

NO EMMAS IN AMAUROTUM: THEORIES OF CHARACTER AND UTOPIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The narratological category of character has been less successful than others in doing away with assumptions that derive from the historical/critical usage of the label, particularly in a realistic, novelistic mainstream. The very attempt to build a theory of character that is intrinsic to the utopian genre shows how difficult it is to eliminate these criteria, but also to determine to what extent they should be retained, specially when a strict segregationist logic is applied to utopias and to notions of character in utopias, if the aesthetic superiority of the realistic/novelistic character still hovers on descriptions. Making the narrative “frame” of utopias a more functional and neutral component has interesting effects in the classification of information about the individuals of utopian fictions, and allows for important intra-generic (aesthetic) distinctions. An analysis of the characters of More’s *Utopia* and Bacon’s *New Atlantis* illustrates the relevance of a principle of reflexivity between social ideals and the characters of these two works.

CHARACTER AND NARRATOLOGY: THE PROBLEM OF AUTONOMY

A SHORT HISTORY OF PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS

Character was a particularly disputed category during the “golden” period of narratology, and certainly not because narratological studies took the role of “favouring” it: its revision (and eventual dissolution) started with two shifts of emphasis proposed in classic narratology:¹

A) Descriptions of characters should do more justice to their textual nature, show them “as nodes in the verbal design” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 33), as “signs”. Narra-

tives are “story” and “discourse”, but “co-presence is not itself a reconciliation” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 42):

Emma Woodhouse is not a woman nor need be described as if it were (...) What becomes of “Emma Woodhouse” once it is drained of life? ... it is a segment of text. (Weinsheimer, 1979: 187)²

B) An important effect of the Aristotelian inspiration of narratology was its primary concern with “the representation of real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence” (Prince, 1982); there is a specific hierarchy implied in this description, and character is not granted a prominent place: the “narrating” became the fundamental problem in the classic period; as far as the “narrated” was concerned the patterns of action, the moves of plot, seemed more essential ingredients.³ While the first change undermined character “intrinsically” by emphasizing its lack of substantiality (“Characters do not exist, are only a collection of instructions, signs, or themes”, L. Davis, 1987: 108), the second change made it lose centrality as a critical tool. This second effect is related to practical difficulties in the handling of typologies: as the project of the “construction of a narrative grammar” (Bal, 1990: 728) continued, it was seen that a grammar of characters was “the single area apparently least amenable to systematic analysis” (Toolan, 1988:90).

These two kinds of problems (ontological and practical) have been widely acknowledged: although some auspicious assessments of narratology have claimed several notable results in the field (Prince, 1990: 272-3),⁴ it is still commented that character remains “the most undertheorised of the basic categories of narrative theory” (Frow, 1986: 227), that “no full-fledged theory of character has emerged within narratology” (Margolin, 1989: 22).

This local “failure” of narratology and the loss of status of character have been related to the “scientism” (Morton, 1993: 408) of narratology: the theory of narrative character had to be, according to Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 29), “systematic, non-reductive but also non-impressionistic”. In our context the obvious challenge was to decide to what extent “character” should be emancipated from conventional notions of “people”, and also from the assumed traditional superiority of this category in critical discourse:

Characters resemble people (...). They are imitation, fantasy, fabricated creatures: paper people, without flesh and blood. That no one has yet succeeded in constructing a complete and coherent theory of character is probably precisely because of this human aspect. The character is not a human being, but it resembles one (...) It is not always easy, or even possible, to determine which material should be included in the description of a character. (Bal, 1985, 80-1)

Although for Bal this is just another (theoretical, methodological) problem to consider, the fact that “characters are attacked or defended as if they were people” (Bal, 1985: 82) has inevitably had disturbing effects on our evaluation of both narratological research and theories of character; Bal’s complaint against “existentialist criticism” (Bal, 1985: 82) is severe enough, but her contentions are certainly less tumultuous than those aimed at both narratology and its character conceptions by “humanists” and poststructuralists.⁵

To start with “HUMANISTS”, their opposition to approaches to character “as discourse” is mainly an effect of their defense of the (aesthetic) superiority of the representational perspective, of their appeal to mimetic values and the reading experience. Two emphatic testimonies may suffice: Hugh Bredin’s discussion of contributions by Propp, Bremond, and Barthes leads to the identification of “fundamental weaknesses” of narrative theory (1982: 291), and to the conclusion that “something is missing ... it is people” (1982: 295). Daniel Schwarz’s *A Case for a Humanistic Poetics* contains a justification of the “life” ingredient of reading (“I want to stress the continuity between reading texts and reading lives”, 1990: 74) and a significant reminder of the “true” function of teachers/scholars:

Do we not do a disservice to our students, ourselves, and literature when we say that it is naive to discuss motives, values, and emotions of characters and when we replace the life and energy of our human responses with our theoretical perspectives? (1990: 73)⁶

The other important dimension of character neglected by narratological approaches was its “honorary” function: in traditional critical practice only when fictional individuals meet several requirements they seem to reach the status of characters, either because they are remarkable “people” or because the author has been able to bestow them with a “vivid and convincing appearance” (Swinden, 1973: 26). In other words, the “brilliant delineation of character” (Abbott, 1993: 394) becomes a mark of creative genius, of aesthetic worth.⁷

While the humanist stance is protective and its claims are united to tradition, to conventional notions of the reading experience, POSTSTRUCTURALIST approaches to character are more belligerent, closer to innovative creative practices and more willing to bring theoretical arguments about:⁸ to start with some *theoretical* arguments, there are serious problems in all those studies on character which somehow retain criteria of “mimetic adequacy” (Docherty, 1983: xi). First because this concept is “a vague critical concept”; second, because these theories still seem to favour naive realism, the understanding of fiction (and of character) as “derivative of an anterior reality” (Docherty, 1983: xi). Apart from that technical problem, character had to be removed because of “ideological” reasons:

So long as we do not put aside “character” and everything it implies in terms of illusion and complicity with classical reasoning and the appropriating economy that such reasoning supports, we will remain locked up in the treadmill of reproduction. (Cixous, 1974: 387)

The third ingredient is *historical*: redefinitions of character were often made in the name of contemporary literary practice; former accounts of character were gradually proved useless by the new tradition of postmodern experimental writing (especially the French *nouveau roman*); character was not practised, it belonged to the 19th Century (“consciousness has replaced character”, Bayley, 1974: 225). More sceptical, even radical, accounts followed in the eighties: it is the concept of narrative itself that should be revised (not just the categories developed by narratological theories), because a dangerous ideological load has been detected in narrative itself:

Postmodernism has challenged narrative as well as narrative theory in several ways. First of all, postmodernism displays a disbelief in what has traditionally been seen as one of the main functions of narrative. Narrative is no longer able to legitimize the meaning of life, of our place in the world. (Van Alphen, 1990: 483)⁹

TWO EXPLANATIONS

This revision has revealed two facets that should have required a more specific attention:

