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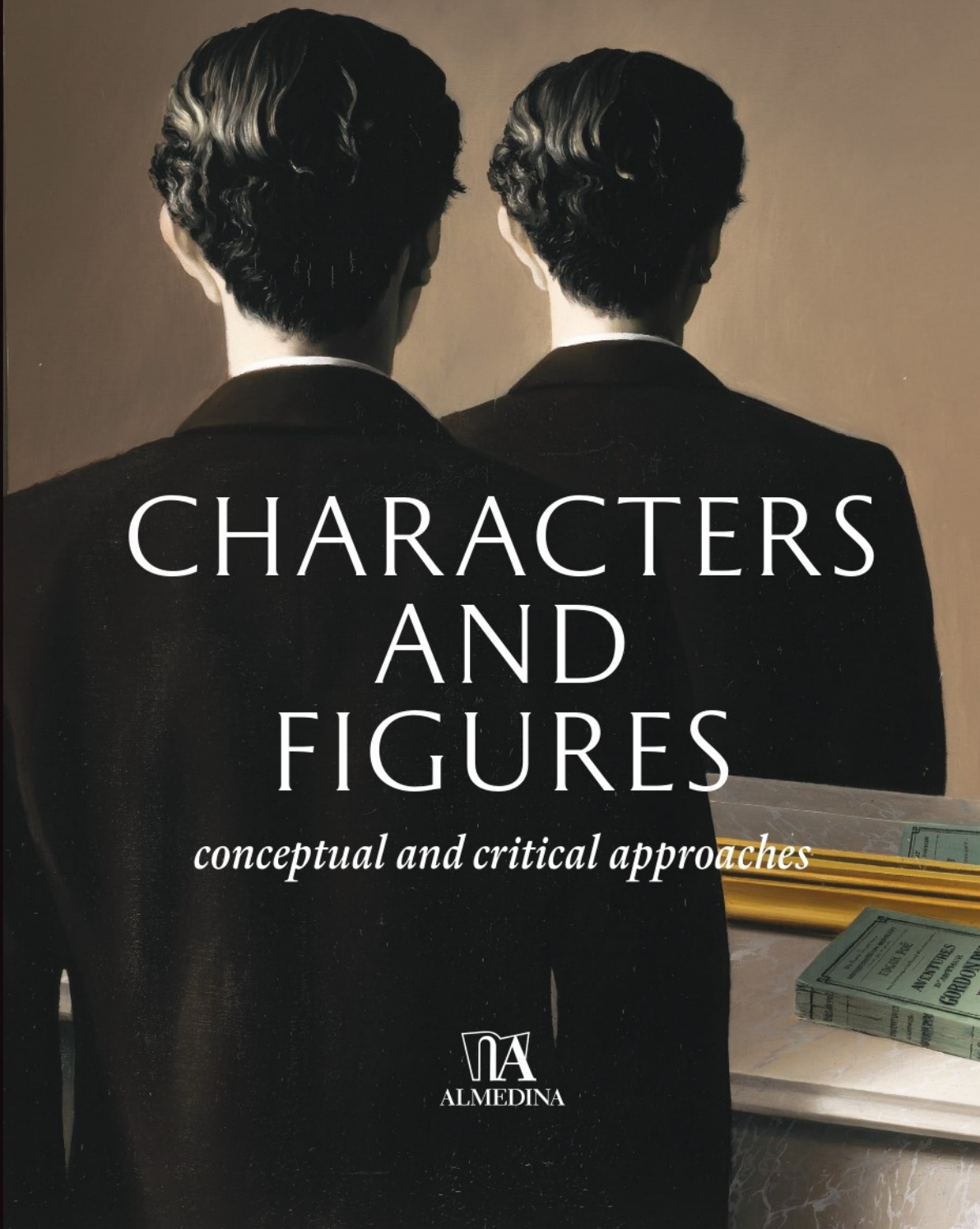

CHARACTERS AND FIGURES

conceptual and critical approaches

ALMEDINA

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CHARACTERS AND FIGURES:
CONCEPTUAL AND CRITICAL APPROACHES

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INTRODUCTION: THE DYNAMICS OF THE CHARACTER

Carlos Reis and Sara Grünhagen

1. For what reason or reasons does it make sense to speak about the dynamics of a character? One relatively obvious response would be the following: because in the majority of narratives that we know of, the character does not remain immutable from his/her first appearance to the close of the story. The dynamic of the character involves a personal trajectory: we can see behavioural, social, and physical changes in the individual as the story unfolds, without prejudice to the relative continuity that assures our capacity to recognise the character, as well as his/her difference in relation to the remaining characters. The exceptions (which exist) are in fact just this, that is to say, singular cases that do not cancel out the generality that is dominant.

The dynamics of the character are clearly inseparable from the other components (from other categories) in which, perhaps in a more expressive fashion, some movement is manifested: changes of space, advances in the plot, transformations brought about by the passage of time, and the like. Although certainly important, it is not these movements — internal ones, so to speak — that are at stake in this case but rather those that current narrative studies have been highlighting in the framework of the revalorisation of the character as a structuring element of the story. Thus, the international colloquium hosted by the Centre for Portuguese Literature of the University of Coimbra in 2017[1], and dedicated to the thematic areas

[1] Central theme: "Dynamics of the Character" (20, 21 and 22 November 2017; University of Coimbra Faculty of Arts and Humanities), project "Figures of Fiction", held since 2012 (see https://figurasdaficcao.wordpress.com/about/). Some of the papers and conferences presented at the colloquium are published in this volume. Other papers were published in Reis (ed.), 2020.

in which the dynamics of the character are examined in-depth, addressed: first, the afterlife of the character, understood as the existence which guarantees a type of permanence in our lives and in our world, one enjoying its own autonomous features; second (and in close association with the afterlife), the transliterary manifestations, meaning, the projection of the character in diverse media ecosystems and in the process of remediation that does not blot out relevant semantic elements of the character's first existence; third, the metaleptic potential of the character and its ontological re-dimensioning (the so-called rhetorical metalepsis is less significant here), in breaking with the "frontiers of fiction", a metaphor that, in this context, reveals its fragilities, or at the very least, its condition of metaphor.

That which can be called the transliterary vitality of the character refers to other concepts with strong epistemological incidences in the context of current narrative studies. We refer first to the notion of transnarrativity and to the analytical procedures that it stimulates, namely the need not to read only narrative in the narrative, but also in practices whose prevailing modal feature is something else, for example, in lyric poetry, or more demonstrably, in drama. Secondly, the study of the character requires contributions that free the analysis of the story from the linguistic, and more broadly speaking, rhetorical constraints that structuralist narratology cultivated. Here, then, the dynamics of the character become more evident thanks to those contributions from disciplines that have made narrative studies a more plural field of inquiry, as in the examples of the cognitive sciences, cinema studies, media studies, feminist studies, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and others.

2. In addition to these premises, quite synthetically outlined here, the study of the character (including the analyses of cases found in this book) urges us to recall certain aspects of the theoretical debate about this category of narrative. To begin, we would be well reminded to recognise that critical reflection upon the character, in the due course which literary theory and narrative theory have amassed, has suffered from certain gaps and misunderstandings.

I would make quick reference to what has already been noted: how the famous and often cited analysis done by E. M. Forster nearly a century ago in *Aspects of the Novel* endured for quite some time, with

its reducing schematism, as a type of unquestionable dogma, feeding those analyses that limited the dichotomy to *round characters/flat characters*. On this very issue, a scholar on character in a classic book on the subject wrote: "What has been said about character since then has been mainly a stock of critical commonplaces used largely to dismiss the subject" (Harvey, 1965: 192), with "since then" referring to the year Forster published his study (which was 1927) and the dyad transformed into "critical commonplace".

The 1960s and 1970s were not the bearers of good news for the study of the character. Indeed, if at the centre of the structuralist wave and the current of narratology there was narrative structure and the translinguistic dimension of its discourse, then all that was being said with respect to the character, its human and social density, and its mutations and winding conformations, was detached from theoretical reflection and the analysis of cases. In this epistemological scenario, it is quite well understood that Todorov had relegated the character — and all that had to do with its "psychological coherence or description of character"[2] — to the background. Or in other words: anything that might recall the spectre of "contentism". In a more piercing way, and borrowing a *boutade* from Paul Valéry, Gérard Genette insisted on the lessening of the character. Criticised for its omission in the seminal *Figures III* (1972), Genette reaffirmed (and in tune, we recognise, with the logic of narratology) the need "to be more interested in the constituting discourse than in the object constituted — this 'living being with no insides', which in this situation (unlike that of the historian or the biographer) is only an effect of the text" (Genette, 1988: 136).[3]

Even so, it should be recognised that in the same year as *Figures III*, the then influential *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage*, by Ducrot and Todorov, sketched out a certain 'overcoming' of structuralist *doxa*. From the chapter entitled « Unités significatives », it reads that "the characters represent people, according to fiction's own

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[2] « Cohérence psychologique ou description de caractère » (Todorov, 1971: 78).

[3] « S'intéresser davantage au discours constituant qu'à l'objet constitué, ce 'vivant sans entrailles' qui n'est ici (contrairement à ce qui se passe chez l'historien ou le biographe) qu'un effet de texte » (Genette, 1983: 93).

modalities".[4] Or in other words: fictional reference is on its way to being recovered as an element of the articulation of the narrative and its relationship with the world.

Nearing the close of the 20th century, Vincent Jouve revalorised that relationship with the world, adopting a contractualist view for the study of the narrative and affording special attention to the effects of reading that the character triggered. And thus, "the character, although established by the text, borrows […] a certain number of his/her properties from the reader's world of reference"[5]. It would not only be a question of a displacement (and this would be no small feat), in operative terms, from the text to the context and from immanence to transcendence. To invite the reader to the study of the character would be to involve Freudian psychoanalysis, pragmatics, and reception theory, and in the early days of the latter, Ingardenian phenomenology, although Jouve does not refer to Ingarden.

3. As David Herman stated with some irony, the "rumors of the death of narratology have been greatly exaggerated" (Herman, 1999: 1). Along the same vein and by extension, we affirm that the death of the character was not irreversible and that the transnarrative and interdisciplinary impulse of current narrative studies has contributed much to its resurrection.

This resurgence has been amply confirmed, so to speak, by a significant sample in the broad descriptions of the concept of the character that we have read in the most influential dictionaries on the material and in the inherent paths for further development that these descriptions stimulate. See, for example, the entries on the character by Uri Margolin in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005: 52-57), by Fotis Jannidis in the *Living Handbook of Narratology* (2013), by Manfred Jahn in *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* (2017) and by Carlos Reis in the *Dicionário de estudos narrativos* (2018: 388-398).

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[4] « Les personnages représentent des personnes, selon des modalités propres à la fiction » (Ducrot and Todorov, 1972: 286).

[5] « Le personnage, bien que donné par le texte, emprunte […] un certain nombre de ses propriétés au monde de référence du lecteur » (Jouve, 1992: 29).

A collateral effect of the development that is noted here is the constellation of concepts directly or indirectly associated with the notion of the character and deduced from the deeper conceptual elaboration that it inspires. We are not speaking merely of already established notions that may be now reviewed but also others that are still undergoing stabilisation, some of which will be analysed later, for example, characterisation, name, discourse (of the character), hero, type, identity, personhood, figure, figuration, afterlife, metalepsis, transfictionality, etc. As can be seen, this is much more than the elementary Forsterian classification that refers to *round characters* and *flat characters*.

More important, however, is to go further, bearing in mind the objectives of this book. The terms with which we refer to the dynamic condition of the character are related to the challenges that a concept (so to speak) in movement will set before the field of narrative studies, enjoying, in turn, a renewal in the submissions of work. The diversity of approaches found here shows this very thing, configuring an always provisional "state of the art". Thus, if at present we are discussing non-natural narratology (which is examined by Brian Richardson in one of the chapters of this book), we are inevitably rethinking the conformation of the character, its logic or its fictional subversion, and its semantic and pragmatic potential. We are situated, then, in a position which goes beyond that "textualism" which dominated structuralism (as described by Marie-Laure Ryan) and, in part, the narratology which derived from it (and that which at times is called "classic"). This implies a contextualist and moderately referentialist vision of the character, with the correlated valorisation of questions such as "the culture, the gender, the history, the interpretation, and the process of the reading, highlighting aspects of the narrative that narratology had made parenthetical".[6]

It is another dynamic feature of the character that is manifested when there are transmedial procedures at stake which offer evidence to the presence of narrativity in different media and in the contexts that accommodate them under the sign of transnarrativity. In this way,

[6] « La culture, le genre (*gender*), l'histoire, l'interprétation et le processus de la lecture, en mettant en évidence les aspects du récit mis entre parenthèses par la narratologie structuraliste » (Nünning, 2010: 20).

the study of the character requires a confrontation of various semiotic elaborations, with the understanding that "the distinct quality of 'transmedial phenomena' […] is the fact that similar phenomena occur in more than one medium and that a possible origin in one medium […] is either uninteresting or unknown" (Wolf, 2005: 84). The matter of the character as a transmedial category, and the consequences that the character elicits in terms of narrative tension, is an issue addressed precisely in one of the texts here presented, authored by Raphaël Baroni.

4. The present book serves to debate theoretical questions, in part already well known, but now re-examined from specific angles that the plurality of the studies on characters have favoured. In addition to the domain of theory, other analyses that appear here will take up those characters that have traditionally been undervalued, or distant, from a strictly literary and canonising vision of the narrative.

In "What are Characters Made of? Textual, Philosophical and 'World' Approaches to Character Ontology", Marie-Laure Ryan carries out a review of the ontology of the fictional character from three different perspectives, which represents a critique and an updating of concepts at the same time. The first approach, which Ryan terms as textualist, is related with classic narratology, which conceptualised the character as an object of language, a being formed by words whose association to the human figure would pass as naïve, more fitting of a "Quixote-esque" reader unable to understand how the game of fiction is played. This vision is problematised by Ryan, who re-examines certain positions taken up by Barthes in *S/Z*, such as the defence of the *writerly* as opposed to the *readerly text*, and it is not by chance that this defence occurred at a time when the *Nouveau Roman* seemed to eschew the "conventional" categories, so to speak, of the construction of narrative, such as character and plot. Either one, however, continue to be essential elements in most stories, making it imperative to review the conceptual ambiguity that derives, for example, from the non-distinction between character and discourse: contrary to Barthes, Ryan understands that "there is more to characters than collections of semes" (p. 26).

The second perspective analysed by Ryan is that of philosophy, having previously shown interest in the ontological status of the fictional

character long before narratology emerged as a discipline. The focus adopted is that of analytical philosophy, as in Amie Thomasson's reflection, and takes up the question of the referentiality of the character. Ryan notes the striking difference in relation to textualism, since, from the philosophical perspective, the definition of the character takes authorial intentionality into consideration. However, even this "exteriorising" or contextual position would still present difficulties for the validation of affirmations on the narrative, the reason for which Ryan prefers the world approach, in the sense of exploring the duality of the perspectives in question more deeply. This theorization has been the subject of the work of narratologists for quite some time, recurring to the Possible World concept and founded on the principle that "fictional storytelling involves a doubling of world and a doubling of speech acts" (p. 32). The author lists a series of advantages to this approach toward the theorization of the narrative, and more specifically, of the character: in the fictional world, the characters have the same status as real human individuals, which explains, for example, the supposed naivety on the part of the reader, his/her capacity to feel empathy or repulsion and to connect with the characters. Akin to cognitivism, the world approach takes into consideration the experience that the reader enjoys with these figures, strengthened by "its ability to deal with behaviors that the textual approach regards as unworthy of an aesthetic appreciation of literature and ones that the philosophical approach regards as outside its field of expertise" (p. 35).

Theorization about the character, having recurrently favoured a certain aspect to the detriment of others, justifies the need to re-examine this imbalance. Brian Richardson's study, "Unnatural Characters", is interested in the character called antimimetic, that is to say, the one whose attributes "defy the realm of human possibilities and elude conventional types" (p. 42). Defined as "impossible persons", for Richardson these characters make a poor fit with many of the theories that are based on the similarity of the character with the human figure. Looking at the limitations of this type of exclusively mimetic approach, he presents a series of unnatural or impossible characters that "violate or parody the conventions of realism" (p. 43) and that, in this process, require a rethinking, not only of the narrative in which they are placed but also of the very category of character.

Richardson proposes five types of unnatural characters: first, Imperfectly Human Characters, many of whom are represented in post-modern works, having at times too few traits or contradicting themselves in terms of characterisation or incarnating an inhuman combination of human traits; second, Multiple Individuals, a category for which the multiplied character from the short story "August 25, 1983" by Jorge Luis Borges serves as an example; third, Parodic Characters, constructed in response to previous texts to insist on the absence of verisimilitude as a basic reference; fourth, Fabricated Entities, as in Gregor Samsa from *The Metamorphosis;* and fifth and finally, Metafictional Characters, to whom Richardson dedicates considerable attention, with examples of characters who are aware of their fictional nature and who, metaleptically speaking, question the elaboration at play and intervene at the discursive level. The level of unnaturalness may vary, but Richardson's central point of analysis is this: characters that stray from the norm of mimetic representation cannot be ignored by a theory of fictional characters that claims to be broad and rigorous.

The emphasis in Carlos Reis's chapter seeks to address something else, but even so, it is in line with Richardson, in terms of reviewing the overly restrictive definitions of the character. In "Figure, Person, Figuration", at issue is a revision of concepts meant to have us reconsider premises and categories which, thanks to narratology, we have grown accustomed to. The key concept coined by Reis is that of *figure*, which touches upon others and which, without being restricted to a single field, serves as an operative tool for the analysis of literary texts, especially. Figure is understood as "all fictional or fictionalised entities, in general (but not necessarily) anthropomorphic, who carry out functions or live out events, in the development of one or various narrative processes" (p. 66). Here, what is being sought is a conceptual reconfiguration by extension, one which, in highlighting the reference to the person and to the respective process of individualisation, does not, however, exclude other possibilities: the very word *figure* encompasses different categories and entities.

For Reis, the character, as it is traditionally understood, is a figure, but it is not just this category that is being pursued: the concept also encompasses the narrator and even the entity that has become known as the narratee. The treatment given to these figures will thus

be referred to as *figuration*, which should not be confused with the mere characterisation of the character: figuration extends the description, which is only one if its components. At the same time, it brings to the discussion elements of the order of the discourse, interesting as well for the meta-fictional dimension, so explored by contemporary literature and exemplified in the text. On the other hand, Reis insists on the dynamic condition of the figure, given how it is not rare for the figure to transcend its origin and reappear in other texts and other supports; one speaks of *refiguration* and *afterlife*, pertinent notions when transmedial narrative processes are undergoing analysis. As a rule, the characters are the principal figures of the narrative, in accordance with what the examples being studied by Reis are demonstrating, with a special focus on Portuguese literary production, from Eça de Queirós to José Saramago.

Like Ryan, Raphaël Baroni re-examines the conceptualisation of the character carried out by classic narratology. In "How Paradigm Shifts and our Taste for Immersive Stories Have Transformed our Understanding of Plots and Characters" it is the relationship between the character and the plot which is at the centre of reflection; it is a question of not only exploring the terms of this interconnection but also of analysing the way in which the discussion on these central elements of the narrative has become possible and has been transformed in recent decades. There was a significant change of narratological *landscape*, according to Pavel's metaphor recovered from the text (p. 78), with the alteration in the character's perception and approach representing an important part of this phenomenon, which helps to understand it. If in the past it was viewed with a certain wariness by structuralism and eschewed in favour of other narrative categories, the character is now the object of renewed interest, which calls for a revision of its image as a "paper being": the processes of identification of the reader and the character enter into the equation and thus the aesthetic experiences that the character and the plot can provoke are valorised. Baroni questions the motivations of such a transformation, understanding that in either of the cases, they are inevitably subject to ideological scrutiny, as in the example of the criticism of alienation made at the time of structuralism or the need to defend and justify literary studies at the present time.

In addition to the changes in paradigm occurring in narratology, Baroni highlights the interest being generated by the character within the framework of what is called *immersive stories*. From there, the character is examined together with the plot, at the same time that the main transformations in its status are retraced, stepping off from the principle that the two notions are interrelated. From Propp to Greimas and even arriving at Hamon, the character was analysed according to its sphere of action in the narrative, varying the number of roles that are attributed by each author. For Baroni, the problems arising with these perspectives of analysis have less to do with the orientation that consists of considering the character as the agent of the action and more to do with the valuation resulting from these reflections, as happens with Hamon, for whom the actant role of the character would be more important than, for example, his/her hair colour. And Baroni goes on to question: who defines this importance and based on what criteria? Such a feature could well be of the utmost importance in the construction of the plot, and to show this, Baroni points to the example of Daenerys Targaryen. What he finds interesting is the transmedial character (from the *A Song of Ice and Fire* saga and from the *Game of Thrones* television series) and the way that their attributes and their transformations influence the modulation of narrative tension. It is based on this criterion that Baroni proposes three functional axes of the character, taking into consideration their puzzling attributes, their mimetic attributes, and their autonomy. For Baroni, the entire construction of the character thus serves for the immersion, and consequently, the functioning of the narrative.

A case study based on the reflection on the dynamics of the character will also be the objective of the following chapter, "This is Not a Character: the Figuration of Fernando Pessoa in *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, by José Saramago", written by Sara Grünhagen. Published in 1984, the novel by the Portuguese author sets out to continue the story of the heteronym Ricardo Reis, created by the poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), who, already dead, will play the role of a secondary character in the narrative. The analysis shows how Pessoa is constructed in an opposite yet complementary way to that of Ricardo Reis: whereas the latter acquires awareness and enjoys prominence over the course of the novel, the former, although originally from the

real world, emerges as an "apparition about to lose his human contours and affirming himself as a fictional being while leaving both the field of vision and the memory of those who still live" (p. 105). The transfictional circulation of characters and the transposition of borders that it occasions in Pessoa's work are highlighted in the chapter, which seeks to explore the extent to which these figures are central to the critical dimension of Saramago's book. In this regard, the dialogue that *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* establishes with a tumultuous period in Portuguese history cannot be overlooked — with the narrative placed in 1935-1936, when the country was bearing the full brunt of the dictatorship under Salazar —, nor can we discount its effort to re-examine the "Pessoa myth", alerting to the risk of it being reduced to a type, emblem of a programmatic nationalism, as with other figures in the canon who preceded him.

For this analysis, Grünhagen has employed Carlos Reis' concept of figuration, as well as the concepts of twofoldness, elaborated by Murray Smith in the scope of literature, and of metalepsis, briefly formulated by Gérard Genette in *Figures III* (1972) and taken up once again in later and more recent works, especially *Métalepse: de la figure à la fiction* (2004). One of the objectives of the study is to show how Saramago's novel plays with the perception that the reader may have of the various levels involved in a work of art: its formal and referential aspects, the real and the fictional, and what is unique to the narrative and the discourse. The juncture of diverse boundaries reveals itself as essential in Pessoa's figuration, who, like other characters, is an important operator of metalepsis in the narrative. Envisioned, thus is "a revalorisation of the category of the character within Genette's own theory" (p. 114), notable as he was one of the fathers of classic narratology, which, in its early days, relegated this figure to the background.

The concepts of metalepsis and figuration are equally important for the reflection proposed in the sixth and final chapter, "Voices in *Travelling*: Figurations of the Character in *The Murmuring Coast*", by Marta Teixeira Anacleto, a case study centred on the protagonist of the 1988 book written by Lídia Jorge, adapted for the cinema by Margarida Cardoso in 2004. Different times, stories, and space cross and overlap in this novel structured as two narratives. The first, at the beginning of the book, entitled *The Locusts*, follows the life of Evita,

a young woman recently arrived in Mozambique to marry an *alferes*, that is, a junior officer in the Portuguese military. The second narrative is that of the following chapters, narrated in the first person by Eva Lopo, our Evita from twenty years earlier, looking back at the past and at the character she had been during that final period of the Colonial War. In this scenario, the metalepsis emerges "as a privileged way to read the text and the characters" (p. 134) and will be essential for the analysis of the specificity required for this novel's adaptation to other media, especially in terms of "the movement of transposition or adaptive rewriting" of the protagonist (p. 120).

Thus, what is being explored is the way that the "vertigo of metalepsis" (p. 121) inherent in Lídia Jorge's text is interiorized in the screenplay and the film, which adopted their own strategies to articulate the complex crisscrossing of the voices in the book. Playing with the images, the sound, the camera movements, and in particular, with the voices recreated in the screenplay and in the film, and by means of other resources, are elements that are underscored in the analysis. It is precisely the transgression of these voices, in the author's view, that provides "basis of the final meaning of the novel and of the film" (p. 136), the mark of fragmentation of the narrative and of the character herself.

5. In the texts assembled for this book there is an important consensus to be acknowledged: the understanding is that in our search to finally update the tools of analysis, we need to re-examine definitions and theorizations, categories and typologies, in such a way as not to ignore the questions which the most diverse range of characters and narratives place before current narrative studies. The chapters open a debate in and amongst themselves, at times offering similar critiques — for example, some of Barthes' positions are problematised as much by Ryan as by Baroni —, while at other times they diverge and develop themselves based on rather distinctive premises and characters. If, for Richardson, the concept of the character should take antimimetic figures into consideration, (p. 43, 54), Baroni defends that without plot and without characters acting as people would do, there is no reason to speak about narrative (p. 93). Although Reis deals mainly with mimetic characters, he sees no obligation to anthropomorphic likeness in his definition of figure (p. 66), and Ryan offers a similar caveat with respect to the world approach (p. 36-37).

To a certain extent, all are interested in the reader and in the way that characters are read. In this respect, the current-ness of the reflections proposed here is understood: if, as Ryan asserts, the role of the structuralist critic is to demystify and denounce the illusion of the text (p. 24), part of present-day narratology places itself in another position. It seeks to understand, in fact, how this illusion can be not only constructed but also metaleptically torn down, how it can play with and even oppose mimetic reference, and how it intertwines with different figures of the narrative, exploring the duality of the aforementioned perspective from which fictional worlds are constructed, and fulfilling an essential role in the development of the plot and the narrative tension.

In what has been said and in what will be read in the following, there remains the view, repeatedly affirmed in these pages, that the character is not a static entity, neither as a concept nor as a narrative figure. On this topic, it is noteworthy to recall both the content and the presentation of an issue of *New Literary History* entirely dedicated to the character. Published in 2011, the journal confirmed, in the field of theoretical reflection and epistemology, the reappearance of an area of study that had been deemed as dried out. "In the last decade, however, we have seen the sudden revitalization of a once moribund field" (Felski, 2011: v). And to complete the statement: "No doubt, a certain conception of what constitutes character — an idea of unified, unchanging, intrinsic, or impermeable personhood — is no longer sustainable on theoretical or historical grounds" (Felski, 2011: ix).

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1. WHAT ARE CHARACTERS MADE OF? TEXTUAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND "WORLD" APPROACHES TO CHARACTER ONTOLOGY

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During the years when the study of literature was dominated by a global movement that I call textualism, whose individual manifestations include New Criticism, Deconstruction, and Postmodern Theory, it was common practice when speaking of literary characters to contrast a "naïve reader" who regarded characters as persons or as model human beings (Herman, 2012: 125) with an enlightened reader who knew that characters are constructs made of language. The following declarations are meant by their authors to uncover the "true" essence of characters: "Characters in fiction are, after all, words on a page" (Richardson, 2012: 133). "Characters are marks on the page, made up of the alphabetical characters that spell out 'who' they are. They have no psychology, no interiority, no subjectivity" (Warhol, 2012: 119). The epitome of the naïve reader is Don Quixote (second part, chapter XXVI), who jumps on stage to rescue the heroine of a puppet show, causes a huge brawl during which all the puppets are broken, and ends up having to pay for the damage (having recognized his error). We all know that Don Quixote was mad, his brain having dried up from reading too many chivalry novels, and that he was unable to distinguish fiction from reality. But there are many people who engage in behaviors that orthodox literary theory would consider naïve: for instance, kids watching puppet shows who scream to warn the hero that the bad guy is approaching. Or people who travel to Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland just to see the spot where Sherlock Holmes fell to his death (only to be resurrected later). And

finally, there are those who cry when reading fiction: Dickens' Little Nell is reported to have let loose torrents of tears. Are these people as crazy as Don Quixote, or do they know something about the nature of fiction and about characters that the puritans of textualism refuse to acknowledge? In this article I will try to answer this question by exploring, and contrasting, three approaches to character: textualist, philosophical, and the approach that receives my personal endorsement, which I will call the world approach.

