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ABSTRACT

The following paper is focused on character study, mainly the areas of character appreciation and of character creation. It explores the past and current beliefs, knowledge and proposed theories and ideas relating to the points stated above, while also providing contextual information to better understand the meaning and status of characters and of the affective relationship that a reader might develop for a character. On top of narrative and literary devices, it also heavily focuses on the roles psychology, and in concrete, cognition, play in the appreciation of fictional characters. Overall, the aim of this paper is to try to structure the known information, knowledge and theories about character perception and creation, and showcase the present status of the field and its main ideas, along with the direction it is taking and going toward.

KEYWORDS: character, fiction, emotions, affective relationship, cognition.

SINOPSI

El paper presentat té com a focus l'estudi de personatges, principalment en les àrees d'apreciació de personatges, i en la creació d'aquests. S'exploraran passades i presents teories, coneixements i idees en relació als punts mencionats anteriorment, mentre també proporcionarà informació contextual per a una millor comprensió del significat i estatus d'un personatge, i sobre la relació afectiva que un lector pot arribar a establir amb aquest. A part dels recursos literaris i narratius, també dona un paper important als rols que la psicologia, especialment la cognició, juguen en l'apreciació cap als personatges ficticis. El propòsit d'aquest treball és intentar estructurar la informació, coneixements i teories sobre la percepció i creació de personatges; i també mostrar l'actual condició del camp i de les seves idees principals, a més de la direcció que està actualment prenent.

PARAULES CLAU: personatge, ficció, emocions, relació afectiva, cognició

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1. Introduction

The world of literature, of novels, is composed by an endless number of concepts, ideas and theories; and one of the elements that make up a part of this world are the items we call characters. These fictional entities are modelled after human beings, and are what we can find as the driving forces for the action in almost all novels, tending to be a central element in their stories and plots, as well as a fundamental element for immersion into the story. The reason for this is, that compared to other devices in narration, characters have a very special property: the fact that readers can establish an emotional connection with them, developing similar feelings than those felt in the real-world context. This phenomenon, while fascinating, went for a long time ignored, and it has not been until recently that the interest of experts has shifted towards the topic and has led to the field of character appreciation to begin to be explored and analyzed; mostly because of a growing interest in the psychological and cognitive aspects in literature, and their relation with and effects on our cognition and morality. This began with Uri Margolin's essays in the 1980s, where cognitive theories were implemented for the first time in a character discussion, making them revolutionary at the time. Thus, the whys and hows of this emotional bond, while being more insightful nowadays than they were in the past, are still highly unknown and being currently studied by psychologists, linguists and narratologists. Nevertheless, there have been incredible discoveries and advances in the field, and many theories have arisen about character perception and about their creation: what makes them unique to our judgement and how that is accomplished, both through the author and the reader. In this mostly theoretical paper I will reflect on the history of character study and their advancements, specially focusing on a current character model that aims to fill in the previous existing gaps in character study theories, and will also be exposing diverse devices and features, psychological and narratological, about character formation and creation. In the end, along with the overall conclusions about the research done, I will be briefly discussing what these findings have led me to learn and believe.

2. Character

2.1. What is a character?

"The status of character is a matter of long-standing debate: can characters be treated solely as an effect created by recurrent elements in the discourse (Weinsheimer 1979), or are they to be seen as entities created by words but distinguishable from them and calling for knowledge about human beings?" (Fotis Jannidis; Hühn, P. et al., 2012, pp. 14)

Over the centuries, the view and conception of what a character is has been a subject of debate studied through many different points of view, starting back as far as ancient Greece. Most theoretical approaches of character study are based on the idea that characters are simply elements of the story world which are governed by its internal rules. The functional view created by Aristotle, for example, claims that characters are not individual entities per se, but that they only exist subordinate to or determined by the narrative action. Another theory, which had structuralist linguistics at its base, claimed that characters are simply words, or a cluster of traits described by words, being Roland Barthes and Yuri Lotman some of the writers that were in agreement. Wellek and Warren (1949), stated that a character was only the words by through which they were described. It was mostly around the 1980's when the theory that characters were objects with a special category of their own began to spread, with Uri Margolin as its pioneer with the declaration that a "character is a general semiotic element, independent of any particular verbal expressions and ontologically different from it" (Margolin, U. 1983, as cited in Hühn, P. et al., 2012, pp. 16); and Hochman (1985), who defended the idea of characters as human-like. From then on, the idea that characters, to a greater or lesser extent, rely on the reader's knowledge of the real world and other living human beings to be fully processed and understood has been the rule and basis of any further studies on character appreciation. After it became widely accepted that characters were intrinsically connected to the consciousness, three theories arose about their ontological status: First, Margolin's theory which claims characters are semiotic and representational, and have different conditions of existence in the story world: factual, counterfactual, hypothetical, conditional and purely subjective (1995); second, the cognitive theories of reading which state that a character is a mental model created by an empirical reader (Schneider 2001); and third, the non-hermeneutical theory of literary communication, that assumes a character is a mental model created by an

hypothetical historical model reader. (Hühn, P. et al., 2012).

When it comes to establishing them as referents, we first have to distinguish between what to us are objects and what to us are sentient beings. Once we recognize an entity as a character, we establish a difference inside our minds between the inside, where thoughts, goals, fears are found; and an outside, which, along with other elements in novels, can be overtly differentiated.

2.2. Characterization

The main distinction between other named components and characters is that characters have the feature of characterization; a technique where they are assigned properties that play an active part during the narrative. These traits can be bestowed in different ways and moments, and during the narrative a character may suffer changes or be given a trait which clashes with one they already possessed, subverting the first impressions the reader got from that character. Characterization is the most important part of character creation, for it is, as mentioned, the process where the characters are assigned different properties and traits. Older studies saw it as the conferring of psychological and social traits, but newer theories and models realized characters are given all kinds of features, such as physiological and locative, too. To perceive a character, it is central to be able to find and understand the information given in the text, which can be delivered in three ways: Explicitly, it is directly stated by the text; implicitly, it has to be drawn from textual cues; and also implicitly but not from the text, but from cultural and historical real-world conventions which are presumed to be known by the reader.