1) Emotions, affections, and impressions have made assessment an extremely difficult task: it seems difficult to determine if narratology was successful, or a failure, if it is dead, or still alive, if adaptations (or extensions or applications) are still “narratology”, if they complement or contradict the original ... these uncertainties have much to do with the prominence granted to attacks and vindications. Proof of this is the range of perspectives reflected in the (mostly) self-satisfied, even nostalgic, two numbers published by *Poetics Today* (1990) on “Narratology Revisited”:¹⁰ most estimations are devoted to explain why “it got swallowed into story”, why the “initial excitements”, why the “rapid disappointments” (Brooke-Rose, 1990: 283). Scrutinies on character, even after the classic period of narratology, are also characterized by these superfluous ingredients: revisions of theories of character tend to start with expressions of radical, intolerant, impatient disappointment clouding much previous work (“we do not yet have a satisfactory theory of literary character” Phelan, 1986-7: 282), while the alternative theories offered are marred by comparative smallness, by incompleteness, by conservatism or conformism.¹¹

2) To what extent is this impression of poor achievement confirmed by objective weaknesses of narratology and of theories of character? It is necessary to insist that there is a great deal of confusion, and in this case also concerning the goals and limits of the areas of inquiry involved. A key concept is AUTONOMY: The autonomy of narratology as a discipline (and consequently the autonomy of its categories) was a central principle of narratology; it has proved also capital (but in a negative sense) in the evaluation of its results: the main power of early narratological categorizing efforts was the selection of a method and an object –narrative– perceived, defined, as independent, as autonomous, from several constraints imposed on “literary” studies (on studies on “literature”) by tradition and variety.¹² The aim of narratology was not the “explication of texts but the uncovering of the system that allows narrative texts to be generated and competent readers to make sense of them” (Lodge, 1981: 18); narratology was not concerned with works, genres, or aesthetic traditions (such as “novel”, “realism”, “principles of coherence based on causality”, the importance of moral and/or psychological conflicts, etc.). These tenets justified two main accusations: First, the object and objectives of narratology were shown to be more dependent on concrete literary practices than originally claimed and acknowledged;¹³ second, there was an implication that those practices best adapted to more theoretical categories were “aesthetically” superior.¹⁴ Significantly enough, what many late affirmative assessments of narratology have done in order to bring narratology back to “respectability” is to explicitly connect narratological distinctions to literary history, to specific periods and genres (Pavel, 1990, 349-350; Prince, 1990: 277-9), i.e. to explicitly trail the historicity of its theories.

Evaluations of theories of character have also been affected by the dubious “autonomy” of the category. The weight of traditional views of character has proved too

strong to graciously accept that any theoretical, ahistorical, “technical”, actant can be a suitable substitute for such “interesting” characters as Emma Bovary, Emma Woodhouse, etc.: many attacks on the narratological simplification and/or dissolution of (literary) character have been made in the name of several great (fictional) names in the *history* of literature that are often associated to the *genre* of novels, or to *aesthetic* practices of *realism*, in which *psychology* and *moral conflict*, connected to fictional individuals (and experienced by actual readers), are essential.¹⁵ So the claimed lack of a “satisfactory theory of character” is the lack of a global theory that could simultaneously summarise (and integrate) all historical, generic, and aesthetic factors and varieties involved in that polysemic, pre-theoretical cultural intuition called “literary character”, i.e. all the “theories” supporting the different historical versions of character. In this sense, the failure is methodological, because the narratological aspiration to that systematic theory has been preserved:

Literary character (LC) is not an independently existing entity with essential properties to be described, but rather a theory-dependent conceptual construct or theoretical object, of which several alternative versions exist in contemporary poetics. Each version thus sees character as a different something or other. The term “LC” is accordingly polysemic ... Our first task is hence methodological: to distinguish and elucidate the different current views or concepts of character and to anchor each view in its corresponding theoretical framework. (Margolin, 1993: 105)

DECISIONS AND PARADOXICAL CONSEQUENCES

Our task in what follows is at once more general and more concrete than Margolin’s; at the same time our idea of a theory of character is at once more tolerant and narrower:

A) Following Margolin, but going further, we will first take “theory of character” as a “theory-1”, that is, as a field of inquiry, not as a set of propositions (“theories-2”) on the category (Mooij, 1979: 112);¹⁶ for instance, Margolin’s classification of available senses of character is one of the possible aspects to consider in a theory of character (one of its theories-2). What about other theories(-2) of character? Following our account of the controversy raised by character, the main point of our revision has to be the persistence of some assumptions on character that are genre-marked, specifically those derived from the aesthetics of the mainstream of the realistic novel.

B) The attempt to build a theory of characters of Utopias brings many problems of these theories of characters to the surface, and one of the main reasons is precisely, paradoxically, the peripheral position of this kind. Do we have to find genuine criteria for utopian characters? Should a representation of utopian characters be built on features that make them distinctive (in the sense of “antithetical”) to those of novelistic characters? It is difficult to eliminate assumptions on character that derive from a “realistic-mimetic” aesthetics, but it is also difficult to imagine those different criteria: characters are only (or also) fictional people, aren’t they?

Some specific problems of utopias (and general problems of genre criticism) are envisaged here –particularly the way the “centre/periphery” binary works in the definition and conceptualization of utopias and of all its ingredients (including character), one in which features are distributed following a pattern of absence/presence. The syllogism is based on a segregationist logic, and works like this: the mainstream

of fiction has made character (or a particular kind of character) a central problem; Utopia is a peripheral narrative form, to be defined as opposite to the main principles of “central” narrative practices; the obvious conclusion is that “character” cannot be important in utopian writing, at least in the way “characters” are usually conceived as valuable. The traditional assumptions about utopias are easily obtained: characters cannot be relevant or interesting figures, or useful descriptive categories; there are no characters in Utopias; the traveller Raphael Hythloday does not introduce any “Emma” in his account of Amaurotum, the capital of Utopia; we discuss theories of character by bringing “Emmas” to the argument, not utopian characters ... An evident theoretical consequence is that the function of a hypothetical theory of utopian character should be to deny its own relevance, to deny that interesting information can be obtained, to deny itself; another, less clear, (aesthetic, or critical) consequence is that a “novelistic” standpoint is still privileged (although applied in a negative sense) in these conceptions of utopias, though in an implicit way. To use a variant of the previous syllogism, the category of character is defined within the confines of its usual ground (a “novelistic” domain); then its presence in another genre (utopias, defined as contrary to that logic) is precisely made on the basis of the unfamiliarity (and then the non-applicability) of the category of character, i.e. on the basis of its absence. This certainly collaborates in a mechanistic and impoverishing description of utopian writing and utopian character.