Textualism

The tradition that I call textualist bears prime responsibility for claims that characters are not persons but objects made of language. Textualism grew out of structuralism, and it is a matter of common knowledge that structuralism drew inspiration from linguistics, especially from the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, who regarded language as a self-enclosed system rather than as a means to represent an external reality. Linguistics was revered by structuralists as a pilot discipline, and the adoption of its methods to other fields such as anthropology, sociology, and last but not least literary theory was considered a way for these disciplines to reach scientific status. The main issue, however, was how to apply linguistic methods to other domains of signification, for beyond the concept of sign and its division into a signifier and signified, and beyond the claim that the value of signs depends on their systemic relationships to one another rather than on their relationship to the world, Saussurian linguistics did not provide particularly concrete directions. The adoption of a linguistic model in the humanities and social sciences was mainly metaphorical and ideological: it was metaphorical because it consisted of regarding every phenomenon under study as a "language" based on a "code" made of discrete signifying units, and it was ideological because it viewed human thought as profoundly shaped by these multiple codes. In its most radical conception, the linguistic influence means that we are spoken by language as opposed to speaking it. The same could be said about the various codes of culture: even nowadays, cultural studies have a strongly

deterministic bend. It is against this background that I would like to discuss the treatment of literary characters by the most famous of structuralist critics, Roland Barthes, in *S/Z*, his well-known study of Balzac's short story "Sarrasine".

Barthes' ambition in *S/Z* was to promote a view of literary texts as systems constituted by multiple codes in which the meanings determined by these codes activate each other in an endless play of signification. But this play can be more or less extensive; in the type of text he calls the writerly [*scriptible*], signs activate each other in all directions, there is neither beginning nor end, and the reader becomes a producer of meaning; in the type of text he calls the readerly [*lisible*], the play of signification is limited by the linearity or sequentiality of narrative structure and by the demands of mimeticism. But even for readerly texts, Barthes opposes the classical literary-critical position that regards meaning as imposed top-down by the author. While he conceives the writerly text as fully created bottom-up by the reader, the readerly text represents a "limited plurality" where bottom-up interpretive activity is at least partly controlled by top-down structures. Yet Barthes does not go so far as to say that these structures are imposed by an author: rather, they are the product of cultural codes and of language itself. It is interesting to note that despite praising the writerly as the future of literature and as the liberation of the reader, Barthes never devoted much attention to such texts. This may be because they do not exist; but I would rather believe that, deep down, he preferred the readerly texts because they preserve narrative interest, which lies, at least in part, in temporal effects such as suspense, curiosity and surprise.

Barthes regarded narrative texts as being regulated by five codes: the proairetic code, which organizes the actions of characters into meaningful sequences, such as "taking a walk" or "rendez-vous" or "assassination"; the hermeneutic code, which organizes narrative information into the presentation and then solving of an enigma; the semic code, which consists of gathering the connotations of textual units, for instance extracting "wealth" from the description of a house; the symbolic code, which links particular existants to universal concepts; and the cultural code, which links textual units to established forms of knowledge, especially popular wisdom and stereotypes.

The designation of these interpretive moves as "codes" betrays the dominance of the linguistic paradigm; nowadays we would be more inclined to regard them as "cognitive operations"; and rather ascribing the functioning of the semic code to codified relations between signifers and signifieds, we would recognize the importance of the reader's life experience for extracting connotations and making inferences. But whether or not Barthes' codes are really codes in a strict sense of the term, every textual unit is justified by its participation in one or more of them; the more numerous the codes, the more determined and meaningful the textual unit. These units can be segments of variable length, and their delimitation is not determined by the kind of systematic discovery procedure that structuralist linguistics identified as their number one priority, but by whether or not Barthes had something to say about them.

Like any other textual unit, characters lie at the intersection of several codes. Take Zambinella, the *castrato* who the artist Sarrasine falls in love with, believing that he is a woman. According to the symbolic code, she represents super-femininity and sub-masculinity. The hermeneutic code presents her sexual identity as an enigma that needs to be solved. According to the cultural code, she stands for ideal beauty. The proairetic code enables the reader to gather her actions into meaningful sequences, such as a sequence of "playing a trick on Sarrasine by pretending to be a woman", and the semic code enables the reader to extract the connotations of the words that describe her, for instance, linking her mouth to sensuality.

More generally, for Barthes a character is a collection of semes (that is, meanings) subsumed under the heading of a proper name. Just as the proairetic code instructs the reader to gather information under a general type of action such as "murder," "walk" or "rendez-vous," the proper name unifies a dispersed collection of semes and turns them into a character:

> Sarrasine is the sum, the point of convergence, of: *turbulence, artistic gift, independence, excess, femininity, ugliness, composite nature, impiety, love of whittling, will*, etc. What gives the illusion that the sum is supplemented by a precious remainder (something like *individuality*, in that, qualitative and ineffable, it may escape the vulgar bookkeeping of

> compositional characters) is the Proper Name, the difference completed by what is *proper* to it. The proper name enables a person to exist outside the semes, whose sum nonetheless constitutes it entirely (Barthes, 1974: 191).[1]

The last sentence in this quote shows that Barthes' conception of characters is more complex than reducing them to a "collection of semes". The proper name does indeed turn characters into persons. Where then do these persons exist, if the text is entirely constituted of semes? The only answer can be: they exist as "persons" in the imagination of the reader. But this existence is an illusion, because, as Barthes notes, the semes "constitute them entirely". The instrument of this illusion is the Proper Name, which suggests the existence of a referent external to language. Barthes admits that his own critical discourse is not always immune to the illusion of existence created by the Proper Name:

> We occasionally speak of Sarrasine as though he existed, as though he had a future, an unconscious, a soul; however, what we are talking about is his *figure* (an impersonal network of symbols combined under the proper name "Sarrasine"), not his *person* (a moral freedom endowed with motives and an overdetermination of meanings): we are developing connotations, not pursuing investigations; we are not searching for the truth of Sarrasine, but for the systematics of a (transitory) site of the text (Barthes, 1974: 94).[2]

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[1] « Sarrasine est la somme, le lieu de confluence de: *turbulence, don artistique, indépendance, violence, excès, féminité, laideur, nature composite, impiété, goût du déchiquetage, volonté*, etc. Ce qui donne l'illusion que la somme est supplémentée d'un reste précieux (quelque chose comme l'*individualité*, en ce que, qualitative, ineffable, elle échapperait à la vulgaire comptabilité des caractères composants), c'est le Nom Propre, la différence remplie de son *propre*. Le nom propre permet à la personne d'exister en dehors des sèmes, dont cependant la somme la constitue entièrement » (Barthes, 1970: 197).

[2] « On parle ici, parfois, de Sarrasine comme s'il existait, comme s'il avait un avenir, un inconscient, une âme, mais ce dont on parle, c'est de sa *figure* (réseau impersonnel de symboles manié sous le nom propre de Sarrasine), non de sa *personne* (liberté morale douée de mobiles et d'un trop-plein de sens) : on développe des connotations, on ne poursuit pas des investigations; on ne cherche pas la vérité de Sarrasine, mais la systématique d'un lieu (transitoire) du text » (Barthes, 1970: 101).

In other words, the proper name is deceptive, because it presents characters as persons and suggests that they exist independently of the text. The task of the critic is to demystify the text, to denounce the illusion, and to prepare the advent of the "writerly text", which will do away with illusion: "What is obsolescent in today's novel is not the novelistic, it is the character; what can no longer be written is the Proper Name" (Barthes, 1974: 95).[3]

Barthes wrote in an age when the advocates of the *Nouveau Roman* claimed that the novel had to do away with such fundamental narrative elements as plot and character. In order to empty characters of any human substance, they often replaced proper names with bare initials; for instance, the wife in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* is referred to as A. But the New Novel was a short-lived literary fashion; today's novels are still full of characters, and the proper name remains the main way of referring to them. Barthes' prophecy turned out to be dead wrong.

To demonstrate that the behavior of characters is not entirely dependent on the realism of psychological motivation, Barthes discusses a passage where Zambinella tries to confess to Sarrasine that she is not a woman, but rather a castrated male. The text goes like this:

> "Listen, monsieur," she said in a low voice. "Oh, be still," the impassioned artist said. "Obstacles make my love more ardent." (Barthes, 1974: 177)[4]

Having been told to be quiet, Zambinella does not make the confession. Here is Barthes' comment:

> If we have a realistic view of *character*, if we believe that Sarrasine has a life off the page, we will look for motives for this interruption (enthusiasm, unconscious denial of the truth, etc.). If we have a realistic view of *discourse*, if we consider the story being told as a mechanism which must

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[3] « Ce qui est caduc aujourd'hui dans le roman, ce n'est pas le romanesque, c'est le personnage; ce qui ne peut plus être écrit, c'est le Nom Propre » (Barthes, 1970: 102).
[4] « Écoutez, monsieur, dit-elle d'une voix grave. » « Oh! tais-toi », dit l'artiste enivré. « Les obstacles attisent l'amour dans mon cœur » (Barthes, 1970: 183).

> function until the end, we will say that since the law of narrative decrees that it continue, it was necessary that the word *castrato* not be spoken (Barthes, 1974: 178).[5]

If Zambinella had been able to make the confession, the story would not have reached its dramatic climax, the murder of Sarrasine by Zambinella's protector during a later meeting. What Barthes calls the demands of discourse are the demands of plot, and they override the demands of verisimilitude: Sarrasine's refusal to hear Zambinella's confession is an *ad hoc* response that cannot be justified on psychological grounds. Here Barthes confronts a dilemma that is often invoked by theoreticians of character: should characters be subordinated to plot — in which case they are mostly cogs in a system — or should plot be subordinated to character? The answer depends on genre: according to Aristotle, in tragedy, character is subordinated to plot (1996: 11-12); by contrast, one can assume that in epics, plot is subordinated to character. The purpose of the multiple episodes of the *Odyssey* can, for instance, be said to be the demonstration of the personality of Odysseus. But in some cases, psychologically or pragmatically motivated actions by characters would prevent an interesting development. To avoid this pitfall, authors often sacrifice credibility to the demands of plot. A common example is the convention of the calumniator credited (Steinmann, 1981: 258), where an intelligent character believes the lies of a character of low reliability, such as Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, because this leads to a crisis which is central to the plot. If characters are nothing more than collections of semes, there is nothing to lose by accepting their subordination to plot; but Barthes' stance is more complex, as we see from this passage: "From a critical point of view, therefore, it is as wrong to suppress the character as it is to take him off the page in order to turn him into a psychological character (endowed with possible motives): *the*

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[5] « Si l'on a une vue réaliste du *personnage*, si l'on croit que Sarrasine vit en dehors du papier, on cherchera les mobiles de ce geste d'interruption (enthousiasme, refus inconscient de la vérité, etc.). Si l'on a une vue réaliste du *discour*s, si l'on considère l'histoire racontée comme une mécanique dont il importe qu'elle fonctionne jusqu'au bout, on dira que la loi de fer du récit voulant qu'il continuât encore, il était nécessaire que le mot de *castrat* ne fût pas prononcé » (Barthes, 1970: 184).

character and the discourse are each other's accomplices" (Barthes, 1974: 178)[6]. Here, Barthes indicates that it is wrong to assume that characters are human beings and that they act out of psychological motivations, but it is also wrong to suppress characters in the name of discourse. In other words, Barthes wants to have his cake and eat it too. He gets out of this impasse through a magic trick typical of textualism, by refusing to make a distinction between characters and discourse: "The characters are types of discourse, and, conversely, the discourse is a character like the others" (Barthes, 1974: 178)[7]. Like the others, really? When Barthes writes that "the discourse is a character like the others", he wants to redirect the reader's attention from the actions of characters to the action of the narrative discourse itself, to the twists and turns this discourse takes, and to the strategies it deploys to achieve its goal of proper narrative form. Naïve readers read texts as being about the life, the adventures and the schemes of characters; sophisticated readers read texts as being about the life, the adventures, and the schemes of discourse.

Barthes' more or less implicit goals, in writing *S/Z*, were aesthetic and pedagogical. He wanted to promote a new mode of reading that broke with the biographical and positivist tradition that dominated French academia early in his career, a mode that liberated textual energies and that allowed readers to find pleasure in playing with language. He also wanted to promote an alternative to mimeticism and realism, an alternative embodied in the writerly, though deep down his loyalties remained with the "limited pluralism" of classical narrative, rather than with the chaotic multiplicity of the writerly. With regard to characters, he seems to have realized the limitations of a purely semiotic approach, and he opted for ambiguity, rather than openly admitting that there is more to characters than collections of semes.

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[6] « D'un point de vue critique, il est donc aussi faux de supprimer le personnage que de le faire sortir du papier pour en faire un personnage psychologique (doté de mobiles possibles) : *le personnage et le discours sont complices l'un de l'autre* » (Barthes, 1970: 184).

[7] « Les personnages sont des types de discours et à l'inverse le discours est un personnage comme les autres » (Barthes, 1970: 184).

The philosophical approach

Philosophers, especially those of the analytic schools, have been interested in fictionality long before narratologists paid attention to it — which is a fairly recent development.[8] For analytic philosophy, the questions that need answering are very different from Barthes' concern with the functioning of literary language. These questions are the following:

- How can we refer to fictional characters and make statements about them, for instance by saying "Anna Karenina is a more passionate lover than Emma Bovary"?

- How does one assess the truth of statements made by critics about fictional characters?

- Are there relationships of identity between, say, Marlowe's Faust and Goethe's Faust, or are they mere homonyms?

- And, last but not least, what is the mode of existence, or ontological status, of fictional characters? Do they represent a special mode of being, a position that transgress a principle dear to philosophers, namely Occam's razor, or should one say that they do not exist at all?

The question of the ontological status of fictional characters is deeply entwined with the question of reference, because reference is widely believed by analytic philosophers to imply some kind of existence. According to Bertrand Russell, a sentence about a non-existing entity such as Emma Bovary is necessarily false because of referential

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[8] Among the path-breaking philosophical approaches are Searle (1975), Lewis (1978), Walton (1990, based on earlier work), and a special issue of *Poetics* (1979). Genette began paying attention in fictionality in 1991 (*Fiction et diction*). The Possible Worlds approach (Pavel 1986, Doležel 1998 and earlier, Ryan 1991, Ronen 1994) followed the lead of the philosophers but was mostly ignored by mainstream literary criticism. In the U.S., Walsh (2007) triggered a "discovery" of the idea of fiction by narratologists.

failure; according to Gottlob Frege's more flexible account, it is not false but indeterminate. But in everyday life we frequently refer to fictional characters, and we intend our statements to say something true: for instance, "John is a real Scrooge"; or "Bill has seduced more women than Don Juan". Moreover, if it were impossible to make true statements about fictional characters, the only criterion of validity for the claims of literary critics would be whether they are provocative enough to excite passions.

Here I will focus my discussion of philosophical approaches on the theory of Amie Thomasson, as developed in her 1999 book *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Thomasson believes that fictional characters can be the target of reference. They must therefore have some mode of existence. But this mode of existence is not the one of concrete, material objects such as people and apples, which are located in space and time, nor the one of purely abstract entities such as numbers or beauty, which exist eternally and cannot be traced back to any specific human creative act. For Thomasson, fictional characters are what she calls "abstract artifacts", and as such they occupy a middle ground between the material and the mental, the concrete and the abstract. Characters are abstract because they do not exist in space and time, but they are artifacts because they depend on literary works, and literary works depend on the concrete existence of authors and books (or other media). "In short, on this view fictional characters are a particular kind of cultural artifact. Like other cultural objects, fictional characters depend on human intentionality for their existence" (Thomasson, 1999: 14). Worth noting in this definition is the claim that characters depend on the intentional act of the author, not on the text itself, as textualists like Barthes would probably claim. If two authors happened to write the same words, unbeknownst to one another, they would produce distinct literary works and different characters. (Jorge Luis Borges played on this idea when he claimed, in his short story, "Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote", that Menard's Quixote is an entirely different work than the one by Cervantes, even though they match word per word.) In Thomasson's view, fictional characters are born through the creative act of the author, they are maintained in existence through the media that make them accessible to readers, and they die when the

last copy of the work, or its memory in a reader's mind, is destroyed. This idea that fictional characters can "die" may seem counterintuitive; is "death" not a phenomenon specific to concrete, material objects? And yet we say that languages die together with their last speaker; why should it be different with characters? If something can die, it means that it once existed.

Through her concept of abstract artifact, Thomasson opposes theories that regard characters as unrealized possibilities. According to these theories, Hamlet could have existed, and the world could contain elves, trolls, and hobbits, as it does in *The Lord of the Rings*. This conception of fictional characters as possible entities is supported by Aristotle's claim that the task of the poet is to show not what is but what could be in accordance with probability and possibility (1996: 16). But there are countless possibilities that have not been textualized. Possibilities exists independently of whether or not somebody thinks of them; therefore, if one takes the view that fictional characters are unactualized possibilities, then authors do not "create" or "invent" characters, but rather "discover" them. Thomasson rejects this idea on the ground that it makes fictional characters independent from the creative acts of authors. Yet if characters do not preexist the text as unactualized possibilities, if they are not "discovered", this raises the question of how they arise in the author's mind. Authors do not create characters *ex-nihilo*; they instead make them up by mentally exploring a field of possibilities, and by selecting some of these possibilities to be realized textually.

An important feature of Thomasson's proposal to keep in mind is that it defines the ontological status of characters from an external point of view — the point of view of the author who inhabits the real world, rather than the point of view of the narrator and characters who are internal to the story. If fictional characters are the product of an act of creation that takes place in space and time, then their properties are entirely determined by this act of creation. And since the author can only imagine and encode a limited number of properties, this means that fictional characters are ontologically incomplete. According to this view, the number of the children of Lady Macbeth, which is unspecified in Shakespeare's tragedy, represents an ontological gap, a hole that cannot be filled in her character, and as the critic Lionel Charles Knights argued as early as 1933, it would be pointless to try

to answer this question. The vast majority of the philosophers and literary critics who have addressed the problem of the nature of fictional characters endorse the idea of their radical incompleteness, for instance Uri Margolin (1990), Thomas Pavel (1986), Lubomír Doležel (1998), Ruth Ronen (1994), and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1980). This incompleteness could be seen as what distinguishes "abstract artifacts" from real persons. But the thesis of incompleteness runs into problems when a member of the real world appears in a novel, for instance Napoleon in *War and Peace*. Should one postulate the existence of a real, ontologically complete Napoleon, as well as of a fictional, incomplete version of the emperor? If these two Napoleons are ontologically so different from each other, how can one explain that, for the reader, they are versions of the same person? Readers of *War and Peace* will imagine the fictional Napoleon as sharing many properties with the real one, even when these properties are not specifically mentioned in the text. For instance, if they try to mentally visualize a battle scene of the novel where Napoleon appears, they are entitled to imagine Napoleon as short, putting his hand in his coat, riding a white horse, and wearing his hat sideways, as shown in the painting by Meissonier. I am not saying that they *have* to imagine him in such details, but rather, that there is nothing wrong in doing so.[9] On the other hand, it would be wrong to imagine Napoleon as looking like Don Quixote.

Thomasson does herself recognize the limitations of a theory that regards incompleteness as a defining ontological feature of fictional characters. She considers the two statements "According to the story, Hamlet is of blood type A" and "According to the story, Hamlet is of blood type B" as both false or indeterminate because Shakespeare's text says nothing about the blood type of Hamlet (Thomasson, 1999: 108). But it does not follow from the negative or indeterminate truth value of these statements that "According to the story, Hamlet is incomplete as to blood type". The reason for the failure of the entailment is that, according to the story, Hamlet is not a fictional character but a regular human being. He is not created by an author but born of a father and mother. And since regular human beings are

[9] This is what I have called the "principle of minimal departure" in Ryan 1991 (chapter 3).

ontologically complete, one must assume that Hamlet is also complete, at least within the story.

The difference between an internal and an external point of view can be illustrated by these two types of statement: "Hamlet is a fictional character who was created by Shakespeare" and "Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark". The second statement can be paraphrased as "According to the story, Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark". By adding the prefix "according to the story", an internal statement can be turned into an external one and receive a positive truth value for the real world. But this operation fails with external statements: we cannot say that "according to the story, Hamlet is a fictional character who was created by Shakespeare".

Thomasson retains an external perspective when she characterizes fictional characters as abstract artifacts, for it is certainly not true that according to Shakespeare's play, "Hamlet is an abstract artifact". In her model, some statements about fictional characters must be prefixed by "in the story" in order to be evaluated as true or false, and others should not. But how do we know which ones should be prefixed and which one should not? An alternative to "externalizing" internal statements with a prefix is to make the contrast between an internal and an external point of view into the cornerstone of a theory of the ontological status of fictional characters. If we replace the prefix "in the story of Hamlet" with "in the world of Hamlet", we can account for the duality of perspective through a theory inspired by the concept of Possible World. It is to this theory that I turn next.

The world approach

David Lewis, a pioneer of Possible Worlds theory who has also made groundbreaking contributions to the theory of fiction, makes the following observation:

> The storyteller purports to be telling the truth about matters whereof he has knowledge. He purports to be talking about characters who are known to him, and whom he refers to, typically, by means of ordinary proper names. But if his story is fiction, he is not really doing these things (Lewis, 1978: 40).

So what is the storyteller doing? He is engaging in an act of pretense or role-playing. And like all acts of pretense, fictional storytelling involves a doubling of world and a doubling of speech acts:

> Here at our world we have a fiction *f*, told in an act *a* of storytelling; at some other world we have an act *a'* of telling the truth about known matters of fact; the stories told in *a* and *a'* match word for word, and the words have the same meaning (Lewis, 1978: 40).

Lewis does not specify who does the two acts of storytelling, but narratology has an easy answer: *a* is the act of the author, *a'* the act of a narrator. The author pretends to be the narrator, who resides in the storyworld, and who presents the characters as real individuals. This means that within the storyworld, characters have the same ontological status as the inhabitants of the real world. But how can the characters be regarded by the reader as actual individuals, when the world they inhabit is not the real world but a non-actual possible world created by the author? To explain this, we must turn to Lewis' indexical conception of actuality and possibility.

Possible Worlds theory is based on the idea that "things could be different than they are". This phrase presupposes a contrast between two worlds, the world where things are "how they are", let's call it the actual or real world, and the world where things are different. But since things could be different from the actual world in many different ways, while things are what they are in only one way, it follows that there is one actual world and many non-actual possible worlds. These possible worlds can be accessed by the mind, either by imagining counterfactual events, or by creating and consuming fictions. The real or actual world could be said to be the only world that has material existence; non-actual possible worlds, including those of fictions, have only a mental existence. This is the most common-sensical conception of possible worlds, and it preserves an ontological distinction between fictional characters and real persons. But this is not how Lewis envisions the nature of possible worlds. For him, possible worlds exist objectively, and there is no ontological distinction between the actual world and merely possible ones: both kinds are made of the same substance, that is, of material things and events. This position is known as "modal realism". As Lewis writes,

> Our actual world is only one world among others. We call it actual not because it differs in kind from all the rest but because it is the world we inhabit. The inhabitants of other worlds may truly call their own world actual, if they mean by 'actual' what we do; for the meaning we give to 'actual' is such that it refers at any world *i* to the world *i* itself. 'Actual' is indexical, like 'I' or 'here', or 'now': it depends for its reference on the circumstances of utterance, to wit the world where the utterance is located (Lewis, 1979: 184).

Lewis' idea that all possible worlds exist objectively may be difficult to accept, but it works very well for fictional worlds and their inhabitants. If "actual" is indexical, fictional characters are actual, embodied and ontologically complete individuals from the point of view of the fictional world. But from the point of view of our actual world, they are the abstract artifacts that Thomasson describes. By referring to the characters as if they were real persons, and by describing their world as real, the fictional text invites readers to transport themselves in imagination into the fictional world, and to adopt the point of view of one of its members. I have called this mental transportation "recentering" (Ryan, 1991: 18 ff.) and I regard it as essential to the experience of immersion in a storyworld.

The world account has multiple advantages. Among them:

- The dual perspective makes it possible to take both the author and the narrator into consideration. The textualist perspective of Barthes eliminates both author and narrator, while the philosophical perspective of Thomasson takes the point of view of the author. Here, characters are both made up creatures from the point of view of the author, and individuals who exist independently of the text from the point of view of the narrator. Their story is invented from the point of view of the author, but it is told as true fact from the point of view of the narrator.

- Because storyworlds can be contemplated from both an inside perspective and an outside perspective — the perspective of the real world — the world model allows users to move back-and-forth between these two perspectives, and it explains how characters can be regarded as both human beings and as textual constructs.

James Phelan (1989) has identified three so-called "functions" that characters can fulfill: the mimetic function (passing as a person), the synthetic function (reminding the reader that it is fabricated), and the thematic function (standing for an idea). The mimetic function represents the internal perspective, while the synthetic and the thematic functions represent the external perspective.

- The world-model solves the problem of the presence of actual individuals such as Napoleon in fictional texts. If things could be different from what they are, as Possible Worlds theory tells us, there are worlds where Napoleon has different properties than the Napoleon of the actual world, for instance worlds where he wins the battle of Waterloo, and worlds where he interacts with the heroes of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The difference between Napoleon and Natasha is that Napoleon exists in both our actual world and in the world of *War and Peace*, while Natasha does not exist in our actual world. But within the world of *War and Peace*, they share the same ontological status.

- If real individuals can have counterparts in different worlds, so can purely fictional individuals. This explains the practice of transfictionality (Saint-Gelais, 2011), or the phenomenon of fan fiction, which consists of writing stories that change some of the features of fictional characters and place them in different worlds, but maintain a connection with the original manifestation of the character. Authors can also expand preexisting fictional worlds, for instance by writing new stories about a character that fully respect the original properties of this character.

- The world approach does not limit characterhood to human beings. The field of the possible is very vast, and we can imagine worlds with species entirely different from those of our world: species such as dragons, elves, fairies, witches, talking animals, Martians and robots smarter than humans. All it takes to turn members of these species into characters is to give them distinctive mental attributes and cognitive abilities that turn them into agents, abilities such as free will, desires, and self-consciousness.

- By ascribing to characters the same ontological status within their world as to human beings within our world, the world-model easily explains emotional reactions toward characters, such as empathy or intense dislike. We cry for Little Nell not because she represents an abstraction, as Richard Walsh has suggested (2007, chapter 8), but because we transport ourselves by imagination into a world where she exists as an innocent little girl who suffers undeserved hardship and dies an early death.

As we can see from this list of advantages, the world approach explains a phenomenon that neither the textual nor the philosophical approach are trying to address. This phenomenon is the reader's *experience* of characters, or, in other words, the *behavior* of readers with respect to characters. The textual approach assumed an external perspective; it asked how readers assemble characters out of scattered information, and it warned them against mistaking these textual constructs for persons. The philosophical approach was concerned with the possibility to make true or false statements about entities that do not exist in space and time, and it asked about the mode of being of these entities. This is not the kind of question that readers normally ask. The strength of the world approach lies in its ability to deal with behaviors that the textual approach regards as unworthy of an aesthetic appreciation of literature and ones that the philosophical approach regards as outside its field of expertise. By allowing a dual perspective, both internal and external, the world approach explains: how characters can be experienced as both persons existing autonomously and as textual creations; how characters can both appear to act of their own free will and be used to represent certain themes and ideas; how characters are both tied to their world and able to migrate to other texts and other worlds; and, last but not least, how readers can cry for characters while fully enjoying their crying, for unlike Don Quixote, readers are aware that characters are not real people.

But what about characters that are not "possible persons", because their properties are self-contradictory, because they lack the cognitive abilities that make it possible to interpret their gestures as meaningful actions, because they are flat allegories lacking any human substance, because they regard themselves as fictional and not real, or because they present ontological gaps that cannot be regarded as missing information

(I view the characters of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as embodying this kind of radical incompleteness)? In his work on "unnatural narrative", Brian Richardson (2015) has presented many examples of characters who lack the dimension of personhood. The textual approach has no problem with them; they are just collections of semes gathered around a name, a pronoun, or an actor's body in theatre and film. The philosophical approach makes no categorial distinction among characters: they are all abstract artifacts created by authors. Can the world approach deal with such creations and distinguish them from fully developed characters? I see two ways of approaching this problem.