2.3. Character classification

A lot of attempts to create a classification for characters to analyze them more efficiently have been made, but as of today, Forster's classification of round and flat characters (1927) is still widely used, since other proposals have been considered either too complex or theoretically unsatisfying. Flat characters are created around specific traits and aspects which remain the same for the whole duration of the novel, while round characters change their behaviors and points of view, making them able to be surprising to the reader by performing unexpected actions in a way that feels authentic. In spite of this, Forster's classification is considered much too vague and full of gaps, specially relating to round characters and what creates their perception of what we call evolution. One of the main problems is that all the information we have of a character

can only be acquired from the text, and so it makes it difficult to separate the character itself from the way the character is presented. This has been discussed by philosophers, who call it "incompleteness of character". Real people, we assume are complete. If there are aspects we do not know about them, we are still sure that they exist, but that we simply do not have the pertinent information to fill in the gaps; instead, characters can only be perceived by the qualities and features the text, either explicitly or implicitly, provides. This means that character descriptions will have gaps that will be unable to be filled just through the available information presented in the narrative.

Nevertheless, more specific types of classifications exist, but they focus on the roles different characters have and play in literary texts, and how they are perceived by the reader, rather than on their overall portrayal and development in the novel like Forster's does. We have Dyer (1993), who marked a difference between what is known as 'stereotypes' and what he calls 'social types'. On the one hand, stereotypes, are characters based on widely spread clichés and preconceptions; e.g: the femme fatale. Furthermore, there are others who are based on generalizations in society; e.g.: the cheating lover who is always on so-called business trips. To understand these types of characters and their purposes in the novel, a concrete level of culture and time is needed. Social types, on the other hand, are character which are known to the reader because they belong to a society the reader is familiar with; we use our real-world knowledge to process them; e.g.: cashiers. Dyer states that they are so different that while social types can appear in almost all types of novels, stereotypes are intrinsically linked to specific narratives.

Marilyn Brewer (1988) made another type of classification based on the reader's generation of expectations: the category-based and person-based classification. The former is when analyzing a character and classifying them because of traits associated with a specific category, and so developing the expectations about that character around that category. The latter is when we analyze a character as unique, through their individual traits. When we categorize a character as, for example, a 'bad guy' or a 'good guy', we mostly pay attention to the behaviors relevant to this categorization, and hardly any to deviations from the norm. The reader's expectations about their future movements will be based on previously known information of what bad guys do and what good guys do. For readers who become more involved in the narrative, they will shift to a person-based procession of the characters. Rather than seeing them as only

members of certain categories, they will see these categories as a small part of what composes the characters, and will begin recalling properties of real individuals which will be what will dictate the reader's expectations from then on.

A similar classification was later developed by Schneider (2001), based on Brewer's one, which he calls the "top-down" and "bottom-up" classification. A top-down process occurs when the reader applies a specific category to a character, and integrates further information given about the character into the category. A bottom-up process occurs when the reader is unable to integrate the given information about a character into a category, which results in the personalization of the character by the reader. Schneider claimed that when you read a literary text you categorize the characters as either one or the other, but that subsequent information might change their status.

3. Fictional Emotions

3.1. The Paradox of Fiction

To understand how and why affective relationships with characters are formed, it is also important to delve into what, exactly, it is we feel when reading fiction. This question has been, and still is, of great importance and debate; to try and understand fictional emotions, two questions have been formulated. The first one is descriptive and asks whether we can classify fictional emotions as the same kind we experience in the real-world context; the second one is normative, and asks if fictional emotions are rational or if they are irrational.

These questions have tried to be answered through the Paradox of Fiction, first suggested by Colin Radford (1975), and is constituted by three statements:

1. Readers experience real emotions when reading about fictional characters, events and situations.
2. Readers do not experience real emotions when reading about fictional characters, events and situations.
3. Readers do not believe that fictional characters, events and situations are real.

The debate focuses on how, for the theory to make sense, one of these statements should be false, with most philosophers agreeing that it is either one or two, although some have tried to argue that the false is number three, the named Illusion Theories.

To answer the descriptive question, various arguments have been made by different experts.

For those who claim number two is false, several groups exist, with most using cognitivism as a base for their theories. These are called Thought Theories. They believe that for an emotion to be felt, a certain cognitive evaluation is necessary, e.g., you are sad when you believe something unfortunate has happened; emotions develop after a critical and logical deliberation of the events. The two biggest groups are the narrow cognitivists and the broad cognitivists. Narrow cognitivism believes that the cognitive component needed is a belief (Lyons 1980, Oakley 1992), so the rationality of the judgment is what determines the rationality of the emotions. Still, they do not claim the belief has to be true for emotions to emerge, but simply that is must exist. Broad cognitivism, on the other hand, states that no belief is necessary for real emotions to be felt (Stocker 1987, Greenspan 1988). They claim that simply an idea or a thought can make us feel emotion; we only need to imagine something distressing happening to feel sad. Broad cognitivists who address the paradox affirm that imagining in response to fictional events is enough for genuine emotions to be felt (e.g.; Lamarque 1981; Carroll 1990; Metravers 1998). Overall, narrow cognitivism is the minor position; most experts (psychologists, philosophers, neuroscientists) agree with broad cognitivism in that we can feel genuine emotions without a previous belief.

The debate over number one being false began after Walton's claims on *Fearing Fictions* (1978), where he said that when we watch horror movies we are not actually afraid, since we know that what we are watching is not real. He described the state as 'make-believe', or as a 'quasi-state' (Walton, 1978, pp. 13). These theories are called Pretend Theories. However, Walton did not claim that the emotions felt were not real, but simply that they shared different features from those experienced in the real world, and so were not the same. For real life emotions to be considered coherent, certain criteria must be met. For starters, there usually exists a close connection between what we believe, and the emotions which arise from this motivation. Second is the evaluation we perform of our emotions. If we imagined a situation and decided to act upon the fake scenario, e.g., get mad at your lover because you imagine they have cheated on you; it would be considered irrational. For emotions to be justified, they need to have a credible basis and proof, even if in the end the reasoning turns out to be incorrect. The third is the intentionality of these emotions. In the real world, the excitement a child

feels when they expect the Tooth Fairy to leave them gifts disappears when they learn it does not really exist. This is not because the Tooth Fairy is not real per se, but because they are not able to believe in it anymore. With fictional characters however, we do not feel it incoherent of us to be concerned about, care for, or despise them, even when there is no real motivational force behind the emotions felt (Walton, 1990).

