Do You Choose Him or Does He Choose You? - Analyzing Character Archetypes in Otome Games

Camila Pawlowski
Faculty of Fine Arts
Federal University of Minas Gerais
Belo Horizonte, Brazil
khwski@gmail.com

Rosilane Ribeiro da Mota
Faculty of Fine Arts
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
Belo Horizonte, Brazil
rosilane@ufmg.br

Abstract—The relationship between fiction and humanity is long-established and, since the beginning, people's involvement with fictional characters has aroused emotions as if the latter were real. This parasocial relationship, where a person forms a long-term socio-emotional bond with a media persona, can also be seen in digital games, especially in otome games. This intense connection may be due to a multitude of reasons, including the unconscious appeal of the characters and the tropes intertwined with the characters' personality. In this sense, a research was developed in order to obtain a richer understanding of the players' strong affective bonds with character tropes from otome games through the archetypal typology developed by Margareth Mark and Carol Pearson. The classification developed by these authors was used to analyze eleven popular character tropes, selected from blogs and online discussions related to otome games. Through this analysis, it was possible to perceive that otome character tropes are connected to the archetypes defined by the authors, and, of the eleven tropes studied, all had at least one dominant archetype active in them. This study's findings can contribute to a better understanding of parasocial relationships between fictional characters and humans by identifying the reason for their intensity. Additionally, such results can aid game developers in creating more intricate characters infused with the power of archetypes, and also provide useful information to assist players in understanding the connection between their love for a character and their own internal necessities and desires.

Index Terms—otome games, parasocial relationships, archetypes, collective unconscious

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between fiction and humanity is extensive. Humans used to carve clay tablets to share stories and today one can experience an interactive narrative through a screen with video games. Humanity has changed and developed over the years, but people still get emotional and invested in fictional characters' tales as if they are real, one of our own. This relationship can be seen, for example, when people took the streets in Victorian England to protest about Sherlock Holmes' death [1]; and similarly, there are people today who rent a giant digital billboard in China to wish happy birthday to their favorite game character [2].

It is believed that such occurrences are due to the strong bonds created between a person and a fictional other, which can range from identification to the creation of parasocial relationships (PSR), where a person forms a long-term social-emotional bond with a media persona [3]. These relationships can be seen throughout history and across cultures, and many cognitive processes that allow the formation of parasocial relationships are similar to those used in real-life relationships. PSRs resemble real relationships in many ways, even having the same effects of providing social support and triggering distress if broken up [4].

Such relationships also happen in otome games, a category of games that originated from Japan, which are developed and marketed towards women and usually contain a dating feature, where the player controls the heroine and can choose one of the male characters to develop a romantic relationship with.

Just as each person has certain individuals in real life which they create stronger relationships with, the same holds true for fictional characters in otome games, which have their own popular character tropes – common or overused themes or devices –, that are so cherished that they keep repeating in old and new games alike. Players don't seem to get tired of them and choose to romance characters with their favorite tropes in different otome games and still create strong PSRs with these characters, so strong that some of these games have specific cafés and merchandise, live shows with the voice actors, and also have generated millions for the companies [5].

This intense connection might be due to a multitude of reasons, and one of them may be the unconscious appeal of the characters and the tropes intertwined in their personality. The popularity of these tropes might have a link to the collective unconscious, a repository of all human experience from its earliest beginnings and that is shared amongst humanity. The concept was coined by psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, but has been discussed since the end of the XIX century [6].

The collective unconscious is occupied with archetypes, shared concepts that may emerge as images and symbols in our dreams and culture [6]. These archetypes speak to the unconscious of people, giving a sense of recognition and meaning. In their book [7], Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson used an adaptation of Jung's theory of archetypes to create a typology, with which they showed how successful brands strengthen their image and meaning in the eyes of the public by associating themselves with archetypes, and thus, creating strong bonds with their customers.