First, we could say that characters lacking the status of possible persons are entities that block the world-internal perspective and limit the reader to the external stance. Blocking the world-internal perspective means preventing the imagination from filling up these characters with anthropomorphic substance and forcing awareness of their synthetic or made-up nature. The only operations left to the reader are asking what abstract idea the characters are supposed to represent and how they contribute to the global organization of the text. The more strongly a character represents a theme or idea, the weaker his status as a person and his perceived autonomy: allegorical figures are the puppets of the author, not creatures acting out of free will. Can one still call these creations characters? Only if one defines "characters" as the referents of proper names in a fictional text.

A second approach would consist of retaining a conception of characters as possible persons, and of denying some of the referents of proper names the full status of characters. There is no reason why every fictional text should create something worth calling a world; similarly, there is no reason why every fictional text should tell a fully developed story that involves individuated and ontologically complete persons. Characterhood, worldness and narrativity are not binary features but scalar properties of the mental representations elicited by texts: there are texts of low narrativity (Ryan, 2007), there are texts whose semantic content does not really congeal into a world because it lacks logical coherence, and there are referents of proper names which lack individuating and mental human substance. If there is such a thing as an "unnatural character", it is not a fantastic creature representing a species that cannot be found in the real world, it is an entity that is not fully realized as a person, that

appears in a text of low worldness and narrativity, and that belongs to the margins of the fuzzy set of characters. Figure 1 represents the various degrees of characterhood. On the outside are those characters who have no proper name, who are ontologically incomplete, who embody contradictory properties, who have no stable identity, who are mentioned but do not appear on the narrative scene (cf. Godot), or who exist only as unrealized possibilities, such as the wife that Frankenstein did not make for his monster. At the center of the fuzzy set are Don Quixote, Elizabeth Bennet, Mr Darcy and the *Star Wars* cast. These are characters who have inspired intense transfictional activity, such as transmedial adaptations, fan fiction, prequels, sequels and transpositions. (As Darth Vader shows, they do not have to be possible members of the real world.) But Hamlet and Emma Bovary, Sherlock Holmes and Little Nell, Donald Duck and Tintin also belong in this inner circle, because the fullest of characters are those that speak so strongly to the imagination that they live beyond their text.

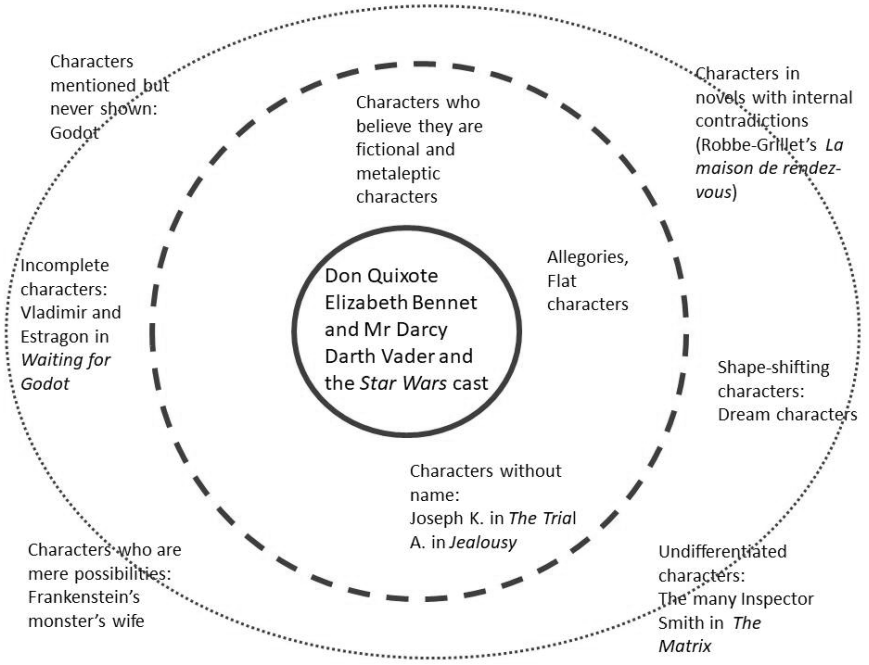

Figure 1. Degrees of characterhood

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2. UNNATURAL CHARACTERS[1]

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Although character theory has existed since the time of Aristotle, antimimetic characters, which have been around since before Aristotle, still need to be adequately comprehended by narrative and dramatic theory. For the most part, character theory has been dominated by a substantially mimetic sensibility that sees characters as largely or entirely like persons; in the words of Baruch Hochman, "both characters and people are apprehended in someone's consciousness, and they are apprehended in approximately the same terms" (Hochman, 1985: 7). Many characters, from those of Aristophanes to Bugs Bunny, fail to fit this description; these figures in fact violate the humanistic concept of a person. In the seventies and eighties there was a period during which non- and antimimetic characters were acknowledged and begun to be theorized. Roland Barthes considered characters to be "paper beings" (Barthes, 1977: 111) and argued that it is wrong to take the character "off the page in order to turn him into a psychological character (endowed with possible motives)" (Barthes, 1974: 178). During the next twenty years, a number of other theorists explored the possibilities of non- or antimimetic characters; these included Joel Weinsheimer (1979), Thomas Docherty (1983), James Phelan (1989),

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[1] This article is based on "Unnatural Characters in Fiction, Drama, and Popular Culture: Beyond the Humanist Paradigm", in Jan Alber and Brian Richardson (eds.), *Unnatural Narratology: Extensions, Revisions, and Challenges*, Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2019. I wish to thank Jan Alber, James Phelan, and Peter Rabinowitz for providing many insightful comments and important suggestions on earlier versions of this essay; they are greatly appreciated.

Aleide Fokkema (1991) and, more recently, John Frow (2014). Now, however, these important advances are often being ignored as the older mimetic bias seems to be returning to the critical scene, led by cognitivist and mind-oriented narratologists like Maria Bortolussi and Peter Dixon (2003), Richard J. Gerrig and David W. Allbritton (1990), Ralf Schneider (2001), and David Herman (2012).[2] In a recent text, Herman returns to the humanist position articulated by Hochman, affirming that literary characters are "more or less prototypical members of the category 'persons'" (Herman, 2012: 125) and again: "characters in novels can be viewed as *model persons*; these fictional individuals are at once shaped by and have the power to reshape broader conceptions of what a person is and of how persons can be expected to respond in particular kinds of circumstances" (Herman, 2012: 127).[3] Such a stance necessarily ignores all the many characters that are significantly different from persons and may even preclude a theoretical treatment of such entities.[4]

The stakes, then, are significant; this essay will attempt to expose the limitations of overly narrow theoretical approaches, draw attention to unnatural characters in a number of genres and media, and suggest a more adequate theoretical model to encompass them. I define unnatural characters as figures that contain antimimetic features that defy the realm of human possibilities and elude conventional types; they are, in fact, impossible persons. It is important to understand these more fully. I will begin by identifying five types of unnatural or impossible characters: 1) incomplete or contradictory

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[2] Gerrig and Allbritton (1990), analyzing James Bond, do note some distinctively fictional aspects of the novels such as their formulaic construction, but stress the ways in which readers ignore those features and respond to the characters as if they were people.

[3] For a critique of rhetorical and cognitivist positions, see Richardson (2012: 238-40).

[4] There is nothing inherent in cognitive approaches to narrative that demands that characters be treated as persons; it is the limited application of the theory and not the theory itself that I am criticizing here. Jan Alber (2016: 104-48) and H. Porter Abbott (2013: 123-30) have shown how cognitive theory can be effectively employed in the analysis of unnatural figures and texts. One hopes that more cognitivist research will help explain how the mind processes robustly unnatural characters when it encounters them.

figures and impossible fusions of multiple persons, 2) multiple versions of the same individual, 3) parodic *personae*, 4) fabricated entities, and 5) metacharacters, or characters who know that they are fictional beings. Particular attention will be drawn to this last type, which has not been adequately theorized.

Five Ways of Being Unnatural

I consider unnatural characters to be not merely impossible beings, but beings that violate or parody the conventions of realism. These are *anti*mimetic figures, to be distinguished from the merely *non*mimetic figures such as talking animals or flying horses or other conventional types found in standard works of fantasy and common fairy tales.[5] I wish to clarify at the outset that what I call an unnatural character need not (and probably cannot) be antimimetic in *all* aspects, but only in enough to make them humanly impossible. Many of the examples below will be perfectly human except for a single, major antimimetic element, such as the fact that they know themselves to be fictional characters.

1. Imperfectly Human Characters

Numerous postmodern characters demonstrate their unnaturalness by having too few consistent attributes to render themselves as human-like personages, or they have too many contradictory features to plausibly form a single character, or they may be a fusion of two or more individuals. Still others may have many of the right traits but in the wrong combination.

Too few traits. The theater offers prominent examples of characters so minimally human that they do not constitute represented persons at all. Tristan Tzara's 1921 Dadaist play, "Le cœur à gaz" ("The Gas Heart") is limited to six figures: Eye, Mouth, Nose, Ear, Neck, and

[5] By "convention" I mean a widely and easily recognized pattern that has been utilized thousands of times over many years.

Eyebrow. They exchange nonsensical comments and show no discernible identities as persons or as body parts. Beckett's drama "Quad" (1981) deconstructs character altogether, presenting four actors or "players", as alike as possible, their gender unimportant, each of whom paces in a straight line along fixed trajectories. There is no speech, no individualization, and no characterization. Perhaps the most radical form of antihumanist presentation occurs in Peter Handke's 1966 *Sprechstück* "Publikumsbeschimpfung" ("Offending the Audience"). His actors face the audience and state: "We don't tell you a story. We don't perform any actions. We don't represent anything. We don't put anything on for you. We only speak" (Handke, 1975: 9). Thomas Docherty (1983: 28-42), Aleide Fokkema (1991: 57-71), and others have discussed such deliberately "incomplete" *personae*. As Fokkema notes, "terms like 'cipher,' 'figure' or — the most striking metaphor — 'cartoon,' imply that characters in postmodern works lack the manifestations of a 'self' which are crucial for representation. Such terms are based on the traditional concept of character, which ought to be 'round,' rich, and particular" (Fokkema, 1991: 60).

Contradictory characters. Other characters have an impossible number of contradictory attributes. In Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Maison de Rendez-vous*, Édouard Manneret, like most of the other characters, is depicted in numerous impossible ways. Like the other figures in the novel, he is more a comic book type figure than a human personality. He has no psychology to speak of, and his actions are contradictory. As Ilona Leki observes, "Manneret is alternately a drug dealer, a dealer in the slave trade, a writer, an artist, or a doctor experimenting with various drugs on Kim, who is perhaps his daughter" (Leki, 1983: 83). He also dies several times in the book, always in a different way. He has no personality but is little more than a series of incompatible narrative functions, sometimes the murder victim, sometimes the killer, etc. In the end, he has little more than contradictory attributes predicated of a name. Other characters in the novel do not even have this stability; the young European woman, for example, is alternately identified as Lauren, Loren, Loraine, or Laura.

An even more extreme example of multiple, discrete entities presented as a single character is found in Martin Crimp's audacious play, *Attempts on Her Life: 17 Scenarios for the Theatre* (1997). Crimp

doesn't merely refuse to provide a single, consistent self-identity; his play challenges the very idea of individual identity by depicting a series of discourses about a woman (or several women) named Anne, or Anya, Annie, or some other variant. They are presented as different people with different life stories in different situations: the girl next door, a performance artist, a rich woman, a terrorist, a scientist, a porno actress, a character in a script, even a new make of car (the Anny, naturally). In a revealing comment on one of her performance art pieces, a voice notes: "She says she's not a real character like you get in a book or on TV, but a *lack* of character, an *absence* she calls it, doesn't she, of character" (Crimp, 1997: 25).

This work cannot, however, be dismissed as a mere collection of unconnected vignettes. There are several strategies, beginning with the drama's title, that invite the audience to bring many of these disparate stories into a plot and thereby partially unify its fragmented subject. These include the many, seemingly contradictory messages that are received by Anne's answering machine in the play's first scene which prefigure the story fragments presented in many of the subsequent scenes.

Similarly, many details recur from one scene to another that suggest a closer connection than mere random association. Warfare, international travel, ashtrays, affairs with married men, terrorism, and repeated imprecations appear to connect various scenes. By the end of the play, we have no resolution and the central question for narrative theorists (as well as spectators) remains: is there a single story about a single figure capable of embracing the entire work, or are there simply seventeen independent stories about different women? The work itself simultaneously advances and precludes both positions. One may read it allegorically or metadramatically, as a critique of the concepts of a fixed, stable character, or as an account of the ways in which subjectivity is constructed by the self-interested discourse that surrounds it. The work itself offers yet another interpretive option. The penultimate scene, in which a pornographic film is being prepared, suggests a number of correspondences between the fictional film and the play itself: "Of course there's no *story* to speak of… Or characters… Certainly not in the conventional sense" (Crimp, 1997: 65-66). After her period of work, the voices suggest that the porno actress

could go on to be a number of things, including a model, a painter, swimmer, chemical engineer, humanitarian, psychologist, writer, and so on (Crimp, 1997: 69-71). Building on this suggestion, one might be tempted to interpret the various Annes and Annies of the play as potential characters that one woman might assume during the course of her life; all would be aspects of a single, potential *fabula*, variants of which we are on the process of observing. Such an interpretation, however, merely assuages some audiences' desires for a mimetic, humanistic recuperation as it does violence to the irreducible heterogeneity of the multiples Annies of the work. It both is and is not a single individual.

Inhuman Combinations of Human Traits. Just such an impossible entity appears in Maya Sonenberg's "Nature Morte", the story of the first cubist child, a baby born to an unwed mother from Avignon in 1911. Visually, he is odd: "He was flat, or no, just when you saw him from the side or back. He looked real skinny then, but from the front, well, it was almost as if you could see all of him" (Sonenberg, 1989: 36). The other boys don't want him to play baseball with them since if he manages to hit the ball, "it seems like before he's even started to run, he's back at home plate" (Sonenberg, 1989: 40). His relationships to space and time are skewed. The boy's "world is solid. He breathes in space that solidifies as it approaches. His body forms planes of space and flesh that adhere to the walls, to the window panes, and to the floorboards" (Sonenberg, 1989: 40-41). Though his body seems to lack a third dimension, his mind transcends all three: he is even able to watch his own birth (Sonenberg, 1989: 41). Surely, figures like these need to be conceptualized in any theory of fictional characters.

2. Multiple Individuals

We may also note cases in which the same character is multiplied. In Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz' *The Madman and the Nun*, Walpurg, the protagonist, hangs himself at the end of the first scene of the third act. As his corpse is being carried away, he reenters the stage. There are thus two Walpurgs present at the same time. His lover tries to understand

the scene before her: "Darling! Is it really you? And what's that? (*She points at the corpse.*) O — what does it matter, I'm so happy I'll probably go mad" (Witkiewicz, 1968: 30).

In "August 25, 1983" (1983), Borges has constructed a fiction in which his sixty-one-year-old self appears to slip through time and stumbles upon his much older self. Borges makes the most of these logically impossible incongruities:

> There, in the narrow iron bed — older, withered, and very pale — lay I, on my back, my eyes turned up vacantly toward the high plaster moldings of the ceiling. Then I heard the voice. It was not exactly my own; it was the one I often hear in my recordings, unpleasant and without modulation. "How odd", it was saying, "we are two yet we are one" (Borges, 1998: 489-490).

3. Parodic Characters

While mildly parodic characters may merely draw attention to a quirk in a character's behavior, more extreme parodic figures are antimimetic if they expose the lack of realism of an author, school, or genre. In showing how artificial or unlifelike an earlier author's character is, the parodic figure is thus necessarily an unnatural, antimimetic figure. The characters of parodic works do not particularly resemble human beings, and analyses of the motives and behavior of people will not be of much help in explaining the actions of these figures. They are instead responses to antecedent texts, texts that may well have been selected for critique because of their perceived failures of verisimilitude. Such characters and events may trace their own, antimimetic patterns as well.

For an extreme case of second- or even third-degree parody, we may turn to Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (1974). Most of its action takes place within the wayward memory of the aged Henry Carr — which is itself an unrealistic, postmodern representation of memory. He also has other eccentricities, such as a highly stereotyped image of James Joyce, whom he knew in Zürich in 1917. Thus many of Joyce's speeches are trivial; often they are presented in the form of limericks. As "Joyce" says when he appears on stage:

Top o' the morning! — James Joyce!
I hope you'll allow me to voice
my regrets in advance
for coming on the off-chance —
b'jasus I hadn't much choice! (Stoppard, 1975: 33)

At one point, Carr seems to guess that which he should not be able to know — that limericks are being spoken by the characters around him in order to represent his confused understanding — when he asks the character Joyce, without any plausible realistic motivation, whether he comes from Limerick (Stoppard, 1975: 33). Some quotations from *Ulysses* (which Joyce was writing at the time) are worked into the dialogue. Aspects of Dada are likewise spoofed in the figure and speech of Tristan Tzara. In addition, the often misremembered events of Carr's past merge with the plot of *The Importance of Being Earnest*; the play and the characters increasingly turn into those of Wilde's. It is only by appreciating the major literary intertexts behind this work that we can comprehend the figures of this play. The characters are not drawn from life, but from books, and in this case it is a genealogy very little mediated by any pretensions to mimeticism.

4. Fabricated Entities

Another category is what I will call fabricated entities, that is, fictional entities that are not found in the real world or in established genres and are not readily reducible to conventionalizing formulas. To some extent this is a flexible and even, at times, an imprecise category; its boundaries are fluid and different readers will perceive and assess the constructed nature of such entities differently. A compelling example is Gregor Samsa from *Die Verwandlung (The Metamorphosis)*. He is, simultaneously and impossibly, both a giant insect and a conscious human being, and this particular mix cannot be reduced to or explained by the conventions of science fiction, fantasy, or the character's dreaming (see Iversen, 2013: 96-98). Caryl Churchill's *Skriker* is another central example. The figure is an extremely creative preternatural being only very loosely based on a traditional malevolent fairy; her language is extraordinarily playful and

employs aural and thematic associations as it dips in and around standard English: "When did they do what they're told tolled a bell a knell, well ding dong pussy's in. Tell them one thing not to do, thing to rue won't they do it, boo hoo's afraid of the pig bag. Open Bluebeard's one bloody chamber maid, eat the one forbidden fruit of the tree top down comes cradle and baby" (Churchill, 1998: 245).

Additional such specimens include John Barth's sentient spermatozoon in "Night-Sea Journey" (1968), Ian McEwan's sophisticated, cunning fetus in *Nutshell* (2016), and Marie Darrieussecq woman transformed into a pig in her widely discussed novel, *Truismes* (1996).

5. Metafictional Characters

Some of the most interesting and most insistently fictional characters are those who know that they are fictional beings; despite their prevalence over the past century, these entities still have not been adequately theorized. Brian McHale is one of the few theorists to have discussed this kind of character (McHale, 1987: 121-24). He importantly differentiates the degree of the characters' awareness of their fictional status, a knowledge that is crucial to their identity and to our responses to their situations. The *locus classicus* of this type is Pirandello's 1921 drama, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, in which the characters show up at a theater and ask for an author to complete their story. They state that they were born characters; as the Father says: "one is born to life in many forms, in many shapes, as tree, or as stone, as water, as butterfly, or as woman. So one may also be born a character in a play" (Pirandello, 1952: 217). Another early example appears in "A Character", in Felipe Alfau's story collection, *Locos* (1936). Here, a character not only escapes from his author, but vies with him to narrate his life along a different trajectory. The narrator begins, "The story I intend to write is a story which I have had in mind for some time. However, the rebellious qualities of my characters have prevented me from writing it" (Alfau, 1990: 19). After writing the first sentence that names the character, the narrator is distracted. At this point the character takes over: "Now that my author has set me on paper and given me a body and a start, I shall proceed with the story and tell it in my own words" (Alfau, 1990: 20).

Along with Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), which has received considerable critical attention, perhaps the most elaborate play with fictional characters is found in Raymond Queneau's *Le vol d'Icare* (1968). The plot begins as the novelist Hubert notices that his central character, Icarus, is missing. A few days earlier, another novelist had read the first few pages of the manuscript and praised the character; Hubert goes directly to his home to determine whether he has stolen him. But Icarus is not there, neither under a pseudonym nor under a different identity. He is in fact in a tavern, learning how to be a person in *fin de siècle* Paris. He doesn't know much, being only "ten or fifteen pages old" (Queneau, 1973: 18). He further suspects Hubert will not easily be able to substitute another personage for him, since he feels he is irreplaceable (Queneau, 1973: 41).

This proves to be the case. Hubert acknowledges that although he could continue with some of the other characters, he is fond of Icarus and will not proceed without him. He laments the fate of a novelist without characters, and goes on to speculate "perhaps that is how it will be for all of us, one day. We won't have any more characters. We shall become authors in search of characters. The novel will perhaps not be dead, but it won't have characters in it any more. Difficult to imagine" (Queneau, 1973: 60) though this is exactly what many authors of *Nouveaux Romans* were doing at the time Queneau's book was being written.

As the narrative progresses, more characters escape from other authors. Adelaide, the character that Icarus was intended to be united with, vanishes from Hubert's novel along with her father in order to find him. Eventually, however, both wind up in the pages of a rival writer. Icarus even offers to go back to Hubert if the novelist is willing to make a number of changes in his plot concerning his future love life. Hubert refuses; he has abandoned the novel and is writing a new one with more docile characters. At the end, he changes his mind, and goes to find Icarus. The character is now piloting an early airplane; he takes it higher and higher. Finally he loses control and the plane crashes. The character meets his end. Hubert's last words, however, enthusiastically state: "Everything happened as was anticipated: my novel is finished" (Queneau, 1973: 192). Icarus' life, Hubert's novel, and Queneau's book conclude simultaneously.

A poignant version of this general situation occurs in Marc Foster's film, *Stranger than Fiction* (2006). Harold Crick, the protagonist, hears a voice that narrates the events of his life as he is experiencing them. Later, Crick hears the voice say that he is to die; he shouts to the heavens, "This isn't a story to me; it's my life. And I want to live!" as the difference between person and character is vividly underscored. He subsequently visits the novelist to plead for his existence; instead of assenting, she gives him a copy of the novel to read. It will clearly be her masterpiece. When he has finished reading it, he becomes resigned, agreeing that as a work of literature, it is necessary for the protagonist to die. Never before in the history of literature has a character agreed to give up his life for art.

This scene points to a distinctive aspect of the most affecting situation involving metacharacters: the drama of their discovery of their fictionality and its mortal consequences. Brian McHale has suggested that the degree of their self-knowledge is especially significant (McHale, 1987: 121); he further notes that some characters, "confronted with the evidence of their own fictionality, fail to draw the obvious conclusion; they hear their master's voice — sometimes literally — but without recognizing it" (McHale, 1987: 121-122) and provides examples of such misrecognition in works by Gabriel Josipovici, Nabokov (*Transparent Things*), Alasdair Gray, and John Barth. I suggest that the transformation of their awareness is still more compelling, as can be seen in the example above from Marc Foster's film.

McHale writes that "a character's knowledge of his own fictionality often functions as a kind of master-trope for determinism — cultural, historical, psychological determinism, but especially the inevitability of death" (McHale, 1987: 123). One might well argue the opposite — that it suggests a possible freedom from these determinisms, as is the case of characters who escape from their creators or convince them to spare their lives. In any event, the appropriate analogues to actual human experience are partial or tenuous; we don't normally worry whether we are literally the invention of someone else.[6] The trope of

[6] McHale observes that Rose, from Muriel Spark's *The Comforters* (1957), "hears voices, and even a typewriter at work, but cannot convince herself that she is merely undergoing a nervous breakdown" (McHale, 1987: 122). It may be noted that Crick's general situation often resembles that of Rose.

death, explicitly invoked by metafictional characters since Miguel de Unamuno's protagonist in *Niebla* (1914), further underscores the difference between people and characters: the characters are conscious of their own fictionality and thus able to be conscious of the dual nature of their existence, both as a human-like figure and as a fictional creation. They personify the two-fold nature of all fictional characters, existing as both fictional construct and mimetic representation.

Perhaps the most important relations are the negotiations between the ostensibly realistic and avowedly fictional characters in these works. Paradoxically, many of the metacharacters (other than Alfau's and, to some extent, Queneau's) are presented through a fairly realistic characterization; other than their ontological status, they often substantially resemble the "real" characters around them; Pirandello's characters frequently critique the inadequate performances of the actors who impersonate them. Despite the fact that, from the standpoint of the real world, both the fictional figure of the author and the character who is created by and escapes from him or her are equally fictitious, we are intrigued by such cross-world transgressions, their status, duration, extent, and number. A character's moment of discovery of his or her fictional status is always important, and the response to this discovery is typically dramatic if not climactic. We are concerned whether the protagonists successfully escape to live undiscovered among "real" people, or whether they are able to persuade their creators to spare their lives. Above all, audiences are concerned to learn whether the metaleptic rupture is closed, and all figures return to their "natural" plane of existence within the fictional world. In these cases, we find an unexpected situation in which metalepsis does not distance but rather helps us identify with the characters. Paradoxically, however, in order to maintain the possibility of empathy, metafictional characters need to resemble their "real" counterparts in most ways: we won't care about Crick's fate if he were to simply shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, after all I'm only a character. Maybe my creator will reincarnate me in into a better entity in her next book". Metafictional characters, in some respects the most antirealistic of *personae*, nevertheless produce significant affective results through displaced mimetic behavior.

Many different genres include works that present characters who are aware of their own fictionality. These include the frame-breaking

techniques of Aristophanic comedy, animated cartoons (especially the Looney Tunes features), popular films such as the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby "road" movies of the 1940's and 1950's, Monty Python films, some hyperfiction, and many comics. Karin Kukkonen describes one such figure, Splash Branigan, from *Tomorrow Stories*: he "is an anthropomorphic, sentient, and opinionated blob of the ink used in the production of comics" (Kukkonen, 2013: 107), a figure that regularly moves between storyworlds and narrative levels by climbing in and out of the blob itself — a variant of which is also found in other comics.

Conclusion

The numerous unnatural examples discussed above exist across genres and media, stretch for two and a half millennia, and range from the most austere to the most popular forms. I hope it is obvious that any theory of character that ignores all such figures is significantly impoverished and clearly incomplete. In particular, unnatural characters largely defy mimetic recuperation and generally elude essentially mimetic theories of character. We can only view as inaccurate statements like: "even though literary characters and real people are ontologically distinct, they are processed in much the same way. In other words, literary characters are processed *as if* they were real people, and real people are processed in terms analogous to the categories brought to bear on the interpretation of literary characters" (Bortolussi and Dixon, 2003: 140). This claim may be plausible for most realistic characters as well as for certain characters in fantasy or science fiction, but is simply not true of the characters discussed above, in particular the metacharacters who know themselves to be fictional characters. As the narrator of Alfau's story "Character" affirms, "a character is entirely the opposite of a real being, although it is sometimes our business to try to convince the reader to the contrary" (Alfau, 1990: 27). Humanists and cognitivists with overly simple theoretical models of character need to account for statements and characters like this. There is nothing wrong about a mimetic theory of character; we need a theory that can identify distinctively mimetic components, though I hasten to add we also need to be skeptical about ideological fictions or generic clichés masking as mimetic representations — many

realist works are not nearly as realistic as they pretend to be. The main problem arises when theorists falsely claim that a merely mimetic theory is in fact a theory of fictional characters, when it is, at best, merely half of such a theory.