Walton claimed that our reading and processing of novels occurs in a "make-believe" environment we create in our imagination, where readers decide to "play along" (Walton, 1978, pp. 20) with their fictionality. Readers decide to induce themselves into the fantasy that "[…] it is true in a game of make-believe" (Walton, 1978, pp. 10), and that what they are reading is a part of real-life. Walton theorized that it is inside this belief that fictional emotions are experienced. He thought that from outside the perspective of the make-believe, the emotions are not genuine; thus, the experienced emotions are only real in the imaginative context. Fictional emotions then, are restrained to the specific context of the story and what each reader extracts from it. While most experts agree that fiction is experienced in a make-believe environment, those who disagree with Walton do so with the claim that the emotions felt are, however, outside the make-believe scope. They believe that if fictional emotions were completely separate from real life ones, then we would not be able to learn and grow through fiction (Moran, 1994).

When it comes to the normative question, it was Colin Radford in the essay "How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" (1975), who sparked its discussions, and as was stated before, first introduced the Paradox of Fiction. In the text, it is argued that feeling emotions for fictional characters; so, for elements that we know do not and have never existed, makes us "incoherent" (Radford, C., 1975, pp. 76). Radford believed that there is truth to the three statements, and defended all of them in a variety of different papers. The question he was most curious about was *why*, in fiction, we can get moved by elements we know are not true when in the real world we only develop emotions when we believe an appropriate reason for them exists. As stated before, real life emotions are only considered acceptable under certain conditions. A set of norms also exists for fictional emotions, which Walton called "principles of generation" (Walton, 1990, as cited in Friend, S., 2016, pp. 228), and which shows that fictional emotions appear in similar contexts than real life emotions. Nevertheless, Radford's conclusion was that, no matter what we decide to believe in regard to fiction, we will continue

being irrational in one way or another because fictional emotions go against the norms for real life emotions, since we know that what we are reading is not, in any capacity, real. Nowadays, based on these ideas, theories about the Paradox of Fiction are still being made; mostly with the aim to better understand our processing and evaluation of fiction rather than to find a genuine solution to the debate.

4. Old theories of affective relationships; the Affective Disposition theory

After discussing what a character is, we will now see how old theories explained the establishing of emotional bonds with characters.

Older theories of character appreciation were mostly based on identification (e.g. Oatley, 1995) and empathy (Zillmann, 1991),; and drew their ideas from Freud or Lacan. Identification took place when the reader felt that themselves and the character were intimately similar, and empathy, in contrast, when the reader could not establish this personal emotional bond but, instead, 'felt with' the character (Zillmann, 1991). These theories, however, had a lot of gaps, like their inability to explain mixed emotions about a character; and when tried to put to the test performed poorly empirically. Furthermore, they failed to define when and how readers identified or distanced themselves from a character, and how this identification or distancing helped with their appreciation of it. The process of what at the time was called the Affective Disposition theory was divided into three steps; which were "a) the transfer of perspective, b) the reader's affective predisposition toward the character […] and c) evaluation of characters in the text." (Hühn, P. et al., 2012, pp. 15). The first one, transfer of perspective, worked at three different levels: Perception, Intention and Beliefs. In the perception level, the reader was exposed to a character's emotions and traits; in the intention level, the reader was introduced to a character's goals and troubles; and in the beliefs level, the reader was exposed to a character's point of view of the world. This process happened through narrative devices, mainly speech representation and focalization. The second part of the process, the affective relation, was considered a complex phenomenon that derived from a mix of different factors. The first factor was the information extracted from the text about the character's emotions in all situations, taking into account general, historical and cultural elements; and what the (considered) appropriate reactions for these situations would be. The second factor was the mental imagining of the described events, which put the reader in a position where they were

willing to create an empathetic connection with the character. All these factors were strongly tied with the classic conceptions that believed realism played a big factor in making the reader involved and gain a higher appreciation. The third factor was the expressive use of language: "presenting emotions in texts using phonetic, rhythmic, metrical, syntactical, lexical, figurative, rhetorical and narrative devices" (Winko, 2003, as cited in Hühn, P. et al., 2012, pp. 22). The last part of the process was the evaluation of characters, which was highly influenced by historical and cultural thoughts and beliefs. Depending on the traits and properties possessed, both explicit and implicit, the reader evaluated a character based on common social standards and expectations, and then created an emotional response to the character such as hatred or sympathy. One of the main problems for the basis of older theories is historical variation, and how most novels from before the 19th century focused more on creating characters that the reader would see as role models, rather than on fleshed out characters whose situation the readers could immerse themselves into. The biggest difference between older and newer models is that, while both older and newer models take into account the reader as an active part of the identification process; old theories did not count on the fact that each reader also held personal and subjective views. Old models contemplated the established affective relationship as mostly depending on whether the character was socially acceptable or not, and not on the reader's own taste and point of view, which in some occasions might clash with what was considered the expected behavior. Furthermore, as newer theories have claimed, old theories failed to consider negative features and the individual traits and experiences of the reader as contributors to appreciation; ignoring the fact that emotions are socially and situation-dependent (J. F. Hoorn and E.A. Konijn, 2003).