In regards to the growing market of otome games [8]–[10], not only in Asia but globally, it is considered that a

nuanced understanding is necessary to analyze the appeal of certain character tropes and the strong PSR developed between them and the players. In that sense, this research aimed to use the archetype typology created by Mark and Pearson [7] to analyze popular otome character tropes, aiming to explore the connection between archetypes and the popularity of the tropes, and to comprehend the preference of players for such tropes. The contribution of this work is twofold: it may aid game developers in strategically creating more meaningful characters with the help of archetypes and, additionally, it may help players have a better understanding of their character preferences and the psychological connotations such preference entails. Perhaps the ability to choose one character to romance is not there after all and the player's choice has already been made beforehand by the ancient patterns interlaced in the character's being.

A. The Rise of Otome Games

The year of 1994 saw the launching of the first otome game, Angelique. Since then, the genre has grown and keeps helping women to escape the social pressure of their gender and seek solace in a safe space dotted with fantasy, where they can experiment with and enact various female identities and female fantasies [11].

This fantasy world also extends into real spaces. In the Ikebukuro district in Tokyo, Japan, there is a small cluster of streets called "Otome Road" by touristic guides. In those streets, women can find a range of otome products, games, manga, and associated merchandise. There are also thematic cafés where you can ask for a meal themed after your favorite otome game character. This phenomenon also happens in China [5], and even in western countries, with Voltage Inc., a Japanese company that develops otome games, having a booth in Anime Expo 2019, a popular American anime convention held in Los Angeles, California [12]. There, fans could buy merchandise, talk to the staff, and take photos at the photobooth and with cosplayers.

Otome game players and fans not only participate in those spaces, but show their devotion through other media by discussing in forums, drawing, writing fanfiction, and celebrating their favorite character's birthday in extravagant ways, as if they were real acquaintances.

It is evident the otome game market is growing with the twin sisters Anna and Mizuki Nakajima scoring Japan's hottest IPO (initial public offering) by creating otome games [8], and Love and Producer, a Chinese otome game, generating roughly 20 million yuan (3.1 million US dollars) in revenues on its peak day within the first month of its release in 2017 [5]. Due to otome games' growing popularity and the players' ardent devotion and strong PSRs developed with the characters, it is believed that a deeper understanding of this connection is essential.

The genre has its limitations and stereotypes but also space to grow, including, for example, more diverse female characters as protagonists and male characters with more complex personalities. This growth might happen if archetypes

Fig. 1. On January 13, 2018, a mysterious Mrs. Li rented a gigantic digital billboard in Shenzhen, China, to send wishes to her virtual boyfriend Li Zeyan, from the otome game Love and Producer.

and the collective unconscious are used to make characters more profound, thus creating deeper connections between the player and the fictional entity. Research in traditional media environments has shown that the stronger the PSR, the greater the influence on the consumer's attitudes and behaviors [3]. However, first it is necessary to study if popular otome character tropes already embody those timeless sources, and in case that holds true, if that can be explored further.

II. RELATED WORK

PSRs have been studied extensively in the past. It has been discovered that these relationships can offer the same benefits of a real relationship, and even advantages, due to the lack of reciprocal interaction between relationship partners. The absent interaction means reduced risk of rejection, creating a safer context in which to form relationships [13]. Furthermore, PSRs are also complex, encompassing many distinct forms of emotional attachment and liking [14]. Some people consider the characters as personal acquaintances [3] and studies also show this behavior is not entirely new. James Caughey [15] has catalogued many instances across cultures and through history where humans form strong relationships with fictional figures, showing that PSRs have existed for a long time. However, these studies do not associate these strong PSRs with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and archetypal patterns.

Research regarding otome games is sparser but highly valuable. A study found that otome games have implications for interpersonal relationships and well-being, and may cultivate idealized romantic beliefs [16], showing how PSRs can deeply affect one's life. Another study made with Japanese women found that the fantasy world of otome "is identified as a space for reverie, far different from the reality of relationships in Japanese society that awaits them" [17]. In this same study, it is highlighted how otome game players have a favorite among the love interests available in the game *Uta no Prince-sama*, and also have a peculiar affection for a few others apart from their favorite. However, research involving otome games

does not elaborate on the PSRs created between players and characters or the nature of this relationship. Additionally, they do not focus on the character tropes present in these games and how they might share characteristics with archetypes.