It is very difficult to speak of narrative categories in peripheral or marginal genres because the implication is always that their peripheral quality has to be reflected in the analysis, and because the analysis always preserves some “central” qualities. Even when critics want to stress an integrationist perspective there are some aprioristic determinations of value of categories:

Readers of literature have always had to base their understanding of fictional characters on that preexisting world those readers inhabit or could inhabit or could create; what else could a reader do? First of all, the most unusual alien in a sci-fi novel or the oddest entity in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books must still contain recognizable human attributes or extrapolations for the all-too-human reader. (Knapp, 1993: 2)¹⁷

The old allegiance between character and realism is so powerful that it is necessary to remind that non-realistic genres also contain characters, that they do not have to be non-realistic in the same way the fictions in which they appear are non-realistic, that individuality or psychological complexity are not essential for *every* fictional being to qualify and be studied. If we let the centre/periphery logic rule the analysis in an indiscriminate way several varieties of confusion and/or prejudice can be detected: 1) concerning the irrelevance of character concepts for utopias, 2) in the idea of an intrinsic weakness of utopias concerning the category of character, and, 3) in the very concept of “weakness” of characters.

These two ideas (and aspects) will be examined in the two following sections of this study: A) some modern theories of character will be examined with an eye on the persistence of human features, and the inevitability of some aesthetic valorization of these qualities; B) a classification of the range of candidates to character in two English Utopias of the classic period –More’s *Utopia* and Bacon’s *New Atlantis*– will follow.

THE “APPROPRIATE PARAMETERS” OF THEORIES OF CHARACTER

We have borrowed the formula “appropriate parameters” from John Frow’s (1986: 238) attempt at a “more rigorous theorization of the concept of the character”. This endeavour, which he thinks should be organised on three concrete parameters or dimensions, also contains an implicit answer to the question “What is a theory of character expected to do?”, because a closed set of relevant tasks and aspects is prescribed from the outset. The underlying logic in Frow’s comments is that of a “theory-2”, in which all statements, all sections, are mutually supportive and tend to exclude “looser” sections, i.e. different degrees of applicability, of relevance, or of consistence. While we acknowledge that the theoretical basis of any statement on the object of inquiry must be carefully tested, and we acknowledge the pertinence of Frow’s three dimensions, here we prefer to allow for more specifications that have been instrumental in the scholarly determination of character.¹⁸

Before starting with the list, we can go back to the question “What is a theory of character expected to do?” the sections selected here perform two functions: to explain several general phenomena affecting character (how it is understood, how it is read, experienced, created ... sections 2.1 to 2.4) and to elaborate criteria for making distinctions among them, to generate typologies leading to practical applications and distinctions (2.5 to 2.8).

ORGANIZING THE POLYSEMY

This is a necessary chapter, although for some scholars it is simply a preface. The determination of the plethora¹⁹ of cultural senses attached to character is dealt with by Frow (1986: 227-238) simply as a preliminary operation; Weinsheimer’s (1979: 189-90) list of 15 different usages of character, characteristic, and characterization could easily lead to a more decisive classification; but for Margolin it is given the status of a necessary methodological step (“to anchor each view in its corresponding theoretical framework”):²⁰ Margolin’s continuous reworking of the list of senses and theoretical frameworks involved shows how the different specific interests of his studies may require different distinctions; so while the whole range is explored in Margolin 1989, the frame of Margolin 1990 is narratology, and in Margolin 1993 he relates his model to Phelan’s distinctions (see 2.7):

AREAS OR OBJECTS	Margolin (1989)	Margolin (1990)	Margolin (1993)
TEXT-LINGUISTICS	topic entity of discourse		topic entity of discourse
WORK OF ART	device		artifice or construct
LING. PRAGMATICS	textual speaker	narrative instance	
SEMIOTIC OPPOSITION EXPRESSION / CONTENT	thematic element		thematic/ideational element
GREIMASSIAN NARRATOLOGY	actant and role	actant	
POSSIBLE WORLDS SEMANTICS	non-actual individual	non-actual individual	possible person

A uniform instrumentalist strategy is adopted by Margolin in each of these works: the utility and productivity of each conception of character for specific “practical questions” (1989: 9-10) should prevail in the choice. The criteria he mentions encompass different areas (aesthetic paradigms, disciplinary interests, non-triviality and connectivity of information, etc), but one a priori genre prescription calls our attention:

The type of text under discussion and its dominant elements. It is widely accepted that different genres possess different dominant elements which tend to subordinate and dictate the specific nature of all other textual components. In allegory, exemplum, parable, *roman à la thèse*, and *conte philosophique*, themes and theses are built in as the dominant components, and character is most fruitfully treated as their extension or exemplification... (1989: 8)

Is not this an invitation to restrict our interrogation of utopian character to the thematic component, to faithfully obey the interpretive constraints of the paratextual history of texts associated to utopian writing?

THE ONTOLOGY OF CHARACTER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RECONCILIATION

For Frow the ontological problem is the first of the three parameters of a theory of character, but a very short formula suffices to solve this problem, because it has already been solved.

Character is a textual effect ... the specificity of character is a function of determinate textual practices. (1986: 238)

Steven Cohan’s “Theory of Readable Character” (1983) is symptomatic of the importance granted by scholars to this aspect: a theory of character is also an attempt to explain where character “exists” in the reading process (1983: 9):

W. Iser’s explanation of the reading process in phenomenological terms has begun to map out clear distinctions leading us to that space between text and reader, which I see as the location where we can understand character as an imaginative construction that does not necessarily depend upon the requirement of intelligible psychological representation.

In other words, the challenge of character is the identification of a mental operation of “ideation”, that is, the construction of a “virtual existent” in an “imaginative space located in our own heads” (1983: 27). Studies like this can be interpreted as attempts to find a sound theoretical basis to cope with the poststructuralist resistance to the “illusion”, and simultaneously to adjust to humanist claims. There are, however, very few concrete applications to be obtained from this area of character studies.

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION: CHARACTER AND THE SELF

Theories of character should specify the different historical notions associated to character, and adequate answers have also been given to this already:

Literary character is historically differentiated according to institutionally sanctioned versions of what the self is or should be, and historically specific practices of “character” formation. (1986: 238)

The task of tracing the development of the concept of character and its connections with notions of self, of Man, of subjectivity, was an important section of poststructuralist attacks on character. What should be understood, however, is that these notions may have been used for many different purposes in different studies and contexts. It does not preclude, for instance, an affirmative usage: character studies can only be benefited from research on the constitutions of human identity (historical, cultural, artificial, arbitrary). The dissolution of the myth of an essential quality of human nature cannot be negative for any theory or history. On the contrary, if it is necessary to understand that “humans are just the sort of organisms that interpret and modify their agency through their conceptions of themselves” (Rorty, 1976: 323), it is still more vital to consider that “characters”, the products of socially, morally, intellectually and/or aesthetically privileged stylizations of humans, are historically conditioned, socially constituted. There has been a birth, and also a death, for every notion of character, and the same applies to notions of self.

At the same time, the genre-markedness of the notion of character becomes apparent when we consider how the rise of the novel is related to the rise of Individualism and of Protestantism, although “modern indicators of subjectivity may be observed” in Elizabethan drama, and “the modern sense of character” is “fully in place in the Restoration” (Sinfield, 1992: 60). Character is, thus, modern character with a peculiar form of subjectivity, to be found in some concrete literary practices, and one gradually dissolved since the modernist novels.²¹ Thus classic utopias are “naturally” left aside, as it is inferred that former practices lack depth of individual representation: the voices belong to allegorical instances or enact impersonal (conventional) rhetorical positions...