5. The PEFiC-model

Newer theories of character appreciation are highly recent, with most emerging in the 2000's and basing their research on empirical studies. Cognitive narratology is the term used to describe them, and it is given to the narrative studies that apply concepts and methods that were unavailable before (by story analysts such as Gérard Genette or Roland Barthes), like research from the cognitive sciences and psychology. Rather than different ideas, thoughts and theories from various experts, one of the only models that have currently been presented as a full structure, and which has aimed to fill in the gaps

left in older approaches to create a functional theory has been chosen; the Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters model (PEFiC-model), with the goals to better explore the overall findings that the present area of character experiencing has advanced towards, and the direction it seems might take in the future.

The Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters model developed by Johan F. Hoorn and Elly A. Konijn (PEFiC-model) (2003) aims to offer an answer as to how characters are processed, and the importance this holds to establish an affective relation with them. The model claims that perceiving and experiencing are interconnected (Cacioppo et al., 1999); perceiving is primarily concerned with encoding the ethic, aesthetic and epistemic features of a character and their situation, and their appraisal by the reader through their subjective norms -which are usually affected by group norms, but sometimes diverge. Experiencing is, in the appreciation process, the completely subjective appraisal of the character in relation to the reader itself.

Using bases from psychology, persuasion and the arts, the model formulates an integrative theoretical framework for the perception of characters, and it divides the process of the reader's assessment of a character into three phases: a) the encoding phase, b) the comparison phase, and c) the response phase.

5.1. The Encoding Phase

In the encoding phase, the reader evaluates the ethics (good-bad), aesthetics (beautiful-ugly) and epistemics (realistic-unrealistic) of a character, while also considering the situational context. Smith (1995) stated that a moral appraisal of a character's traits is important for the process of identification, because features have valence, which can be positive or negative. Research has proven that readers tend to agree with the goals of the 'good guys' and go against those of the 'bad guys' (Zillmann and Bryant, 1975); with the good guys making the reader feel positive emotions while the bad guys negative emotions. Nevertheless, there are many instances in novels where the same actions perpetrated by both the good guy and the bad guy generate different emotions in the reader. When the negative action e.g. violence, which is usually considered bad, is done for a reason the reader considers justifiable, or when it leads to a good outcome, readers are more willing to approve of it; showing that characters with bad features can still be considered good, with the opposite being true, too, e.g. kindness used as a manipulation tool. For the vast majority of traits, both good and bad outcome-valences exist, with

these group of features belonging to a group called ‘fuzzy sets’ (Zadeh, 1968): qualities and traits that can perceived and considered as both good and bad, depending on the context and situation. Furthermore, bad guys that have bad traits that lead to negative outcome-valences can still evoke involvement. The model explains how the common phenomenon of readers feeling attracted to evil characters may arise from curiosity about moral boundaries, or from a place of conflict inside the individual between personal needs and the established appropriate behavior from being a part of society. In the real world, human beings need to create relationships with others to survive. In general, society considers behavior that is helpful as proper, and behavior that is harmful as improper; nevertheless, we all wish to reach the maximum personal satisfaction possible within the acceptable societal limits, and what the bad guys do is combine the advantages of being in a group with the highest chance of acquiring personal gratification, thus making them entities readers feel fascinated by.

Overall, while good traits will make the reader feel more involved and bad traits more distanced, most will reflect a little of both; and characters with too many good traits or too many bad traits will most likely induce distance to the reader. They could either feel unrealistic, or not make the reader feel immersed enough, like how for example a character that is too benevolent might make the reader feel bored or irritated.

Referring to the aesthetics, the PEFiC-model claims a strong comparison with the real world can be made. When meeting someone, humans first appraise their physical attractiveness because it is the only information we have about the other. In novels, the information we gain is proportional to how much we have read, so, when a character’s physique is described, we first appraise their inner qualities through their appearance. As stated, physical beauty is what is first considered in the real world, and attractiveness is usually associated with being good, as has been proven through empirical experiments performed by Berscheid (1985), along with also being an apparently important factor in persuasion. However, Gombrich (1984), Levton (1993) and Green (1995) state that it is different in fiction and art, where deviations from what is standardly considered beautiful tend to be better regarded than in real life. The model theorizes that this may arise from the curiosity to explore whether there can be positives in what is appraised as ugly. So, while attractive features tend to generate more involvement, some factors of ugliness can, too; e.g. generating sympathy, while some factors of beauty can create distance in certain situations, e.g.: condescension,

arrogance, narcissism. In fiction, unlike in real life, a mixture of both traits is probably what creates the best degree of involvement.

The epistemics deal with the reader's appraisal of a character in relation to the degree of realism/unrealism of the traits they possess; always taking into consideration the rules of the fictional world they belong to. In older theories, we saw that they considered realism to be a very important element for identification; however, greatly unrealistic shows such as Pokémon are also highly popular. Johnson (1997) suggests that a fictional portrayal can come closer than a realistic portrayal to a subjective experience for the reader, since it is more outwardly appealing and reveals more truths about our society, morality and emotions. A character in a novel sharing too many traits with the reader e.g. fears, troubles; might create too much realism, lowering the reader's appreciation for the character. Unlike in the real world, in fiction characters may have features like superhuman strength or mind reading. Davies (1997) claims that when individuals assess the grade of how real or how unreal a fictional element is, they are expressing their views about what is true; and what people consider realistic is that which has an empirical explanation or is related to the laws of nature (Woolley, 1997). Fantasy, on the other hand, originates from that which we are not able to explain. As Davies stated, reality is constructed through what we believe is the truth; thus, truth is a human construct formed on a set of conventions based on historical events and which differs depending on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and a lot of other variables. Based on this information, the model states that what is important about epistemic appraisal is that it shows to the reader about the different possibilities in reality, whether that is done though realistic or unrealistic features, to make the reader learn and see from different points of view.

5.2. The Comparison Phase

In the comparison phase, the reader examines specific features relevant to their own goals and concerns, identifies features which the character and them might share, and then assigns subjective valences to those features.

