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Outsiders in Italian Fiction

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Point of View in Fiction

Throughout this course of *Outsider's In Italian Fiction,* a deeper comprehension of the

mechanisms utilized to construct outside characters has been instilled within me. It is evident

that various techniques are implemented that aid the establishment of the persona of an outsider.

Although a complete understanding of the protagonist's tendencies must be displayed, an author

must remain focused upon the social scene and environment that surrounds the character.

Without the context presented in the society of the setting, the characters actions and behaviors

will ultimately be rendered as useless information. The importance of the stories atmosphere

becomes especially important when one is pursuing the art of fiction. When an audience is

presented with non-fiction, they can assume some of the methods of socialization through their

own real life experiences. However, since fiction circulates around imagination, the author must

create a clear pathway for the reader to grasp the social normalities and ways of life that the

protagonists resides in. This essential method serves as a foundational basis for the formation of

a strong outside character.

A common way to display the traits of the social life of a fictional novel is to compliment

the protagonists with other characters that offer a particular point of view. If the story is too

focused upon the thoughts and behaviors of the main character, then it becomes difficult to

compare and contrast the protagonist. This difficulty will then lead to the inability for the

audience to administer the label of an outsider. Ultimately, if the actions of the outside character

are not deemed irregular by others in the story, than the character's interactions will be interpreted as normal by those reading the fictional novel. An article by Norman Fried suggests that point of view is a critical concept that facilitates the authors in their endeavor to not only display the development of a character, but project it (Friedman, 1955, p. 1160-1148).

This distinction endorsed by Norman Friedman, exemplifies the theoretical thoughts of Plato himself. Plato suggests that the author's point of view is the most important perspective to be obtained by the reader. In fictional novels, Plato argues that the writer's own personality, values and morals, are what lead to the better understanding of the developed character (Friedman, 1955, p. 1162). There is a particular separation made between relaying details about a persona and projecting the character with common tools like point of view. An audience is not naive to whom is telling the story. This allows the reader to assimilate and share the emotion that the author feels towards his/her's characters (Friedman, 1955, p. 1164).

The arguments mutually made by Friedman and Plato simplistically mean that the style of the narration enables the audience to empathize with the author's outlook on his characters. With these declarations being made, it is not unreasonable to assume that the author's intentions are displayed through the narration of the novel. An example of this idea can be seen in the novel *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*, by Paolo Giordano (Giordano, 2011, p. 1-288). The narrative structure of this fictional novel causes those that read it to draw an association between the protagonist's of the story, Alice and Mattia.   The first several chapters of this piece of fiction switch off between the point of view of Alice and Mattia, while the narrator conveys them in similar ways. Giordano manages to do this by displaying the family dynamics in the early phases of their childhood through adolescence. These scenes first normalize the protagonists by

providing similar experiences that children face in our social lives today. Alice partakes in ski school which is so often reminisced and dreaded upon by those comprising our society. Mattia is discomforted by the thought of not being invited to a birthday party; which revolves around our current anxieties towards popularity. These common occurrences in contemporary childhood and adolescence allow the reader to reflect back upon these times. This sense of reminiscing then urges the audience to distinguish the normalities and appropriate behavior and action during the early years of life. With this in mind, those reading then identify deviances from their understood norms of this time period.

This action of narrating the story with the implementation of author's personality is a dynamic that is used to illustrate the characters of the novel. By providing these detail of the protagonists, Giordano narrated the story and presented information that allows the reader to target and understand the outside qualities that both Mattia and Alice contain. This style is most commonly used and is present in the readers subconscious. On the conscious aspect of the spectrum, those reading the fictional novel are presented different perspectives within the novel. This is tactic can also be seen in narration and is most obvious when the author provides the reactions and thoughts of the characters that are surrounding the protagonists. This often confirms the readers initial thoughts on the qualities of the outsider.

An example of this can be seen in *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*, where there are various characters whose opinions on the protagonists can be seen. Although these opinions are not always specifically declared, it can be inferred through the authors choice to include their facial expressions, posture, and or overall morale. Viola, a teenage girl who plays a prevalent role in the story, often is included in dialogue with Alice. This dialogue is very passive

aggressive and the statements that Viola make can often be interpreted. Viola tried to get Mattia and Alice to partake in a relationship for her own humor. Once it became understood that some chemistry existed between the two she grew upset and distanced herself by blaming her friends stomach ache on the cake Alice bought (Giordano, 2011, p. 78). Viola's perception of Alice was vividly displayed in her interactions and exclusivity with Alice. With Viola as a character whose opinion becomes clear to the reader, then it is easy for the audience to construct a detailed foundation around the actions and behaviors of Alice.