READING (NOVELS): IDENTIFICATION AND DESIRE

Frow’s most relevant parameter of a theory of character complements Cohan’s phenomenological arguments. The function of character is clearly located in the frame of the reading experience, and an institutionalised function of reading: “character is a necessary formal condition for the binding-in of the reader to narrative” (Frow, 248). In the reading process the reader “constitutes” himself in his relation with character, in his identification with it (Frow, 1986: 238):

Character is an effect of desire ... as a structure forming the imaginary unity of subjects in their relation to the imaginary unity of objects.

This element is not alien to Lennard Davis’s approach:

It is not so much that we identify with a character but that we desire that character in some non-specific but erotic way. In this sense, part of novel reading is the process of falling in love with characters or making friends with signs. (1987: 127)

But there are differences: while both share the Freudian inspiration, Frow clearly emphasises the pleasure element involved in the reading experience (including scopophilia and narcissism); Davis links this phenomenon to more restricted generic (specially novelistic) reading practices, and comments on the social effects of this in the history of the novel.

STRUCTURALIST CHARACTERIZATIONS

The most remarkable application of structuralist methods to narratology in this area is the analysis of characters by means of systematic descriptions of psychological features,²² and it is so because several tenets of narratological classifications had to be abandoned. The choice of psychological features is just the first of the differences: the search for the “*differentia specifica*” of narrative character cannot go so far; as the mimetic perspective is proved inevitable a revaluation of Bradleyan approaches has to be suggested (Toolan, 1988; 106). Two important methodological consequences of the choice of psychological features taken from natural language are the loss of discreteness of the attributes of characters and the huge amount of these features we have to consider.²³ Two further consequences of this are:

- Traits are multiplied also by factors such as differences of degree or modality (Toolan, 1988: 100-1), reliability of sources, the fact that they can be derivative from events or actions (Margolin; 1986), the importance we grant to these factors, etc. The critic is almost exclusively left with one faculty, or restriction: his capacity to decide “the worthwhile and the trivial” (Chatman, 1978: 108).

- It has to be conceded that a distinction between plot-centered and character-centered narratives should be added to the general model; is not this to acknowledge the importance of the traditional reception of texts, of genres within narrative?

- The general procedure can be defined (Toolan, 1988: 99) as “a bottom-up” type of processing”, established on the basis of concrete texts (to some extent derivative of the paratext or institutionalized interpretations), and the reactualization of well-known problems of the aesthetics of psychological mimesis.²⁴

CONSTITUTIVE CONDITIONS OF CHARACTERS: THE SUPERIORITY OF FULL-FLEDGED POSSIBLE INDIVIDUALS

This heading also recalls a specific scholar’s contribution. In Margolin’s 1990 work, the notion of non-actual individual is claimed to be theoretically superior to the other two (“textual speaker”, and “actant/role”) devised in the narratological tradition. The superiority of non-actual individuals (INDs) is certified on the grounds of “conceptual comprehensiveness, theoretical depth and explanatory power, and diversity of types of texts to which it is applicable” (Margolin, 1990: 845). These methodological virtues should be understood as “neutral”;²⁵ neutrality is also the basic principle of the prescription of four constitutive conditions for these individuals “in formal terms, abstracting from genre or period vicissitudes”. However, coming to specifications, the mainstream of realistic fiction is implicitly recognized as the model to follow, as the ideal of analytical complexity and sophistication: first, the qualities selected recall psychological depth (“existence, individuality, distinctness or singularity and paradigmatic or simultaneous unity of traits”); second, he makes clear that “all four conditions are satisfied in realistic literature” (Margolin, 1990: 849), and there are different degrees of satisfaction (so there is a starting point, a less anoma-

lous kind of character); third, although it is made clear that he is referring to objective textual factors and technical qualities without any aesthetic significance, it is easy to imply the opposite when he brings about the ideal of a “full-fledged IND” (Margolin, 1990: 851); fourth, when dealing with characterization he has to concede that

... traditional literary scholarship has concentrated its attention almost entirely on mental attributes ... the nearly exclusive attention paid to nineteenth-century narrative has impeded the development of a wider theory.” (Margolin, 1990: 852)

COMPONENTS OF CHARACTERS: FUNCTIONS OF TEXTS AND GENRES

Character consists of three components –the mimetic (character as person), the thematic (character as idea), and the synthetic (character as artificial construct). The relation among these components varies from narrative to narrative. (Phelan, 1993: 61)

Phelan’s summary of the model developed in his *Reading People, Reading Plots* (1989) is significant because the three components identified in character can be very easily linked to well-known kinds of narratives, as he made clear in another previous contribution:

The problem of developing a satisfactory theory of literary character can be usefully connected to the problem of the mimetic-didactic distinction because a major factor in the judgment of a work as mimetic or didactic is the way its characters function. (1986-7: 283)

Of course the function of Phelan’s model is precisely to deny that this or that function and status of characters can be completely decreed for genre texts, because of the obvious circularity of the argument, and because texts are never “pure” (“Why must we assume that we are in an either/or situation?”, 1986-7: 284); the underlying logic is that aesthetically superior texts integrate all of them in what he calls narrative progression, understood as

... the web formed by the inferences readers are led to by the combination of setting, characters, events, points of view, ideational content, and style. The way in which all these things work together ... greatly influences the further movement of that narrative and determines its effects. (1986-7: 286)

Of course we cannot blame Phelan for using Jane Austen’s novels and not *Utopia* in his characterization, or for the persistence of novelistic factors in his characterization; on the contrary, his decision –to underrate the interpretive force of the genre affiliation of a text in the determination of the function and status of character– has to be considered as a very sensible attempt to overcome a mechanistic approach to texts “marked” by the function historically designated to the genre they have been historically associated with.²⁶

FORSTER MODERNIZED: FLAT/ROUND CHARACTERS ARE NOW FOUR

It is not only Bradley who needs reevaluation; E.M. Forster's traditional distinction between flat and round characters (1927) may have proved ambiguous or vague, but accusations of lack of technical accuracy have not defeated it: its persistence seems to lie precisely in its intuitive energy. This explains David Fishelov's (1993) attempt to blend Forster's with another, much needed, distinction between the textual and the representational ("construction") level. "Flat" (or "type-tendency") stands for one-dimensional (textually), or simple, easy to designate with a short, conventional, formula (representationally); "round" ("individual-type") means complex, "a rich and elaborate appearance" (at the textual level), or inability to reduce personality into one category (at the construction level). As these two levels may not coincide, four possibilities are produced: PURE INDIVIDUALS, and PURE TYPES reflect their corresponding tendencies at both levels. When the textual and construction levels differ we obtain a TYPE-LIKE INDIVIDUAL or an INDIVIDUAL-LIKE TYPE. The logic and applicability of these typological efforts are evident: the works selected to show these categories are "three famous English novels of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (Fishelov, 1993: 79); the notion of "psychological depth", follows conventional ideas on personality and identity (Fishelov, 1993: 82); his criticism of Hochman's distinctions between characters is based on the accusation that the categories developed by Hochman in his *Character in Literature* (1985) are not intrinsic enough, but deal sometimes with the textual revelation of characters; when reading the definitions it is difficult not to feel that, despite Fishelov's denials (1993: 79) some valorization is retained, because an evolutionary sequence is implied in his selection of examples:

Needless to say, all four categories are purely descriptive; there is no point in claiming that the "pure" individual is in any sense superior to the "pure" type. Both of them have their places and functions in the heterogeneous literary scene, and each can be highly effective and successful in his own context.