The PEFiC-model states that while identification does not tend to be the general outcome after a full evaluation, that readers compare themselves to the characters is true. What is termed 'perceived similarity' is what has been regarded as the base to

finding a character appealing; Aboud and Mendelson (1998) affirm that the perception of similarity contributes to feeling sympathy and choosing friends. Still, while perceived similarity plays a part in the identification process, it is clear that there are other elements that also influence it, since it has been repeatedly proven that readers feel fascination for the unknown, the surreal, the evil and the uncertain. Von Feilitzen and Linné (1975) also pointed out how it was common for readers to feel an intense attraction towards characters that were fantastical, such as superheroes, and referred to this as 'wishful identification'. A character that has traits that the reader wishes they had but does not possess (e.g. being good-looking) will gain a higher appreciation for the good features than the bad, and also gain a higher appreciation through these desired traits than through the traits shared with the reader. Thus, for a reader to feel emotionally engaged with a character, they should have both distinctive positively charged traits, which create involvement, and similar negatively charged traits, which create distance. Since characters with mixed evaluations will challenge the reader more, they are preferred over straightforwardly positive or negative characters.

Perceived dissimilarity is also important to similarity judgements. Tversky (1977) proposed that we compare sets of similar features against sets of dissimilar features, and the set with the larger distinctive features is judged as less similar than the one with the smaller distinctive set. The perception of estimated similarity is not, however, only dependent on perceived dissimilarity, but also on the similarity/dissimilarity of the surroundings, with Koriat, Melkman, Averill, and Lazarus (1972), Smith and Ellsworth (1985), Tesser and Collins (1988), and Hettema (1994) defending and having empirically proven "that involvement through similarity is strongly governed by putting oneself (in imagination) into the *situation* of the observed other" (Hoorn, J. & Konijn, E., 2003, pp. 256). Situational information seems to be crucial into judging which emotions are portrayed in a scene, e.g. whether a smile is genuine or out of politeness; or to understand what the character's goals are. What the reader does, then, is extract information about the settings as well as associated life events to create a judgement.

However, the concept of relevance plays a very important part in identification, because not all the traits that a character possesses will be chosen by the reader to compare themselves to. As psychological studies have shown, to be able to adapt and survive, the human perceptual system selects only certain information from all stimuli we are

exposed to. While this is happening, our emotional system also scans the area to assess threats, concerns or interests to our well-being, goals and intentions (Frijda, 1986). If the situation seems irrelevant, the emotion process stops. Thus, it can be assumed that the relevance of particular features regarding the reader's ambitions and concerns will influence which features of the character will be perceived. Generally, positive emotions arise from the fulfilling of concerns, while negative emotions arise from uncertainty in front of obstacles that are impeding the fulfillment of those concerns.

The model defends that all these aspects derive from relevance. "Relevance determines whether there is an emotional response or not, and if there is, how intense that emotion will be" (Hoorn and Konijn, 2003, pp. 257). Not all features will be as relevant, depending on what the situation that is happening depends on. So, what situational aspects determine is the degree of relevance, which determines, in turn, the intensity of the emotional responses. The last important element about relevance is the fact that, in similar circumstances, readers do not select the same traits for characters that they would for real life people, because different interests arise in fiction compared to the real world.

5.3. The Response Phase

In the response phase, the model states two levels of engagement with a character exist: involvement and distance; which the model considers to be the most important aspects when it comes to character appreciation. Responding to characters is based on the involvement and distance the reader feels towards them, motivated by the assessment the reader has made, which is, nonetheless, receptive to change every time they are exposed to the character.

It has been proven that at the beginning, approaching tendencies tend to be stronger than avoidance ones; called the "positivity offset" by work on impression formation (e.g., Cacioppo, Gardner, & Bernston, 1999; Baumesiter, Bratlavasky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). However, more evidence shows that as the reader continues being exposed to the text, the higher avoidance will become in comparison to involvement, called the "negativity bias". "Thus, the initial tendency to approach a desired goal will be higher than the tendency to avoid, but over time, the tendency for avoidance will grow faster than that to approach." (Hoorn and Konijn, 2003, pp. 259). The reader engages a

fictional situation with a goal in mind, e.g. get entertained; and because of the positivity offset, the initial degree of involvement in the situations and characters is higher. As the action develops, however, distancing features will become what will influence the reader in a higher degree; after having been exposed to the novelty of the circumstances and having interiorized the features possessed by the characters and storyworld, the reader gradually becomes more critical. The more the text advances, the more the reader focuses on the goal and the main character(s) to fulfill it, rather than on the novels' freshness. At the point where involvement and distance meet is when the reader might begin to feel unmotivated or bored, and if by the end of the novel distance is greater than involvement then it will negatively influence the reader's appreciation. Usually elements that create distance and elements that create involvement moderate each other, with relevance, similarity and valence mediating these effects. As claimed, the same trait of a character can be experienced as both positive and negative, even at the same time, so the model considers that involvement and distance are not two extremes of a line, but rather that they stand parallel to each other. The ideal balance would be one that creates a considerable amount of involvement, complemented by a lesser degree of distance.

In older theories, the process of engagement had been studied only through the appraisal of a character's individual norms, but newer findings claim that the norms of significant others also have to be taken into the account. Usually, people judge each other based on the attitudes upheld in front of others of the same group. 'Feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1979) reign over which emotions are socially accepted in each situation, and 'display rules' (Ekman, 1973; Ellsworth, 1994) control the socially accepted form of display these emotions might take. When conflicts arise between an individual's subjective norms and the group norms they are a part of, it is not solved by either departing from the group or changing the individual norms, because we are usually not willing to abandon neither of them. It is hard to leave aside what we believe in to conform to what is expected of us, and at the same time, no matter whether the degree of identification is high or low, the identification with certain groups is a determining component of an individual's self-definition; even when not following the group's norms, people feel enjoyment identifying with them. Appraisal of a character can be a dual processing: through the subjective, and through the norms of the group(s) we belong to. When both these norms clash, separate processes for the perceiving and experiencing of characters

take place, "which can result in overlapping and interrelated patterns of involvement-distance conflicts" (Hoorn and Konijn, 2003, pp. 261). Sometimes, this results in both appreciations cancelling each other out, and leaving the reader in an, apparently, neutral position that actually hides "great emotional tensions" (Hoorn and Konijn, 2003, pp. 261).

