".

In the *fidelity* side, we see again the somewhat unexpected (although fully consistent with Fisher's avowed motivations) introduction of an ethical and value-based characterization of this requirement, which has to do with its "reliable" vs. its "truthful" quality. However, this very important aspect would demand, in my opinion, its own space as not immediately related to prima facie *believability* or, in any case, to a *correspondence theory of truth.* Of course the compliance of stories with values may be crucial for their usefulness in practical reasoning and so their assessment according to this criterion may be part of their acquiring the quality of "evidence" in certain contexts. But I still think it would be better to distinguish more neatly, at least in principle, between the two aspects of *fidelity* mentioned by Fisher. So Fisher's account, apparently clear, schematic and diadic has finally proven rather pluralistic, which is not a bad thing, but just reminds us that there are still many things which could be clarified in this domain.

I will mention now the old list of requirements given by the 15th c. humanist Rudolph Agricola (ca. 1479) for a "probable account" (*probabilis expositio*), which

is *triadic*, not because I intend to classify theories about story credibility according to the number of criteria they propose, but because the third criterion he adds to roughly the two equivalents of the main ones we have already seen deserves, in my opinion, some consideration. According to Agricola, in a well-known passage of his De *inventione dialectica*,[i] the kind of *probabilitas* we are after in accounting for facts is obtained by means of an exposition which would be:

a. "rich in argumentative content (*argumentosa*): i.e. which accounts for enough aspects of the action related;

b. "free from contradiction" (*per se consequens*): i.e. which presents an internal coherent structure;

c. "consistent with how things are" (*consentanea rebus*): i.e. resembles what we know about the real world, complies with an external standard of comparison.

While b) and c) could be more or less equivalent to Plumer's intra- and extra-diegetic criteria, criterion a) is, obviously, something different. It may have something to do with the "material coherence" mentioned by Fisher in the sense that the relative "degree of detail" (depth and richness) attained by a story cannot be an absolute meassure, but will always be evaluated by comparison to other accounts (competing or not).

In any case, this kind of criterion, reconverted into a requirement for "coverage", reappears in modern theories regarding the testing of stories in legal settings. We find something very similar in, for example, Pennington and Hastie (1992). These authors mention several factors that determine the acceptability of a story in juror's decision- making:

a. Coherence: which sums consistency (internal criterion) and plausibility (external criterion);

b. Coverage: of the legal evidence presented;

c. Uniqueness: that it is the only story available

The two most obvious principles (Plumer's internal and external coherence) they group under the heading "coherence" and distinguish between an internal "consistency" requirement (freedom of contradictions) and an external "plausibility" one. The second criterion (close to Agricola's "richness in argumentative content") refers not just to the particular "degree of detail" of the story but to its degree of detail relative to the data presented in trial as evidence, the idea being that the credible story should be capable of "covering", that is of

explaining and situating such evidence within a global, articulate account. This I find a nice way of spelling out the pragmatic circumstances regarding the kind of criterion demanded by Agricola with his "*expositio argumentosa*" for a particular argumentative practice (in this case, juror's decision-making) and I imagine something similar should be done in different contexts.

Now, Penington and Hastie's criterion c), "uniqueness", is also very interesting. It is rather akin to the "material coherence" mentioned by Fisher (although Fisher's characterization would include both coverage and uniqueness in "material coherence"), as this author specifies that other stories told should be compared and contrasted with the one we are testing, in order to evaluate it. I would suggest, though that this criterion should be supplemented or qualified with an additional *independence* criterion that may bring in issues about multiple-source confirmation.

It is a common rule in law that, at least, two *independent* witnesses should coincide in telling roughly "the same story" for their "joint" testimony to constitute "evidence". If there are contradictions between witnesses this circumstance goes against the plausibility of each of their accounts. However, the meassure of the "degree of independence" of two, more or less coincident, witnesses relies precisely on their stories being at least "slightly different" so that they do not seem to have been dictated by a common source. If two people, who in principle should have seen things with their own eyes, from their own respective different positions, tell exactly the same story, mention the same details and qualify actions with the same vocabulary, anyone will suspect that their testimony has been unduly prearranged. So Pennington and Hastie's uniqueness criterion should be supplemented or qualified with an *independence* criterion that may take account of such possibilities. We'll finally mention Cicero's "multiple criteria" approach as exposed in a well known paragraph of his *De inventione*:

The narrative will be plausible if it seems to embody characteristics which are accustomed to appear in real life; if the proper qualities of the characters are maintained, if reasons for their actions are plain, if there seems to have been ability to do the deed, if it can be shown that the time was opportune, the space sufficient and the place suitable for the events about to be narrated; if the story fits in with the nature of the actors in it, the habits of the ordinary people and the beliefs of the audience. Verisimilitude can be secured by following these

principles (*De inv*. I.29.)