CITIZENS, VISITORS, ET AL. IN *UTOPIA* AND *NEW ATLANTIS*

This section should start with a revision of views on utopian characters. We cannot deny that interesting perspectives have been offered, and that they should (and can, and will) be incorporated. What is needed sometimes is only a change in the tone or function of information: some qualities which are often described as obstacles for a correct or "richer" treatment, have to be "translated" into a more neutral or affirmative discourse; of course, they also have to be validated by textual evidence, and some theoretical distinctions will help to "correct" evident generalizations. This adaptation could be explained in two phases: some ideas on "why utopian characters should not be studied (or are not problematic)", and ideas on "how utopian characters could be studied (or, what distinctions could be made)".

THE IRRELEVANCE OF CHARACTER

The content and function of Utopian discourse have been clearly established by tradition, and this sketch can only be a parody of the endless nuances that have been

traced: a perfect (or simply better, but always alternative and desirable in an ambiguous sense) imaginary society is systematically (or globally) described; the function of the text is either to recommend an improbable similar reorganization of our state/society or to revise the values of our state/society (“to make us see”, in a Conradian fashion). These two parameters are complemented with a particular social diagnosis all writers of (serious)²⁷ utopias have historically detected since Plato –that a more correct organization of society (or the state) will always depend on a certain (variable) degree of submission of individual satisfactions (by means of restrictions of supplies, limited aspirations and appetites, etc.) to the general welfare. With this information it is very easy to determine the quality and quantity of characters necessary for utopias. Besides, a particular hierarchy of typical critical tools is established, and different perspectives confirm the idea of the disappearance and irrelevance of character:

1) If narratives are theoretically made of three elements at the level of story (“setting”, “plot”, and “character”, Linn-Taylor, 1935: 54; Toolan, 1988: 90), or perhaps two (“events” and “existents”), and then two kinds of existents (“character” and “setting”, Chatman, 1978: 19), all tensions in narratological descriptions seem to stem from the disputed dominance in fictions of two of them, while the other is generally relegated: there are fictions in which characters are subordinated to plot, or viceversa, but setting can never be the central issue: it is necessarily subordinated to the others. Narratologists had to concede that dynamic characterizations might not be applicable to character-based fictions, but there was no point in identifying fictions in which the main interpretive axis is the “static” background against which “normal” narratives are defined. In other words, attention is primarily paid not to the existence of individuals within society, but to the existence of that society ruling the lives of those individuals.

2) It is not only the “generalist” orientation of the text that takes us away from individuals: the organization of society is powerfully designed to eliminate *conflict*, which is the essence of the organization of narrative.²⁸ Conflict disappears when the individuality of individuals is eroded, when characters mechanically and literally embody the “Constitution” of the State. If there is no place for Hamlets or Emmas there is no place for “humanist” vindications, nor for structuralist “dynamic” characterizations. The conclusion is that Utopias are left outside the tensions portrayed in sections one and two of this essay: there are no individuals to save from the tyranny of action, there are no figures whose ghostly essence should be exposed, because these temptations have been excluded:

The destruction of the individual as a private and self-regarding entity is a positive goal in Utopia; at the least, the ways in which a person could constitute himself as a being distinct from those around him are radically reduced. (Greenblatt, 1980: 41)

3) Utopias can also be conceived as oriented outside the “illusion” of the story, and be taken as evident and functional illustrations of “ideas” and ideals, most typically extremely well-known political (communist), spiritual (monastic) or scientific options. A “natural” interpretive consequence of this is the irrelevance of all elements of illusion, and it certainly precludes the illusion of character. Apart from the fact that linking utopias to a didactic or satirical function contains an implicit

(negative) statement on their aesthetic merit,²⁹ there is even a tendency to exclude them from the “literature” label, because of the “anomalous” quality of the issues handled in Utopias, in a “literary” or “novelistic” context. At least, these two terms become synonymous in Elliott’s statement:

Because they [utopias] are subject to the laws of politics, morality, sociology, economics, and various other fields, the issues to which these questions and dozens like them apply require discursive treatment. They belong to a reality foreign to that enacted in a novel. They are not literary issues, nor can the work which elicits and tries to answer these questions about them be judged in terms applicable to the work of Henry James. (R. Elliott, 1970: 110-111)³⁰

4) The very existence of descriptions of the Utopian in terms of peculiar psychological mechanisms seems to work against the consideration of characters as relevant critical tools: if there is a genuine character in utopias it is the creator of these works, the utopian writer, the one who invented the utopian model, *his* model, his *dream*; so there is no other “person” to speak of in these fictions. This implication is particularly strong when we are told of some quasi-religious propension or vocation (Manuel-Manuel, 1979: 19), or of “the utopian impulse” (Holquist, 1968: 138).

5) This section will be closed with a paradox: we will relativize a contribution in which a genuine fictional character is prescribed for utopias, a contribution in which a “neutral” perspective is adopted. In terms of narrative structure More’s *Utopia* and Bacon’s *New Atlantis* contain two typical characters, two sailors: Raphael Hythloday, back from Utopia, talking to Morus in Antwerp, the other an anonymous sailor who parted from Peru to find Bensalem. Their accounts let us know of the organization of the utopian communities. What importance should we give to these Europeans? If we follow Vita Fortunati’s (1979) analysis the impression is that these figures are essential: utopias are based (narratively, fictionally) on the structure of a journey, and the central figure is that of the “personaggio-viaggiatore” (1979: 41). The general structure of utopias is logically based on three stages of every journey, “Andata”, “Permanenza” and “Ritorno”, or “A-B-C”. The possible textual (“discours”) manifestations of this general model of action (“histoire”) can be typologized: for instance, in *New Atlantis* the structure is “A-B-c” (“c” is lowercase because there is no account of the sailor’s return as the work was left unfinished); in *Utopia* we get “C’-A-B” (i.e. the return is not described in detail, and the logic of description is essayistic, not chronological or autobiographical). It could be thought that with these details the “life” and relevance of the individual traveller is emphasised, and we at least have an individual character. However, we should ask ourselves if isolating one name, the shadow of one person, is all we can obtain by incorporating a narrative perspective in our analysis. In Fortunati’s analysis this narrative dimension (and its product, the sailor) is not given any other function in relation with the “real” text –i.e. the utopian society, its institutions– than the mere telling of that society. In other words, this character may have a function in the utopian text, but that function is merely shown to be instrumental (mechanical, to transmit information), not significant (the object is not modified by the voice telling it). In this reading the narrative level is only an ineffectual frame, some unnecessary wrapping,³¹ and the traveller, though more individual and closer to us (more European) than “anodyne” utopians, remains a superficial device; with this “generic” reading the failure of utopian writing is sanctioned:

The pleasure palls under this relentlessly mechanical approach to the necessary expository problem. (Elliott, 1970: 109)

PEOPLE MADE RELEVANT

What is needed, or desirable, is information about fictional individuals of Utopian texts that could give us information about utopian texts as true complexes of narrative elements, fictional constructs, and social ideas expressed. It is true that some commentaries on the irrelevance or the disappearance of characters in utopias have been apparently endorsed in the previous section (prominence of setting, absence of conflict, loss of individuality), but our analysis of textual data should produce a more precise discrimination: these general principles can be more problematic than previously stated, especially:

- The quality of indications of loss of individuality, which is ambiguously communicated through a combination of textual and representational means.
- The different suggestions of the author's personal compromise with the social model, which allow for some flexibility or, in *Utopia*, self-reflexivity.

