

# AROUND THE FUNCTION OF THE CHARACTER IN LITERARY FICTION<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** || The main goal of this article is to analyze the character's role in literary fiction from a perspective focused on the reader's mind. In particular, the article reviews some different perspectives and approaches to the study of the relationships between author, text and reader, especially in Dostoevski's literary works. The analysis aims to contribute to the study not only of Dostoevsky's poetics and characters, but also of the conceptualization of the character as a set of overlapping discourses, which would help us to deal with some narratology issues.

**Keywords** || Character | Fiction | Dostoevski | Discourse | Psychology of Fiction

In the spaces of fiction there are beings capable of living normally. The author of novels relies on their routine manner of doing, saying, and experiencing realistic hopes and dreams to make the leap from the real world to the represented world, and vice versa. But this ability is due to the fact that the very fiction which gives them shelter both configures and is configured by their existence.

Identifying the character as the essence of the novel, as Ortega does (1925), should not be confused with an inadequate definition of character as representative or opponent of the author's voice. Herein lies the necessity of conceptualising the character as a pragmatic discursive connector, as the probability of a certain meaning and behaviour. The character is more than just a representation of the author's intention in some way or another. She is a projection of language, a social act which expresses a particular ideology, in Lewis's terms (1979), a cultural unit. Character is a dynamic function (according to a conception similar to Tinianov's) that is defined while at the same time participating in the dynamism of the work. The character must, following the classic formula of Schiller, place herself before a universe, because she is a person, and must be a person, because there is a universe before her; she must feel because she is self-conscious, and she must be self-conscious because she feels. One of the greatest achievements of fiction is that the reader can peer into this universe, composed of various interconnected worlds, to see what the character sees, and feel what the character feels: to pretend, in effect.

We recognise the character through what she says, thinks and does, but also, we might say, through what is constructed around her, through her influence in the progression of events, the topology of the discursive fabric, and thus, through what *others* say about her. It could be said, following the theory of the never-ending search (Lukács, 1985), that the character merely tries to find herself, a task she will accomplish only in the mind of the reader; that is, when her effective transposition from the fictional to the real universe is complete. At this stage, she will no longer be a discourse, an amalgam of words pointing in this or that direction. Neither will she be a summary of aphoristic interventions and foreseeable actions, but a potentially real being, a warning, a panegyric or epitaph, an emotional blow. Her mere *existence-in-the-fictional-world* is a sign reminding the reader that the person who speaks in the work is not the person who writes in real life, and that the person who writes is not the one who speaks. The character is only a channel for the author's overall intention, which does not have to be defended or refuted by his characters.

The protagonist stands out among the cast of characters of a work. She is the hero, or in other words, the character without whom the structure of the action would cease to function, the one upon whom

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## NOTES

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the motives of the action fall, and from whom its consequences come (Friedman, 1955). But as a character, her conduct and meaning will be equally defined by the discursive relations among the different characters, in her involvement with, against, thanks to, through, in spite of, and due to the rhetoric of the text. It might never be possible to talk explicitly about her personality, ethics and intentionality, but once integrated into the text that is read, the reader gains a certain impression of them, a mental image. From her name – the categorical imperative of the character, as Spitzer would say<sup>2</sup> – to her physiology, everything in the work is a Barthesian *sign* that marks her in the mind of the reader.

Like an Atlas who, in this new avatar, must use his powerful arms to approach the fictional universe to the real world, the character becomes a battleground for the author, who will fight with himself to achieve a defined, stable image of his idea in and through the character. The character's consciousness and way of thinking and interpreting the world will remain locked inside the all-encompassing consciousness the author possesses with respect to his creature. But she can escape from this control at any moment, forcing the author to rethink his work, the possessive pronoun becoming slippery. On more than a few occasions, authors have expressed concern at not being able to refute the powerful discourse of one of their characters.

For Bakhtin, both hero and plot are of the same mould, and we could add that the material of which they are made, in the majority of cases at least, is the idea. The character does not stop doing, because she is formed through her speech or because her silence can be much more eloquent.<sup>3</sup> It is a silence which must also be counted: here is the fictional fallacy of the not done. A character is always defined by an accumulation of actions, never by their absence, because the very lack of them must be narrated through another action. We could say that the not said is not an absence in the discourse, but is rather a discourse about absence. In this, narration has the greater responsibility. One of the most developed ways of saying the not said, the not done, are the words and actions on the threshold and the false promises of the text from which the mind of the reader is suspended in anticipation of completeness and meaning (Barros García, 2014a).