As the authors state, the PEFiC-model argues for complex interactions leading to complex emotions, and considers more factors than earlier approaches. It uses individual factors from past theories such as empathy, similarity and valence; and studies them all together to create a method where their relationship with each other helps understand how and why the affective bond formed with characters originates.

6. Devices to establish affective relationships

The past section helped us understand and learn about how one of the most advanced character affection models claims affective relations with a character are established by the reader, and what elements play a part in developing them. Furthermore, it also focused on explaining why this relationship is formed, mostly through a variety of cognitive sciences. However, and while the reader undoubtedly plays the central role in character processing, the authors are the creators; and they might sometimes use the different narrative techniques at their disposal to influence the readers. It is impossible to deny that authors are able to play with the reader's mind, altering their impressions and perceptions. So, while in this section the author's aim when developing characters and situations will be taken into account, it is nevertheless believed that the death of the author is fundamental for the construction of literary worlds. In the end, after a full evaluation of the work, it is reader who with their own judgement will make a reading or another of the story and its characters; and while it can very well be that the final evaluation performed by the reader was the one the author had intended from the beginning, it is the reader who in the end will extract their own conclusions.

What in this section will be discussed is an array of both psychological and narrative devices used to infuse realism and create immersion, which help foster and develop the affective relationship with characters. It is important to notice that the majority of these tools do not work without the reader's presupposed knowledge, and that "rather than being passive recipients of information, readers venture beyond the text to explain and

predict aspects of the unfolding story" (Richard J. Gerrig and David W. Allbritton, 1990, pp. 380).

6.1. Psychological devices

6.1.1. Fundamental Attribution Error

In the vast majority of literary works, the overall plot of the story is developed through events, and what the characters' reactions to these events are. The causes for these happenings may be human or non-human, and the author might either explicitly or implicitly state their own theories of casualty; whether they are situational, or dispositional. Situational causes are external; dispositional, internal. External causes are determined by the situation the character is found in, and internal causes by their inner desires. Most of the time, both are factors when making a decision or responding to an action. For the reader to understand the cause behind the behavior of a character's actions, they should be able to differentiate between one and the other; instead, people tend to fall into the Fundamental Attribution Error (Lee Ross, 1977). What the Fundamental Attribution Error states is that, ignoring the signs given, readers tend "to overestimate the importance of personal or dispositional factors relative to environment influences" (Lee Ross, 1977, pp. 184). To confirm that this is true, it has to first be proven that in certain circumstances situational elements play a bigger part in decision-making than dispositional ones; and then, that even after it has been demonstrated, people will still attribute the causes as internally motivated.

In 1963, Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment where a group of subjects was told they would be participating in a study on the effects of punishment on learning and memory. Each subject was assigned the role of 'teacher', and they were in turn assigned a 'learner' who they assumed was another subject, but was in fact an actor. The subjects were explained that they would be given the control of a device which gave electric shocks, and were told that for every wrong answer given by the learner they would have to give them a shock. Before the official test, the teachers were given a test shock so that they would experience what the learner would, in theory, feel. For every wrong answer, the voltage increased, with the maximum being 450 volts. Before its performance, Milgram asked his colleagues in the department and a group of 4th year Yale psychology students whether they believed the subjects would go all the way, and the majority stated that they would not. During the experiment, the teacher and learner

could not see, but only hear one another; there were no real electric shocks being administered, and the sound of increasing voltage was pre-recorded. The higher the supposed voltage became, the louder and more intense the reactions from the learner became, too. They screamed, cried, and begged for the teacher to stop. In the end, all of the subjects administered at minimum 300 volts; with more than 60% reaching the final 450 volts. While the subjects showed signs of tension and uncomfortableness, and all stopped at least once to ask the experimenter if it was okay to continue or to ask to quit, only when a subject asked for more than four times to stop was the experiment concluded. Most of them continued after being reassured by the experimenter, or when being told that they had to continue until the experiment was finished. This experiment was recreated by Milgram in other parts of the world, always with very similar results. He concluded that, when the pressure exerted by authoritative figures went against the individual's own moralities, the authoritative figure's power would win most times.

Knowing this, we can assume that people analyze the behavior of characters through the bias of the Fundamental Attribution Error. This, for example, can be very beneficial to the author, because they can count on the readers themselves to perceive events as fresh thanks to the characters' inner workings, even if the situation in itself is clichéd or formulaic. It can also be linked to the questions of why is it that readers still find certain genres of novels immersive, even when they possess knowledge of the general plot structure, which should break the illusion of reality; because readers tend to look for the causal explanations inside the characters, and so the text's structure is initially irrelevant in their processing of the novel.

6.1.2. Impression-formation; first impressions.

First impressions, both in real life and in fiction, are what guide us through the generation of predictions about an individual's reactions in future events. In the real world, first impressions are difficult to change, and mostly help us in getting to know the other more; however, after having known someone for some time, memory is what will work best (Zadny & Gerhard). It is when these two ideas are put against each other that trouble arises. When instead of drawing from memory we continue to use the first impressions, they can become a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Robert Merton 1948, 1957) that alters our interpretation of future behaviors, even after further contact with the other has proven their character to be different than first believed. If we think, for example,

that an individual is suspicious, we will structure future interactions with them so that they confirm our beliefs. This makes it important for first impressions to be mostly accurate, because we will assimilate the individual's new behavior through them; which is the exact same process that happens with fictional characters.