In order to identify these two aspects we have to list briefly the people who appear in the texts of *Utopia* and *New Atlantis*, and make some groups.

A. It is true that we do not know the *Proper Name* of any citizen of Utopia, and in New Atlantis only Joabin is given to us. The population is characterized as a whole: all citizens are portrayed as one anonymous individual, identical because all identified with the rules of the country (which should paradoxically make laws superfluous). The uniformity of societies, the destruction of individuality, has been stressed in so many accounts that it is difficult not to conceive the idea of clones who cannot even name or identify their neighbours, as the inferior classes of *Brave New World*.

The explanation of this phenomenon is simple enough, but a further observation is indispensable. We are invited to think that individuality has been suppressed; this idea, reinforced by convincing remarks on the educational system, makes citizens extremely faithful servants or perfect hypocrites.

However, it is impossible to attribute this generalizing tendency with an absolute psychological value, because the orientation of discourse naturally prevents the narrators' voices from distinguishing between different individuals; the object of discourse is not to emphasise discrepancy, but the general attitude to the State; this makes any individuating commentary superfluous, like the proportion of fair-haired people, because the organization of the state will not be affected, and no competent narrator will select this information. These two levels, textual and representational coincide and collaborate in utopias: there is ecology in the relationship between object and discourse, but they have to be distinguished, because of the many possible modulations of the textual dimension.

B. The logic of the description is the logic of the state, as illustrated by the fact that all distinctions between social groups derive from the social functions of their members. The parade of individuals of *New Atlantis*³² only includes indications of dress and position (also in an ecological relation): an officer (216), a clerk of the Health Service (217), a notary (217), a clerk and the governor of the House of Strangers (217, 220), and one Father of Salomon's House (237).³³ In *Utopia* only profes-

sional groups are distinguished, and we have names for political positions (phylarcs, protophylarcs, governors, 67). Again discourse creates order in the object, and emphasises the impression that uniformity and lack of identity (textual data) are physical or psychological phenomena.

C. Utopus is the only Proper Name mentioned in the description of Utopia; the appearance of Altabin and Solamona in *New Atlantis* is equivalent. These are the founders of the utopian societies, but even they are subordinated to their own creations: they are not interesting as individuals, but as establishers, agents of transformation, instances of the figure of the “rex absconditus,” following the model, or myth of Lycurgus (Holstun, 1987: 95ff). In fact they are restored from the past by the present relevance of the model.

D. We can concentrate on Joabin, the Jew of *New Atlantis*. There is also a function for him –that of guide, which he shares with the governor of the House of Strangers and the Father of the House of Salomon. The impression that utopian societies are extraordinarily uniform and coherent has much to do with a less objective function they perform: they are often engaged in an exercise of propaganda, of indoctrination, as historians of the official truths of the state, as worshipful followers of the founders, etc. If we tend to think that the opinions of these voices are shared by all citizens, and that all citizens could express their devotion so eloquently, it is so because we are applying a conventional “ecological” transfer from discourse to story, because we have been instructed to read the text in the logic of genre, and we should not doubt the voice of these narrators, while we are instructed to suspect the voices of, say, postmodern novels.

E. Utopian societies are not only perfect, but unknown, and the European voices of sailors are needed to make these societies accessible. From the point of view of the European reader these sailors are not only *narrators*, but, in different degrees, *guides* and *spokesmen*, sharing sometimes the loss of objectivity of native voices.³⁴

F. The narrator of *New Atlantis* has no motives, his account is not contextualized. Raphael Hythloday’s stance is slightly different because his account is the consequence of a conversation with another character, another European that prompts him to speak: in Utopia this function is performed by *Morus* (the mask or persona of More). This device has become part of the descriptions of the genre, as Holstun (1987: 63-4) speaks of the *philosopher*.

G. Although the philosopher *Morus* is often critical with Hythloday’s ideas, Holstun suggests that this generic convention only induces the reluctant sailor to speak, i.e., has no ideological relevance. The last type is contrary in the sense that it is characterized by its *authority*:

Utopias characteristically contain a fictional character –henceforth called the ‘*delineator*’- who explains the ideal society to an audience unfamiliar with it. Generic conventions entitle the reader to assume that even though the author cannot be identified with the delineator, the author does *endorse* the delineator’s values and statements of what is socially desirable. (Morson, 1981: 76)

This delineator, the author’s representative in the world of fiction, can be actualized in any of the inhabitants or visitors (or even founders) we have distinguished before.

We have obtained seven people-related categories in this revision of two classic utopias. However, the general logic seems to be one of overdetermination, in the end the identification of several dimensions and distinctions becomes superfluous: the elimination of conflict is first manifested in the agreement between the textual and the representational levels; second, in the correspondence (or equivalence) between the different functions identified. Inhabitants (groups A to D) are too indeterminate; European visitors and interlocutors (groups E and F) mechanically repeat what they saw.³⁵ All this naturally leads to an extreme case of simplification: the list of possible individuals is absorbed into a bodiless voice, that of the “delineator”.³⁶ However, this “generic” feature of the functional and ideological identification of all figures, fictional and non-fictional, European and Utopian (or Bensalemite), past and present, this fusion into an abstract “delineator”, should still pass the test of textual validation. In this respect the works of More and Bacon differ:

The design of *New Atlantis* individualizes the imaginary figure of the narrator in a peculiar way: Bacon creates a conventional image of respectability, leadership and Christian bonhomie: He is always present when a selected group is chosen (218, 220, 221); he is chosen to interview the Father of the House of Salomon (238); he sensibly addresses his fellow sailors to recommend them a pious behaviour while they are on the island (out of self-protection and gratitude, 220); he is acquainted with the Scriptures (236) ... this character is individualized but remains typical, and his identification with the life of Bensalemites is not problematized at all. More gives his Raphael Hythloday more opportunities to single himself out of the Utopian society: we are given information about his name, aspect³⁷ and origin,³⁸ but there are different, less trivial, mechanisms that make Hythloday transcend the function of mere spokesman of the social structures of Utopia, grow a more autonomous individual. The narrator of *New Atlantis* tells Bensalem from *there*; More’s design is radically different: instead of limiting him to the menial task of telling a voyage, the character Hythloday, a cultivated cynical philosopher, is given the opportunity of defending his social ideas and his personal choice of life *in Antwerp*, before the celebrated Morus. Where Bacon’s sailor simply listens and congratulates, More’s Hithloday argues, and finds personal and theoretical conflicts and dilemmas (the inapplicability of the system, the uselessness of becoming a counselor, Morus’s doubts on communism); we could even say that the mood of his account of Utopia is regulated by those dilemmas.