In his creation, the author distributes to the characters the information that only he can provide, seeking to produce imitative speech acts, as if they were being performed by someone (Ohmann, 1972). For example, the reader does not usually realise that the character only forgets if, and only if, someone tells us or shows us this forgetting,<sup>4</sup> that, in reality, the character forgets because she remembers or is reminded that she must forget. All feeling, perception or judgement of a character is a technique for the presentation of consciousness

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2 | Hamon argues (1977) that the real referents, especially those that are historical and mythical, present a freedom of action that is considerably conditioned from the moment they appear as such before the reader. But it is also true that, due to this very predictability, they can admit a larger number of surprises, of ruptures, in the expected discursive horizon. In this same sense, we need hardly recall the extraordinary potential of proper names in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Literature, which have generated significant translation problems due to the disparity of criteria regarding the best strategies (foreignisation, domestication, etc.) for achieving an emotional effect similar to that of the original text.

3 | Recall the “reflector-characters” of Stanzel (1978), which communicate more through their silences.

4 | It made be the case that this forgetting is revealed as the absence of an action which was expected and promised, but there must also be certain textual signs that show the reader that this promise has not been fulfilled.

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(*stream of consciousness*). This is so much so that we can apply the additional *falsidical* formula and say: the mere apparition of the character would seem to warn us that everything he says is false. Being a chimera of an impossible reality, the enunciation of a fictional being cannot be real. Neither does it attempt to be so, aspiring instead – in this game of uncertainty and indeterminacy – to verisimilitude in order to allow the reader to judge whether or not it is appropriate. It therefore swings in the catenary of awakened emotions, being only a gradation of affect.

The character is a victim of her discourse, from which she will never escape (even her death is recounted); the word about herself will be the sum of what she says and what *the universe* says about her. External opinion, in Bakhtinian terms, controls her person. This is how we recognise the character, this being who speaks and constructs herself (Greimas, 1976) because the language is hers, and in this appropriation she tells us about herself (Benveniste, 1970). In Bloom's words (2001), we are speaking of a Macbeth created by Macbeth.

The relationship between character and discourse is a fundamental element for analysis, not only because it can refract or reflect the idea of the author, but also because it takes place at all levels of the work: from the thematic, with the assignation of functions in the flow of the text, to the stylistic, as a way of characterising the speaker. Each character constitutes a system of reference for the observation of the fictionalised universe and, as such, there is a variation in the perception and configuration of the fabric of space-time from her perspective. Hence the great importance of discourse analysis in studies about the literary character and her linguistic specificities (which are, at the same time, behavioural): deictics, which contextualises the discourse from the point of view of the speaker only, of the person who speaks, and with reference to the moment in which she thinks, speaks or enunciates (Fillmore, 1981: 158); *Ohmannian* quotation marks and other distancing figures (Lozano, Peña and Abril, 1997: 159-163); the referenced discourse; indirect address (Tyler, 1978: 4401-441), etc. All of these – within a semiotics of discursive action (Bühler, 1967) that distinguishes between the linguistic act and linguistic action – refer to an analysis of the character's discourse in its relation to the discursive operations and states that they obtain; that is, to the analysis in its interrelationship with the rest of the discourses. The conclusions extracted from the isolated discourse of a character will not be very accurate, given that her voice belongs to a larger, more cohesive group, where her utterance is formed of many more elements. The character-discourse link is a global relationship of the work with its text, both terms being taken in their widest sense.

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The reciprocal relationships between characters, the *situation* according to Tomashevsky, constitute the base for understanding the characterisation of the hero, whose significance depends on and derives from her relationship with the rest of the characters in the text. But here we need to understand the concept of character in a larger sense, as many of these relationships are already marked by reference. The character is (bearer of) a discourse which she supposedly obeys and represents, such that the very discourse she champions encourages the reader, even when the former does not intervene or remains silent, to predict a behaviour. It is a heuristic, almost computational exercise, and therefore constructs one network of characters and scenes in which the discourse of the character is reinforced, and another in which it will be confronted.