The implications of this essay are straightforward: any plausible theory of character must include two very different components: one for characters and aspects of characters that resemble or imitate human beings, and another for aspects of characters who resist, defy, transgress, or reconstruct identities in ways that move far beyond realist or humanist models. The type of dual model offered by Joel Weinsheimer (1979) remains an excellent starting point: characters can resemble people, but they are also verbal constructs that may have little or no grounding in actual human behavior — and are interesting for that very reason. Discussing the limitations of either of these positions taken in isolation, John Frow asks "how can we understand fictional character both as a formal construct, made out of words or images and having a fully textual existence, and as a set of effects which are modeled on the form of the human person?" (Frow, 2014: v1).[7]

Antimimetic characters represent an extreme and transparent kind of exclusively fictional entity and as such they have often been ignored by theorists pursuing a primarily mimetic approach. The two perspectives are necessary both for a comprehensive theory of character. The introduction of antimimetic aspects may occur at the beginning and then be laid aside, as they are in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*; they may start at the beginning and continue throughout the text, as in Beckett's *The Unnamable*; they may appear at the end of an otherwise realistic presentation of characters, such as the personification of the author who appears late in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and goes on to provide multiple incompatible endings; or the characters may be largely mimetic but situated within entirely antimimetic sequences of events, as in Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" (1969). This is only to say

[7] This general position has been vigorously argued for from a rather different approach by Julian Murphet (2007). Catherine Gallagher traces a form of this difference back to the Renaissance in her chapter, "The Rise of Fictionality" (Gallagher, 2006: 350-354). Her analysis suggests that there are a number of neglected though excellent members to be added to the class of unnatural characters.

that some characters are born unnatural, some achieve unnaturalness, and some have the unnatural thrust upon them.

I believe that a thorough account of character needs to go still further: a tripartite theory, like that of James Phelan's, which promotes mimetic, synthetic, and thematic aspects of character, is particularly useful (Phelan, 1989: 1-14). Phelan's synthetic component includes exclusively textual aspects of character, as well as functional aspects that are required by the logic of the narrative. I would like to see this aspect expanded to its full capacity to include the unnatural examples I have assembled above. My preferred model would also include an intertextual component for works that rewrite earlier texts. It seems evident that a character may be derived from lived experience, personify an idea, exist as an artistic creation, or revive a character from an earlier work.[8] And it goes without saying that many characters perform several of these functions at the same time. This then is the kind of comprehensive model we need to do justice to the great variety of characters in fictional narratives.

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[8] For a fuller outline of this position, see Richardson (2012: 132-138).

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3. FIGURE, PERSON, FIGURATION

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1. At the beginning of his essay entitled "Tell me a Story: The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences", Martin Kreiswirth affirms:

> As anyone aware of the current intellectual scene has probably noticed, there has recently been a virtual explosion of interest in narrative and in theorizing about narrative; and it has been detonated from a remarkable diversity of sites, both within and beyond the walls of academia. Along with progressively more sophisticated and wide-ranging studies of narrative texts — historiographic, literary, cinematic, psychoanalytic — we find a burgeoning development of disciplinary appropriations or mediations: narrative and psychology, narrative and economics, narrative and experimental science, narrative and law, narrative and education, narrative and philosophy, narrative and ethnography, and so on, as well as numerous, newly negotiated cross-disciplinary approaches (Kreiswirth, 1995: 61).

The citation is long, but necessary, to substantiate what I intend to do. However, before revealing this, I must remark how Kreiswirth's words directly following the above excerpt lay before us a series of questions: "Why? Why narrative? And, more particularly, why narrative now? Why have we decided to heed the story, to trust the tale? And what does this say about how we define, talk about, and organize knowledge?" (Kreiswirth, 1995: 61).

I will not at the moment attempt to respond to these questions, formulated in an article in 1992 and published in a book in 1995 (cf. Kreiswirth and Carmichael, 1995). I will only note how they refer to relevant epistemological themes, specifically those suggesting two

important development paths: firstly, there are those questions which were the clear harbingers of the constitution and plural unfolding of the vast discipline that more than twenty years later we call narrative studies. Secondly, it was Kreiswirth who alerted us to the urgency and also to the responsibility of narrative theory and narrative theoretization, inevitably correlated with the disciplines mentioned in the citation above, and impregnated, all of them, by the knowledge of the narrative, by its heuristic potential, and by its analytical dynamics.

2. This is what I am thinking about, first and foremost, when I find myself contemplating the notions of *figure*, *person*, and *figuration*. And from the outset, this comes with a caveat that may also serve as a critique, if such is justified: it is not enough to adopt new terms to gain new competences and direct access to a certain theoretical domain, benefitting one's methodological gains and operative instruments. In other words: those who in the past said *character* and now say *figure*, or those who wrote *characterization* after having erased this apparently obsolete term and now opt for *figuration*, are not, by way of a magical change in terminology, enjoying greater access to new knowledge. Unfortunately, the command of "Open Sesame" from the famous story is of little service here as this is not some kind of treasure that is discovered only by the power afforded by some miraculous expression.

The "founding father" of narratology, Gérard Genette, articulated the essence of this when he coined new terms for new concepts (heterodiegetic or focalization, for example) or when he readjusted already existing concepts aided by new terms (analepsis or prolepsis). But Genette himself retained concepts that were already in use (narrator and narratee) when this remained pertinent within an internally coherent scientific and logical framework. And by the way: I still remember when the term *intertextuality*, which coincided more or less with the Genettian revolution, arrived to soothe the consciences of those fleeing (with poorly disguised haste) from the demons of *influence*…

We are no longer living in those times, as is well known. Carried off by the change in the winds that has touched narrative theory in its passage from the twentieth century to the present day, we have forged not only new terms but also correlated concepts which afford consistency to the so-called "narrativist turn in the human sciences" (Kreiswirth). With

these concepts we have arrived at modes of approaching narrative texts anchored in epistemological attitudes appropriate to that shift; the triad of interdisciplinarity, transnarrativity, and contextuality should be regarded as an affirmation of principles, and with them, as a belief in the capacity of narrative studies to reach ideological and identity-based, feminist, post-colonial, ethnic, and cultural themes (cf. Nünning, 2009: 48-53).

3. This is no novel statement, but I should nevertheless like to raise it at this time. The theoretic endeavour that we are undertaking, in this and in other fields of consideration, can be (and I believe is) abundantly aided by the writer's own words. It is not what they teach us through the "illuminated" revelation of an ill-prepared interview, what we must ascertain and extract by study and reflection; instead, when the writer's voice brings with it the long years and extensive labour of literary creation, it alerts us, at times in an indirect way, to what interests us to know. It is from this notion — I should say: this winding and honourably shared knowledge — that I give an example as it helps me to speak about what I wish to draw out.

In an interview recorded in 1997, the novelist José Saramago answered a question, unavoidable and often repeated in similar circumstances: "How does a character appear to you?" In addition: "Your experience of the world, looking at people's faces, at a passer-by in the street" is this "important for constructing a character?" And Saramago's response:

> No, it's not. What is strange is the fact that it's not. […] In the case of novels, it happens that no character of mine is inspired by real persons. None whatsoever. […] I don't mean that a novel may not […] inspire itself directly in some fact from real life, with characters that are representations of real figures; I think so, this may perfectly well happen, but in any case, I would have to wonder what the D. João V of my novel has to do with the D. João V from reality (Reis, 2015: 137-138).[1]

[1] "Não, não é. O que é estranho é que, de facto, não é. […] No caso dos romances, acontece que nenhuma personagem minha é inspirada por pessoas reais. Em caso nenhum. Eu não quero dizer que um romance não possa […] inspirar-se diretamente num facto da vida real, com personagens que são representações de figuras reais; acho que sim, pode perfeitamente acontecer, mas de qualquer maneira tenho que me perguntar o que é que o D. João V do meu romance tem que ver com o D. João V da realidade."

What I would like to retain from this response is not so much what it expressly states but what is revealed by it in an indirect way: ambivalence and vacillation with respect to the process of constructing a character, which, at the same time and according to Saramago, comes and does not come from the reality and the history that the fiction writer knows. It is as if to say: from the autonomy to the heteronomy of the character, there is a range of nuances implied in the figuration of an entity that, being fictional, does not necessarily break the bonds of connection that it may maintain with reality even when that figuration is ruled by the formulations of the fantastical or of the unusual (Saramago's Blimunda is from this family). It is as if, in the end, the figure which the fiction offers us were inseparable from a more overarching and problematic concept, even if apparently trivial: the concept of personhood.

4. I will address this only after reading and commenting on the text of a recent novel by Mário Cláudio, *Os naufrágios de Camões*, from 2016. Before this, however, I should note that in this novel, we reencounter the poet mentioned in the title, that is to say, the most celebrated, glossed, mythological, and fictionalised figure in our entire Portuguese cultural history. All this, and indeed when it so happens, the most ideologically falsified and dissimilar thing from the figuration to which novels, short stories, dramas, parodies and narrative poems have subjected the hero-writer of the *Lusíadas*. I repeat: hero in that parafictional sense in which we have individuals who come from History but are hardly ever able to return, so reiterated, expressive, and elaborate are the processes of figuration to which they have been subjected. As if they were not more convenient in this other condition of personhood which is the personality "captured" by fiction and in some cases successively refigured *per omnia saecula saeculorum*.

I return to the novel by Mário Cláudio. In it is recounted the confusing and tumultuous story of the epic and the destiny of the epopee following a shipwreck occurring somewhere in the Far East when the poet was travelling from Macau to India. Thematised in innumerable and well-known legends and images, this shipwreck, in Cláudio's novel, opens the way for a re-fictionalisation along the lines of that which is

said to have been removed from the poem by the impostor, Bartolomeu de Castro, the commander of the ship which went down. And thus, the impostor not only presented the *Lusíadas* as his own, but also added to them what the poet had not: nothing less than the episode from the Isle of Love [Ilha dos Amores].

On stage in the second part of *Os naufrágios de Camões* is Sir Richard Francis Burton, "linguist, but above all, the translator of Luís de Camões" (Cláudio, 2016: 73)[2], says the narrator. And so it is, to my mind: Burton was, in the real world, perhaps the most famous translator of the *Lusíadas* into English. Again, the narrator's words, which, by the way, is the author: "Only he [Burton, one understands] showed himself able to conduct me to the resurrection of myself, writer devoid of characters, and thus reduced to the realisation of giving up on reaching the genius of the author of the *Lusíadas*" (Cláudio, 2016: 73)[3].

Here is one of the passages by which Richard Burton assists the "author devoid of characters":

> The splendid talent of Richard Burton to take possession of the lives of others, more or less imaginable, would become well proven in the two years prior to his journey to Goa and to the Blue Mountains. It was not a question of the mere composition of this or that character, and similar to what actors perform, or even the laborious projection of an *alter ego*, as Dante had carried out when choosing Virgil as a guide, or as Nietzsche had conceived in opting for Zarathustra as an oracle. Straight away in the first years of his military service in India, and as if he were fulfilling some physiological function, the British official would construct an entity that he would christen as Mirza Abdullah, the Bushiri, a half-Persian, half-Arab merchant born in Bushiri on the Persian Gulf. He was an elegantly dressed creature, adorned with rare jewels, cutting a figure of a man from a higher caste. And when he walked about the villages, the broad sleeves of his shirt unfurled in the wind, his puffy

[2] "Linguista, mas sobretudo tradutor de Luís de Camões."

[3] "Só ele [Burton, entenda-se] se mostrava capaz de me conduzir à ressurreição de mim mesmo, escritor desamparado de personagens, e reduzido por isso à emergência de desistir de alcançar o génio do autor de *Os Lusíadas*."

> trousers drawn tightly at the waist, and making his dignified way with each step of his yellow *babouches*, the peasants took him for a perfect Hindu and refrained from bothering him (Cláudio, 2016: 91).[4]

This passage contains several points that are of interest to me. First: the talent of Richard Francis Burton enables him to "take possession of the lives of others, more or less imaginable"; as if to say: lives situated on the undefined boundary between fiction and the real. Second: Burton goes beyond the "mere composition of this or that character", an apparently conventional process in theatrical practice, and if anything, surpassed by the configuration of an *alter ego* which nevertheless does not hide either the hand or the identity of the author (Dante, in "choosing Virgil as a guide", Nietzsche, in "opting for Zarathustra as an oracle"). Third: the entity to construct derives from "a physiological function", with the scope of an identity conformation which truly conceals (or wishes to conceal) the first instance, which is, the authorial gesture. Fourth: given a name, clothing, and a profession, Mirza Abdullah takes on a life of his own and strolls about the world with the freedom of movement of an automatized creature in relation to the creator. And also recognised for himself ("the peasants took him for a perfect Hindu"), not as the extension of someone else. In sum, "a figure of a man from a higher caste", as is written in the novel.

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[4] "O esplêndido talento de Richard Burton para se apoderar de vidas alheias, mais ou menos imagináveis, ficaria sobejamente comprovado nos dois anos anteriores à sua viagem a Goa, e às Montanhas Azuis. Não se tratava da mera composição desta ou daquela personagem, e à semelhança daquilo que os actores realizam, ou sequer da projecção laboriosa de um *alter ego*, conforme ao que Dante efectuara, ao escolher Virgílio como guia, ou ao que Nietzsche concebera, ao optar por Zaratustra como oráculo. Logo nos primeiros tempos do seu serviço militar na Índia, e como se se desempenhasse de uma função fisiológica, o oficial inglês iria construir uma entidade que baptizaria de Mirza Abdullah, o Bushiri, mercador meio persa e meio árabe, natural de Bushiri no golfo Pérsico. Era uma criatura elegantemente vestida, e adornada de jóias raras, recortando uma figura de homem de casta superior. E quando transitava pelas aldeias, de camisa de largas mangas, desfraldadas ao vento, de calças tufadas, e muito cingidas à cintura, e de babushas amarelas, a pisar com dignidade o seu caminho, os camponeses tomavam-no por um perfeito hindu, e abstinham-se de o importunar."

I will leave Mirza Abdullah for now (but not Richard Francis Burton) as he is on a mission "infiltrated in the seedy brothels of Karashi" (Cláudio, 2016: 93)[5] and ask: what makes him a figure? All those attributes, evidently, but more than this — it is the metafictional dimension in both Abdullah and his elaboration that contribute to an explicit autonomization with respect to the one who constructed him. It is thus a question of another person, distinct from the person of the author, but with the capacity to affirm a figurational dimension which overcomes characterisation, as the latter is nothing more than a component (and even so, not mandatory) of figuration.

This takes place in a novel in which (post-modernism *oblige*…) the mechanisms of metafictionality, or of *making* fictional figures, are often in view, but we can also observe them in many other narratives, always paying attention to their respective context and other cultural frameworks. In them, we attempt to inquire as to how, under the banner of fictionality, one goes about processing the composition of the figure for the one whom we usually call character; the random figure whom we designate as narrator, or even any other (also a figure, of course) who is the immediate receiver of the narrative, has been "christened" by narratology as the narratee. All of these figures are, in sum, thus worthy of transcendent survival which is what, at one point, Miguel de Unamuno recognised in Don Quixote and Sancho Panza: they both possess "a life of their own within the mind of the author who creates them, as well as a certain autonomy, and that they obey an intimate logic of which the author himself is not altogether conscious" (Unamuno, 1967: 4)[6].

5. Having said that, I undertake what is more arduous and certainly less attractive: to secure and to characterise a concept, something that I do with the support of earlier attempts on several occasions from the "Figures of Fiction" project; my search is to move forward now, with enlargements and with specifications founded upon ongoing reflection, and thus inconclusive. Thus, with the term *figure*, I designate all

[5] "Infiltrado nos alcouces urânicos de Karashi."

[6] "Una vida propia, con cierta autonomía, y obedecen a una íntima lógica de que no es del todo consciente ni dicho autor mismo" (Unamuno, 2019: 12).

fictional or fictionalised entities, in general (but not necessarily) anthropomorphic, who carry out functions or live out events, in the development of one or various narrative processes. In this context, the notion of figure gathers meanings from the diverse uses that the term *figura* encompasses in Portuguese. Amongst them, I have chosen three: the first refers to the general aspect of the body of someone who "cuts a handsome figure"; in another sense, there is the term used in dramaturgy alluding to the characters in a theatrical show (for example, "figures in a play" in Gil Vicente); the third is that which points to elaborate social behaviours or attitudes, suggesting, by homology, an artistic performance (thus we remark that someone has made a good impression when we say "*fez boa figura*").

Some examples taken from a narrative that is quite illustrative on this point, examples in which we will observe not only the manifestation of figure but also its explicitness — or even the conscience of its specificity — as a narrative element. In Almeida Garrett's *Travels in my Homeland*, the narrator at one point observes "a fine, poetic figure of a man" (Garrett, 1987: 24)[7]; further on, in another interpretation, notes, "Of all the great figures of that time, the one I knew best and had most contact with was a lady, the epitome of charm, of affability and talent" (Garrett, 1987: 61)[8]; finally, the same narrator — he as well, and in his own way, a figure — refers to the woman protagonist of the novella in these terms: "Such was the ideal, highly spiritual figure who stood leaning on the table from which the good old woman had just eaten, contemplating the inexpressible look of sadness that was spreading gradually over her wasted, faded face and was mirrored, as I said, in the watcher's countenance" (Garrett, 1987: 77)[9]. In short, from the general aspect of the body, to the sense of notoriety and social standing, the term *figure* encompasses various components of the existence of human persons, in a fictional or parafictional narrative and in a register

[7] "Bela e poética figura de homem" (Garrett, 2010: 95).

[8] "De todas as grandes figuras dessa época, a que melhor conheci e tratei foi uma senhora, tipo de graça, de amabilidade e de talento" (Garrett, 2010: 153-154).

[9] "Tal era a ideal e espiritualíssima figura que em pé, incostada à banca onde acabava de comer a boa da velha, contemplava, naquele rosto macerado e apagado, a indicível expressão de tristeza que ele pouco a pouco ia tomando e que toda se refletia, como disse, no semblante da contempladora" (Garrett, 2010: 176).

that includes valorising the narrator and, when this is the case, metafictional ponderations.

It is via the axis of the person that I arrive at the narrator. I recall that it is narratology which, on the plane of narration, designates as a *person* the entity responsible for the enunciation of the narrative discourse as well as the one who is constituted as the person's immediate addressee. From the Genettian analysis of narrative, that designation recognises that "the narrator can be in his narrative, (like every subject of an enunciating in his enunciated statement), *only* in the first person" (Genette, 1980: 244). To this I add that the narrator is not the only person who inhabits a fictional world.

In the framework of a dialogical conception of narrative (a conception that valorises the perlocutory orientation and the pragmatic dimension of narrative texts), the second person of the narrative is revealed as an entity that is variably visible. The second person can be found silently implicated in the discourse or explicitly invoked (for example, as a "reader"), thus becoming his/her most evident person. In the words of Michel Butor, "it is because there is someone to whom one tells one's own story [...] that there can be a second-person narrative, which will accordingly always be a didactic narrative" (Butor, 1969: 80; *apud* Fehn *et alii*, 1992: 173). And rightly so: Michel Butor is the author of the novel *La modification* (1957), considered to be a pioneering work with regard to the utilisation of the second person in fiction.

The recognition of the second person in narrative (and in narration) calls into question a certain schematism that affected some narratological descriptions and before those, the first person-third person dichotomy. This is what Monika Fludernik implicitly notes:

> Second-person narrative introduces great combinatory complexity by the fact that both the narrator and the current addressee of the narrational act can become involved on the story level, with the narrator's past self participating in the *you*-protagonist's experiences and the *you*-protagonist surviving into the time and situation of the narrative act (Fludernik, 1996: 169).

And with them I would add other characters, as in the end, they are the narrative's reason for being, and almost always the most highlighted figures.

6. Founded upon what I have put forward, I affirm that the person of the narration, understood as has been characterised here, may be considered a figure, in terms homologous to those related to the character. This homologation makes sense for two reasons. First: the person of the narration, be it the narrator or the narratee, is a fictional entity, placed on the same ontological plane as the character (and, of course, the same as the objects and situations that the fictional narrative accommodates). Second: as often happens, the person of the narrative can be the object of the processes of figuration, which may allow for individualisation deduced from the attribution of differentiating identity-based traits.

As with the character, the person of the narrator may have a face, may display a social, psychological and moral condition or certain behaviours of note, etc. Naturally, this type of figuration occurs with some clarity especially in those narratives in which the narrator, having participated in the story as a character, self-characterises himself; no longer being a character, he establishes, as a figure with a voice, a register of narration addressed to the person of the narratee, who also becomes gradually configurated. A classic example: in the opening of Herman Melville's famous novel, *Moby Dick*, the self-appointed narrator addresses an anonymous narratee with whom he immediately establishes a relatively casual narrative contract: "Call me Ishmael. Some years ago — never mind how long precisely — having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world" (Melville, 1851: chapter 1) Another example, one more familiar to me: at the beginning of Eça de Queirós' *The Relic*, Teodorico Raposo, matured by the experience of his journey to the Holy Land and by the adventures and mishaps therein, establishes himself as the narrator, presents himself as an autonomous figure, so to speak, of the present and identifies the narratee as a collective person (and figure), the fellow citizens to whom he directs those "restful holiday pages" (Queirós, 2012: 4)[10].

I repeat: the figuration of the narrator is more evident when he has a name, body, and identified voice in a context that is not only

[10] "Páginas de repouso e de férias" (Queirós, 1887).

communicative, but rather, fictional. But not only in this case. The narrator who says, "it was Easter Sunday when it became known in Leiria that José Miguéis, the Cathedral paroco, had died of apoplexy in the early hours of the morning" (Queirós, 1994: 7)[11], this narrator is a figure of fiction; even if in an implicit and skewed manner, he will have to go dialoguing with the characters that he characterises, ranks, address, judges, and interrelates with during the narrative. In this way, he is not a mere manager of the story, nor is he that other narrator who says about the characters in *Baltasar and Blimunda*: "we cannot go into the details of the lives of all of them, they are too numerous, but at least we can leave their names on record, that is our obligation" (Saramago, 2001: 227)[12]. The differences between these narrators can be established in a clip of identification that is not always easy (there are narrators who hide themselves) but which, in the end, is of the same nature as that which aids us in distinguishing a priest from Leiria called Amaro Vieira from a certain Baltasar Sete-Sóis whom we encounter in Lisbon of the eighteenth-century.

What has been uttered, thus, takes on another dimension, one that is more complex and more far-reaching, if we summon the concept of polyphony, and if in its practice, we include the voice of the narrator. As is known, within Bakhtinian sociological poetics the notion of polyphony is the object of a relatively precise characterisation on the basis of its relationship to two other notions: pluri-discursivity and dialogism.

According to Bakhtin, Romanesque polyphony is based on the principle that the characters establish amongst themselves the bonds that address the hegemony of the narrator as much as the concentration on a single character fulfilling the function of ideological spokesman. Understood as the autonomous entity in relation to the narrator (and, obviously, also in relation to the author), the character, as "the man speaking in the novel" institutes his own identity with reflexes in his discourse and in the interactive plan of articulation of the various

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[11] "Foi no Domingo de Páscoa que se soube em Leiria que o pároco da Sé, José Miguéis, tinha morrido de madrugada com uma apoplexia" (Queirós, 2000: 97).

[12] "Já que não podemos falar-lhes das vidas, por tantas serem, ao menos deixemos os nomes escritos, é essa a nossa obrigação" (Saramago, 1984: 242).

point of view; for this reason, Bakhtin affirms that the polyphony implies not a single point of view but several points of view, whole and autonomous, and are not directly the materials but the different worlds, consciences and points of view that are associated with a superior unit, of the second degree which is that of the polyphonic novel (cf. Bakhtine, 1970: 45). In another excerpt from his seminal essay on Dostoevsky's novel Bakhtin concludes that the author's purpose is not the ideal totality considered neutral and equal to itself, but the discussion of a problem by several different voices, its pluri-vocalism, its fundamental and inescapable heterovocalism (cf. Bakhtine, 1970: 342). One of these voices, to my mind, is that of the narrator as a figure of fiction.

As with the character, the narrator is also the object of processes of figuration, and at times, re-figuration. In the present state of this reflection, I am unsure as to whether the devices used in figuration that lead to the shaping of the narrator are identical to those which I have described, even summarily, with respect to the character (cf. Reis, 2018: 124-134). But they are of the same nature, first and foremost because as it occurs with the figuration of the character, the figuration of the narrator corresponds to a discursive and metafictional process that individualises him in a determined narrative context.

On the figuration of the narrator, I would also say that it is dynamic, gradual, and complex, forming a macro-device that weds very diverse processes of feature and scope: for example, the simple notation of one's name ("Call me Ishmael") or the adoption of an imperative ethic ("that is our obligation" declares the narrator of *Baltasar and Blimunda*). Finally, the figuration of the narrator is eventually taken up again in acts of re-figuration: when a literary narrator emerges re-elaborated, by remediation, in another support and other mediatic context, he is configurated according to the devices in effect in this context and is remodelled by the narrative language that is enounced in it. The case of the cinema, in this regard, is quite significant, but it is not unique. As this is a multimodal medium, the figuration (or the re-figuration) of the narrator in the cinematographic narrative is not restricted to a narrative voice, with the literary narrator's own clarity and individuality. The concept (not absolutely consensual, it is said) of the *cinematographic*

narrator proposed by Seymour Chatman strives, indeed, to respond to the demands of figuration which arise in a specific mediatic "ecology"; in this "ecology", the narrator, according to Chatman, is understood as a "composite formed by an ample and complex variety of communication devices" (Chatman, 1990: 134) directed to the visual and to the auditory channels.

7. I conclude, once again supported by the words of a writer, Mário de Carvalho, in this case. It was Mário de Carvalho who uttered them, the writer of fiction and inventor of characters and narrators who composed and published, in 2014, the *Guia prático de escrita de ficção* [*Practical guide for writing fiction*], so-called: *Quem disser o contrário é porque tem razão* [*Whoever says the opposite is right*]. And with the subtitle: *Letras sem tretas* [*Letters without lies*]. His caveat in writing in a preliminary remark: "The author does not intend, in any way whatsoever, to dare attempt the field of narratological theoretization, the aim of which is not to reach that of literary studies" (Carvalho, 2014: 11)[13]. Thus it may be, but this does not exclude that in a *Guide* in which there is an abundant blend of irony, theoretical knowledge, and a vast literary culture, very pertinent teachings are gleaned for that which is of interest in this case.

The apparently absurd title of the book by Mário de Carvalho is explained (or, all the more, is confused) in the opening of this essay, which endeavours not to be a creative writing manual. I quote:

> Now and again, I recall a certain oriental story, in one version or other. In the cinema, this has also occurred. Today, I take up the tradition again. A woman goes before a judge with a complaint: "A neighbour-woman of mine has stolen from me a she-goat, some honey, and my husband. I want justice done". And the judge tells her: "You're right". No sooner has she left than the neighbour-woman enters the judge's house yelling: "You have been fooled by that woman. The husband, the she-goat, and the honey were mine all the time. It was she who stole them from me". "You're right", says the judge. The judge's wife, who had overheard everything, addressed him,

[13] "O autor não tenciona, nem de longe, nem de perto, atrever-se ao terreno da teorização narratológica e visa muito aquém dos estudos literários".

annoyed, "How could you say that those two creatures, who said the exact opposite, were both right?" And the judge answered: "You're right" (Carvalho, 2014: 15).[14]

This bizarre story, and its characters, serve to warn against what comes immediately thereafter: "At the end of two thousand odd years of debates on literature and similar areas, with the opulence of knowledge, it seems to me that this is the state of the art, and probably it will not go further than this" (Carvalho, 2014: 15)[15].

I would not go so far as this, or else nothing would justify our being here. Nevertheless, those words give food for thought, particularly when we read the long chapter in the *Guide* on characters and narrators. In it, the writer confirms important aspects of a general theory of figuration which I have been elaborating and which, in particular, reiterates the complexity of the matter which concerns me. Fascinating matter, but arduous, because our knowledge of the characters is sparse, precarious, and provisional. Much like what the author himself possesses of the characters in the end. Maria Sara says as much in José Saramago's *History of the Siege of Lisbon*: "the author only knows what his characters have been, even then not everything, and very little of what they will become" (Saramago, 1998: 235)[16]. That which they "will become" arises from the "intimate logic" which Unamuno spoke of, and is that which we discover and rediscover in each reading; and thus, the characters reveal themselves to us as "people in books"

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[14] "Volta e meia, certa história oriental é recordada, numa versão ou noutra. No cinema também já apareceu. Retomo hoje a tradição. Uma mulher queixa-se a um juiz: «A minha vizinha roubou-me a cabra, o mel e o homem. Faz-me justiça.» E o juiz diz-lhe: «Tens razão.» Mal ela sai, rompe a vizinha pela casa do juiz aos gritos: «Foste enganado por aquela mulher. O homem, a cabra e o mel sempre foram meus. Ela é que mos roubou.» «Tens razão», confirma o juiz. A mulher do juiz, agastada: «Como é que foste dar razão a duas criaturas que afirmam exactamente o contrário?» Responde o juiz: «Tens razão.»"