What is the purpose of this device of showing the utopist not where he is in a comfortable position (physical and rhetorical), but when he has to face serious problems to defend his truth? By transferring the radicalism of the Utopian model to a fictional being who has been transferred from that society to a different one More simultaneously grants himself the possibility of being radical in his expression and show his awareness of the ingenuousness of indulging in the utopian impulse. By splitting himself into two characters, one representing his longings and the other his knowledge, More anticipated the difficulties utopian thought entails. Morson (1981: 185) found the most intelligent expression of this strategy in a short commentary in Dostoevsky’s *Diary of a Writer*:

Self-reflection –the ability to make an object of one’s deepest feelings, to set it before oneself, to bow down to it, and perhaps immediately after, to ridicule it.

Meanwhile, Hythloday has been forced by More to become multi-dimensional and problematic, i.e. more like a character. In this sense, the political realism that haunted More's imagination manifested itself aesthetically in the transformation of the necessary sailor into somebody more like a full-fledged individual, more like a realistic character, and, besides, one whose "depth" is articulated with utopian ideas. There are no Emmas portrayed in *Amaurotum*, but there is a significant Raphael in *Antwerp*. A "realistic" character is still a major aesthetic factor even in peripheral genres like *Utopias*, and it will be a critically useful figure if gives us more information on utopian ideas.

Notes

1. Morton's chronological sequence of three narratological phases (1993: 407-8) starts with the Narrative Theory of the New Criticism (until Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology*), follows with "Classic" (structuralist) Narratology, and is closed with a "postnarratological (poststructuralist) era". Hochman-Wachs (1993: 44) suggest two wider shifts in modern studies concerning character and human beings:
Theorists have utterly breached the traditional barrier between character in literature and people in life (...) At the same time, they have striven to explode our sense of the coherence and unity of the self ... and of the human subject as a viable focus of meaning.
2. Emma Woodhouse has become a symbol of the humanist stance and a victim of the attacks of revisionists. See Cohan (1983) and Frow (1986). Fishelov (1993) also uses her (or it).
3. It is debatable if the implementation of a semantic dimension to studies on narrative (as those practised by Ryan, Doležel, Margolin, Pavel, etc.) has really changed this situation: the application of possible-worlds semantics to fiction is typically applied to plot-based narratives.
4. Some typical and/or popular general introductions to narratology, like those of M. Bal (1985), Chatman (1978), Garrido Domínguez (1993), Gelley (1987), Prince (1982), Rimmon-Kenan (1983), and Toolan (1988), include chapters on character.
5. For clear sketches of these debates, Cohan's (1983: 7-9) and Frow's (1986: 228-38) organize their revisions in three groups: humanists, structuralists and post-structuralists. Sinfield's treatment (1992: 56-66) fuses other perspectives. See also Hochman-Wachs (1993).
6. Traditional studies of character in this mimetic vein are those of Harvey (1965), and Swinden (1973). In an Appendix entitled "The Attack on Character" Harvey makes an interesting reflection on the fears this category has raised:
Character, in itself, is no more dangerous an abstraction than any other critical term; we are just as liable to compromise our critical well-being in the name of symbol or vision or theme (p. 205).
7. This confusion between the intrinsic quality of the object (the person "narrated") and the quality of the process of portraying it that I have reproduced is a typical instance of sliding from one (mimetic) perspective into another (semiotic) perspective, or viceversa.
8. Most arguments are ontological. This sketchy history cannot trace the complex development of antinarrative positions. For an analysis of different versions of this stance, see Alex Argyros (1992): Derridean deconstruction, Radical feminist theory, Neo-Marxist perspectives, Cultural relativists...
9. Or in with a shorter formula: "Traditional narrative is dead. My purpose is to explain its demise (Brown, 1985: 573). The historical origin of this process of disintegration is conventionally associated to modernism. This is severely contested by Abbott (1993), who stresses the persistence of some Victorian conceptions of character in modernist practice.

10. The title is significant enough. Barry's "Narratology's Centrifugal Force" is quite optimistic. G. Prince's contribution also starts in this vein, and M. Bal finds, after all, a way to defend the discipline (728-30):
- It may seem, superficially, that narratology has gone out of fashion (...) Today's options seem to be either regression to earlier positions, primary focus on application, or rejection of narratology (...) The title "narratologist" seems to call for an apology, a denial, or a justification (...) My contention in this paper –or my desire, one could argue– then, is that narratology, ten years after Synopsis 2, is flourishing, but less within the study of narrative texts than in other disciplines.*
- Alex Argyros (1992: 659) confirms the doubts on the contemporary relevance of narratology by commenting that his purpose is "to rehabilitate narrative by suggesting that it can be a principal agent of cultural change".
11. This evaluation applies, for instance, to Chatman (1978: 108), who openly complains about the poverty of attention devoted to this aspect of narrative: "We are left with little more than the identification of characters as "persons" or as "people" depicted in writing", while he cannot do without some sense of uncertainty about the relevance of "traits" as the material on which to build his own theory. In fact his solution, as we will see in section two, contains several concessions to "old ways" (Forster's and Bradley's) in the more orthodox structuralist frame of his *Story and Discourse*. Similar commentaries can be made on the works of Phelan, Frow, and Weinsheimer. For instance, Weinsheimer's final remarks simply acknowledge the ineptitude of current theories:
- What we require is a Janus-faced critic who can do justice to both texts and persons: to the textualized persons, personified texts that are characters. It is clear that neither mimetic nor semiotic criticism can do so.* (1978: 208)
12. Autonomy is to be understood here as retreat from historical, generic, and aesthetic particularity. D.W. Fokkema's (1982: 61) description of the narratological manoeuvre is clear:
- In the absence of a consensus of what literature is and how it is to be defined, many students of literature believe that the problem can be circumvented by disregarding the literary nature of their object. This tendency has given rise first to narratology, which is concerned with narrative, irrespective of whether it is received as being literary or nonliterary, and second to the study of texts in general ... which includes the examination of all texts, narrative as well as nonnarrative, literary as well as nonliterary.*
13. The relationship between discipline, object, and historical traditions was extremely ambiguous: as we have seen narrative was made a synonym of narratology on one hand, and of particular genres or works on another.
14. The relevance of attacks on character implicitly based on postmodern writing were perhaps more compelling then than now. For Lennard Davis (1987: 104):
- Their novels [Duras's, Robbe-Grillet's, Borges's, or Calvino's] can be read, but in essence they are anomalous, contentious pieces of counter-practice. What most of us call novels are works substantially intertwined with character.*
15. Some revisions of character simply reveal the "frames", or working assumptions of semiotic and mimetic criticism, and show how difficult it is to satisfy simultaneously the needs of both sides (see Weinsheimer's commentary in note 11 above); other post-structuralist attacks on character go further and systematically expose the myths and dangers of "essentialist humanism" (Sinfield, 1992: 61-3).
16. Of course the serious methodological problem of circularity denounced by Mooij persists, but making the distinction explicit may help to elude it to some extent.
17. This has important consequences concerning evaluation:
- The novelist's art is to metamorphose ideas into the idiosyncratic experience of complex human beings ... the utopian writer has rarely been able to accomplish this translation. Instead of incarnating the good life dramatically, novelistically, the characters of utopia discuss it.* (Elliott, 1970: 110. Italics mine)