6.1.3. Perseverance in Social Perception

Following the idea introduced in the previous point, after the impact left by first impressions, there is a process where all further actions are filtered through them, and so it creates a perseverance of these first impressions in our social perceptions of the other, even after these judgements are later proven to be wrong. "Personal impressions and social perceptions become relatively autonomous from the evidence that created them", as has been stated by Lee Ross, Mark R. Lepper, and Michael Hubbard (pp. 880) in the data analysis of an experiment where they confirmed that social perceptions continue even after being exposed to ideas that directly contradict them. In the experiment, they tasked a group of women with differentiating which ones were real and which ones fake between 25 suicide letters. Furthermore, there was an observer assigned to each participant (unbeknownst to them). Before the test began, a score for each woman had already been decided. After the test finished and they were given their score, they gave each participant an evaluative sheet asking how they believed they would perform in the future in similar tasks. While the overall structure was the same, there were three possible variants of the experiment. In variant number one, participants were not told anything about the true objective or functioning of the test, and performed as they would have normally. In variant number two, after the scores were given, the participants were told the scores had been assigned to them before the beginning of the test, and that in reality did not reflect how well or how badly they had performed. In variant number three, they were informed about the truth of the score, and, before doing the evaluative sheet, the perseverance phenomenon was explained to them. The observers always had the same information their assigned subjects were given. While in the evaluative results by those in variants number one and two the responses were quite similar, in variant number three a higher discrepancy arose; the subjects seemed to assimilate and take into account the information given about the perseverance phenomenon when filling the evaluative sheet, while the observers filled in the sheet with the responses that aligned better with the fake score previously given. First

impressions seem to be attributed to the person and their expected characteristics; while subsequent information provided that goes against it tends to be attributed to the situational context and not the individual. Most importantly, information is processed in a biased way. (Asch 1946; Zadny and Gerard 1974). Belonging to certain communities because of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. might also lead to some expectations being tied to that individual; however, there is a difference between stereotyping and generalizations because of personality theories. All of this helps us understand how readers try to fit characters into broad categories based on their first impressions of them, such as the 'good' and 'bad' category, which will strongly condition the interpretation of events, because we know the morality under which individuals with these etiquettes operate, and so the expectations about their future behaviors will be based on previously known information of what bad guys do and what good guys do. One of the troubles that this might bring is that it may cause the reader to overlook irregular behavior; ex: Mr. Wednesday in *American Gods*, and after a betrayal is exposed, the reader is forced to evaluate all the past actions of the character from a new point of view, not based on the first impressions. "We color objectively neutral information to fit our initial hypotheses" (Richard J. Gerrig and David W. Allbritton, 1990, pp. 385).

6.1.4. Script Memory

In 1977, Schank and Abelson developed the "script theory": that a part of our knowledge, that of common activities, is mechanically inscribed onto us, ex: going to a restaurant; and that through social and cultural conventions we all develop these scripts in our minds, each with a varying degree of abstraction depending on our knowledge and automatization of them. They claimed that script memory has two uses, one is to help us with the planning and execution of actions and the other is analyzing situations and being able to identify what it is that is happening. Gordon H. Brewer, John B. Black and Terrence J. Turner performed seven experiments to better grasp how people understand and remember narratives, and how people use the knowledge they already possess to expand on what they are reading. In experiment number three, the participants were asked to recall from memory the actions described in the texts given in experiment number two -short stories whose themes were common activities such as 'going to the doctor' or 'going to the supermarket'. The objective was to see whether the participants would use their real-world knowledge to fill in the gaps for implied but

unstated actions in the original texts, and if they did, in what capacity. Participants first began using their 'surface memory', but as it eventually faded, they began to fill in the gaps with the information in their subconscious. In fiction, this might be used to manipulate the reader's perceptions, by perhaps trying to make them recall actions that did not happen, making them believe they did. It also ties with the Local Spread hypothesis, which claims that individuals, after certain actions, expect certain others to play out, and so it can help with surprising the reader with unexpected developments or with plot twists. Incidentally, it can also do the opposite and help create immersion by leading us through familiar motions that we are used to. In experiment number five, subjects were presented with a story divided into 13 steps, four of which were out of their canonical order. They were asked to remember the stories as they were written, and later order them in the same way. The experiment showed that, on average, the subjects tended to put the disordered actions six steps closer to their canonical order than on the place they had originally been. These results are really helpful when taking into account that many novels do not follow the canonical order but are presented through flashbacks, or a mix of a retelling between the past and the present, and so, authors can take advantage by disordering actions to create confusion, or maybe to make the reader overlook certain actions that might later on in the novel become significant. In experiment number seven, they tested how interruptions in the middle of script actions influenced in their recalling. Schank and Abelson claimed there were three types of interruptions: obstacles, where something stops the active element from being able to continue with the action, ex: receiving a call while looking at the menu in a restaurant; errors, which lead script actions to end in unexpected ways, ex: ordering soup but getting served a cake; and distractions, where a script is created inside the script, and the first one is halted to follow the second one, ex: having to go to the bathroom while dining. The experiment proved these interruptions were remembered more than the scripted ones because they broke with the flow of what was expected and stood out (Von Restorff effect), and that irrelevancies such as looking at other customers or small talk made while waiting for the food in a restaurant setting were remembered less. In fiction, this might help camouflage certain actions or statements whose importance might be deeper than at first seemed, by then adding an unexpected action that is more memorable following the given hint or clue.

6.2. Narratological devices

6.2.1. Focalization.

The term was coined by Genette in 1972, and has sparked a lot of debate in relation to the concept of the narrator, which some experts claim are essentially the same. Genette defined the term focalization in terms of knowledge and information, and the limitations of these depending on the point of view and type of narrator. Authors can try to manipulate a reader's perception, so that the reader sees things the way the narrator, or author, intends. Michael Storms (1973) performed an experiment where he videotaped a conversation from the point of view of one of the participants, and also videotaped the same conversation from the point of view of an observer. When asked about the causality of the behavior, the observer made a lot more dispositional attributions than the person involved in the conversation did about themselves. However, when shown the videotapes of the opposite point of view, the observer attributed less dispositional motivations than the participant did. The conclusions where that when the subjects were focused on the person (the observer's point of view), the attributions tended to be dispositional; and when they were focused on the situation, tended to be situational (the participant's point of view). This can, of course, be related to literature, since most of the times the narratives are presented from a character's point of view and so what readers focus on, mostly, are the characters and not the situations per se. Furthermore, in fiction we have two types of alterations: paralepsis and paralipsis. Paralepsis refers to the inclusion of certain events against a particular focalization, and paralipsis refers to the omission of certain events against a particular focalization, which can completely change the way a story is portrayed.