The character as semiotic phenomenon is thus born from a spectrum of personalities, of actions and possible discourses, being a connector between the fictionalised universe (that which is written) and the fictional (that which is read). She is burdened both with the inescapable burden of literature's established archetypes, which are supposedly imbued with certain qualities and characteristics, as well as with a sense of being influenced by the social context in which the work is published, or desired to be published. It is for a reason that the work is written for something, for someone who must decode, or rather, recode the message, depending on how the effectiveness of the strategy suggested by the text is interwoven with the reader's way of thinking.

As with the author's work, the character is located within a possible repertoire from which she is born, but which she forms at the same time. Through their characters, Pushkin and Lérmontov enable Russian literature to create an illusory universe that is so realistic it can encapsulate society within it. This is how Dostoyevsky, a great admirer of Aleko de Pushkin's Aleko, understands it:

En el personaje de Aleko, héroe del poema *Gitanos*, se plasma ya una idea profunda y fuerte, completamente rusa, que más tarde se expresa en su plenitud armónica en *Onegin*, donde prácticamente el mismo Aleko se nos presenta ya no bajo una luz de fantasía, sino de una forma palpable, real y comprensible. Pushkin ya encontró en Aleko, y magistralmente resaltó, a un ser errante en su tierra natal, al histórico ser errante ruso que ha aparecido de forma oportuna en la historia de nuestra sociedad alejada del pueblo. Evidentemente, no solo en Byron dio con él. El personaje de Aleko es correcto y ha sido captado fielmente, es constante y se ha instalado en nuestra tierra para mucho tiempo. Estos seres errantes rusos siguen sin rumbo hasta hoy en día y parece que no van a desaparecer tan pronto. Ahora estos ya no frecuentan los asentamientos gitanos para buscar sus ideales entre el peculiar y salvaje modo de vida de los gitanos y para buscar en la naturaleza un descanso de la enrevesada y absurda vida de nuestra sociedad intelectual. Pero, de todas las formas, se sumergen en un socialismo que no existía en los

tiempos de Aleko, van con la nueva creencia a otro campo y la trabajan con celo, convencidos, al igual que Aleko, de que en su actitud fantástica alcanzarán sus fines y la felicidad no solo para uno mismo, sino también para el resto del mundo. Porque el vagabundo ruso precisamente necesita esa felicidad universal para conseguir el descanso, no se conformará con menos, pero, por supuesto, de momento todo es teoría. Sigue siendo el mismo ruso, solo que pertenece a diferentes épocas. Repito, esta persona ha sido engendrada justamente en el comienzo del segundo siglo desde la gran reforma de Pedro I, en esta nuestra sociedad intelectual alejada del pueblo, de la fuerza popular, justo al principio del segundo siglo después de la gran reforma de Pedro I. (26; 137-138)<sup>5</sup>

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5 | All citations to Dostoyevsky's work are taken from the 30-volume edition of his complete works, (Достоевский Ф.М. Полное собрание сочинений в 30 томах. - Л., 1972-1990). I refer to it using the agreed criteria for citation, which indicates in brackets the volume and page number of the citation.

6 | Or of Turgenev himself, caricatured in part in Karmazinov.

From this reference we can deduce how Dostoyevsky understood the relationship between the character and the referent. Outlined according to the distinct types of people who live in society, the Russian person is reality itself, a mixture of the past, of which she is inheritor, and of the future, of which she is constructor and verb. These are the reasons, says Kantor (Кантор, 2010), that Dostoyevsky's hero can be seen as a consequence of Russian culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Dostoyevsky sees in the character the possibilities of the idea, or more concretely, a microcosm in which he could create and develop the idea, see it succeed or fail. To this end, the character is oriented in two directions: on the one hand, towards the past in a reflection and evaluation of her own existence, that is, of the reason for the appearance of the little person, the insignificant or superfluous person, of the nihilist and other archetypes; on the other hand, towards what looms ahead, through the function of warning contained in all of Dostoyevsky's texts. The message of the character is far from individual: it is a full 'representation of social roles' (Duranti, 1997: 329), textualised in the idea that is expressed for her and in her.