Regarding the use of Mark and Pearson's typology [7], a study by Taguchi and Miyake [18] utilized the method to analyze characters from the game *Say Bye to the Villains*. The research developed an expansion for the game with new character cards based on Mark and Pearson's twelve archetypes. It was observed that the narrative patterns provided by the archetypes created a greater immersion for the players, building a feeling of familiarity and connection. Furthermore, Taguchi and Miyake [18] affirm that the development of deeper stories and characters enables stronger bonds between the player and the game. This view supports Mark and Pearson's argument that when correctly recognized, the archetypes can help individuals find deeper meaning in their lives and offer them comfort. Nevertheless, this study does not delve into the PSRs created between players and characters, and its analysis is limited to only one game.

III. METHOD

Despite the growing body of research around PSRs and games, the works that make this connection are limited, especially those involving archetypes and otome games. Thus, in order to gain a richer understanding of the players' strong affective ties with otome game character tropes, the archetypal typology developed by Mark and Pearson [7] was used to analyze eleven popular otome game tropes, selected from blogs and online discussions related to otome games.

Therefore, the next sessions will present Mark and Person's Archetypes, and then proceed with the eleven otome game tropes analyzed through the aforementioned archetypal typology, which will articulate examples of characters from each trope to illustrate their behavior with actions taken from the games' narrative. Some characters might have more than one trope, like Toma from Amnesia who is both Yandere and Childhood Friend, however, one of the tropes is always their dominant characteristic and foundation of their personality.

It is worth noting that this research used the adaptation made by Paula, Araújo, and Silva [19] in relation to the concept of archetypes used by Mark and Pearson [7]. This is an essential observation since Mark and Pearson, when proposing their typology, promoted a simplistic and reductionist appropriation of the concept of archetypes developed by Jung [20] to be the basis of a typological system aimed at understanding individual psychology [21]. However, despite the present study adopting the understanding of the aforementioned authors to refer to the typology proposed by Mark and Pearson [7] of perceiving archetypal types as descriptors of attitudes, behaviors, and significance in the world, it was opted to use the term archetype to maintain consistency with the terminology adopted by Mark and Pearson to refer to these types.

Furthermore, this typology posed as an interesting strategy for the analysis of otome games considering Mark and Pearson created an instrument that enables the practical application, even if adapted, of Jung's theory, since the latter did not prefix and characterize archetypes at this level of detail, focusing on the development of the theoretical basis surrounding the concept of archetype. Additionally, another characteristic that supports the validity of using Mark and Pearson's typology in research on otome games is related to the two fields' connection with marketing. The fact that the brands analyzed by the authors can exploit the "strength of archetypes" to retain their audience, refers to the potential that otome games have to financially stimulate a consumer market loyal to this type of entertainment, whether by selling products linked to the characters or other business strategies.

A. Mark and Person Archetypes

Mark and Pearson [7] characterize the twelve archetypal types identified in their studies, describing the characteristics of each type. The authors identified these profiles in company brands, associating their characteristics with consumer loyalty. This description comprises the archetype's desires, goals, fears, and gifts. Additionally, according to the authors, each archetype has different levels, Level Three being the deepest one, more infused with meaning, and the Shadow being the negative temptation of each type.

The characterization elaborated by Mark and Pearson is summarized in the twelve topics presented below:

a) The Innocent

The Innocent's core desire is to experience paradise and their goal is to be happy. They fear doing something wrong or bad that will provoke punishment and their gifts are faith and optimism. The Innocent is also hopeful and yearns for a "happy ending".

The levels of the Innocent are:
Level One: childlike simplicity, naivety, dependency, obedience, idyllic views;
Level Two: renewal, positivity, reinventing, new beginnings;
Level Three: an almost mystical sense of oneness, innocence comes from values and integrity, not outer experience;
Shadow: denial, repression, losing themselves trying to fix their life or other people's.

b) The Explorer

The Explorer's core desire is to have freedom to find out who you are through exploring the world and their goal is to experience a better, more authentic, more fulfilling life. They fear getting trapped and conforming, and their gifts are autonomy, ambition, and the ability to be true to one's own soul. The Explorer also desires to escape from routine and boredom, thus avoiding developing ties with people and things.