This same mechanism was used with Mattia's and Michela's character as well. Mattia and Michela exhibited their personalities in the first few chapters where interactions were seen between teachers and peers. Michela was a character who had special needs and the outlook upon her was well portrayed through the scenes that took place in the classroom. The fact that Mattia and Alice were twins forced Mattia to watch out and take care of his sister. A particular scene in the classroom where no one wants to sit next to Michela reveals the dynamics of the classroom. Mattia ends up choosing the seat which is showing that those two individuals are outside characters compared to their peers (Giordano, 2011, p. 20-35). The twins are also rejected from the social scene through the abstract fact that they have never been invited to a birthday party. In the scene where they finally do get invited, the child is rude and distant from Mattia. Another character that facilitates the proper development of Mattia's character is Dennis. Dennis is a homosexual misfit who befriends Mattia. This friendship displays that like homosexuality in Italy (during that time period) Mattia is a misfit. As stated previously, Giordano reveals to us through narration of the story that the protagonists underwent similar experiences, but differ in their approaches which ultimately shifts their reality from that of an insider.

Without the narrator including the perspectives of those surrounding the outsiders, then there is nothing to distinguish the outsider from. Since it is a fictional novel, the reader should not compare the protagonists to themselves although they may assimilate. Therefore it is essential that the inclusion of view points allow social interactions to amplify the development of the character. Dennis, Viola, peers, teachers, and parents all are surrounding characters of the protagonists that define them in a more apparent way than simply listing details. The author's personality of viewpoints upon his own character creation lead to the construction of these other charcters. Plato argues that the outlook a narrator has upon his characters reflects the values and morals that they adhere to (Friedman, 1955, p. 1165).

In the movie a *Magnificent Presence*, directed by Ferzan Özpetek, the characters surrounding Pietro, the protagonist of the film, are also outside characters that take away from the full development of the character of Pietro. In most outsider fictional stories, the antagonists and other characters contribute to the establishment of the main feature of the protagonist as an outsider. However, in a film where a large portion of the interaction of the protagonist is with a ghosts who are even further away from the normalities of social life, it is easy to disregard the fact that Pietro himself is indeed an outsider as well (Ozepetek, 2012). This can be compared to the dynamics that surround the protagonists of *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*. This involved in Giordano's novel constantly shift the focus back to the matter of fact that the protagonists are outsiders. However the narration and way *Magnificent Presence* is presented does not obsess over the distance that Pietro has from his social world. This frames the story of Pietro as more of a comedy instead of serious reflection of the life of an outsider.

These different approaches in the narration of the storytelling shifts the audience perception of the characters. Although Pietro's character is still recognized as an outsider, the events do not emphasize this trait and remind the audience of the importance behind it. With Giordano's intent to circulate all the transpirations around the core feature of an outsider, we utterly define the protagonists of the novel as an outsider. On the other hand, Pietro could be considered a goofy man whose atypical behaviors are portrayed as friendly and genuine. This shift in approach enables the reader to sympathize and assimilate with the intent and emotion of the author. Ultimately, the point of view that is incorporated in the style of the narration administers the audience's attitude towards the protagonists and other characters in a fictional tale.

The point of view of the author is an essential tool that allows the audience to infer the characteristics of the characters that need to be contemplated throughout the interactions that they engage in. As Plato said, the author's own values and morals are reflected in the pieces he or she writes. If the director of *Magnificent Presence* had issues with homosexuality the story would not be conveyed in the manner it has been. Similarly, Giordano clearly understood the devastations associated with self harm and eating disorders, thus allowing his audience total into the theoretical life of an individual with one of these harsh and sorrowful disorders. The subject of the fictional topic often leads the author to portray his emotions towards the topic in particular manners. With this being said, the implementation of other non vital characters aids the author in his or her endeavor to fully develop their characters.

The addition of characters perspectives and their relative opinions offer an additional source of character development. The protagonists builds their own social reputation through the

encounters that occur within the fiction of the novel or film. By relaying the opinions of surrounding characters the audience is able to establish an understanding and connection to how the protagonists would interact and behave in social situations. This inclusion of social perspective allows the author to get some help with portraying the character as an outsider. Ultimately, the approach and pathway that the storyteller takes to narrate the fiction allows the audience to obtain their own opinions of the characters surrounding the novel. Without these tactics being implemented in novels and stories, the full development of the character would be lacking. It is not the place of the reader to simply distinguish between normal and atypical in fictional stories. Therefore, it is obvious that the strategies behind these characters involve the interaction between reader and character in the social scene.

References

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