Remaining on this point, it is useful to see some of Dostoyevsky's opinions about other characters of Russian literature. This can undoubtedly help clarify questions still posed today about the great author's understanding of character, if she is considered to be bearer of her own discourse or if she is fictionally free of the author's control. Dostoyevsky is known for including references to literary characters in his works, usually in a mocking tone. We need only to think of the significant presence of Turgenev's Bazarov in *Demons*,<sup>6</sup> where he is not only judged by Stepan Trofimovich ("...Bazarov es una especie de persona ficticia que no existe en absoluto [...] Este Bazarov es una especie de mezcla incomprensible de Nozdrev con Byron..." [10; 171]), but also defines the textualisation of an idea in itself. He represents a discourse, a voice, that of a character who, according to Dostoevsky, was born as an ideal, but did not know how reflect the genuine Bazarovs of the 1850s.

[...] Se ha atrevido a no reposar con nosotros y a no contentarse con nuestras personalidades importantes y se negó a tomarlas por su ideal, buscó algo mejor que nosotros. Mejor que nosotros. ¡Válgame Dios! ¿Acaso existe algo en el mundo más bonito y más correcto que nosotros? Le han dado lo suyo por Bazarov... [5; 59]

Dostoyevsky, whose letter to the author of *Fathers and Sons* no longer exists, seems to see in Turgenev's Bazarov a rupture of literary truth, a conclusion which we can be made from the following annotation he made in a copy of *Los demonios*:

[...] el hombre de los años cuarenta no podía crear a Bazarov sin faltar a la verdad.

- ¿En qué se le ha destrozado?

- En el pedestal en que se encuentra. [11; 72]

Dostoyevsky's analysis of Tolstoy's Levin and *Anna Karenina* in general in various articles published in *A Writer's Diary* of 1877 is also interesting. In his interpretation we can see two essential ideas: that the character always represents an idea or mode of thinking which is either already established or conceivably possible in society, and that the author, as the entity who regulates the rules and discursive- and action-related manifestations, should not be clearly observable in her characters:

El autor ha hecho bien en mencionarlo, sin mencionar que lo expresó como un extraordinario artista. Después, vuelve a extenderse la novela y de pronto, para mi asombro, me encuentro en la sexta parte de la novela con una escena que corresponde un verdadero "tema de actualidad" y, lo más importante, la escena aparece sin intención ni falsedad, sino que emerge de la misma esencia artística de la novela. Sin embargo, lo vuelvo a repetir, para mí era algo inesperado y he llegado a sorprenderme: no me esperaba semejante "tema de actualidad". Desconozco la razón, pero no me esperaba que el autor se atreviera a desarrollar a sus personajes hasta convertirlos en semejantes "representantes". Aunque, precisamente en estos representantes, en esta exageración de la conclusión radica todo el sentido de la realidad. Sin ello la novela tendría un aspecto prácticamente indefinido, y no correspondería ni a los intereses rusos actuales ni a los esenciales: se describiría solo una parte de la vida, ignorando intencionadamente lo más importante y lo más preocupante de esta vida. Aunque, parece ser, me estoy sumergiendo en la crítica, y esto no es asunto mío. Tan solo quería destacar esta escena. [25; 53]

Aquí muchos de los intelectuales rusos ahora suelen decir: "¿Qué pueblo? Yo soy el pueblo". En la octava parte de *Anna Karenina*, Levin, el personaje favorito del autor de la novela, dice de sí mismo que "él es el pueblo". En cierta ocasión anterior, hablando sobre *Anna Karenina*, dije que ese Levin era "un corazón puro". Sigo creyendo en la pureza de su corazón, pero no creo que él sea el pueblo; al contrario, ahora me doy cuenta de que él también con cariño tiende a alejarse del pueblo. Me di cuenta de ello cuando acabé de leer la octava parte de *Anna Karenina*, que ya mencioné al principio de este diario de los meses julio-agosto. Levin, como hecho, no es, evidentemente, un ser que existe,



sino simplemente un invento del escritor. [25; 193]