[15] "Ao fim de dois mil e tal anos de debates sobre literatura e áreas afins, com opulência de saber e conhecimento, parece-me ser este o estado da arte e provavelmente não passará daqui".

[16] "O autor só conhece das personagens o que elas foram, mesmo assim não tudo, e pouquíssimo do que virão a ser" (Saramago, 1989: 264).

(Saramago, 1998: 235)[17] with whom we maintain a dialogue consisting of friendship and antipathy, seduction and rejection. Thus it is, in the end, with those persons in our world, traversed by the contradictions that the writers project into the figures that they construct, if such is right (and I believe that it is) in the challenge made to us by Mário de Carvalho:

> The challenge, dear reader, writer-in-progress, is to create characters who, at one time are unique, so that they will be remembered, and universal, so that they will be recognised; who speak for themselves and who defend their own cause and reason for existence; who are contradictory, made of various pieces and incomplete, because in truth, no man is complete. Who breathe truth and authenticity (yes, fabricated truth and authenticity) in such a way that we do not feel that mandatory school items are being filled in, with their tags and refrains. Is it difficult? It is. For everyone. Even for any established writer. No doubt about that (Carvalho, 2014: 189).[18]

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[17] "Pessoas de livro" (Saramago, 1989: 264).

[18] "O desafio, caro leitor, escritor-em-progresso, é criar personagens que sejam, a um tempo, únicas, para serem lembradas; e universais, para serem reconhecidas; que falem por si próprias e que defendam a sua própria causa e razão de existência; que sejam contraditórias, feitas de várias peças, e incompletas, porque, na verdade, nenhum homem é completo. Que respirem verdade e autenticidade (sim, verdade e autenticidade fabricadas), de forma a que não sintamos o preenchimento cumpridor dos itens escolares, com o seu *tag* ou o seu estribilho. É difícil? É. Para toda a gente. Mesmo para qualquer escritor consagrado. Não tenha dúvidas."

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4. HOW PARADIGM SHIFTS AND OUR TASTE FOR IMMERSIVE STORIES HAVE TRANSFORMED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PLOTS AND CHARACTERS

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From a Small Camp of Foldable Tents into a Vast Metropolis

In narrative theory, looking at the changing relationship between characters and plots is a good way to account for the evolution of the discipline over the years. While debates concerning other issues — like narrativity, implied author, optional narrator, or focalization — at times appear to have frozen in some kind of Cold War — with front lines that have moved very little over the years — the way we look at the interconnection between fictional entities and the unfolding of plot has changed quite dramatically over the last few decades. This evolution is obvious if we examine a recent discussion between Thomas Pavel and Françoise Lavocat. Asked why she chose to write a book on possible world theory and the difference between fact and fiction[1], Françoise Lavocat recalls how she discovered, in the mid-1990s, the famous essay by Thomas Pavel, *Univers de la fiction*:

> One evening that I remember very well, in February 1996, I began to read *Univers de la fiction*, which an analytical philosopher had advised me. I read from the very first page — which evokes Mr Pickwick — that we have the right to love characters. With this authorization, ten years of structuralism collapsed all of a sudden. In preparatory school, I had learned that characters were made of paper and that it would be very naïve to picture

[1] See Lavocat (2016).

> them in another way. I read in Thomas Pavel's book that we have the right to be naïve.[2]

Thomas Pavel replies by saying that, when he began working on possible world theory, in the seventies, he felt quite alone:

> You remind me of the 1970s, when the few people who had begun to think about these questions felt a little like three or four friends on an excursion into the Rocky Mountains, spending nights in easily foldable tents. Forty years later, studies on fiction seem to have reached the size of a vast metropolis, with its enormous skyscrapers. The landscape has changed a lot! At the time, we were told that what counted in *Madame Bovary* was the use of free indirect speech. It was certainly not false. Now, I read *Madame Bovary* to follow the life of the characters, to learn, for example, what will become of this unwise woman, who, among other things, buys dresses too costly for her budget. We were told that it was stupid to read novels simply to understand the plot.[3]

The evolution of narrative theory has transformed a small camp of foldable tents into a vast metropolis, and on this account, narratology

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[2] « Un soir dont je m'en souviens très bien, en février 1996, je me suis mise à lire *Univers de la fiction*, qu'un philosophe analytique m'avait conseillé. Je lis, dès la première page — qui évoque Mr Pickwick — qu'on a le droit d'aimer les personnages. Avec cette autorisation, dix ans de structuralisme s'effondrent tout d'un coup. En khâgne, j'avais appris que les personnages étaient de papier et qu'il était vraiment naïf de les envisager d'une autre façon. Je lis dans le livre de Thomas Pavel qu'on a le droit d'être naïf » (Lavocat and Pavel, 2016: n.p.).

[3] « Vous me rappelez les années 1970, lorsque les quelques personnes qui avaient commencé à réfléchir à ces questions se sentaient un peu comme trois ou quatre amis en excursion dans les Montagnes Rocheuses et qui passent les nuits dans des tentes facilement pliables. Quarante ans plus tard, les études sur la fiction semblent avoir atteint la dimension d'une vaste métropole avec ses énormes gratte-ciels. Le paysage a beaucoup changé ! À l'époque, on nous apprenait que ce qui comptait dans *Madame Bovary*, c'était l'emploi du discours indirect libre. Ce n'était certes pas faux. Or moi je lisais *Madame Bovary* pour suivre la vie des personnages, pour apprendre, par exemple, ce que deviendra cette femme imprudente qui, entre autres, achète des robes trop coûteuses pour son budget. On nous expliquait qu'il était bête de lire des romans simplement pour comprendre l'intrigue » (Lavocat and Pavel, 2016: n.p.).

may almost appear like a cumulative science. But we know that human sciences possess the virtue of forcing us to reconsider our deep motivations when we change our interpretive frameworks. Besides, as expressed by Thomas Pavel and Françoise Lavocat, this evolution is also a form of regression, or more exactly, it is a way of reevaluating narrative experiences that were once discarded because they were considered as "naïve", "stupid", or "regressive". The history of narrative theory is not linear nor teleological, instead it consists of curves and dead-ends.

In any case, we may ask ourselves: Why have things changed so much? Why did we feel impelled to engage ourselves in new directions? Françoise Lavocat argues that the ephemeral success of structuralism partly explains this lack of interest in the character's mimetic depth and in the study of the emotional commitment to their destiny. So, one might conclude that the problem was essentially epistemological. And of course, it is quite easy to show how new paradigms, like reception theory, possible world theory, or cognitivism, have enriched considerably our understanding of the relation between plot and characters, passing from a "desiccated" description (to use the words of Wayne C. Booth, 1968) to a more vivid and "embodied" conceptualization (to use a very popular expression in contemporary cognitivism). Nevertheless, beyond the constant need for novelty in academic institutions, this doesn't fully explain why so many scholars have decided to change their perspective.

As we know, the negation of referential readings and the discarding of plot dynamics were also ideologically motivated. Paradoxically, many narratologists during the sixties and the seventies were not really fond of fictions. Or, more exactly, prototypical narratives were viewed with political suspicion. Immersive narratives, those involving convincing characters, suspenseful situations, or intriguing mysteries, were seen as belonging to popular culture, and they were denounced as political and/or commercial levers, aimed at alienating the readers. Accordingly, Emma Bovary was not considered as a character that the reader should identify with, but as an example of what a reader should try to avoid to become. Thus, many narratologists endorsed the mission to educate these "dominated readers"[4], to teach them to despise some very basic

[4] On this concept, see Lafarge (1983).

aesthetic experiences usually associated with prototypical fictions, and to develop a taste for experimental literary works and for other formal, or intertextual, aspects of narratives.

Eventually, the bigger contrast between a structuralist like Roland Barthes, and scholars like Françoise Lavocat and Thomas Pavel, can be found in their opposed interests for fictional characters and for thrilling stories. They thus belong to a growing number of narratologists who have adapted their taste when compared with the historical founders of our discipline. As pro-narrativists, they believe that immersion, identification, empathy, curiosity, suspense, or other similar issues, are not necessarily dangerous, but can be enjoyable aesthetic experiences, and these could even be cognitively or ethically beneficial experiences. Many believe now that these phenomena could even constitute one of the deepest anthropological functions of mimetic arts in general.

This does not mean, however, that we do not take the dangers of malicious uses of fictitious or factual mimetic narratives seriously. Recent history has taught us much about what happens when heroic characters, with their fascinating life stories, are in fact ambitious politicians or leaders of greedy global companies. But even if a malicious agent can use the power of narration to manipulate crowds, I think it best not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.[5] In summary, one could say that over time, the narratological doxa has moved from a Platonic to a more Aristotelian perspective: many narrative theorists believe that their duty is no longer to warn the audience against the dangers of mimicry but to recognize the virtues of the cathartic phenomena associated with fiction. Thus, philosophical or cognitive theories highlighting the ethical[6] and/or adaptive[7] values of fiction have played a major role in this transformation, along with the exhaustion of modernism and the crisis of literary studies.

Under the pressure of postmodernism, not only have the experimental literary works that dismantle plot structures or expose the artificial nature of characters lost their central position in the avant-garde, but

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[5] See Citton (2010); Baroni (2017).

[6] See Laugier (2006); Laugier and Ginsburg (2012).

[7] See for example Kukkonen (2014: 737); Herman (2009: 20-21); Baroni (2009: 45-94; 2017: 52-62).

also many scholars confronted with the desertion of students from their Departments now feel impelled to justify the value of literary fiction, as opposed to other kinds of discourse, such as argumentation or scientific explanation. And to do so, it is probably best to avoid frontally criticizing immersive and thrilling novels, not only because they belong to the territory that needs to be defended[8], but also because they are probably those that have motivated some of their remaining students to attend literary classes.

Yet, I do not claim that every narratologist has now completely lost his or her taste for experimental literary works. Firstly, I can easily understand the motivations of those who continue to reject a pro-narrativist ideology for political or ethical reasons. Secondly, academic scholars (as well as some students) are naturally interested in challenging objects. The existence of a very vivid branch of contemporary narratology focusing on "unnatural narratives" illustrates this remaining interest in representations that "violate mimetic conventions and the practices of realism, and defy the conventions of existing, established genres" (Richardson, 2015: 3). Nevertheless, I don't think that we find in this present-day interest in experimental or "unnatural" narratives the same antimimetic ideology that motivated many structuralists some fifty years ago. In the terms of Pierre Bourdieu, even if the *orientation* seems similar, the *posture* has changed, because the *field* has been reconfigured completely.

This being said, I will give now a quick overview of some of the most important transformations that we have witnessed over the past decades concerning the status of characters and their relation to plot. Then, I will focus on an attribute of a famous contemporary character, in order to highlight some principles governing the interrelation between characters' features and their function in plot dynamics.

From Structure to Mimetic Functions and Plot Dynamics

Both characters and plot are interrelated notions that have evolved considerably, but while the object designated by the former is quite obvious, the referent of the latter remains subject to a somewhat

[8] See Merlin-Kajman (2016).

discouraging polysemy[9]. I will not attempt to argue here that it would be better to adopt what James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz (2012: 57) have called a "maximalist" definition of plot, or to explain why *progression* — a notion introduced by Phelan (1989) — is useless as long as we do not confuse plot with the internal logic of the *fabula*. My point here will be to highlight the mutability of a concept that has been defined alternatively: 1) as a static image of the story (or *fabula*); 2) as the reconfiguration of the story by narrative discourse (or *syuzhet*); 3) as a strategic combination of this double sequence aimed at arousing narrative tension[10] (the three main narrative interests being suspense, curiosity, or surprise)[11]; 4) or, last but not least, as an evolving story-world, a mental experience relying on the progression of the reader.[12]

I leave aside the definition of plot as an equivalent of *syuzhet*, which results from an unfortunate translation of Tomashevsky's seminal essay (1965), since this is a terminology that most narratologists have now ceased to use. I will rather focus on the opposition between plot as an equivalent of *fabula* and plot as a rhetorical device aimed at creating and resolving tensions in the reading experience, because these opposed definitions provide a good image of how narrative theory has evolved over the past fifty years. While the description of the internal logic of the *fabula* was the main concern of structuralists and formalists, readerly dynamics has become the new focus of most postclassical narratologists, some insisting more on its rhetorical dimension, others on the cognitive process aroused by the narrative. Of course, this evolution had a direct impact on the way we talk about characters, since it is practically impossible to think of plot without thinking of characters, and vice versa.

In the first phase, one of the most influential models was the morphology of Russian folktales by Vladimir Propp (1968), soon followed by the logic of actions by Claude Bremond (1973), and the structural semiotics by Julien Algirdas Greimas[13] (1987). In these conceptions,

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[9] I discuss this polysemy in Baroni (2017: 25-36).

[10] See Baroni (2007; 2009; 2017), Phelan (1989), Brooks (1983).

[11] See Sternberg (2001).

[12] See Dannenberg (2008), Kukkonen (2014).

[13] For a presentation of this model in English, see Hébert (2006).

plot was referred to as a fixed structure of the *fabula*. It could be exhumed in any narrative, like a skeleton hidden behind the materiality of the discourse, and also behind the accidental nature of the events told. Using the same methodology, every character was supposed to embody an abstract identity determined by his or her role in the plot. In this extremely disincarnated conception, the potential roles were very limited: Propp counted only seven spheres of actions in Russian fairy tales, while Greimas reduced these functions to six actantial structures, supposedly valid for all narratives: Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, and Opponent.

Of course, none of these narrative theorists ever pretended that characters were no more than actants or roles. For instance, Philippe Hamon mentions the existence of many other semantic axes differentiating a character from others. But, as he explains, there is a hierarchy between different axes, and in this hierarchy, the role played by the character in the plot seemed to be more important than any other attributes:

> A recurrence is not necessarily confused with narrative functionality, with importance. First, because an axis like the color of the hair is common to all characters in a novel, and secondly because it is probably not such axes that organize the main narrative transformations of novels. Such axes are therefore probably noted and summoned by the text, either to bring about a simple "reality effect", or to highlight, accompany, underline, or indicate, a particular relationship situated at another level, or on a more "fundamental" axis.[14]

One might believe that Hamon is most likely right when he states that the actantial role of the character is more fundamental than hair color. But fundamental for whom? And in what respect? Is hair color so

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[14] « Une récurrence ne se confond pas obligatoirement avec une fonctionnalité narrative, avec une importance. D'abord parce qu'un axe comme la couleur des cheveux est commun à tous les personnages d'un roman, ensuite parce que ce ne sont sans doute pas de tels axes qui organisent les principales transformations narratives des romans. De tels axes sont donc, probablement, notés et convoqués par le texte, soit pour provoquer un simple 'effet de réel', soit pour mettre en relief, accompagner, souligner, ou indiquer, telle ou telle relation située à un autre niveau, ou sur un axe plus 'fondamental' » (Hamon, 1998: 185)

trivial for the audience and for plot dynamics? Rhetorical or cognitivist perspectives helped us to reevaluate what used to be considered as trivial and to give a more dynamic account of the fundamental structures outlined by the structuralists.

Let's take for instance the blond hair of Iseult or, even better, of Daenerys Targaryen. Daenerys was first presented as an object of desire for several characters, and quite likely for many in the television viewing audience, as well. Indeed, in the first scene where Daenerys appears, she is shown naked in her bath and preparing for an arranged wedding, which is supposed to restore her brother's chances of becoming the king of the Seven Kingdoms. In this respect, the blondness of her hair is far from being innocent: we can associate this symbol to a *topos* found in many Western narratives, which, of course, resounds with the intertextual echo of Iseult. Accordingly, it is hard to ignore that the blondness may indicate Daenerys' purity, as she is still a virgin when the narrative begins, but it can be also a means to enhance her erotic value, and therefore, it refers to her narrative function as an Object of desire.

Yet, this character evolved tremendously after the death of her husband and her brother, while the entire TV show has adopted a progressively more feminist tone, as many commentators have noticed. Daenerys was reborn in the fire of her husband's cremation and she became the Mother of the Dragons, the Queen of the South, and one of the few ambitious characters of Westeros to have a true sense of morality. She has clearly transitioned from the position of a passive Object to the role of an active Subject, yet without losing any of her erotic attractiveness. In this new context, her blondness has acquired many additional symbolic functions: it can be associated with Fire as opposed to Ice, Life of a passionate human being as opposed to the Death meted out by the White Walkers.

But this does not exhaust any of her potential functions, since the epic narrative is based on the intertwined destiny of several heroes, making us wonder who represents the real core of the *fabula*, if there is such a thing. If we take the point of view of another potential hero, Jon Snow for instance, we may wonder if she should be considered as a potential Opponent, a Helper, or an Object again? Of course, it is extremely complicated, because it all hinges on the phase of the

story we are considering. When I began writing this essay, in late July 2017, the long-awaited meeting between Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen had not yet occurred. In-between, new revelations concerning Jon Snow's true identity have made him both a potential rival and a possible relative. At this stage of the plot unfolding, it was impossible to know whether those two emerging central characters would become allies or foes, enemies, friends, or lovers. And this indeterminacy is of course essential for arousing narrative tension in the middle of the seventh season.

What if Jon Snow's long and magnificent black hair helped him to become the powerful Daenerys' Object of desire, as much for her as he is for an increasing number of spectators? Then, would not their union become a way to reconcile the South and the North, the Summer and the Winter, the Fire and the Ice, and the erotic power of the Female and Male? If we are concerned with how narrative tension functions, rather than with narrative structures, then we ought to deal with unresolved stories because their working power is more obvious. We see that, even when considered in a structuralist perspective, characters' attributes are an unstable matrix of virtualities evolving throughout the progression of the narrative. To use the words of Jonathan Culler, "characters are not heroes, villains, or helpers; they are simply subjects of a group of predicates which the reader adds up as he goes along" (Culler, 1975: 235). Undeniably, there is an addition of complexity when the narrative is not seized as a whole, but considered in its evolution. As such, the fixed functions delineated by Propp and Greimas can hardly be attributed to characters without ambiguities. As Eco explains: "We know […] that a text has or should have a specific actantial structure, but we could hardly say at which phase of the cooperation the Model Reader is invited to identify it".[15]

Additionally, the new perspectives offered by reception theories, and by rhetorical and cognitive narratology, invite us to broaden our investigation beyond a "group of predicates" (to quote Culler), even

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[15] « Nous savons, du moins quand la reconstruction critique est effectuée, qu'un texte a ou devrait avoir telle structure actancielle, mais nous pourrions difficilement dire à quelle phase de la coopération le Lecteur Modèle est invité à l'identifier » (Eco, 1985: 229).

if those predicates are described in their evolution. Along the psychoanalytical vein advanced by Michel Picard (1986), Vincent Jouve (1992: 110) insists in particular on the reader's affective and erotic investment, thus going far beyond the intellectual understanding of the narrative function played by a character. In this new stance, we must reevaluate the importance of these elements that serve to create what Jouve describes as an "illusion of person (object of sympathy or antipathy of the reader)" and "a phantasmatic alibi (support of unconscious investments)".[16] James Phelan follows the same line when he proposes adding to the synthetic components of characters — namely those aspects reflecting their artificial nature — a study of their mimetic dimension:

> When the structuralist remains suspicious of the emotional involvement that comes from viewing the character as a possible person, the mimetic analyst regards that involvement as crucial to the effect of the work. In short, where the structuralist seeks an objective view of the text, one which foregrounds the text as construct, the mimetic analyst takes a rhetorical view, one which foregrounds the text as communication between author and reader (Phelan, 1989: 8).

Now, if we return to the previous examples, we see that this new approach allows us to stress the importance of Daenerys Targaryen's blondness or Jon Snow's voluptuous black hair in a completely new way. They are crucial aspects of the plot, not only because they reveal the synthetic or thematic[17] functions of these characters, but also because

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[16] « Le personnage sera ainsi à étudier comme élément du sens (fonction narrative et indice herméneutique), illusion de personne (objet de la sympathie ou de l'antipathie du lecteur) et alibi fantasmatique (support d'investissements inconscients) » (Jouve, 1992: 111).

[17] Phelan defines the "thematic dimension" of a character as attributes "viewed as vehicles to express ideas or as representative of a larger class than the individual character" (1989: 12). In this case, this dimension corresponds to the reading when Daenerys is considered an incarnation of Fire as opposed to Ice, or Life as opposed to death. As Phelan explains "just as the full mimetic function is often not revealed in the initial stages of a narrative, so too may the thematic functions emerge more gradually" (1989: 12-12).

they deepen their attractiveness and their mimetic consistency, and therefore, they reinforce their potential for arousing suspense. As Marie-Laure Ryan explains, the emotions aroused by believable and attractive characters is not only a way to intensify immersion, but also a way to make us forget the artificial, and more or less predictable, nature of the plot: she argues that "emotional immersion" makes situations present in the mind; therefore, "it does not matter whether the envisioned state of affairs is true or false, and its development known or unknown, because simulation makes it temporarily true and present, and from the point of view of the present, the future has not happened" (Ryan, 2001: 156).

When the characters are defined according to their role in modulating the narrative tension — which can be considered as the dynamic aspect of plot[18] —, three main functional axes can be identified[19]. Each of these axes can encompass a virtually infinite set of attributes, ranging from their actantial roles to the color of their hair, or any tiny detail that may have the power to reinforce the character's power to increase the tension of the story until reaching its virtual resolution. It is crucial to insist on the fact that, in this set of attributes, what is missing, or what may change over time, is actually as important as what is being specified.

1. **Puzzling attributes**: if characters are meant to arouse curiosity, it is nonetheless necessary to keep some of their characteristics hidden. For example, a hidden agenda or an undisclosed intention, as well as an unclear role in the actantial structure, all these missing attributes can be used to puzzle the audience. In *Game of Thrones*, Petyr Baelish, aka Little Finger, is an ambiguous character whose actions and loyalty remain unpredictable. In contrast, Tyrion Lannister's loyalty, after several spectacular twists, has become more and more predictable over time, but in the last episode of the sixth season, while he seems to surrender to Daenerys' enemies — the latter appearing to be in a desperate situation — we understand retrospectively that he has set a trap for them. Here, the hidden plan was aimed at arousing curiosity and surprise.

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[18] For a definition of plot in relation with narrative tension, see Baroni (2007: 18; 2017: 31).

[19] See Baroni (2017: 85-90).

2. **Mimetic attributes**: if characters are meant to arouse suspense, the audience must care for the fate of at least some of them, and to do so, these focal characters must have some attributes that help us to view them as *possible persons*. This "reality effect" is usually achieved through a form of over-determination. Over-determination is meant to describe qualities going beyond the definition of the role that characters play in the story, or what Barthes used to call "insignificant notations" (2005: 231). In an abstract game, we can feel suspense because we care for the players, or simply because we wonder how their next move may solve a complex problem. But in a narrative fiction, we are less concerned by those who move the pieces, but by the pieces themselves. If the authors decide to sacrifice a Queen, we must care for her in order to be moved by this event, because the only way for authors to lose the game, is to have the audience stop being concerned by the piece on the board. So, the piece must have more complexity than chessmen, and it must be enriched beyond its direct functional value[20]. This over-determination may include any idiosyncratic features. Of course, if the character is also attractive, his or her affective impact may be stronger. It is clearly the case with Daenerys and Jon, while others, like Tyrion, can count on their intelligence, their afflictions, their wounds, their humor or their tortured past in order to arouse a feeling of compassion. Besides, imperfect characters may inspire more empathy, and be even more attractive than bigger-than-life heroes, since they may appear closer to us. Therefore, Jon's uncontrolled impulsivity (not to say his lack of cleverness) or Tyrion's alcoholism, may also help to increase their emotional impact.

3. **Autonomy**: even if characters become so familiar to us that we know them as friends or relatives, they must nevertheless retain a degree of unpredictability. This means that their fate must be an open one: they must show some freedom in their reactions and take surprising decisions. This is a necessity not only in order to

[20] For a more detailed distinction between abstract games and narrative fictions, see Caïra (2011) and Lavocat (2016).

> maintain an interest for the potential developments of the plot, but also to strengthen the mimetic deepness of the storyworld. In some extreme cases, the illusion of freedom may reach the point where characters seem to acquire a type of autonomy. This is what Bakhtin (1981) called "polyphony": a character's ability to speak for him/herself, with his/her own voice, and to make his/her own decisions, instead of being a pawn on the chessboard, or a spokesman for the author. Accordingly, along with the unexpected evolution of characters, their synthetic or thematic functions, including their axiological value, may be blurred, and, as many authors acknowledge, in the process of creation, the story often drifts away from the author's original intentions.

We see now how different kinds of attributes may come into conflict when an author tries to build narrative tension: while we need to know the characters intimately in order to be moved by their fate, they must also remain partly unpredictable and mysterious in order to keep hold on their power to intrigue us. Yet, these qualities are not always incompatible. A well-known character may sometimes keep a secret, or make a surprising decision, without compromising his/her mimetic deepness and the coherence of his/her personality. Nevertheless, the most mysterious characters, like Little Finger, are usually condemned to play second-roles because they are too inscrutable to build an emotional bond with the audience, while the most unpredictable characters run the risk of becoming tricksters, a fool that refuses to play according to the rules, a pure chaos, a person without personality. Therefore, a focal hero is usually recognizable when there is a stronger investment on the mimetic axis and, even if he/she shows a relative degree of autonomy, when he/she remains more or less coherent with his/her personality.

As for the autonomy of characters, Bakhtin praises Dostoevsky's talent in crafting narratives where characters have their own voice, but production constraints can also play a significant role in increasing a series' polyphony. I just mentioned the numerous roles successively played by a character like Daenerys. I have no doubt that the saga's author had a vision of her overall evolution in mind when he first began writing the story, but along the way, he may have discovered that his creature embodied some unexpected qualities or flaws, leading

her to act unpredictably. Moreover, we cannot exclude the fact that the audience's reaction to the TV series, in particular some attacks published in the news media denouncing the sexism of the first seasons, may have changed the fate of the character, especially when the writers came to the point where they faced the production of the saga's final volumes. This last point will lead me to mention rapidly the specificities of serialized narratives in the context of transmedia storytelling[21], and I will finish this discussion with a reflection on the impact of media on the mimetic thickness of a character and how unnatural features may impact this dimension.

Transmediality, Mimetic Deepness and Unnatural Features

TV series, in particular the productions associated to what is now being called Quality TV, have become progressively a cultural phenomenon considered by many as a dominant form of storytelling, most likely due to their extensive temporality, combined with luxurious scriptwriting conditions. This new context of production has increased the complexity of plot developments and the deepness of characters.[22] Of course, when George R. R. Martin began to publish *A Song of Ice and Fire*, his saga provided us with substantial information concerning the characters. Literary discourse has a special capacity for conveying an endless flow of data on the inner-world of each character, not only because of its use of natural language, which is made of the same material as our thoughts, but also because of its almost unlimited length, which allows us to delve into subtle details of each character's reactions and background stories[23].

But when we are concerned with a character's external features, or with their seductive power, no description can compete with the

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[21] See Jenkins (2006), Goudmand (2013) and Baroni (2016).

[22] The interest for TV series, which is a recent phenomenon in narratology as well as in cultural studies, might be another symptom of the shift toward a pro-narrativist posture. See Baroni and Jost (2016).

[23] Yet, Jan Alber (2017) has recently claimed that film is much better suited to depicting character's interiority than is commonly assumed.

imagery provided by a film or a TV show. A photograph can capture an infinite array of unfiltered information on a person's appearance, and the film representation of that individual adds the tone of the voice of the actors, their own way of speaking and moving, along with the aura they have accumulated while participating with different narratives, or just because they can be seen in galleries of portraits displayed by the web. The enrichment conveyed by the television adaptation also includes costumes, settings, and many other visual effects. As Jenkins explains:

> The shifts between media mean that we have new experiences and learn new things. To translate *Harry Potter* from a book to a movie series means thinking through much more deeply what Hogwarts looks like and thus the art director/production designer has significantly expanded and extended the story in the process. (Jenkins, 2011: n.p.)