This paragraph was commented by Marius Victorinus in the 4th c. CE (*Explanationum in rhetoricam M. Tullii Ciceronis*) emphasizing the oposition between the so-called "seven circumstances" (that account for the story's "coverage" and "internal coherence") and the "doxastic" standards that have to do, above all, with the "pragmatic" circumstances of discourse delivery (audience-related issues). According to Marius Victorinus (Halm, 1863, p. 207) Cicero's criteria for the assessment of the plausibility of a *narratio* could be schematized thus, placing, on one side, the seven circumstances that must be duly accounted for by the narrative and, on the oher, the three doxastic aspects mentioned by Cicero.

Seven circumstances	Opinion
Who (person)	*Nature of the agents*
What (fact)	
Why (cause)	*Common habits and values*
Where (place)	
When (time)	
How (mode)	*Audience (arbiter's) opinion*
How possibly (faculty)	

Seven circumstances – Opinion

This is probably an oversystematic interpretation of Cicero's paragraph, but what counts for our purposes is that *De inventione* mentions among the extra-diegetic criteria for narrative assessment things like the "common habits and values of the ordinary people" (in line with Fisher) and also (in an explicit rhetorical mood) the need to take into account the "audience's or arbiter's previous opinion" in analysing the "credibility in context" of a story.

4. *Argumentative assessment of story credibility*
Now, all these proposals seem to be based on the collection and ordering of a list of different criteria that a story told in an argumentative discourse should fulfil in order to be credible and accepted as evidence of some sort. If we sum up and try to arrange what we have so far seen, starting from the most inner (intra-diegetic) to outer (extra-diegetic) criteria, we have a much more complicated framework than the diadic theory we started with and which referred to roughly numbers 1 and 9 on our list, equivalents of which are mentioned by practically all authors:
1. Internal plot or structural coherence
2. Internal characteriological coherence (Ficher, Cicero)

3. Internal degree of detail: *expositio argumentosa*, covering the seven or more circumstances: i.e. a rich enough, dense enough account (Agricola, Cicero)

4. Arguer-related, "ethotic" assessment: story/storyteller coherence (Fisher)

5. Coverage of relevant extra-diegetic evidence ("material coherence"). Relative to argumentative practice involved (Pennington and Hastie).

6. Uniqueness, situation of the story regarding other "competing" discourses (Pennington and Hastie).

7. Independence regarding other competing discourses (relative contribution to a collective reconstruction of plausibility based on multiple-source confirmation) (Olmos).

8. Audience-related, "pathotic" assessment: previous beliefs of audience. Relative to argumentative practice involved (Cicero).

9. External coherence, fidelity to the real, extra-diegetic world. Degree of realism (a complicated issue in itself).

10. Fidelity to human values: reliability and applicability of the story. Degree of humanism: ethical assessment (Fisher, Cicero).

Now, what can we do with this growingly sophisticated list? (It could be easily extended). First of all, I see many problems in taking these criteria as a growing number of requirements that would eventually take us somehow closer to a kind of definitive list of necessary and sufficient conditions for the assessment of any story as "credible". But the alternative to such an approach is in the hands of argumentation theory.

If we assume that the process of evaluating the credibility of a story would be an argumentative practice in itself that would require arguments supporting it (or meta-arguments in case our story is already a substatial part of an argument) and further arguments if challenged, then criteria as the ones we have been reviewing (and other conceivable ones) would be possible (more or less combinable in argumentative structures) motifs or topics providing warrants for arguing for the credibility of a story or for challeging it in an argumentative interchange. Our proposal would oppose these two conceptions and usage of such criteria

* Criteria as conditions or requirements for the *qualitative* assessment of narrative argumentative discourse. An approach that would imply discussions about the inclusion/exclusion of individual criteria and about their necessity/sufficiency, *vs*.

* Criteria as topical suggestions providing reasonable warrants for (meta)*argumentative* assessment, depending on things like: i) possible argument-types involved in the assessed discourse (i.e. different argument schemes would require different criteria for the assessment of the narratives making part of them); ii) discursive interactive context with possibly competing stories (i.e. assessment would in most cases be *comparative*, Marraud, 2013, p. 149ff.) or iii) objectives of the particular argumentative practice in which the narrative appears.

This approach is coherent with my general standpoint that argument evaluation and premis assessment are, finally, argumentative practices themselves, which may involve a variety of warrants and lines of argument.

The different theorist and authors that we have reviewed as providing us with criteria for narrative credibility, coming from different traditions and interested in diverse kinds of discourse, have coherently pointed to different aspects that could be conceivably used in arguing for the correctness, reliability or truthfulness of our stories and therefore for their usefulness as evidence in argumentative discourse.

Such an aproach is, in my view, applicable to any process of argument evaluation as reveal the different CQ's involved in assessing argumentation schemes which may be easily multiplied in several ways, especially if we take into account pragmatical and rhetorical issues. But in the case of our narratives, moreover, I think we must also acknowledge some rather intractable additional problems. In the next section I will concentrate on those regarding what in our summary list was criterion 9): the requirement of realism.