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Sencillamente él le quita al pueblo lo máspreciado, le quita el principal sentido de su vida. Sin duda, le habría gustado si nuestro pueblo no pusiera por doquier su corazón en favor de los hermanos suyos, mártires de su fe. En este sentido él niega los hechos, a pesar de que sean evidentes. Por supuesto, esta idea está expresada tan solo en los personajes ficticios de la novela, pero, lo vuelvo a repetir, con demasiada evidencia se percibe junto a ellos al mismo autor. Sin embargo, el libro es sincero, el escritor descubre su alma. Incluso las cosas más comprometedoras (y aquí sí que existen), se dejan caer como por casualidad. Por ello, a pesar de su carácter comprometedor, el lector las percibe tan solo como una palabra directa y no ve ni un atisbo de complejidad. Sin embargo, no considero que ese libro sea tan inocente. [25; 202-203]

Es muy triste el hecho de que un escritor de su talla escriba de esa forma. Es triste para el futuro. Aunque mejor, empiezo la cuestión: me gustaría protestar, señalar aquello que me llamó la atención especialmente. Sin embargo, antes empezaré con Levin, que evidentemente, es el personaje protagonista de la novela. En él se ha expresado lo positivo como si fuera la contradicción de aquellas anomalías por las que han muerto o sufrido otros personajes de la novela. Parece ser que para ello ha sido creado por el autor, para expresarlo todo en él. Pero, sin embargo, Levin todavía no es perfecto, todavía le falta algo, y habría que ocuparse de ello, solucionarlo para evitar cualquier duda, cualquier pregunta que pueda encerrar en sí Levin. Más tarde el lector comprenderá por qué le presto atención a este hecho y no paso directamente a la cuestión principal. Levin es feliz, la novela acaba alabándole, pero todavía carece de un mundo interior espiritual. [25; 203]

Dostoyevsky seems to accept the tendency towards a certain autobiographism in the creation of characters, probably not as beings based on the author's own experience, but rather, following Sartre, due to the fact that there can be no 'being' if the 'being' does not already exist. After the death of George Sand, Dostoyevsky reflects:

Entonces, cuando se la encontraban en Europa, decían que ella predicaba la nueva situación de la mujer y profetizaba sobre "los derechos de la esposa libre" (según la expresión de Senkovsky); pero no es del todo cierto, ya que ella en ningún caso predicaba sobre una mujer concreta, tampoco se inventó eso de la "esposa libre". George Sand pertenecía a todo el movimiento y no solo a la predicación sobre los derechos femeninos. Es verdad que por ser mujer, ella, evidentemente, prefería destacar a los personajes femeninos más que a los masculinos. También es evidente que todas las mujeres del mundo ahora deben ponerse de luto, ya que ha muerto una de las más brillantes y bellas de sus representantes. Además, fue una mujer prácticamente única por la fuerza de su intelecto y talento: su nombre ya es historia, es un nombre que no está destinado al olvido ni a la desaparición entre los europeos. Por lo que se refiere a sus protagonistas femeninas, vuelvo a repetir, desde que empecé a leerla cuando tenía dieciséis años quedé impresionado por la rara contradicción que suponía lo que hablaban y escribían sobre ella y lo que yo veía con mis propios ojos. En realidad, muchas, algunas por lo menos, de sus protagonistas encerraban una pureza moral tan elevada que uno no podría imaginar sin realizar una gran búsqueda moral en el alma del poeta, sin profesar el deber

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más completo, sin comprender ni reconocer la belleza más elevada en la misericordia, paciencia y justicia. Aunque es cierto que entre la misericordia, paciencia y el reconocimiento de las obligaciones del deber se entreveía también un extremo orgullo del llamamiento y la protesta. Pero precisamente este orgullo era preciado, ya que partía de aquella verdad superior sin la que la humanidad jamás podría haber aguantado en la cima de toda su altura moral. [23; 34-35]

We find highlighted here two things: firstly, the fact that an author-character identification is necessary despite the former not being the carrier of the discourse of the latter; and secondly, that the ultimate aim of the work comes before the development of the characters. The Russian author will make of the first a labyrinthine process of assigning contrasting discourses and, of the second, a genuinely minute ritual which will lead him to the necessity of representing each character anthropomorphically.