Emilia Clarke as Daenerys Targaryen, Kit Harington as Jon Snow, and Peter Dinklage as Tyrion Lannister, have all transformed and expanded the original universe, adding their contribution to the story, with their own erotic potential, as well as their ability to turn fictional entities into plausible human beings. Thus, for the audience, these characters' attractiveness, mimetic deepness, and autonomy have been multiplied by a creative collaboration that goes beyond what a single author could have achieved. This expanded work of art includes the actors' performances, but also the creative work of a showrunner, of several scriptwriters, directors, production designers, special effect specialists, and of no less importance, the critical reception of the audience, which plays an increasingly important role in the production, as affirmed by Jenkins (2006), who sees this phenomenon as a symptom of the "convergence culture".

But transmedial extensions of a fictional world do not always lead to an enrichment, as they also comprise some meaningful alterations. In the case of Daenerys Targaryen's physical attributes, there have been interesting transformations in the shift from one media to another. In the novel, she is described as a woman whose eyes have shades of purple and her hair is silver-gold or platinum white. These characteristics are described as typical of her Valyrian heritage and point toward

her almost superhuman nature, which includes her invulnerability to fire and her ability to ride dragons. In contrast, in her TV incarnation, Daenerys eyes have Emilia's natural green color, while her hair color has been transformed into a more classical platinum blonde. This alteration can be partly explained by the producers' decision to avoid using contact lenses or CGI techniques as these would have compromised the actor's performance or required the use of time-consuming postproduction. Yet, there might be another explanation: in a verbal narrative, unnatural attributes, like purple eyes and white hair, can be mentioned and processed as meaningful information, but in the mental representation of the reader, they do not necessarily alter the attractiveness of the character, whose beauty remains a fundamental attribute overruling other qualities. Each reader will most likely build a subjective mental representation based on his/her own conception of what a beautiful woman looks like, and in this subjective representation, purple eyes and white hair are weird elements that could be considered as a contradiction. This incongruity can easily be reduced by simply mentally disregarding these attributes, even though they can be reactivated in some meaningful contexts. But when transferred to the screen, each time the character's face is seen, it would be hard to forget the strangeness of her eye color, and this may threaten her mimetic deepness by stressing the artificial nature of the character. In this case, I think that the mimetic function has been privileged over the symbolic function, while the contradiction did not appear as critical in the literary representation, because physical appearance was mediated by the reader's mind.

This leads to the last point: the relation between mimetic deepness and what can be described as the *unnatural attributes* of characters. It is important to clearly differentiate mimetic deepness, or "reality effect", from the conformity of the existent to the rules governing the real world. Unnatural narratology urges us to discuss the dimensions of characters that do not imitate life, or those transgressing ordinary narrative rules (Richardson, 2015). Two cases must be clearly differentiated. In the first, even if non-natural in some ways, the character possesses some fundamental attributes helping us to treat him/her as a convincing person, and therefore, we should not necessarily consider that this fictional entity is lacking mimetic deepness. In the second case, the character may lack some of those basic features, and thus, he/she

threatens the functioning of the narrative itself. The essential aspects differentiating these two cases must be found in the behavior of the fictional entities, because there is no narrative without a plot, and no plot without characters acting like real persons. All other aspects, internal or external, may be considered as merely superficial, even though they may play a secondary role in the evaluation of the mimetic deepness of the representation.

Obviously, *Game of Thrones* or *A Song of Ice and Fire* belong to the corpus of prototypical mimetic narratives, at least in the sense that characters do not lack deepness and they act like typical human agents. Of course, in this highly mimetic narrative, many elements differ from reality, but they do not alter our immersion into the narrative world, or the interest of the plot. Here again, Daenerys' eye color might be problematic in a filmic representation, because it would contradict other important features: her attractiveness and the actress' ability to play her role naturally while hiding her eyes behind contact lenses. But she possesses many other unnatural qualities which are not problematic, like her resistance to fire and her bond with her dragons. What makes her a convincing person is more fundamental: it is the plausibility of her actions, the connection between her life-story and the building of her personality, the human-like nature of her motives, intentions, flaws or virtues.

Even a character like Leto II Atreides, in the *Dune* saga created by Frank Herbert, can be considered as mimetically convincing. The god emperor, who ruled the universe for 3500 years under the hybrid form of a human and a sandworm, is eternal and omniscient, but the novel offers us privileged access to his inner life, and thus, his story is presented as a fully understandable tragedy and a moving destiny. Therefore, the mimetic deepness of the character relies more on his plausible humanlike reactions to fictive — and sometimes completely unrealistic — circumstances, than on the nature of these circumstances or any other superficial attributes.

Instead, if characters act absurdly or incomprehensibly, if their actions seem to be pointless and unable to affect the progression of plot, if they seem completely baffling and unreachable for a classical intentional understanding, then these characters may affect more dramatically the narrativity of the representation and the functioning of plot.

Vladimir and Estragon may look like banal hoboes, and by waiting for Godot in vain, they may reveal the absurdity of the human condition, but their strange reactions and the absence of narrative progression flatten the mimetic deepness of the representation. The mimetic narrative is replaced by a defamiliarization of narrative scripts, and existents appear as mere functions in a critical discourse addressed against mimetic illusion.

In a way, a character like Bugs Bunny could be considered as a person by the audience if we consider that he acts like a rational talking individual, with his phlegmatic personality and his indefectible sense of humor. But of course, in another way, he lacks some essential mimetic attributes, not because he looks like a rabbit — which is only a superficial feature — but rather because he acts like an unpredictable trickster in a highly metaleptic world, where transgressions do not simply contradict the physical laws of our own world, but satirically reflect the artificial nature of the representation. But Looney Tunes are slapstick comedies linked to early cinema; they are attractions rather than real narratives. True narratives cannot work without narrative immersion, without mimetic deepness and with at least a minimal interest in the unfolding of plot. That is why unnatural narratology can only deal with marginal forms of narratives, and as such, it has the virtue to teach us what narrativity truly is by pointing toward what contradicts its core definition. In this case, it clearly urges us to discriminate essential from superficial features for any definition of mimetic deepness, which cannot be reduced to a mere imitation of the bare reality. Meanwhile, Daenerys' hair continues to float in that narrative world where we imagine she resides.

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5. THIS IS NOT A CHARACTER: THE FIGURATION OF FERNANDO PESSOA IN *THE YEAR OF THE DEATH OF RICARDO REIS*, BY JOSÉ SARAMAGO

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Imagine a painting, something like Goya's *El 3 de mayo en Madrid o "Los fusilamientos"* (1814) or perhaps Picasso's *Guernica* (1937): what do we see there? Oil on canvas, in both cases. In a broader sense, the depiction of a tragedy. Amongst the many other details there is also a person with arms raised, awaiting imminent death. In the former it is a man about to be shot by a firing squad and in the latter, a person on whom a rain of fire is about to fall. These are both complex paintings, and I make note of them here to affirm a premise which, from the outset, seems quite obvious: we can see the brushstrokes of both Goya and Picasso as being, at the same time, both a *painting* and a *representation* of what is real. Each work has its own differences, and we see people (the bystanders, the victims), a bull, a horse, the rifles at the ready, the lamp, the fire, etc. as parts of a pictorial composition, and thus fictitious, but also as figures that refer to a reality that is external to the painting, enabling us to cognitively create a narrative of the experience of the tragedy, especially when those images merge with the information we have about the French occupation of Madrid in May of 1808 and the bombing of the Basque city of Guernica in 1937.

This capacity for dual perception — to see both things at the same time, the oil paint and the canvas, the character and the figure that he/she represents — is well described by the concept of *twofoldness*, a term coined by Richard Wollheim (1987: 21) in the realm of painting, and developed by Murray Smith (1995: 42-44), who extends the concept to other fields, in particular the cinema but also literature (2010:

234-238 and 2011: 277-294). The issue is one of highlighting the *formal* and *referential* aspects of a work of art (Smith, 2011: 286), essentials as much for the construction as for the perception of a literary character, the category which is of most interest to the present study. The differentiation of these two levels, at times, goes unnoticed given how accustomed we are to the game of literature, but its importance in some novels is analogous to that of painting when we speak of how composition, in its aesthetic aspects, operates in favour of the content of the work. In painting, for example, Goya's smudged features on the face of the man lying on the ground aid in communicating the horror of his death (Kieran, 2005: 59-62), and the monochromatic collage in *Guernica* reinforces the chaos and the meaninglessness of the atrocity portrayed.

In literature, our dual perception influences the appreciation of a fictional work. It would not be rare for us to speak of characters as if they were real people — with desires and their own personality —, and we could well come to identify with them empathically, lamenting their unhappy fate or expressing joy in their successes (Smith, 2011: 277). Identifying with them in such a way, however, does not erase our awareness of the fictionality of the character. Indeed, this is the point that I would like to underscore by extending the concept of *twofoldness* a bit farther, as there are works that play with our ability to simultaneously understand what is diegetic and extradiegetic, what falls within the scope of the story or on the level of discourse, and even what is real and what is fictional. That is to say, it is also based on this differentiation between what is unique to the fictional construction and what is referenced in the extra-fictional world that metafictional and metaleptic devices are constructed, which disturb the stability of the literary game and call attention to that which constitutes it as such.

In Portuguese, a good translation for *twofoldness* applied to the character can be found in *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, by writer José Saramago (1922-2010), when Maria Sara explains that characters are "people in books"[1]. This awareness described in the character's for-

[1] This is indeed the title (in Portuguese) of the book by Carlos Reis, with reflections on the category of the character, from whose chapter entitled, "Pessoas de livro: figuração e sobrevida da personagem" I took the reference to Saramago (2015: 120).

mal and referential dimension, and especially the interplay of the two levels, is quite important in Saramago's fiction and is the foundation of the transformation of both the heteronym Ricardo Reis and his creator Fernando Pessoa as fictional characters. Focusing on Fernando Pessoa's figuration[2] in *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*[3], the present study seeks to develop certain hypotheses: the novel not only plays with our dual perception of the various levels that are involved in a work of fiction but also does so in Pessoa's style; in other words, a metaleptic reflection on the ontology of the character is already present, to a certain extent, in the Portuguese poet's work. In parallel fashion, Pessoa's presence in the narrative — this "intruder" from the real world who plays a supporting role to his own creation — has to do with the novel's ideological affirmation which offers up a reflection on the status of characters, authors, heteronyms, that is, 'people in books' and flesh-and-blood people and their role in fiction and in the world. Finally, the construction of narratives such as *The Year*, which affirm the *afterlife* of the character (Reis, 2015: 49) as well as the development of concepts such as *twofoldness* and to a greater extent metalepsis, demonstrate the revalorisation of the category of the character, which, with all its consistency of paper, has been enjoying rather comfortable circulation in books and in the world.

The transfictional circulation of writer-characters is the distinct hallmark of the work of Portuguese poet and writer Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), which is, in and of itself, a metaleptic reflection on artistic creation. This universe is marked by "paper beings" who are presented as figures called heteronyms and endowed with personality and style, expressed in the poetic forms utilized and in the themes addressed, in sum, in the features and preferences of each one. In this affording of authorship to a diversity of discourses which, in their singularity, we may say that they are bearers of the "author function" (Foucault, 2001: 817-818), we have marked the difference between the heteronym and the traditional character: in Pessoa's words, although the

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[2] My work is based on that of Carlos Reis, who takes figuration to be the process that goes beyond the characterization of the character and includes elements having to do with discourse (Reis, 2015: 27-28).

[3] Henceforth, I will refer to the book by the abbreviated title of *The Year*.

substance is the same, the form is something else: "There are authors who write plays and novels, and they often endow the characters of their plays and novels with feelings and ideas that they insist are not their own. Here the substance is the same, though the form is different" (Pessoa, 2001: 2).[4]

The fact is that Pessoa goes beyond the creation of independent figures who engage in dialogue, exchange letters, and influence each other; he also brings to the same level these fictional beings, the heteronyms, and their creator, the orthonym. And he presents this coexistence as something natural: "But if tomorrow, traveling in America, I were to run into the physical person of Ricardo Reis, who in my opinion lives there, my soul wouldn't relay to my body the slightest flinch of surprise; all would be as it should be" (Pessoa, 2001: 4)[5]. In this statement on the juncture or the encounter of two levels — one that is Pessoa's while the other belongs to his heteronym, Ricardo Reis —, we are offered a glimpse of the metaleptic movement that constitutes the Portuguese poet's basis for creation. The phenomena of heteronomy and orthonomy play with the frontier between the real and the fictional, and in so doing, they enable the creation to leap from the page in a self-generated act of autonomy, yet at the same time they pull the creator toward the universe of the characters. For this reason we may speak about metalepsis in the terms that Genette ascribes to it: not only as the metaleptic figure who reveals the transgressive passage from one narrative level to the other (1972: 243-244), but also as a "manipulation [...] of this particular causal relationship which unites, in one sense or another, the author to his work, or in a more general manner, the producer of a representation to the very representation".[6]

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[4] "Há autores que escrevem dramas e novelas; e nesses dramas e nessas novelas atribuem sentimentos e ideias às figuras [...]. Aqui a substância é a mesma, embora a forma seja diversa" (Pessoa, 2017: 143).

[5] "Se amanhã eu, viajando na América, encontrasse subitamente a pessoa física de Ricardo Reis, que, a meu ver, lá vive, nenhum gesto de pasmo me sairia da alma para o corpo; estava certo tudo" (Pessoa, 2017: 146)

[6] « Une manipulation [...] de cette relation causale particulière qui unit, dans un sens ou dans l'autre, l'auteur à son œuvre, ou plus largement le producteur d'une représentation à cette représentation elle-même » (Genette, 2004: 14).

It is precisely this metaleptic universe that Saramago will address in *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, a novel published in 1984, whose protagonist, as the title would imply, is the heteronym who lived in Brazil from 1919 onward and who had not yet died, as noted in the biography which Pessoa had given him.[7] The dialogue with Pessoa will be of importance as much in *substance* as in *form*; that is to say, we see before us a continuity not only in the history of the heteronym himself, with all of his unique attributes, but also, to a certain extent, in the way one speaks of this heteronym via metalepsis. Thus, the encounter with Ricardo Reis, which Pessoa would affirm as being possible and natural, effectively takes place in Saramago's novel:

> He recognized him at once, though they had not seen each other for many years. Nor did he think it strange that Fernando Pessoa should be sitting there waiting for him. He said Hello, not expecting a reply, absurdity does not always obey logic, but Pessoa did in fact reply, saying, Hello, and stretched out his hand, then they embraced. Well, how have you been, one of them asked, or both, not that it matters, the question is so meaningless (Saramago, 1999b: 63-64).[8]

To function better, *The Year* needs a reader who is minimally familiar with Pessoa's universe of heteronyms, with the fictional dimension of the heteronym, and the real reference to the heteronym's creator. Thus, in having Ricardo Reis encounter his creator, Fernando Pessoa, in the novel, the latter already deceased, and this in dialogue with Pessoa's own text, Saramago engages in a literalisation of what was, to a certain extent, metalepsis. And in so doing, and much like Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), *The Year* is constructed as "a vast expansion of

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[7] The principal biographical reference on the heteronyms is established by Pessoa in a letter written to critic Adolfo Casais Monteiro (1985: 228-241).

[8] "Reconheceu-o imediatamente apesar de não o ver há tantos anos, e não pensou que fosse acontecimento irregular estar ali à sua espera Fernando Pessoa, disse Olá, embora duvidasse de que ele lhe responderia, nem sempre o absurdo respeita a lógica, mas o caso é que respondeu, disse Viva, e estendeu-lhe a mão, depois abraçaram-se, Então como tem passado, um deles fez a pergunta, ou ambos, não importa averiguar" (Saramago, 2016: 88).

metalepsis" (Genette, 1983a: 235)[9], telling the story of the heteronym-character who not only escapes from the literary work and the poetic genre in which he existed but also *outlives* his master. This separation and autonomy enjoyed by Ricardo Reis will be constantly reaffirmed in the novel:

> This newspaper gives no more information. Another reports the same facts with different words, Fernando Pessoa, the extraordinary poet of Mensagem, an ode of patriotic fervor and one of the most beautiful ever written, was buried yesterday […]. In his poetry he was not only Fernando Pessoa but also Álvaro de Campos, Alberto Caeiro, and Ricardo Reis. There you are, an error caused by not paying attention, by writing what one misheard, *because we know very well* that Ricardo Reis is this man who is reading the newspaper with his own open and living eyes, a doctor forty-eight years of age, one year older than Fernando Pessoa when his eyes were closed, eyes that were dead beyond a shadow of doubt (Saramago, 1999b: 23-24, author's emphasis).[10]

In this excerpt, the pronoun 'we', which includes the reader and calls him/her into the narrative, is also metaleptic.[11] It marks a narrative suspension which serves to introduce some important information, in particular, the age of both Reis and Pessoa, and the fact that the heteronym is one year older than his creator, reminding the reader of the

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[9] « Une vaste expansion de la métalepse » (Genette, 1972: 245).

[10] "Não diz mais este jornal, outro diz doutra maneira o mesmo, Fernando Pessoa, o poeta extraordinário da Mensagem, poema de exaltação nacionalista, dos mais belos que se têm escrito, foi ontem a enterrar, […] na poesia não era só ele, Fernando Pessoa, ele era também Álvaro de Campos, e Alberto Caeiro, e Ricardo Reis, pronto, já cá faltava o erro, a desatenção, o escrever por ouvir dizer, *quando muito bem sabemos*, nós, que Ricardo Reis é sim este homem que está lendo o jornal com os seus próprios olhos abertos e vivos, médico, de quarenta e oito anos de idade, mais um que a idade de Fernando Pessoa quando lhe fecharam os olhos, esses sim, mortos" (Saramago, 2016: 36-37).

[11] According to Genette (2004: 24), « Si l'auteur peut ainsi feindre d'intervenir dans une action qu'il feignait jusque-là de seulement rapporter, il peut aussi bien feindre d'y entraîner son lecteur », and in doing so, he « associe simplement le lecteur ou l'auditeur à l'acte de narration ». It is a question of rhetorical metalepsis, according to the distinction that Ryan (2005: 205-209) proposes in relation to ontological metalepsis.

transgression — metaleptic in nature — with which he/she is dialoguing and reinforcing the idea that this very transgression of the frontier of representation is, in fact, the basis of the novel's plot.

Amongst the narrator's interventions, Fernando Pessoa's presence is an important operator of metalepsis in the narrative, as much for having to do with the intrusion by a "real person" in the diegesis as in the position which he occupies in the novel, one of an apparition about to lose his human contours and affirming himself as a fictional being while leaving both the field of vision and the memory of those who still live. This intrusion by a "real person" is a recourse used mainly in the cinema when an actor plays him/herself in a certain film, thus playing with our dual perception of the character. In literature, such special participation is less conspicuous, but it does occur with some frequency when we have a character from historical extradiegesis — in this case Fernando Pessoa — appearing in a novel in which most of the characters are fictitious. According to Genette, it is the habit we have of reading historical novels which prevents us from perceiving the transgressive nature of this intrusion from the real presence (Genette, 2004: 130). Nevertheless, in the case of *The Year*, the presence of both the creator and the creation on the same level calls attention to the historicity and fictionality of both, creating an effect that is even greater than that of Hitchcock's appearances in his own films, given how the narrator of *The Year* seems to insist on commenting on this encounter, highlighting what would otherwise be absurd. The interaction between fictional and real characters is also very important in *Baltasar and Blimunda* (*Memorial do convento*, from 1982), in which we have on the one hand King João V and Bartolomeu Lourenço (de Gusmão) and, on the other, Baltasar and Blimunda — although the status of historical or fictional character is not absolute, especially for Blimunda. The similarities between the two novels, published two years apart, also extends to the sturdy dialogue that they both establish with Portuguese history and the critical dimension involved in the construction of these characters from historical extradiegesis.

In *The Year*, Fernando Pessoa occupies a position that is somewhat similar to Blimunda's, one of a character who is differentiated from others by his/her fantastic nature, and this unusual element serves an important critical function in both novels: in *Baltasar and Blimunda*,

Blimunda has the power to see inside a person and to know their desires, which then serve as fuel for the airship of Father Bartolomeu, allowing for an allegorical interpretation of what drives human creation, in opposition to the religious obscurantism that the novel is denouncing. In *The Year*, which begins with Ricardo Reis's arrival in Lisbon on December 29th, 1935, a month after the death of his creator, Fernando Pessoa emerges as a type of phantasm that can only circulate amongst the living for nine months more, this being the time it would take for him to be forgotten, and a reflection of the nine uncounted months that preceded birth (Saramago, 2016: 89). But unlike Blimunda, Fernando Pessoa is a character who is known to us from the reality of history, and he is not brought forward as the protagonist in the novel. Instead, it is his heteronym — or we might well say his literary work — who, still being alive, is able to take the place of his creator:

> The death of Fernando Pessoa, apparently, was a valid reason for crossing the Atlantic after an absence of sixteen years, for staying in Portugal, resuming his practice, writing a poem now and then, growing old, taking the place, after a fashion, of the poet who died, even if no one noticed the substitution (Saramago, 1999b: 281).[12]

In fact, Fernando Pessoa in the novel is constructed based on his relationship with Ricardo Reis, either through a series of encounters or when in daydreams and reflections he appears in Ricardo Reis's thoughts. In total, Pessoa comes directly onto the scene twelve times, in nearly alternating moments: five casual encounters of Reis with Pessoa during his strolling about Lisbon (2, 4, 5, 7, 11) and six episodes in which Pessoa goes to visit Reis, either at the Hotel Bragança (1, 3) or at his house in the Alto de Santa Catarina (6, 8, 10, 12), including the final visit in which Reis decides to accompany Pessoa for his definitive departure from the world of the living. On only one occasion does

[12] "A morte de Fernando Pessoa parecera-lhe forte razão para atravessar o Atlântico depois de dezasseis anos de ausência, deixar-se ficar por cá, vivendo da medicina, escrevendo alguns versos, envelhecendo, ocupando, duma certa maneira, o lugar daquele que morrera, mesmo que ninguém se apercebesse da substituição" (Saramago, 2016: 384).

Fernando Pessoa interact with someone other than Reis (9); in addition, there is another episode in which Reis runs after someone dressed as the figure of death believing it to be Pessoa but realising later that it was simply a carnival reveller (between the 4th and 5th apparition).

Nº.	Place	Encounter
1st	Hotel Bragança	Returning to the hotel, Ricardo Reis encounters Fernando Pessoa waiting for him in his room (Saramago, 2016: 88).
2nd	A street in Lisbon	"Ricardo Reis is about to descend the Rua dos Sapateiros when he sees Fernando Pessoa" (Saramago, 1999b: 74).[13]
3rd	Hotel Bragança	Ricardo Reis, reading *The God of the Labyrinth* by Herbert Quain, "shut his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them, Fernando Pessoa was sitting at the foot of the bed" (Saramago, 1999b: 96).[14]
4th	A café in Lisbon	"They had met in a local café, half a dozen tables, no one there knew them" (Saramago, 1999b: 129).[15]
?	Chiado	During the carnival revels, Reis sees a funeral procession of masked people, accompanied by "a strange figure in the procession, despite its being the most logical of all, namely Death [...], Could it be Fernando Pessoa" (Saramago, 1999b: 137).[16]
5th	Belvedere of Santa Catarina	Ricardo Reis observes the river while waiting for Marcenda: "I say, Reis, are you waiting for someone. The voice, biting and sardonic, is that of Fernando Pessoa" (Saramago, 1999b: 153).[17]
6th	House in the Alto de Santa Catarina	On Ricardo Reis's first night in his new house: "It was Fernando Pessoa, trust him to choose an awkward moment. [...] Were you asleep, I believe I dozed off" (Saramago, 1999b: 192).[18]

[13] "Vai Ricardo Reis a descer a Rua dos Sapateiros quando vê Fernando Pessoa" (Saramago, 2016: 102).

[14] "Fechou por alguns segundos os olhos e quando os abriu estava Fernando Pessoa sentado aos pés da cama" (Saramago, 2016: 131).

[15] "Tinham-se encontrado num café de bairro, de gente popular, meia dúzia de mesas, ninguém ali sabia quem eles eram" (Saramago, 2016: 175).

[16] "Um vulto singular no meio do acompanhamento, [...] a mais que todas lógica presença da morte […], lembrara-se do que lhe dissera Fernando Pessoa, seria ele" (Saramago, 2016: 178).

[17] "Ó Reis, você por aqui, está à espera de alguém, esta voz é de Fernando Pessoa, ácida, irónica" (Saramago, 2016: 209).

[18] "Era Fernando Pessoa, logo hoje se havia de ter lembrado. […] Dormia, Julgo que tinha adormecido" (Saramago, 2016: 261-262).

7th	Belvedere of Santa Catarina	Returning from dinner, Reis sees Pessoa from behind, next to the statue of the Adamastor: "his black suit barely distinguishable from the shadow thrown by the statue" (Saramago, 1999b: 233).[19]
8th	House in the Alto de Santa Catarina	Ricardo Reis was "in his study, trying to compose a poem" (Saramago, 1999b: 285).[20]
9th	Largo de Camões	The only scene in which Pessoa does not interact with Reis: "Had Ricardo Reis gone out this evening, he would have met Fernando Pessoa in the Praça de Luís de Camões" (Saramago, 1999b: 304).[21]
10th	House in the Alto de Santa Catarina	"One night Fernando Pessoa [...] knocked on his door" (Saramago, 1999b: 309).[22]
11th	Cemetery of Prazeres	"Ricardo Reis does not turn around. He knows that Fernando Pessoa is standing beside him, this time invisible" (Saramago, 1999b: 330).[23]
12th	House in the Alto de Santa Catarina	"A knock at the door [...], it was Fernando Pessoa […], I came to tell you that we will not see each other again […], Let's go then, he said, Where are you going, With you" (Saramago, 1999b: 357).[24]

Fernando Pessoa is thus a type of shadow which accompanies Ricardo Reis upon his return to a greyish and gloomy Lisbon, a Virgil of sorts, leading Dante on his passage to the other world (Saramago, 1999a: 110). Whether it be walking about Lisbon or chatting privately, Pessoa and Reis observe and comment upon this unrecognisable world

[19] "Mal se distingue o fato preto da sombra que a estátua projeta" (Saramago, 2016: 322).

[20] "Ricardo Reis estava no escritório, a tentar compor uns versos" (Saramago, 2016: 390).

[21] "Tivesse Ricardo Reis saído nessa noite e encontraria Fernando Pessoa na Praça de Luís de Camões" (Saramago, 2016: 417).

[22] "Numa destas noites Fernando Pessoa bateu-lhe à porta" (Saramago, 2016: 425).

[23] "Ricardo Reis não se voltou. Sabe que Fernando Pessoa está a seu lado, desta vez invisível" (Saramago, 2016: 455).

[24] "Então bateram à porta […], afinal era Fernando Pessoa, […] Vim cá para lhe dizer que não tornaremos a ver-nos, […] Então vamos, disse, Para onde é que você vai, Vou consigo" (Saramago, 2016: 493).

with its morbid spectacles; they speak about politics and politicians, wars and revolutions as well as the misfortunes of other characters that occur along the way, whether in the form of news items or in remembrances. In these dialogues, Pessoa's critical role is highlighted as it points to the incoherencies and contradictions of Ricardo Reis, who is no longer the apathetic heteronym of the past, content with just watching life go by. In the same way, Pessoa shows himself as critical of that time, one that is no longer his, to the extent that even for Reis the transformation is notable: "As I recall, when you were alive you were much less subversive. When one dies, one sees things differently" (Saramago, 1999b: 288).[25]

Pessoa's characterisation is thus seen more in the dialogues with Reis than in descriptions; for example, by way of his conversations with the heteronym, we come to learn about his ability to remain invisible and how his image is no longer reflected in the mirror (Saramago, 2016: 90). If not for this, few details on his profile would emerge, and it is in this 'what's missing' that the emphasis appears: Pessoa loses his face in the novel, he wears neither eyeglasses nor a hat (Saramago, 2016: 390-391, 74, 102). The character of Pessoa sidesteps becoming the caricature that was prevalent at the time that *The Year* was published. It bears noting that the novel was published in late 1984, one year prior to the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Pessoa's death and at a time in which his 'cult of personality' was gaining force and assuming a certain dimension of political influence. This was criticised by Saramago and others, especially when the author's mortal remains were transferred from the Cemetery of Prazeres to the Monastery of the Hieronymites in October 1985, following a proposal made to the National Assembly in 1983.[26]

The context of publication is important given that the novel, harkening back to an older time, also sets its critical sites on the present,

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[25] "Você, em vida, era menos subversivo, tanto quanto me lembro, Quando se chega a morto vemos a vida doutra maneira" (Saramago, 2016: 395).