5. *Narrative realism*
What exactly is "a realistic narrative" is not a question that we can answer in any easy way. Literature scholars have been dealing with this topic for at least the last 150 years (cf. classics as Booth, [1961]1983; Stevick, 1967) and the answers are multiple and historically changing. Wayne Booth in his classical *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, acknowledged that general rules fail in providing good answers: there are too many ways of being realistic and of conceiving of realism. More recently, Claudia Jünke (forthcoming), has presented a study about three French writers: Marivaux, Diderot and Stendhal, all of whom use very different literary devices (although in all three cases we are talking about explicit meta-linguistic authorial

interventions) to account for the verisimilitude of their tales and novels. Jünke's study proves a certain historical variation and evolution in the conventional ways of arguing, within literary narrative, for verisimilitude. If we take in account the possibilities exploited by more contemporary novels, in which avoidance of authorial interventions becomes the norm, things get even more complicated. It is, of course an endless issue.

For our purposes though I would just suggest that we take into account these two rather reasonable and relevant claims:
a. we are not really sure of what is *plausible* in human affairs, the infinite complexity and unexpectedness of human life will always be there; it is the kind of realm where we should not look for a complete system of rules (Cf: Wittgenstein on *Menschenkenntnis* or "knowledge of human nature", PI §355-356, Cf. Bouveresse, 2007, pp. 80-81);
b. storytelling is a way (one of our most basic ways) to explore what's plausible in human affairs: so the relation narration/reality is inescapably circular.

Now, regarding (a), I would say that it is part of our condition that the inconceivable, the unexpected in many cases happens in human affairs and we cannot really construe a theory that would overcome this situation, among other things because we are not allowed to make lab-experiments about what would happen if so-and-so happened regarding human life and affairs.

Krzysztof Kieślowski's film *La double vie de Véronique* (1991) is precisely about an author (a storyteller and, ironically enough, a puppeteer) who is not sure about the plausibility of a certain tale he has imagined and tries to put part of the plot into practice, inducing a girl to take certain actions just to see whether such actions are conceivable for her. The film shows how inadmissible and inhuman this "playing with others as puppets" is, even in the case of apparently inconsecuential actions (as those in the film which are not really dramatic). Then, (b) is our alternative, one of our alternatives to this and Kieślowski's film is finally a piece of human life storytelling regarding the intrinsic difficulties of human life storytelling. Kieślowski uses a fiction film, a narrative, to show us that we cannot make non-narrative or real-life experiments to test stories.

This circumstance exposes the intractable circularity of the relationship between reality and narrative or storytelling. When we (in a spontaneous, natural way, in Fisher's sense) find a narrative plausible, in part we may be comparing it with

what we have already experienced (it rings true because it's similar to what we know) or, alternatively, we may be partly surprised (and nevertheless convinced) by what it reveals about human nature and, from then on, apply it in our understanding of real situations. This balance is rather complex and it may be further complicated.

From the point of view of argumentation theory, we could say, with Perelman, that narratives (be them fictive or not) are partly "based on the structure of reality", partly "founding the structure of reality" (1958, pp. 351ss, 471ss). We'll have to decide in each case and depending on the characteristics of the discourses (including the particular types of argument involved) and discursive interchanges in which the narratives are inserted, which of these aspects is more relevant and should be taken into account in our analysis, evaluation or challenge.

6. *Conclusion*

If we assume that the evaluation of arguments or parts of arguments can be conducted in an argumentative way and become an argumentative practice in itself, we will be prepared to listen to different ways of arguing for the adequacy of the stories involved in our practices of giving reasons.

For example, Aristotle's maxim warranting the use of past stories derived from facts as evidence to be taken into account in decision-making processes, by means of arguments from example, or *paradeigmata* and which reads: "*for the most part what's coming will be similar to what's already happened*," (*Rhet.* II.20) might seem fairly reasonable. But then so it is (especially for our modern sensibility) Richard Ford's justification of the verisimilitude of the story he tells in the novel *Canada*:

*I can't make what follows next seem reasonable or logical, based on what anyone would believe they knew about the world. However, as Arthur Remlimger said, I was the son of bank robbers and desperadoes, which was his way of reminding me that no matter the evidence of your life, or who you believe you are, or what you're willing to take credit for or draw your vital strength and pride from –anything at all can follow anything at all. (*Richard Ford, Canada – 2012)

I think both are usable (and in fact used) warrants that I personally would accept as *prima facie* good reasons supporting stories in different settings and for different purposes. They are both rather extreme though and I would certainly prefer more balanced principles for "important" or "consequential" decisions.

Ironically enough, if decision-making or other serious purposes are lacking or avoided and the end of our stories is something like *frivolous entertainment*, we may always abide with Mark Twain's warning at the beginning of *Huckleberry Finn* which prevents his novel's serious use as *evidence* by precisely forbidding its narrative assessment:

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot. (quoted by P. Stevick, 1967, p. 3).

NOTE

i. "Probabilis fit expositio, si sit argumentosa, si consentanea rebus, si per se consequens" (Agricola, 1992 [1539], p. 350).

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