With the human soul as the object of representation, Dostoyevsky would create realism in a superior sense (for a review, see Степанян, 2005). Whether this is interpreted as a way of advancing the typical concepts of poetics (Фокин, 2010: 152), or as a strategy of giving high importance to dialogism, it seems evident that it is about a world view, a way of conceiving reality in its transposition to the fictional and fictionalised universe of the work. From this position, in which the category of the real serves as a base for Dostoyevsky's realism, Tatiana Kasatkina (Касаткина, 2004) shows that what dominates in Dostoyevsky's work is the Word; something many of the author's contemporaries could not understand, and against whom the author soon reacted.

Me llaman psicólogo; mentira, tan solo soy realista en el sentido superior de la palabra. Es decir, plasmo toda la profundidad del alma humana. [27; 65]

Tengo mi propio punto de vista sobre la realidad (en el arte). Lo que la mayoría considera casi fantástico o poco común, para mí, a veces, es la misma esencia de la realidad. Para mí, la trivialidad de los acontecimientos y una opinión banal no llegan a ser realidad en sí, sino todo lo contrario. [29/1; 19]

Lo que yo entiendo por la realidad y el realismo es totalmente diferente de lo que consideran nuestros realistas y críticos. Mi idealismo es más real que el suyo. ¡Dios! Si llegáramos a exponer con detalle todo lo que nosotros, los rusos, en los últimos diez años hemos experimentado en nuestro desarrollo espiritual... Entonces los realistas gritarían que todo es una fantasía. Esto también es realismo, pero más profundo. ¡El suyo es superficial! [28/2; 392]

In this scenario, where the word becomes a material with which to mould the character, a fertile space for transmitting a message, Bakhtin, following Grossman, will emphasise the importance of dialogue this writer's work. For Bakhtin, it is a dialogue or manner

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of dialoguing in as much as the author remains suspended in the words, ready to complete the *great dialogue now*, in the moment in which the communicative situation happens (Бахтин, 1963: 84-85). But the phenomenon of dialogism implies a special relationship with the text, and, consequently, with the reader. From here arise the real problems with Dostoyevsky's poetics, but strangely they are also the solution: the word of the author, understood as the expression of his voice in the characters' discourse; his artistic and formal position with respect to the discourse of the hero; and the strategies of reasoning, in accordance with those obtained by polyphony, that is, *the plurality of independent and unmistakable voices and consciousnesses*. It could be said that the real problems with the author's poetics arise because Bakhtin emphasised them without definitively resolving them, while most critics were still stuck on a textually-focussed analysis of Dostoyevskian discourse.

For Bakhtin, the essence of the polyphonic novel, which he considers to have been created by Dostoyevsky, is its capacity to allow the different voices to remain independent, while at the same time being combined into a unity greatly superior to that of homophony. However, so as not to fall into unnecessary reductionism, we must emphasise that Bakhtin does not argue that in Dostoyevsky there is a hero who is not subject to the intention of the author. Rather, he sees in her liberty and independence the maximum expression of an intention of the author which previously configures a perfectly calculated plan.

It is clear that there were precedents to Bakhtin's theory of polyphony, to which he himself makes reference. He mentions Grossman as a point of departure for the study of Dostoyevsky's poetics and as the discoverer of a certain structural polyphony. He also mentions Engelgardy, Ivanov, Askoldov and others. They all have the same proposition in common: to create a new vision in the interpretation of Dostoyevsky's work, focusing on what Engelgardt called "the idea as object of representation" (Энгельгардт, 1924). There arose then the necessity of integrating the idea into the dominant form of representation in Dostoyevsky's work, that is to say, of polyphony, whether understood on a structural level, or as a strategy in the discursivisation of the intention. Thus, he began a study of the character as a bearer of the idea, until he reached a conception of the idea-character; that is, of the fragmentation of the intention of the author into ideas, which one character or group of characters had to embody.

One of the first consequences of this way of understanding character could be the fact that *the action* (*function* in Propp's terminology) of the character is always defined according to its significance in the development of the plot. However, the second consequence is of greater interest: the refutation of a certain character's discourse,

being a relatively independent voice, will be done through the rhetorical potential of the idea, through its weight in the negotiation of meaning. Therefore, it will take place only on a structural level and through a discursive confrontation of “rhetorical attitudes” (Leith & Myerson, 1989).