18. I have identified eight areas, although many others can be included or segregated from the ones I have selected. In fact some of them are simply significant developments of other areas.
19. Some related labels are: hero, protagonist, (self-identical) subject, person, persona, mask, consciousness, soul, actant, (cluster of) signs, Proper Name, ego, self, non-actual individual, figure, cypher, personality ...
Those primary substances to which everything else is attached (...) A symbol like the cross can be a character. An idea or a situation ... anything indeed, which serves as a fixed point ... functions as a character. Character, in this sense, is a matter of degree. (Gass, 1970: 272). Another interesting view of this phenomenon is offered by Anthony Wall (1984: 47-51) in his revision of Bakhtin's commentaries: sliding from general theory to historical commentary on the novel, ambiguity in the handling of character/subject/hero ...
20. The transfer from pre-theoretical, "historical", sense to definition of a concept in a theoretical context is discussed by M. Bal (1985: 12) when she defines "narrative".
21. Docherty (1983: 247) illustrates this idea with commentaries by Ian Watt, George Orwell and Gabriel Jospovici. Lennard Davis (1987) and Alexander Gelley (1987) also establish the links between historical kind (novel) and analytical category (character). Sinfield's references to the constituted and socially constitutive notion of human identity and to the "Invention" of Man in the Enlightenment (1992: 61) owe much to Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy*.
 Hochman-Wachs revise the strategies of the "identity-dissolving discourse" (1993: 45ff), by using Culler, De Man, Foucault, Lacan ... the conclusion is that there is a simplification of the humanist tradition: it is Postmoderns who essentialize (1993: 47).
22. See instances of this in Margolin (1986), Toolan (1988: 99-102, 106ff), Bal (1985: 97-99).
23. As Chatman shows, in 1936 Allport y Odbert listed 17.953 possible psychological traits from the *Webster's Dictionary*. Compare this to the closed, manageable number of narratorial instances frequently identified, or to the claimed inspiring experience of structuralist phonology.
24. Some commentaries by Chatman (1978: 118) on the processing of action and of character inevitably remind us of Henry James's *The Art of Fiction*:
There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident ... What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel but of character?
 These commentaries should not be taken as an attack on psychological analysis, or on psychology, as a definitely "weak" or unscientific solution, but as an illustration of the contradiction of some formalist tenets. Knapp's (1993) defense of collaboration is solid enough, because fears of literary critics are easy to remove.
25. These criteria are added to the other six of "methodological adequacy" he specifies at the beginning of the same work (1990: 843-4).
26. It is worth noting that Margolin's last (1993) list of four senses of character is an elaboration from Phelan's triad (with the addition of non-actual individual). The point is that Phelan, unlike Margolin, does not connect his distinctions to theoretical activities, but to genres.
 See Adena Rosmarin's *The Power of Genre* (1985) for an apology of a generic criticism that seeks to erode this logic.
27. There is virtually no bibliography on Utopia not following these principles. Two practical areas for checking the universality of basic agreement are the efforts of definition of the genre and of placement of utopian literature in general maps of literature. Some excellent and brief revisions of historical variants of the utopian model are those of Sargent (1979), Suvin (1979), J.C. Davis (1981) and Morson (1981).
28. Or of some privileged narrative? The issue is to what extent the definition of narrative allows for this specification, if a narrative without conflict or selection of the story of an individual does not qualify ...

29. Morson's (1981: 95) awareness of the implications of the didactic function of utopias is reflected in a basic principle: utopian writers have to deceive the reader, to defeat his initial resistance to be preached, to pretend there is no function, but pleasure, in the text. Once the reader has been forced into reading the text, a typical device is to close the book without closing the initial (deceitful) frame:
Didactic writers therefore make orthodox, if disingenuous, use of the opening frame –this is only a story– but elude as much as possible the power of the closing frame.
30. The implication is that love affairs are *intrinsically more novelistic*, more literary ... Gary Morson (1981: 76-79) follows the same logic: the difficulty of utopias is that they require an *“unfamiliar, intrinsically non-literary body of knowledge”*.
31. The idea of the narrative frame as literally frame, not a part of the portrait, is defended on the grounds of the aesthetic merit of verisimilitude. In this light, Bacon's *New Atlantis* is said to be closer to the novel and its “formal realism” thanks to its narrative method (Powers, 1978: 21). Accepting this criterion of verisimilitude is disastrous from the point of view of its articulation with the utopian message: no narrative device will make the irreality of utopian society unperceivable, and different criteria of realism are functional in utopias, such as the theoretical soundness of organizational details (Bierman, 1963).
32. All page references are from Arthur Johnston's Clarendon edition of *The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis* (1974), and Edward Surtz's Yale edition of *Utopia* (1964).
33. We also find references to the Conservator of Health (217), the governor of the city and the king (232). When describing the Feast of the Family two roles are given names: Tirsan (231) and Taratan (232).
34. G. Morson (1981: 99ff) uses the platonic allegory of the cave to explain the sailors' conversions.
35. This is more evident in *New Atlantis*, where the narrator only reproduces the guides' speeches and adds commentaries on the aspect of things. On the other hand, the character “Morus” ironically comments that his role is only to reproduce what he heard:
Certainly you [Giles] know that I was relieved of all the labour of gathering materials for the work and that I had to give no thought at all to their arrangement. I had only to repeat what in your company I heard Raphael relate... (3)
36. Although this notion is intuitively useful, the critic's task should be to check the textual evidence for this generic aprioristic prescription. For instance, he speaks of Socrates as the delineator of Plato's *Republic* (1985: 84-5), but he neglects one interesting narrative aspect: Plato's work is a fictional dialogue, but it has no society portrayed “as existent”, but as a hypothesis.
37. *a stranger, a man of advanced years, with sunburnt countenance and long beard and cloak hanging carelessly from his shoulder, while his appearance and dress seemed to me to be those of a ship's captain. (11)*
38. *... his sailing has not been like that of Palinurus but like that of Ulysses or, rather, of Plato. Now this Raphael ... is no bad Latin scholar, and most learned in Greek. he had studied that language more than Latin because he had devoted himself unreservedly to philosophy, and in that subject he found that there is nothing valuable in Latin except certain treatises of Seneca and Cicero. (12)*

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