The levels of the Explorer are:
Level One: hitting the open road, exploring the world;
Level Two: seeking their own individuality, to become fulfilled;
Level Three: expressing individuality and uniqueness;
Shadow: becoming a misfit, being alienated and unable to fit in, aimless wandering.

c) The Sage

The Sage's core desire is to discover the truth and their goal is to use intelligence and analysis to understand the world. They fear ignorance and being misled, and their gifts are wisdom and intelligence. The Sage is attracted to intelligent people and those who stimulate knowledge.

The levels of the Sage are:

Level One: search for absolute truth, desire for objectivity, admiring experts;

Level Two: skepticism, critical and innovative thinking, becoming an expert;

Level Three: wisdom, confidence, mastery;

Shadow: dogmatism and disconnection from reality.

d) The Hero The Hero's core desire is to prove one's worth through courageous and difficult actions, and their goal is to exert mastery in a way that improves the world. They fear weakness and vulnerability, and their gifts are competence and courage. The Hero wishes to be as strong and powerful as one is capable of being, usually to defend someone or a noble cause. They also long for challenges and competition.

The levels of the Hero are:

Level One: the development of mastery and competence, expressed through achievement or tested through competition;

Level Two: doing their duty for their community, family, or organization;

Level Three: using their strength, competence, and courage for something that makes a difference to them and to the world;

Shadow: ruthlessness and obsessive need to win.

e) The Outlaw

The Outlaw's core desire is to seek revenge or revolution and their goal is to destroy what is not working, either for the Outlaw or society. They fear being powerless and trivialized, and their gifts are outrageousness and radical freedom. They have deeper values, different from the conventional and prevalent ones, and desire to be stronger to achieve their goals.

The levels of the Outlaw are:

Level One: identifying as an outsider, dissociating from the values of the dominant group or society, challenging conventional behaviors and morality;

Level Two: behaving in shocking or disruptive ways;

Level Three: becoming a rebel or a revolutionary;

Shadow: criminal or evil behavior.

f) The Magician

The Magician's core desire is to have knowledge of the fundamental laws of how the world or universe works. Their goal is to make dreams come true and they fear negative and unanticipated consequences. The Magician's gift is finding win-win outcomes and they value vision and innovation.

The levels of the Magician are:

Level One: magical moments and experiences of transformation;

Level Two: the experience of flow;

Level Three: miracles, moving from vision to manifestation;

Shadow: manipulation, sorcery.

g) The Everyman

The Everyman's core desire is to connect with others and their goal is to belong and fit in. They fear standing out and acting superior, and being exiled or rejected as a result. The Everyman's gift is realism, empathy, and lack of pretense. They have the "common touch", are hard workers, and hate artifice.

The levels of the Everyman are: Level One: feeling abandoned and alone, seeking connection; Level Two: learning to connect, fit in, accept help and friendship; Level Three: believing in the natural dignity of every person and that everyone should be treated the same; Shadow: the victim who is willing to be abused rather than be alone, or the one willing to go along with abuse in order to be part of a group.

h) The Lover

The Lover's core desire is to attain intimacy, a deeper connection, and their goal is to be in a relationship with the people, work, and experiences they love. They fear being alone, unloved, unwanted, and feel unworthy of love. The Lover's gifts are passion, appreciation, and commitment. They make others feel special and want to feel the same.

The levels of the Lover are:

Level One: seeking great sex or a great romance;

Level Two: committing to whom and what you love;

Level Three: spiritual love, self-acceptance, and the experience of ecstasy;

Shadow: promiscuity, obsession, jealousy, envy.

i) The Jester

The Jester's core desire is to live in the moment with full enjoyment and their goal is to have a great time and lighten up the world. They fear boredom or being boring, and their gift is bringing joy. The Jester also wants to have fun and brighten the world.

The levels of the Jester are:

Level One: life as a game, fun;

Level Two: cleverness used to trick others or get out of trouble, and find ways around obstacles;

Level Three: life experienced in the moment, one day at a time;

Shadow: self-indulgence, irresponsibility, mean-spirited pranks.

j) The Caregiver

The Caregiver's core desire is to protect people from harm and their goal is to help others. They fear selfishness and ingratitude, and their gift is compassion and generosity. The Caregiver might put others before themselves, but also manipulate, entrap who they're trying to protect.