There is still a debate today about Bakhtin’s ideas, the author-character relationship, the types of discourse in Dostoyevsky,<sup>7</sup> and other problems which remain mostly unresolved. This is due to the absence of a unanimously accepted model for the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts, as pointed out by Schimdt (1978) or, more damagingly, due to general preconceptions of criticism (denounced by Richards, 1967) and out-dated interpretative axioms. Indeed, over the past few decades we have remained immersed in a debate between those in favour of polyphony and those who reject it (including Jones 1990; Emerson, 1997, 1999; Келдыш, 2009). Maybe the best solution is to be found in intermediate positions and focuses. This might be accomplished, as Kinoshita proposes (Киношита, 2005), by accepting a permissive polyphony or else by positioning it in terms of the structure of the novel, as a structural function of the work, rather as its main engine (Баррос Гарсия, 2009, 2010; Barros García, 2014b).

Thus, (in conformance with our review here), once we have accepted that the text can only perform a literary function when considered as a whole, that the literary text is a form of communication whose study requires increasingly interdisciplinary approaches, that discourse is a *continuum* with no beginning or end, and that the work is a dynamic whole that transcends its own margins, it is time to propose models based on already-existing knowledge in the field of discourse analysis and the interface between interpretation and fiction. Now that the limits of Bakhtin’s polyphony are recognised (see, among others Jones, 1990; Копман, 2006) and that there is a point at which it is no longer valid because there are other discursive forces in operation (to adopt a simile from physics), it is time to elaborate concrete paradigms about this author which are derived from other approaches and disciplines. This would help not only to define and illuminate the means of understanding and speaking the world of this author, but also to go more deeply into the emotional reaction of the reader, to what is usually termed the psychology of fiction.

As the literary work is finite but unlimited, because it is carried out in a space without physical limits, as is the mind of any possible receiver (but not that of the implicit reader), we think that one of the steps to take in Dostoyevskian criticism is to search for coherence and cohesion in the entirety of his work, to conceive of it as a totality of feeling, despite the possible oscillations that can be seen in the intentionality of the author, in part a consequence of a vision

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## NOTES

7 | Note that Bakhtin himself said that his classification was not definitive (Бахтин, 1963: 265-266).

of the world which is in constant reformulation (“refortalecimiento” in Dostoyevsky’s words) (Barros García, in press). We might recall here that Dostoyevsky said he did not want to represent reality, because he himself recognised it to be an impossible task. Rather, he wanted to approach it. This is a model which should be applied by the researcher who desires to represent the intention, ideology and world view of this author:

Hace poco tuve una conversación con uno de nuestros escritores (un gran artista) sobre lo cómico de la vida, sobre lo difícil que es definir un hecho, buscarle el nombre adecuado [...]. “Sabía usted, —me dijo de pronto mi interlocutor, como si estuviera profundamente y desde hace tiempo impresionado por su propia idea— sabía usted que no importa lo que escriba, lo que deduzca, lo que destaque en su obra literaria, ya que en cualquier caso no se podrá acercar a la realidad”. [...] Yo ya lo sabía aún en el año 46, cuando comencé a escribir, quizá un poco antes. Este hecho me había impresionado más de una vez y me hacía preguntarme sobre la utilidad del arte con su tan evidente impotencia. Y es verdad, pruebe a estudiar un hecho de la vida real, cualquiera que incluso no sea evidente a primera vista. Y si es capaz y tiene buen ojo descubrirá en este hecho una profundidad que no está presente en las obras de Shakespeare. Pero ahí está el problema: ¿quién es capaz y quién tiene buen ojo? Y esto no es solo para crear y escribir obras literarias, sino que solo para fijarse en el hecho, hay que ser un poco artista. Para un observador todos los acontecimientos de la vida transcurren dentro de una enternecedora simplicidad, y son tan comprensibles que no hay nada en que pensar, nada en que fijar la mirada: no merece la pena. Pero existe otro tipo de observador al que los mismos acontecimientos le llegan a preocupar tanto que (ocurre a menudo) no es capaz, finalmente, de generalizarlos y hacerlos más simples, desrizarlos en una línea recta y tranquilizarse. Este observador acude a otro tipo de simplificación y sin más miramientos se pega un tiro en la frente para acallar de golpe su mente atormentada y todas las preguntas surgidas. Tan solo son dos posiciones opuestas, pero entre ellas se encuentra todo el sentido de la existencia humana. [23; 144]