6.2.2. Narrator

The narrator is a central element in almost any novel, for it is the one that controls the narrative itself and how it is presented to the reader. While the narrator can, and most of the times is, also a character in the novel, it is also possible for it to not be one, but rather an external entity that for some reason or other has a connection to the recounted story. If the narrator is not also a character, the only way to create an image of them is through the elements that can be extracted from the novel then, since neither a physical nor psychological description will, most likely, be provided. Margolin (1986) states that this is done through linguistic pragmatics, context of utterance, the utterance's

capabilities, beliefs, communicative intentions and, the cognitive psychology theory of attribution "[…] which seeks to infer from a behavior, including verbal, the dispositions and attitudes of the agent" (Hühn, P. et al., 2012, pp. 307). The articulateness, and how the narrator reacts to and thinks of the events that happen throughout the novel also help the reader create an image of them, and sway the reader into perceiving them as trustworthy or suspicious, affecting the perception on the narrator and because of it, of the entire novel. Furthermore, depending on the novel, the narrator's scope of knowledge can range from only knowing what they are seeing in the moment, to having full access to all characters' minds and thoughts. They can also deceive, withhold information; or be unreliable, either on purpose or not.

6.2.3. Narrative empathy

Deeply related to the old and new theories of character perception and experiencing, it is the sympathetic / empathetic reactions felt towards characters, along with the negative feeling of aversion. With sympathy, while we can understand a character, we cannot relate to them. When we empathize, on the other hand, we feel with the characters, creating an intimate bond to be born for the reader. These two connections created between reader and character foment immersion, and help the reader become comfortable when reading. On the other hand, aversion, also called personal distress by psychologists, causes the opposite in the reader; a feeling of negative overwhelmingness that causes the link between reader and novel to break, pulling the reader away from immersion. Miall (2009) claims there is a direct relationship between immersion and empathy, with Mar & Oatley (2008, as cited in Hühn, P. et al., 2012, pp. 250) arguing that "imagined settings and characters evoked by fiction literature likely engage the same areas of the brain as those used during the performance of parallel actions and perceptions"; meaning we use the same areas of the brain when reading fiction than we do when interacting with situations and others in real life, a statement that has been supported through scientific investigation on mirror neurons. When discussing fictional emotions, it is taken into consideration that not all characters/events/scenarios will incite the same reactions to all readers, but that an array of elements influence in any reader's reaction because of the variants in dispositional empathy (Keen, 2007) and in their positions on the text (Goffmann, 1956).

7. Conclusions

The exploration of character has proven a very fruitful journey; in a short amount of time, it has managed, with support from various other fields, to advance and discover new connections at a rapid pace, bringing into light new information that is, and will continue to prove to be, very useful in researching other areas of narratology, psychology and the cognitive sciences. From the early beginnings of character appreciation studies, emerging with the theories on empathy and identification, to the nowadays discoveries that have managed to make the theorization of the PEFiC-model possible, the combination of literature with consciousness has proven to be an excellent method in understanding and teaching human beings, and with the field still developing, a lot of other relevant discoveries will surely be made. The presented information, mostly focused on the experiencing of characters and the affective bonds we create with them, has mostly explored the cognitive processes and devices that take place when the relationship between reader and character is being built, and the conditions this takes place in. To understand this relationship and why its existence is important, there was a need to introduce other concepts such as the essence of what a character is, or the concept of The Paradox of Fiction. In truth, many more ideas and theories have been presented and explored, and a lot of other concepts are relevant to character construction and experiencing, however, it was impossible to fit all the information in, which is one of the reasons why one specific model, the Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters model, was chosen for this paper: because while nowadays there are quite a lot of different concepts by many different experts, one of the only ones that has tried to encapsulate the entirety of the process in modern day times has been the PEFiC-model, which, nevertheless, is not presented as a final model, but instead acknowledges that a lot more research is needed to be able to actually create a theoretical model of character experiencing that is complete. The research I have done has lead me to realize aspects I had not though about before, and enlightened me in a lot of areas I had doubts about; and has ultimately lead me to the belief that while characters do exist, they are not real. We acknowledge them as entities resembling human beings, and that they have features and characteristics proper of humans. They have names, attributes, lives, secrets. This is why, in first instance, we are predisposed to establish an affective connection with an entity that we know does not and will never exist. However, they have all been made up, and do not have any physical or material

realizations in the real world, and as readers we also acknowledge this, and so know that they are not real. Walton's ideas regarding the status of the relationship established between reader and text, the 'make-believe world' that is created, are an excellent explanation for this. We let ourselves believe they are real, and so we can become emotionally involved while at the same time, never doubting about the fakeness of what we are immersed into, or, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued, we enter into a willing suspension of disbelief about the fiction we are reading. To finish, I would like to offer my conclusions on why we decide to willingly play along. It is a topic that has been scarcely explored during the paper, mostly because there have not been that many analyses about it. While most center on building morality and learning life lessons, apart from the simple pleasure of enjoyment, I believe that people enjoy immersing themselves into stories and characters simply to allow themselves to feel. Literature, fiction, is a controlled environment. As established, what you are reading is not real, and you are aware of it before letting yourself participate in the text. We allow ourselves to connect with characters, feel for and with them; happiness, sadness, anxiousness, confusion, betrayal, because in the end, we can just step away from it all and distance ourselves from the fictitious world. We are able to freely express ourselves without dealing with the burdens, troubles, and emotions that the fictional situations would bring to us in the real world: to connect with others, without the chance of being hurt. In the end, it is very important to realize that each individual is different and so, each reader will feel and understand in different ways, making the realization of a complete character appreciation model a very complex task, that would, theoretically, have to take into account an infinite number of variables for all individuals. There is still a lot that the field of character study overall needs to explore to be able to offer more solid and concrete theories and models on the relationships formed between reader and character; still, its progress is fast and each new finding helps understand both literature and human beings a bit more than we did before.

8. References

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