[26] The proposal was presented on June 24, 1983 by the then Socialist Party deputy, Manuel Alegre, who wanted the ceremony to be held that same year, at the conclusion of the 17th European Exhibition of Art, Science, and Culture, which took place from May to October (cf. *Diário da Assembleia da República*, 1983: 253). Nevertheless, this was only realised during the commemorations of 1985.

shedding light on the Pessoa myth and especially on the association with the Camões myth, whose appropriation by the *Estado Novo* is repeatedly taken up by the novel as a symbol of the epic grandeur that is eagerly sought:

> [Ricardo Reis] saw bunches of flowers at the foot of the statue of Camões, homage from the Federation of Patriots to the epic poet, the great bard of the nation's valor, that all may know that we have shaken off the enfeebling and degrading melancholy we suffered in the sixteenth century. Today, *believe me*, we are a very happy people. As soon as darkness falls we will switch on floodlights here in the square and Senhor Camões will be lit up, *what am I saying*, he will be completely transformed by the dazzling splendor. *True*, he is blind in the right eye, but he can still see with his left, and if he finds the light too strong let him speak up, we can easily dim the intensity to twilight, to the original gloom that we have by now grown so accustomed to (Saramago, 1999b: 303-304, author's italics).[27]

The metaleptic intervention of the narrator, who constantly announces his presence and corrects himself in the act of narration, reinforces the irony with which the nationalistic appropriation of Camões's figure is treated in the novel. After this description of the space, and with Ricardo Reis already at home, we then learn that Pessoa is in the square, sitting at Camões's feet (his 9th apparition). It is the statue that responds to Pessoa's thoughts when he comes to realise that in the *Mensagem* there is no poem dedicated to Camões: "It was envy, my dear Pessoa, but forget it, don't torment yourself so,

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[27] [Ricardo Reis] reparou que havia ramos de flores nos degraus da estátua de Camões, homenagem das associações de patriotas ao épico, ao cantor sublime das virtudes da raça, para que se entenda bem que não temos mais que ver com a apagada e vil tristeza de que padecíamos no século dezasseis, hoje somos um povo muito contente, *acredite*, logo à noite acenderemos aqui na praça uns projetores, o senhor Camões terá toda a sua figura iluminada, *que digo eu*, transfigurada pelo deslumbrante esplendor, bem *sabemos* que é cego do olho direito, *deixe lá*, ainda lhe ficou o esquerdo para nos ver, se achar que a luz é forte demais para si, diga, não nos custa nada baixá-la até à penumbra, à escuridão total, às trevas originais, já estamos habituados (Saramago, 2016: 417, grifos meus).

here nothing has importance" (Saramago, 1999b: 304).[28] Camões is also an "intruder" coming from the real world, and his status in the narrative is similar to Pessoa's: whereas the latter is a figure from the world beyond, the former is nothing more than a statue, such that both have less *material* reality — human reality — than fictional characters, than Ricardo Reis himself. This figuration of Pessoa and Camões, something diminished in their ontological status, also serves in the critique that the novel makes of a certain role that is afforded to the author in the construction of Portuguese narratives — or better put — nationalist narratives. The comparison between the two poets is evident in the book, extending to the political aspect of the posterity for both of them, as Pessoa's character reveals his interest in the world of the living, leaving it clear in the novel that he wants nothing of Camões's destiny, relegated as it is to that of a quasi-military statue transfigured by the spotlights:

> They have removed or are about to remove the statue of Pinheiro Chagas, and that of a certain José Luis Monteiro, whom I've never heard of. Nor I, but as for Pinheiro Chagas, they have done the right thing. Be quiet, you don't know what awaits you. They will never erect a statue to commemorate me, only if they have no shame, I'm not one for statues. I couldn't agree more, there can be nothing more depressing than having a statue as part of one's destiny, let them raise statues to military leaders and politicians, who like that sort of thing, we are men of words only and words cannot be set in bronze and stone, they are words, nothing more, look at Camões, where are his words (Saramago, 1999b: 309-310).[29]

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[28] "Foi inveja, meu querido Pessoa, mas deixe, não se atormente tanto, cá onde ambos estamos nada tem importância" (Saramago, 2016: 418).

[29] Tiraram, ou estão para tirar, a estátua do Pinheiro Chagas, e a de um José Luís Monteiro que não sei quem tenha sido, Nem eu, mas o Pinheiro Chagas é bem feito, Cale-se, que você não sabe para o que está guardado, A mim nunca me levantarão estátuas, só se não tiverem vergonha, eu não sou homem para estátuas, Estou de acordo consigo, não deve haver nada mais triste que ter uma estátua no seu destino, Façam-nas a militares e políticos, eles gostam, nós somos apenas homens de palavras, e as palavras não podem ser postas em bronze ou pedra, são só palavras, e basta, Veja o Camões, onde estão as palavras dele (Saramago, 2016: 425-426).

Here, the time of diegesis seems to be intersecting with that of extradiegesis as there is irony in the character making reference to something which, fifty years later, was already occurring: the celebrated figure of Pessoa was becoming the new official national symbol, comparable to Camões and reaching a political status for which his own statue would not be long in coming.[30] Thus, the place occupied by Pessoa's character is, in fact, one of "ideological affirmation", to use the expression by Reis and Lopes (1990: 318.) As a secondary character, with his days on Earth numbered, and as someone who, via his interventions, plays a predominantly critical role, Pessoa affirms a position contrary to that of discourses from different periods which praised the creation of national myths to serve as propaganda for a political agenda. The novel places itself in opposition to this simplification, against reducing Pessoa to a *type*, one where he is the last singer of the virtues of the fatherland, synthesised in the image of a statue that is raised and reallocated according to the dictates of fashion.

All these metaleptic movements of the novel — whether in the figuration of Pessoa (or even Ricardo Reis based on biographical parallels), or in the anachronisms that intermingle the time of the diegesis of the characters with the extradiegesis of the reader, or in the intromissions of the narrator — show evidence of the limit that is being transposed and, to a certain extent, break with the "fictional contract" (Genette, 2004: 23), which consists of negating the fictional nature of the fiction. With metalepsis, such a "suspension of disbelief", to use Coleridge's words, is shaken[31], because this type of transgression underscores the process of creation itself, as if it were to suddenly allow us to see the theatre's backstage area, the camera when filming, and the writer's pen.[32] In the case of *The Year*, the representation is also present on the diegetic level and not only in the discourse: as readers, we accompany a scene from

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[30] The statue of Fernando Pessoa in the Chiado district was erected to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth and was inaugurated on June 13, 1988.

[31] "Called into question is the Coleridgean 'willing suspension of disbelief' […] with metalepsis, it is the reader's belief, not disbelief, that is suspended" (Pier, 2009: 193).

[32] In Genette's words, it is a question of games which « manifestent par l'intensité de leurs effets l'importance de la limite qu'ils s'ingénient à franchir au mépris de la vraisemblance, *et qui est précisément la narration (ou la représentation) elle-même* » (Genette, 1972: 245, original italics).

the play "Tá Mar" by Alfredo Cortez, the filming of *A Revolução de Maio* by António Lopes Ribeiro, as well as certain moments in which Ricardo Reis is writing his poems. The transpositions of a narrative level that these scenes afford and the figuration of metaleptic characters such as Pessoa thus constitute a challenge for the reader, expressed in the following by Borges, quoted by Genette (1972: 245):

> Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet*? I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious. In 1833, Carlyle observed that the history of the universe is an infinite sacred book that all men write and read and try to understand, and in which they are also written (Borges, 1964: 196).[33]

Part of the uneasiness that *The Year* can cause has to do with this type of inversion, as in Fernando Pessoa becoming a character aided by his own creation. What is most disturbing in the metalepsis is this mixture of levels that we immediately identify, and in a novel that establishes a strong dialogue with history, the erasing of the boundaries between what is real and fictional seems to add one more degree of risk for the reader, who may suddenly see himself/herself as a possible character in that narrative as well. In this way, the metaleptic games in the novel equally reinforce its ideological-critical dimension, since the narrative in question, which beckons the reader into the work, speaks of a particularly dangerous and dark period in history which could spill out from the book at any moment. Recognising the risk of such an occurrence, the novel invites the reader not to participate in history but rather to prevent it from repeating itself.

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[33] "¿Por qué nos inquieta que Don Quijote sea lector del *Quijote*, y Hamlet, espectador de *Hamlet*? Creo haber dado con la causa: tales inversiones sugieren que si los caracteres de una ficción pueden ser lectores o espectadores, nosotros, sus lectores o espectadores, podemos ser ficticios. En 1833, Carlyle observó que la historia universal es un infinito libro sagrado que todos los hombres escriben y leen y tratan de entender, y en el que también los escriben" (Borges, 1974: 669).

As has been said, dual perception affects our reception of works of art: in the case of the two paintings mentioned at the beginning of this text, it is important to perceive that the smudged or straight lines, the concealed or well-lit face of a character has a meaning in that composition beyond the aesthetic question. This needs to be taken into consideration especially in the work of artists who, like, Picasso, are reacting against the spectacle of the world: "Painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war against brutality and darkness" (*apud* Chilvers, 1994: 384). Saramago's books were also clearly not made to decorate bookshelves, and the figuration of Pessoa in *The Year* precisely rejects this decorative and belittling place for art and the author who has created it.

Depicting the tragedy of the dictatorship, as well as the spectacle that was Europe in the period between World War I and II (and including the Spanish Civil War), works such as *The Year* stand out for how they merge the formal and referential aspects of their composition, playing with our dual perception as if they were to say: this is and this is not a fiction. In this process, as a vast expansion of the metalepsis that forms Pessoa's work, *The Year* places equal value on the place of the character, without whom the narrative would not sustain itself. Directly linked to the character, the metalepsis in *The Year* offers another status to the "beings without entrails", who, much more than an "effect of the text"[34], are the central axis of this composition. They are indeed the ideological point of departure which the novel proposes in the transfictional game of remission to characters, heteronyms, people, and authors who travel through diverse books and worlds. I dare suppose that, with metalepsis, it might well be possible to appreciate a revalorisation of the category of the character within Genette's own theory: the character, in the end, emerges at the core of his most recent reflections on the concept (2004), transposing levels, disturbing the narrative logic, and forcing the theory to afford it due attention. We would do well to rethink the role and importance of characters in the narrative, and its place in fiction and outside it. Pessoa once mentioned many

[34] According to Genette's famous observation (1983b: 93), in which he defends that it is more important « s'intéresser davantage au discours constituant qu'à l'objet constitué, ce 'vivant sans entrailles' qui n'est ici […] qu'un effet de texte ».

years ago: "I can't be sure, of course, if they really never existed, or if it's me who doesn't exist. In this matter, as in any other, we shouldn't be dogmatic" (Pessoa, 2001: 254).[35]

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[35] "Não sei, bem entendido, se realmente não existiram, ou se sou eu que não existo. Nestas coisas, como em todas, não devemos ser dogmáticos" (Pessoa, 1974: 95).

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6. VOICES IN *TRAVELLING*: FIGURATIONS OF THE CHARACTER IN *THE MURMURING COAST*

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1. Preliminary remarks

The principle of transgression that marks the concept of metalepsis, according to F. Lavocat (2016), is the principle that subsists with respect to the particular dynamics assumed by the protagonist of *The Murmuring Coast* by Lídia Jorge (1988) — Evita, or Eva Lopo —, be it in the novel or as envisaged in the script and in the 2004 film of the same name, by Margarida Cardoso. The same principle of transgression legitimises the complex articulation of voices — the "*voices in travelling*" — which traverses the three texts (the novel, the script and the film) and whose reason for being resides in the temporality of the narrative, and in the fragmentation of the writing and the image (which is simultaneously the fragmentation of the character). Moreover, at the threshold of its conception, the novel seems to contain this transversal moment — the transversal movement of fiction and memory. In attempting to portray the end of the colonial war in Mozambique through the eyes of the protagonist, the author reveals her to be twofold — Evita and Eva Lopo —, at the same time the narrative also reveals itself as twofold: the first narrative, *The Locusts* (*Os Gafanhotos*), with a heterodiegetic narrator, containing the dreamlike recounting of Evita's history in Africa from her arrival as a "war bride" to the death/suicide of the Lieutenant, Luís Alex; and the long second narrative written in the first person by Eva Lopo, who comments on *The Locusts* and adds facts and voices retrieved from a fragmented memory some twenty years later (under the autobiographical perspective of Lídia Jorge).

Let us consider, then, the contents of Scene 6 from the script that Cédric Basso and Margarida Cardoso wrote in 2001, which brought Lídia Jorge's *The Murmuring Coast* to the cinema:

> 6. EXT./LATE AFTERNOON — STELLA MARIS/TERRACE
> Shot of EVITA from behind, wearing a wedding dress. EVITA crosses the terrace where her wedding celebration is taking place. It is very windy. The camera follows her. From the terrace one can see the sea and part of the colonial town. [...] Most of the guests are military men in uniform and their wives. [...]
> EVITA'S VOICE-OVER
> Don't worry about the truth…
> You, me, wherever we went, wherever we were, we would only need a bit of correspondence… simple things… [...] Do I remember Evita? Yes… today I can see her clearly, walking through the Hotel Stella Maris, and I feel some fondness for her and I even miss her, I miss the time I had a small waist… At that time, that was my name, at that time Evita was me…[1]

The movement of transposition from the novel, published in 1988 by Dom Quixote[2], to the script (noted as being "based on the work by Lídia Jorge of the same name"), and finally to the film, which premiered in November 2004, expressively creates four distinct and independent narrative moments, albeit ones that legitimately overlay in terms of

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[1] The text of the script used corresponds to the 4th version, and was made available by the Cinemateca.
"6. EXT./FIM DE TARDE — STELLA MARIS/TERRAÇO
Costas de EVITA vestida com o vestido de noiva. EVITA atravessa o terraço onde decorre a festa do seu casamento. Está muito vento. A câmara segue-a. Do terraço vê-se o mar e uma parte da cidade colonial. [...] A maior parte dos convidados são militares, em uniforme, e as suas mulheres. [...]
VOZ OFF DE EVITA
Não se preocupe com a verdade…
A si, a mim, que fomos onde fomos, que estivemos onde estivemos, basta-nos uma correspondência pequenina… coisas simples… [...] Se me lembro de Evita? Sim… hoje consigo vê-la claramente a atravessar o hotel do Stella Maris e fico com algum apreço por ela e tenho até saudades dela, do tempo em que tinha a cintura fina…
Nesse tempo chamava-se assim, nesse tempo Evita era eu…" (Basso e Cardoso, 2001: 4).
[2] It is the 2008 edition that is cited throughout the present article. The English translation is from 1995.

transgression: i) the narrative inscribed as *didascalias*, in Evita's voice-overs and in the camera movements of Scene 6 of the script, which corresponds to the presentation of the protagonist in Lídia Jorge's novel; ii) the recreation of the kiss of the bride and groom, Evita and Luís Alex, after the former's arrival in Lourenço Marques, during the scene on the terrace of the Hotel Stella Maris, the symbolic space of the wedding and the war, reproducing the image represented in the first sentence of *The Locusts*[3]; iii) the *incipit* of the second narrative of the novel[4], the long introspection written in the first person and in an autobiographical tone where, as mentioned earlier, Eva Lopo reconfigures Evita's prior history, doing so twenty years later and by use of memory and establishes a reality that only subsists in the precariousness of

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[3] "The groom's mouth came down close to hers, meeting her teeth at first; but then she stopped laughing and their tongues touched for the photographer. A shiver of joy and excitement rippled through the wedding party, as if any worry that Earth had lost its power to proliferate had been dispelled" (Jorge, 1995: 1). "O noivo aproximou-se-lhe da boca, a princípio encontrou os dentes, mas logo ela parou de rir e as línguas se tocaram diante do fotógrafo. Foi aí que o cortejo sofreu um estremecimento de gáudio e furor, como se qualquer desconfiança de que a Terra pudesse ter deixado de ser fecundada se desvanecesse" (Jorge, 2008: 9).

[4] "It is a delightful narrative. I have read it carefully and concluded that everything in it is exact and true, particularly as regards smell and sound (said Eva Lopo). For you to write it like that, you have had to make a very arduous trip to a time from which anybody else would have difficulty returning. As for my own role, your account was a kind of alcohol lamp that has lit up, for this afternoon, a place that grows dimmer, from week to week, from day to day, with the speed of years. Besides, what you sought to clarify became clear, and what you sough to hide remained hidden. […] I would advise you, however, not to worry about the truth that cannot be reconstructed or about verisimilitude, which is an illusion of the senses. Worry about correspondence. Or do you believe in a truth other than the one that can be obtained through correspondence?" (Jorge, 1995: 35-36). "Esse é um relato encantador. Li-o com cuidado e concluí que tudo nele é exacto e verdadeiro, sobretudo em matéria de cheiro e som — disse Eva Lopo. Para o escrever desse modo, deve ter feito uma viagem trabalhosa a um tempo onde qualquer outro teria dificuldade em regressar. Pelo que me diz respeito, o seu relato foi uma espécie de lamparina de álcool que iluminou, durante esta tarde, um local que escurece de semana a semana, de dia a dia, à velocidade dos anos. Além disso, o que pretendeu clarificar clarifica, e o que pretendeu esconder ficou imerso. […] Aconselho-o, porém, a que não se preocupe com a verdade que não se reconstitui, nem com a verosimilhança que é uma ilusão dos sentidos. Preocupe-se com a correspondência. Ou acredita noutra verdade que não seja a que se consegue a partir da correspondência?" (Jorge, 2008: 41-42).

fiction; iv) the first images of "Evita's story" in the film by Margarida Cardoso, presenting an overlaying of *The Locusts* with the second narrative in the novel, one in which the abrupt burst of fiction — seen in a perspective that opens on the protagonist, who is in the foreground and protected in a fairy-tale world — is cut by Eva Lopo's voice-over which gradually invites the memory, in a serene *découpage* of the camera (Cabrita, 2004: 37) and announces another perspective on the character, on Africa, and on fictional writing.

In this regard, and inasmuch as the four narrative configurations are simultaneously woven in a polyphony and confluence of voices, legitimised by the dual focalisation constructed by Lídia Jorge's novel and in the dialectical extension of perspectives that Margarida Cardoso's script and film develop, constantly returning to both novel-based "narratives", it would seem viable, via the contiguous profiles of Evita/Eva Lopo in both the novel and the film script, to address the concept of *metalepsis* as initially proposed in the seminal work by Gérard Genette (1972: 243 ss)[5], which Françoise Lavocat has taken up in a recent work (2016).

Suggestively, in the final chapter of Part III of her work — « Frontières de la fiction et métalepse » (Lavocat, 2016: 473-520) —, the author refers to *Figures III*, as well as the volume *Métalepses: entorses au pacte de la représentation*, directed by John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2005), to show that the relevance of the boundaries of fiction are articulated with the notion of *metalepsis*, restricting, however, its use to an "intrafictional" acceptance. Therefore, if it is Lavocat's (and Genette's) stance that metalepsis, in the intrafictional scope, can develop diverse movements of transgression and mark the passage between two levels of discourse and/or two ontological levels represented, we could well consider, first and foremost and in a generic way, the movement of transposition or *adaptive* rewriting of the character from the novel to the screenplay of the film as a meta-theoretical example of a boundary space that makes the ontological versatility of this narrative category clear. Moreover, in our understanding of Eva Lopo, at the beginning of her (second) narrative — someone for whom the truth is not recovered

[5] See also: Genette, 1983: 58-59; Genette, 2004: 7-10 (at the beginning of the work, the author presents a critical synopsis of his definitions of the concept and their epistemological implications).

by reading/looking at the "narrative" of *The Locusts*, (realising what it does not say about itself), and for whom verisimilitude is the illusion of the senses, "particularly as regards smell and sound" (Jorge, 1995: 35)[6], being an appreciation explicitly reflected in Evita's voice-over in the script and in the film — we note the clear awareness assumed by the character-narrator that the boundary between the truth and its fiction is shaded in "*twisting*/distortions" of the pact of representation (to borrow the expression that Jean-Marie Schaeffer uses for metaleptic movement), that is to say, once again, in ontological transgressions that assure its afterlife *in* the novel and *beyond* the novel.

In fact, in the figuration of Evita-Eva Lopo and in its cinematographic reconfiguration, there are temporal games and games of writing that are permitted simultaneously by the essence of the narrative and by the labour of the fiction: two stories, two narrative voices, two temporalities in the novel originating a type of vertigo of metalepsis; a story, a voice, and a voice-over in the script and in the film, interiorising the metalepsis. Evita is, *in fieri*, a character in constant ontological transgression and who only exists in the novel on the boundary of this transgression, which will come to be demonstrated by the film. Lídia Jorge affirms this to a certain extent in her understanding of Margarida Cardoso's *The Murmuring Coast* as a "revelation" of her own text and its characters[7], a different narrative that caused her "to revisit the book from another perspective", a constant game of "the hallucination of the memory"[8]. The very boundaries between discourses inherent to

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[6] "Matéria de cheiro e de som" (Jorge, 2008: 41).

[7] In an article written for *Expresso*, Lídia Jorge analyses the fiction of her novel and Margarida Cardoso's cinematographic fiction, implicitly dismantling the concept of *adaptation* (Jorge, 2004: 42).

[8] "Between the film and the book, in the end, I find no divergences, so to speak. I find the movement of elements and different modes of intensity that say the same thing […] the same desire to create a fictional space where something outside the paradigm happens, the same desire for this to occur under the impact of images created by the hallucination of the memory" ("entre filme e livro, afinal, não encontro propriamente divergências, encontro deslocação de elementos e diferentes modos de intensidade, para dizer o mesmo […] a mesma vontade de criar um espaço ficcional onde alguma coisa fora do paradigma acontece, a mesma vontade de que isso suceda sob o impacto de imagens criadas pela alucinação da memória", Jorge, 2004: 42).

adaptation[9] accentuate the porosity of this fictional back-and-forth movement and "put them in their place", that is, in the plural place of its own figuration, in *time* and *space*, the protagonist: "It is a violence that speaks of violence without showing it, one that rarely happens in the cinema. A rare decency of narrating. This touches me emotionally because the pact, made at the beginning, is entirely fulfilled. Beauty is in its proper place".[10]

2. On the dreamlike transgression: character and time

If the relationship of the character with the time in which the fiction is set is an essential feature of his/her figuration, then Evita-Eva Lopo becomes an interesting model of transgression given the confluence of voices that model her ontology as a protagonist[11]: the heterodiegetic voice of the narrative *The Locusts*, the homodiegetic voice of the second narrative, and the voice-overs of Margarida Cardoso's script and film, through which the character survives differently. In the context of plural identities, we also have the memory (the memory of fiction) instituted in a movement of *travelling*, in a subjective chronology that, as has been noted, introduces a span of 20 years to separate the protagonist's past from her present, the colonial days from the post-colonial period. Thus Lídia Jorge saw in the first narrative — Evita's story from her arrival in Mozambique and the wedding scene to the groom's death — a way to have the reader enter "inside a narrative where the

[9] There are several texts that reflect upon the epistemological and theoretical vicissitudes of the concept of adaptation, underscoring the liminal rejection of any evaluation of an ethical order and the substitution of the notion with *rewriting*. Highlighted here are two recent works on the theme (Cléder and Jullier, 2017; Boillat and Philippe, 2018).

[10] "É uma violência que fala da violência sem a mostrar, como raramente acontece no cinema. Uma rara decência de narrar. Isso emociona-me porque o pacto, feito no início, está inteiramente cumprido. A beleza está no seu lugar" (Jorge, 2004: 42).

[11] In her Master's thesis in which she points to the confrontation of perspectives on the war as identified in Lídia Jorge's novel and Margarida Cardoso's film, Susana Carvalho indicates the way in which the novelist makes Eva Lopo a driver of the narrative, concentrating the character, herself, into the protagonism in a nearly absolute way (Carvalho, 2008: 77).

hallucinated memory had to be stronger than the chronicle of time"[12]. Thus, there exists a suspension of time that is almost elliptical at the end of this first narrative moment — with the brief description of Luís Alex's death and Evita's return to Lisbon[13] now a widow of war —, to allow for the just interference of time in the previous evolution of the character, when she becomes the principal narrator in a vertiginous and long flash-back of the autobiographical facts initially recounted by others. Eva begins, in fact, by explaining the reason for which certain details are preserved in the memory as fragments without there being a rational justification for her, in the exact measure in which they are fixed in fragmentary fashion in the second, autobiographical narration through sensations and reasons of affection, of "the profound being of a peach" (Jorge, 1995: 35)[14].

It is thus by being aware of this fragmentation of the memory, that is to say, recognising the need to not leave the realm of fiction (the domain in which the character is constructed *in* and *through* time),[15] that Eva Lopo recovers Evita, the innocence of a pre-colonial perspective and of a dreamlike marriage later transformed into a perspective

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[12] "Para dentro de uma narrativa onde a memória alucinada tinha de ser mais forte do que a crónica do tempo" (Jorge, 2004: 42).

[13] "Evita was able to go to him, wash the hole on his forehead through which the bullet had been fired by the Lieutenant's own hand, and kiss him on the mouth until morning came. The night was green, through and through. […] Evita felt she had been the victim of a lesson as subtle as it was untransmittable, particularly when the Major stepped out from the entourage arranged in a semi-circle where the waves arrived foamless, bowed to his knees, and said, 'Madam, I offer you my condolences!'. She flew out on the first civilian flight. His body followed soon after, on a military boat" (Jorge, 1995: 33-34). "Evita pôde abeirar-se dele, lavar-lhe o buraco da testa por onde a bala havia entrado pelo próprio punho do alferes, e beijá-lo na boca até ser manhã. Verde toda a noite. […] Evita sentiu-se vítima de uma lição tão subtil que intransmissível, sobretudo quando do cortejo, posto em semicírculo, e onde as ondas chegavam sem espuma, o major surgiu, deu um passo em frente e se curvou até aos joelhos — 'Madame, os meus respeitos!'. Ela voou no primeiro avião civil. O corpo dele seguiu depois, num barco militar." (Jorge, 2008: 39).

[14] "Razão profunda do pêssego" (Jorge, 2008: 41).

[15] On this topic, see the long chapter that F. Lavocat dedicates to « Personne, personnage », a work previously referred to, where she analyses the question of the status of the character and its intrinsic link, in the scope of cognitive perspective, to the difference between reality and fiction (Lavocat, 2016: 345-380).

in mutation, in successive perspectives — "Evita would be, for me, an eye, or a look" (Jorge, 1995: 38)[16]. The perspective of the narrator consequently rewrites itself in the abrupt or slow temporality of the camera's perspective, inscribed by Margarida Cardoso in the script and transposed to the film. The time of the fiction in which Evita establishes herself in images is thus an intellectualised time, itself also marked by the fluid nature of memory and by the dream evoked by the dated song "Sol de Inverno" (sung by Simone de Oliveira) which accompanies the archival images from the colonial war in the film credits and in the script[17], moving on to the protagonist's wedding and to the beginning of the end[18]. On this point, Lídia Jorge notes that "the film starts off as a chronicle […] only afterwards it begins to transform into a shadow that the memory alters, and which resorts to photography as the principal transfiguring element of scenes between those that are real and imagined"[19].

Thus, the evolution of the protagonist — from the time of naïveté and not knowing oneself to the painful confrontation with Africa, with the maturity and disaggregation of the myth assumed in the autobiographical narrative — is developed not only in the novel and in the innumerable excepts that intensify the ambiguity in the perception of the truth and the reality between the two accounts, but also in the script and film, in the alternance of the fictional truth, situated in time (in the time of the fiction) with the dreamlike narrative (situated in the symbolic time of the colonial fiction):

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[16] "Evita seria para mim um olho ou um olhar" (Jorge, 2008: 43).