No se puede definir la moralidad solo como fidelidad a las convicciones de uno. Es necesario hacerse una pregunta sin cesar: ¿son correctas mis convicciones? Existe una única comprobación: Cristo. Pero aquí no se trata de la filosofía sino de la fe, y la fe es el color rojo. (Страхов и Миллер, 1883: 371)

In this sense, it is interesting to note, with Fridlender (1980), the reflection Dostoyevsky sought to put in the mouth of Verjovesnky’s original model, Granovsky, in *Demons* on the subject of Shakespeare’s dramas:

La realidad no se agota con lo que existe, ya que en una gran parte reside en la forma de una futura palabra latente, aún sin pronunciar. En ocasiones aparecen profetas que adivinan y expresan esa palabra acertada. Shakespeare es uno de esos profetas, enviado por Dios para anunciarnos el misterio del hombre, del alma humana. [11; 237]

The real is not exhausted in the spoken word. This is only an appeal, Bakhtin would say, an appeal to an entity other than life: the reader.

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Thus, Dostoyevsky, who was aware of the reader's contribution to the meaning of the text, would embed in the fictionalised universe the figure of a reader who is potentially able to build on the inferences. It is not surprising that, as has already been noted, from his first novel onwards there are constant explicit references to the reader in order to redirect his or her judgement, the judgement of any reader (this is the intentional expansion of the author), towards the desired interpretation. For Dostoyevsky it was not that important to defend his novel as a work of art, but rather what was represented in it and by it. "I defend not my novel, but my idea", he would write to Strájov and many other critics and friends. The clear preoccupation with the idea solemnly reflects the attractive uncertainty of reception, of the collision between the world of the reader and a text which is neither all nor the only thing the author wanted to say.

Estoy trabajando en una gran idea. No hablo de la ejecución, sino de la idea. Es una de esas ideas que provocan un efecto seguro en el público. Algo del estilo de *Crimen y castigo*, pero aún más real, más cercano a la realidad y referidos directamente al problema actual más importante. La acabaré en otoño, no me apresuro, sin prisas. Intentaré que se publique también en otoño. [...] Lo único... que es un tema demasiado caliente. Nunca antes había trabajado con tanto placer y tanta facilidad. [29; 107]

The problem, and also the challenge, of an approach oriented towards an understanding of how the reader interacts with the texts lies in the fact that we have to start from the analysis of the reader and reading as processes and know how to analyse them. This implies a meticulous study, not only of the deep textual structures, but also of the products of a semiotic process, in other words, of the reconstruction, observation and systematisation of the factors that appear to condition interpretation. The meaning of Dostoyevsky's work, therefore, would be the result of a complex interlocking of ideas and associations which are in communication, in turn leaning towards an analysis of Dostoyevsky's discourse from a relational point of view (Barros García, 2015).

In the era of neuroscience and Big Data, and in the context of great and valuable advances of neurocognitive approaches centred on literature and reception (Miall, 2009; Bernaerts et al., 2013; Jacobs, 2015), on cognitive theories of the character (among others, Schneider, 2001; Weststeign, 2007; Jannidis, 2015), neuroaesthetics and empirical studies of art (Huston et al., 2015), reading (Pollatsek and Treiman, 2015) and psychology of fiction (Oatley et al. 2015) it may be possible to make considerable progress in an apprenticeship once demanded by Foucault. This would allow finding positions of subjectivity in discourse, being not so much about learning from Raskolnikov, Sonia, Ivan Karamazov or any other character taken in isolation, but learning directly from Dostoyevsky as the creator, as well as from the reader who gives meaning to the text, as specified

by Bakhtin (2004: 60). That is to say, it would be necessary to show the author in the author, following the Bakhtinian formula, but doing so with the knowledge that the place where we are searching for him is a dynamic space created in and by the text (as Iser previously remarked, 1980), and which is also configured in and by the reader.

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