[17] "Scene 1. Archive images in black and white of daily life in Portugal and the colonies. Typical images taken during the time of the *Estado Novo*. Propaganda images showing stability, happiness, progress and multiracialism. [...]. Scene 2. EXT/DAY/SEA Farther off, we see only some waves of the sea. Next, a wide shot of EVITA'S face". "Cena 1. Imagens de arquivo, a preto e branco, da vida quotidiana em Portugal e nas colónias. Imagens típicas do Estado Novo. Imagens de propaganda representando estabilidade, felicidade, progresso e multirracialismo. [...]. Cena 2. EXT/DIA/MAR Em plano picado vemos só a água do mar, levemente agitada. Depois, em GP, o rosto de EVITA" (Basso e Cardoso, 2001: 2).

[18] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 3:23'.

[19] "O filme arranca como uma crónica [...] só depois se começa a transformar no fantasma que a memória altera, e para o qual concorre a fotografia como principal elemento transfigurador de cenas entre reais e imaginadas" (Jorge, 2004: 42).

> Truth is definitely not reality, though they may be twins, and in "The Locusts" it is not only truth that matters. [...] Truth must be unified, unfragmented, while reality can be — must be, otherwise it would explode — dispersed and irrelevant, slipping, as you know, toward nowhere (Jorge, 1995: 83).[20]

Margarida Cardoso indeed transports to the script and to the film this truth/reality dichotomy, which, at the edge of the boundaries of fiction contextualises the writing of the novelist and the voice of the protagonist by reclaiming the sentimental and political intrigue (Evita's relationship with the journalist, Álvaro Sabino, both attempting to denounce the death of the Mozambicans poisoned with the methanol from bottles that had washed ashore) which does not appear in *The Locusts* but rather in the second narrative, in analepsis. Eva Lopo, the protagonist, accentuates this additionally in a dialogue with the narrator of the first story.[21] The images of Evita with the journalist, although they postulate a chronology arising from plot that leads to the ending (the death of the groom or of Luís Alex, fruit of the discovery of a merely suggested "betrayal"), they consist, for the most part, of either rapid camera movements that show blurred images of the two of them, obscured by the rain or the car window[22] when they visit the poor neighbourhoods of Mozambique and note the grotesque *Moulin*

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[20] "Definitivamente, a verdade não é o real, ainda que gémeos, e n'*Os Gafanhotos* só a verdade interessa. [...] A verdade deve ser unida e ser infragmentada, enquanto o real pode ser — tem de ser porque senão explodiria — disperso e irrelevante, escorregando, como sabe, literalmente para local nenhum" (Jorge, 2008: 85).

[21] "Yes, it's likely that it was a peaceful, easygoing conversation that started with the invocation of courage and ended with the tracing of family heritage. The fact is that I recall fragments. And why should I remember more? "The Locusts" doesn't even name the journalist or give him a person's voice, and nevertheless it becomes clear that he is the catalyst of that final night" (Jorge, 1995: 128). "Sim, é natural que tenha havido uma conversa calma, pacata, que tenha começado com a invocação da coragem e tenha terminado no processo da ascendência familiar. A verdade é que me lembro de fragmentos. E para quê mais? *Os Gafanhotos* nem identificam o jornalista, nem lhe dão uma voz pessoal, e no entanto, fica-se a perceber que é o desencadeador daquela última noite" (Jorge, 2008: 127).

[22] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 1:01:57'.

Rouge — an Africa where everything "gets mixed together… life and death…"[23] —, or in the close ups of Evita's face, looking up from the yellow floor of the room at the Stella Maris, evoking only the realised desire and the loneliness of the protagonist in a yellow, colonised Africa[24].

In the same way, the Russian roulette scene where Luís Alex, wanting to preserve his reputation, sets out to rid himself of Evita's lover, Álvaro Sabino — which is absent from *The Locusts* — is included in the film with the same sense that it has in the narrative of Eva Lopo and via Evita's voice-over in order, once again, to reconfigure a fact by the mediation of the fragmented memory of the character/protagonist, inscribing itself, thus, in the domain of the hypothetical, of the possible imagined world, of the sadistic dreamlike context of the colonial war:

> No, don't use the journalist's eyes to end your truthful narrative. You were right not to end it like that. I do understand that twenty years later he might still have that vision in his memory. […] he expected two hit men to drag him by the shoulders from his house, stuff him into a car, take him handcuffed to a room with windows looking onto the polluted inlet. […] Is that what he told you? He found me there, already seated, pale, with my eyes yellow, in the middle of that red stage. […] (said Eva Lopo) (Jorge, 1995: 264).[25]

The hallucination of the truth, shaded by the memory and the transgressive duplication of the voices, is situated, consequently, at the edge of Eva Lopo's lucid consciousness, in an existential path that is laid out

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[23] "Fica misturado… a vida e a morte…" (Basso e Cardoso, 2001: 52).

[24] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 1:03:41'.

[25] "Não, não utilize a visão do jornalista para pôr fim à sua narrativa verdadeira. Fez bem não utilizar. Eu compreendo que vinte anos depois ele tenha guardado essa visão na memória. [...] ele imaginou que dois capangas o iriam buscar a casa pelos ombros, o enfiavam num carro, o levavam algemado para uma sala cujas janelas dessem para o assoreado braço de mar. [...] Foi isso que ele lhe contou? Encontrou-me a mim, já sentada, branca, com os olhos amarelos, no meio da cena vermelha. [...] — disse Eva Lopo" (Jorge, 2008: 249-250).

gradually between the novel and the film, for an existential maturity shared between the interior revolt with respect to the discovery of colonial violence and the utopian construction of the image (blurry as it is) of a free Africa that is so dearly desired, corresponding to the perspective of the character in terms of the past, *in* the present of the writing of the novel and the film. One can thus understand how Lídia Jorge underscores the role of suggestion in the film, a narrated suggestion, as being "a rare decency of narrating"[26] — as in her own novel —, a euphemism for violence, which accompanies Evita's characterisation, placing her on another level of analysis, outside of time, in the time of symbol.

3. On symbolic transgression: character and space

In the *didascalias* from Scene 17 of the script, the director, Margarida Cardoso, rewrites the symbolic scene of the groom, Luís, and his captain, Forza Leal, shooting down flamingos before Evita's distant, disapproving gaze, in what will become one of the first symbolic confrontations of the protagonist with the space of the colonial war:

> Scene 17 EXT./DAY // BEACH/BAR CANIÇO
> The bar has an abandoned air to it. To the side, an old pot is boiling.
> It is low tide, and a flock of flamingos has gathered on marshy land on a windy day. Huddled together, they stand unmoving with their beaks protected under their side feathers. [...]
> FORZA LEAL takes up his weapon, looks at the birds, makes a discreet sign of the cross, puts one knee to the ground and shoots.
> The birds that are shot are thrown into the air and land far away, still kicking. The birds not hit by the bullets have not moved from their same position. Pink feathers fly in the wind. The dead birds disappear, sinking slowly into the muddy swamp. [...]
> EVITA steps back and is separated from the group. [...]

[26] "Uma rara decência de narrar" (Jorge, 2004: 42).

> LUÍS puts one knee to the ground and shoots. When he tries to shoot again, the flock of birds takes flight slowly and heavily. Luís stands up to see them fly away.[27]

The episode in which Luís Alex and his captain, Forza Leal, shoot at a peaceful flock of flamingos, decimating them just to show Helen and Evita the sadistic skilfulness of their gesture, becomes fundamental for understanding how our protagonist enters the conflict of the space of Africa. This is relevant given that the birds that are not killed, in an instinct of natural preservation, fly over the bodies of their murdered fellows, setting out on a liberating flight that foretells a desired expression of political freedom. Like the protagonist, the episode sees itself submitted, at different instances of narration, to the various transgressions stemming from its configuration *en abyme* and from its semantic intrafictional centrality[28]: in *The Locusts*, Evita still looks at the birds in a childish, almost allegorical and biblical way, identifying them with an Africa/space that she does not know and that she contemplates at the groom's side — "he took off his shoes and walked toward the long-legged fire-colored birds that moved as if still under the powerful instinct imparted by Genesis. Evita saw that everything did indeed seem

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[27] "Cena 17 EXT./DIA // PRAIA/BAR CANIÇO
O bar está com um ar abandonado. No estrado de caniço um tacho velho rebola.
A maré está baixa e, no lamaçal, o bando de flamingos resiste ao vento. Estão imóveis, muito juntos, com os bicos enfiados nas penas das costas. [...]
FORZA LEAL, com a arma na mão, olha para os pássaros, benze-se discretamente, põe um joelho no chão e atira.
As aves atingidas são atiradas pelo ar e caem longe, esperneando. Os pássaros que escapam às balas, ficam na mesma posição. Penas vermelhas voam ao vento. As aves mortas desaparecem, pouco a pouco, engolidas pelo lamaçal. [...]
EVITA recuou e está afastada do grupo. [...]
LUÍS põe um joelho no chão e atira. Quando vai para disparar outra vez, o bando de pássaros começa a levantar voo, pesadamente. Luís levanta-se para as ver partir" (Basso e Cardoso, 2001: 18).

[28] Taken up again here is the meaning that Françoise Lavocat confers upon metalepsis and the levels of transgression on which it operates, marking, as in the scene of the flamingos in the script and in the film, the passage between the two ontological levels *represented* (Lavocat, 2016: 497 ss).

to take on yellow and orange tones, even the groom" (Jorge, 1995: 7)[29]; in the autobiographical narrative, Eva Lopo recalls the scene as being the very "vivid" scene, that is, fundamental in her evolution as a character of fiction inside the fiction and thus easily reconstructed over the long interval of time by perspective and sensations, by the symbolic detail of the violent acts diluted in the dream or in the beauty of the birds taking flight: "Do I see some vivid scenes? Of course I see again some very vivid scenes. […] I can see the last birds disappearing, startled, shrinking like the red dreams that rise with the dawn" (Jorge, 1995: 43, 48).[30]

Following the script indications, the director uses a succession of images and slow camera movements to film *the very vivid scene* that Eva Lopo describes, twenty years later, opening up the way for her, either for a swift passage from the moment of the gunshots and the killing of the birds to the close up of Evita, isolated and dumbfounded, standing in her African motif dress[31], or for the final duration of the *travelling* that accompanies the surviving flamingos' flight into the horizon of the African sky in a dream-like scenario. Violence, cruelty and beauty are thus part of the way in which Lídia Jorge and Margarida Cardoso have conceived of Evita's path to learning and her chronologically plural and symbolic perspectives of the African space — from innocence to the perception of the real and to the utopian or metaphorical desire to be freed (the flock of flamingos remains, despite the butchery) —, being certain that the character is never fixed liminally in a space, that is, she never crosses the boundary of fiction even if the novel and the film are constantly tempted to do so.

The truth is that, just as it occurs in the scene of the flamingos, Evita's relationships with the space where she arrived 20 years earlier is also made in the evocative memory of objects, colours, sounds, and smells, resulting quite often in an impressionistic point of view of the

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[29] "Ele descalçou-se e entrou pelo bando de aves que eram cor de fogo, pernaltas, e pareciam deslocar-se ainda sob o instinto formidável do Génesis. Evita ficou a ver como de facto tudo era laranja e amarelo, mesmo o noivo" (Jorge, 2008: 15).

[30] "Se vejo algumas cenas vivas? Claro que revejo cenas vivíssimas. […] Vejo os últimos pássaros espantados desaparecerem, diminuírem pouco a pouco, como os sonhos vermelhos que sobrevêm ao amanhecer" (Jorge, 2008: 48; 53).

[31] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 20:33'.

real, a quasi-unreality that nevertheless is limited by the point of view of the character and by the ideological purpose of the author and the director.[32] A possible *travelling* of the colonial spaces thus corresponds to a structuring *travelling* of the voices and perspectives that turn these spaces into interior places and places of the memory. It is thus that the various versions/images of the episode of the flamingos constitutes a *mise en abyme* (formal and semantic) of the space of Africa (the hotel Stella Maris, its terrace, Helen's colonial home, the shoreline boulevard, the poor neighbourhoods of Mozambique, the *Moulin Rouge*), a space that structures, *ab initio*, the figuration and reconfiguration of Evita as a character-protagonist and narrator-character in constant ontological analepsis or flash-back.

It is, in fact, this movement of pullback or of the exposition of the "hallucinated" memory (Jorge, 2004: 42) that conditions the perception of the space of the terrace at the Stella Maris, of the ball that marks Evita's wedding at the beginning of *The Locusts*, in the *incipit* of the second narration by Eva Lopo in the first scenes of the script and of the film. Described in *The Locusts* is the profusion of colours in the exotic fruits and seafood, the Baroque wedding cake, the vertiginous movement of the couples dancing, spinning around to the sounds of Latin music on the terrace with the Indian Ocean providing the horizon, the "yellow" of Africa embodied in the pair of Forza Leal/Helen of Troy, symbolic stigma of the colonial war and of the violent and blurred romantic relationships that are created in wartime and that will accompany Evita's existential path. In Eva Lopo's account, the description of the scene is wilfully rebutted, constructing an interpretation of the space that bears witness to the mythification of the Stella Maris as an expressive metaphor of a moment of the already-existing decadence of the colonial war — "I have not forgotten, however, how the Stella maintained all the clamor of a decadent hotel turned mess hall with a beautiful lobby" (Jorge, 1995: 38)[33] —, as if the voice of the autodiegetic narrator were omitting the colonial ostentation to allude

[32] In this context, see the colonial readings of the novel proposed by Santos (1989: 64-67) and Machado (2011: 161-195).

[33] "Não esqueci, porém, como o *Stella* mantinha todo o fragor dum hotel decadente transformado em messe, de belíssimo hall" (Jorge, 2008: 44).

to a space in nostalgic disintegration (the terrace, the hall, the rooms, the bathtubs), accompanying the beginning of the disillusion/destabilisation of the character. Again the oblique or transgressive movement that it generates, in the space and in the character, is reinterpreted in the synthesis established between the text of the script and the film, in the exact measure in which the transmediation allows it to be prolonged in the image and camera movement. Whereas in the script there is insistence on the *didascalia* of Scene 6 in the metonymic relationship of the hotel with the war, although having to do with the wedding celebration[34], in the film the same indication is followed but alongside the establishment of a contrast between the successive close ups of the bride's face with the *travelling* that follows the gallery of officers' wives, leaning against the terrace balustrade, static in the stereotype that they represent, solitary, in clear contrast with the ontological individuality of the protagonist. Next, almost abruptly and without much concern for the true passage of time, the camera passes to the newlyweds' room, pausing on the nakedness of Evita's body[35], out of focus and in double image (Evita, and in the future, Eva Lopo), but leaving out the groom's body. Then it focuses on the black servants cleaning up after the wedding reception, and next goes on to show a close up of the protagonist's face, captured in the very early morning, in isolation and exaggeratedly close to the lens, passing by a dumper vehicle carrying several bodies of the Mozambicans killed by methanol. What is created here is an oxymoronic photographical sequence where the decadence lies in the place afforded to it by the texts and images. The voice and perspective of Evita, the protagonist, are found in the encounter of the voices from

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[34] "6. EXT/LATE AFTERNOON//STELLA MARIS/TERRACE. From the terrace, the ocean and part of the colonial town can be seen. A small band plays on an improvised stage. Most of the guests are military men in uniform, with their wives. Black servants wait on the tables, ordered about by the MANAGER of the mess hall, also in uniform and wearing a toupee that is off-kilter". "6. EXT/FIM DE TARDE//STELLA MARIS/TERRAÇO. Do terraço vê-se o mar e uma parte da cidade colonial. Uma pequena orquestra toca, sobre um palco improvisado. A maior parte dos convidados são militares, em uniforme, e as suas mulheres. Criados negros servem às mesas, dirigidos pelo GERENTE da messe, vestido também de uniforme e com 'capachinho' um pouco torto" (Basso e Cardoso, 2001: 4).

[35] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 9:19'.

the novel and from the script and film, the collective voice of Africa, the voice of Lídia Jorge and Margarida Cardoso, in the post-colonial denouncement of a situation undergoing rupture.

Consequently, it could well be inferred that the symbolic nature of the nexus that the space develops relative to Evita and that Evita develops relative to the space depends to a great extent on the oscillations to which the protagonist's voice and the perspective submit themselves, be it either along a floating temporality (as has been said) or along the equally hybrid spatiality (with constant passing from the exterior to the interior), with it being certain that the film photography gives back to the narrative writing the constant temptation of the metaleptic game. In other words, the director — who took meticulous care of the external photography, nearly documentary in style, of the decoration of the interiors, the extras, and the props — does not steal from a logical *effect of reality*, intending to materialise in the film the edges of the fictional boundary as pondered in the novel, gradually internalised by the protagonist along her path to learning about Africa and the writing of the memory of Africa. There in fact exists a crossing of the exterior scenes on the terrace of the Stella with the interior scenes of the newlywed's room (or at other moments, of the hall or other rooms in the hotel where the women are crocheting while their husbands are away on a mission, or where a blind officer gives a press conference legitimising the colonial conquest with mention of *Estado Novo* values), a symbolic reinforcement of the space doubly described in the narrative that amplifies or strengthens its meaning (and the final meaning of the novel).

It is in this respect that Margarida Cardoso pays particular attention, in the long Scene 46 of the script, to the interior of the "secret room" of Helen's colonial home where Evita is shown a parade of photographs with incredibly violent images of war, hidden away in a safe and meant to be destroyed (Basso and Cardoso, 2001: 42-45). The episode does not figure in the account of *The Locusts*, but makes perfect sense in terms of the ideological intent of the text when it is recovered by Eva Lopo in her autobiographical narrative in a long descriptive pause (Jorge, 2008: 129-131), introduced by the allusion to a secret interior space whose nature is that of an initiation (Evita's path toward learning). The war thus reveals itself to be a secret room,

dark and closed off from itself, in the intimacy of two women and appearing as photographic images that could well come from some documentary. The writing, of an enormous visual nature, recovers the memory of the protagonist through a sequence of photographs described with irreproachable detail and is transferred to successive, long *didascalias* in Scene 46 of the script, which are insightfully taken up in the film, exploring an expressive *mise en abyme*: the photography within the filmed image, the black and white film within the colour film.

It is thus fitting how it would be exactly within these spectacular games — through a photo in which Luís is holding as a trophy the head of a Mozambican guerrilla fighter impaled on a stick, described in the novel[36], in the *didascalia* of the script[37] or in the image of the film (black and white over colour) — that Evita should become aware of the change taking place in Luís Alex, of the change occurring within herself, and of how essentially difficult it is to distinguish between 'being' and 'appearing to be', that is, the real from the fictitious. The camera once again shows a close up of Evita[38], in horror before the reality depicted in black and white, seeing shadows, feeling duality (doubly the protagonist): "I see shadows. […] said Evita. That's who I was (said Eva Lopo)" (Jorge, 1995: 138; 135)[39] — she mentions in her narrative, describing this photograph as if the threshold between fact and fiction

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[36] "Helen of Troy said, 'See your groom here?' She wanted Evita to see him. It was clear as the rising morning that Helen of Troy had brought me to this room in the house specifically so I could see the groom" (Jorge, 1995: 135). "Helena de Tróia disse — 'Vê aqui o seu noivo?'. Ela queria que Evita visse. Era claro como a manhã que despontava que Helena de Tróia me havia trazido até àquela divisão da casa para que eu visse sobretudo o noivo" (Jorge, 2008: 133).

[37] "Scene 6. [...] The photos continue to be given to EVITA to see. Wide shot of LUÍS speaking with FORZA LEAL. One soldier lying stomach down. Some dead black men. Farther off a man standing on the thatched roof of a shack. LUÍS on top of the shack, holding the head of a man impaled on a stick, pumping it up and down". "Cena 6. [...] As fotos continuam a passar nas mãos de EVITA. Grande plano de LUÍS falando com FORZA LEAL. Soldado deitado de bruços. Alguns negros mortos. Ao longe, um homem num telhado de uma palhota. LUÍS no cimo da palhota, agitando um pau com uma cabeça espetada" (Basso e Cardoso, 2001: 45).

[38] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 54:21'.

[39] "Vejo sombras, disse Evita. Ela era eu — disse Eva Lopo" (Jorge, 2008: 151).

were an obvious ambiguity[40], the ambiguity of her own awareness and of her fictional ontology.

From this crucial moment in the novel and in the film script, Evita enters, no longer naïve, led by Helen (who takes her to see the "secret room" of the house), in the spaces of Africa, with no alternative left for her unless it were to look on them through an artifice of poetics or metaphor or allegory — subliminal form of the symbol in this intrafictional and intramedia relationship of the character with space. The metaphor of the locusts, set in the title of the first narrative of the novel and in the poem which the journalist Álvaro Sabino writes for his "Involuntary Column" — and that Evita reads to Luís at the end of the autobiographical narrative, one that anticipates his death — in all likelihood translates this irreparable loss of innocence and one's entry into maturity, surely noting that the *travelling* of voices underlying the multilayered construction in successive narratives of the cloud of locusts makes the colonial allegory's setting in the novel possible and sets the final meaning of Evita/Eva Lopo in the plot that lives and narrates. From the outset, the fact that Lídia Jorge has chosen as an epigraph an excerpt of a poem by Álvaro Sabino[41], a fictional character from the second narrative, clearly introduces the metalepsis as a privileged way to read the text and the characters. In this first narrative, however, the cloud of locusts is described in the voice of "the major with the yellow teeth" (Jorge, 1995: 27)[42] and serves as the setting for

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[40] In this context, F. Lavocat places herself (and in the theoretical context that this article assumes) in the ambivalence of the boundaries between fact and fiction, without being marked by the need to distinguish between them and their "moderate differentialism" with respect to the boundary: « Souscrivant à ce que l'on pourrait appeler un différentialisme modéré, nous montrerons l'existence et la nécessité cognitive, conceptuelle et politique des frontières de la fiction » (Lavocat, 2016: 12).

[41] These are verses where the journalist uses metaphorical discourse (the green rain of locusts and love) to camouflage a message of a political nature (the green cloud of flying emeralds is the biblical, allegorical premonition of the destruction of the Portuguese army in Africa): "Oh, how it poured flying emeralds! The sky burned green even where it didn't have to — the fires along the coast all took on that color, even those swelling our hearts" (Jorge, 1995: 1). "Oh, como choviam esmeraldas//voadoras! O céu incendiou-se de verde onde//nem era necessário —//todas as fogueiras da//costa tomaram essa cor, mesmo as que inchavam// nos nossos corações" (Jorge, 2008: 9).

[42] "Major de dentes amarelos" (Jorge, 2008: 32).

a discreet briefing on the death of the Mozambicans poisoned by methanol, without Evita sharing in the moment (here, Evita is an absent voice and a perspective): the rain of locusts is thus a part of the colonial context, voluntarily ignoring the metaphor or poetic leanings of Álvaro Sabino's verses. It is in fact in the second narrative that the voice of Eva Lopo poetises the rain of locusts in a meta-commentary to the narrator's voice from the first narrative and to the way the episode was described, anticipating Álvaro Sabino's poem without, however, neglecting to introduce into the metaphorical tension its ideological dimension (real, likely) and the discourse (the voice) of the blind cavalryman, unable to see and feel the rain of locusts, praising the patriotic principles of the colonial war:

> Eva Lopo grew still. "How well you described the locusts! Pretty, shiny, phosphorescently green, girating near the lamps illuminating the doors. We could even see the lacework on their wings from where we were seated, and the cavalryman-historian's address progressed toward the final mental paragraphs. We felt like turning off the white light coming from the lamp fixtures on the wall — why did they have the wall lights on if the speaker had no need to read, could in no way use the lights? — and listening to the rest in the half-light, or in the dark, watching the green luminosity of the lamps spill onto the shoreline boulevard and reach use in here, like the wide hem of a long dress. […] Besides, were not what was going on outside and what was going on inside one and the same thing? The speaker who wasn't aware that a rain of locusts was falling over the coast had reached the apex of eternity in the words of his speech.
> "The Planet is eternal, Portugal is part of the Planet, the Overseas is as Portuguese as the soil of the fatherland within our borders; we are trodding on overseas soil; we are standing on eternal Portugal!" (Jorge, 1995: 222).[43]

[43] "Eva Lopo ficou suspensa — Que bem descreveu os gafanhotos! Lindos, brilhantes, fosforescentemente verdes, rondavam perto das lâmpadas que iluminavam as portas. Chegava-se-lhes a divisar a renda das asas, mesmo dali, enquanto se estava sentado, e o discurso do cavaleiro historiador avançava na direção dos últimos parágrafos mentais. Apetecia apagar as luzes das flâmulas brancas das paredes — para que estavam acesas se o orador não precisava de ler, nem poderia jamais servir-se da luz — e ouvir o resto na penumbra, ou às escuras, vendo a luminosidade verde dos candeeiros entornar-se pela avenida da beira-mar, e chegar até ali, como a aba de um vestido longo. [...] Aliás,

Thus the simultaneousness of the voices — of the voice/political discourse of the blind officer, of Evita's poetic voice describing the sensations caused by the green cloud of locusts — anticipates the poetic and ideological value of the rain of emeralds described in the journalist's poem (allegory of the space of Africa, symbolic synthesis of the protagonist's relationship with this space), indicating an ideological solution found within the fiction, in the unfolding of the plot. This simultaneousness of voices also anticipates the fact that, in the film by Margarida Cardoso, the episode is described in a voice-over by Eva Lopo, beginning with a panoramic and poetic vision (as it is out of focus) of the locusts in the cloud, away from the terrace of the *Stella*, next concentrating on the terrace and the figures of the women, the officers' wives, with umbrellas, in quasi-movement of dancing, sublimating the immobility of their existence as "war brides" at an exotic and dreamlike moment. The isolation of the protagonist is the isolation of her voice, temporally distant, with a hermeneutic capacity that her maturity affords her, unmoving, her back to the viewer, faced with the mobility of the women at the *Stella*, then watching the locusts in the next scene, observing them from the window of the room of the journalist who writes the column. Thus, visually, the hermeneutical maturity of Eva Lopo comes closer to the hermeneutical poetics of Álvaro Sabino.

4. Final note

The transgression of the voices thus continues to be the basis of the final meaning of the novel and of the film, the basis of the dynamic figuration of the character, of its afterlife, until that moment in which the fiction (or the fictions) come to a close or the voices transform

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o que acontecia fora, e dentro não era uma e a mesma coisa? O orador que não sabia que uma chuva de gafanhotos se desprendia sobre a costa, tinha atingido o auge da perenidade nas palavras do seu discurso.
'O Planeta é eterno, Portugal faz parte do Planeta, o Além-Mar é tão Portugal quanto o solo pátrio do Aquém, estamos pisando solo de Além-Mar, estamos pisando Portugal eterno!'" (Jorge, 2008: 212-213).

themselves into murmurs. Let us thus, inevitably, take up the conclusion of the novel:

> Leave it there, suspended, without any useful meaning; don't prolong it, don't listen to the words. Little by little the words detach themselves from the objects they designate, then the sounds separate from the words, and of the sounds only murmurs remain, the final stage before the erasure — said Eva Lopo, laughing. Handing back, annulling "The Locusts" (Jorge, 1995: 274).[44]

This is the voice of the protagonist, Eva Lopo, which silences that of the narrator, turning it into a murmur when the fiction ends, and with it, the character and the metaleptic game also ends. Because, as Françoise Lavocat affirms, real metalepsis does not exist, only intrafictional and ontological metalepsis (Lavocat, 2016: 520). Similarly, the conclusion of the film corresponds to Eva Lopo's voice being replaced by the music of Dvořák or by Evita's perspective, which blends with that of the camera, moving from the observation of the colonial houses as seen from the terrace of the *Stella* to a more panoramic view of the African sky and the liberating flight of a flamingo when the character no longer exists within the film, without having to exit either from the screen or from its ontology[45]. Once again, Margarida Cardoso shifts the murmuring of the novel's voices toward the murmuring of the camera and the photography, confirming, as Lídia Jorge notes, that in both cases, "beauty is in its proper place"[46].

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[44] "Deixe ficar aí, suspenso, sem qualquer sentido útil, não prolongue. Não oiça as palavras. A pouco e pouco as palavras isolam-se dos objectos que designam, depois das palavras, só se desprendem sons, e dos sons restam só os murmúrios, o derradeiro estádio antes do apagamento — disse Eva Lopo, rindo. Devolvendo, anulando *Os Gafanhotos*" (Jorge, 2008: 259).

[45] See Film: Cardoso, 2005: 1:51:59'.

[46] "A beleza está no seu lugar" (Jorge, 2004: 42).

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