The levels of the Caregiver are:

Level One: caring for and nurturing one's dependents;

Level Two: balancing self-care with care for others;

Level Three: altruism, concern for the larger world;

Shadow: martyrdom, guilt-tripping, manipulation.

k) The Creator

The Creator's core desire is to create something of enduring value and their goal is to give form to a vision. They fear having a mediocre vision or execution and their gifts are creativity and imagination. The Creator is often a perfectionist and values authenticity and innovation.

The levels of the Creator are:

Level One: being creative or innovative in imitative ways;
Level Two: giving form to their own vision;
Level Three: creating structures that influence culture and society;
Shadow: overly dramatizing their life, living a soap opera.

l) The Ruler

The Ruler's core desire is to control and their goal is to create a secure and successful family, company, or community. They fear chaos and being overthrown and their gifts are responsibility and leadership. The Ruler can also be bossy and authoritarian.

The levels of the Ruler are:

Level One: taking responsibility for the state of their own life;
Level Two: exerting leadership in their family, group, or workplace;
Level Three: becoming a leader in their community, field, or society;
Shadow: tyrannical or manipulative behaviors.

B. Analysis

The eleven otome character tropes selected for the development of this research are some of the most popular ones present in otome games. They're also present in other types of Japanese media, such as anime and manga. This analysis sought to characterize the trope, present two characters from different otome games that correspond to this profile and, later, associate the trope with one of the twelve archetypal profiles of the typology developed by Mark and Pearson [7].

Fig. 2. Romanceable characters from the otome game *Collar x Malice*.

i) Tsundere

Tsundere is a term derived from the words "*tsun tsun*", meaning to turn away in disgust, and the term "*dere*", which comes from the Japanese word "*dere dere*", meaning lovestruck. These characters tend to be hostile and harsh towards the heroine at first, but as the story progresses, they slowly warm up to her and become more affectionate, showing their soft side. Jiwoo, from the otome game *Dandelion*, openly shows this trope and even acknowledges it by saying in-game that "a tsundere charm never fades". At first, he is rude and snobby, and even insults the protagonist, but as the story progresses, the player finds out he actually cares for her and only had trouble showing his feelings. He was aggressive in order to hide his desire to have a more profound

connection, to receive the heroine's undivided attention, which are characteristics of the Lover. At some point in the story, he begins to avoid the heroine because he's afraid she doesn't like him, thus showing the fear of the Lover of being unwanted and abandoned.

Tsunderes use verbal abuse to hide the Lover within them, usually out of fear of not being worthy of love or being abandoned. This wall they build around themselves might be due to past trauma, as in the case of Takeru Sasakuza from *Collar x Malice*, whose mother died to save him. Such trauma is usually revealed only when the heroine is able to free the Lover inside the Tsundere, which is what happens with Takeru. When he trusts the heroine and lets the Lover take a hold of him, he realizes how her love and care made him grow and deal with his trauma.

Players attracted to the Tsundere trope might have the Lover active in their lives and want to feel special and adored. They may want to be that unique person that will finally make the hot and cold Tsundere blush and stammer, losing his composure. They want to be the only ones capable of bringing the Lover within them forward, thus fulfilling the players' need of being special.

ii) Yandere

The "*yan*" in Yandere comes from the word "*yanderu*", which means to be sick. Thus, the yandere is someone that is literally "lovesick". Once they meet the heroine, they become highly obsessive, desiring to have her love and devotion, her everything, only for themselves. In some cases, the Yandere might have been harboring those feelings for a long time, like Kuroyuki from *Nightshade*, whose obsession had grown over the years. The obsession is characteristic of the shadow of the Lover, along with jealousy, which is also a trait of the Yandere, since they will do anything to keep the heroine with them, even commit murder.

Additionally, Yanderes also have the urge to protect, much like the Caregiver. However, the shadow of the Lover poisons this need, taking it to the extreme, to the point that the Yandere will separate their love interest from the world and keep them only for themselves. At first, they manipulate the heroine by lying to her and showing a loving and caring exterior, but when she realizes what is happening, it is too late. Toma from *Amnesia* lies about being the heroine's boyfriend after she lost her memory and keeps her in his house. When the heroine finally sees through his lies and questions him about it, Toma puts her in a cage "for her own protection". Similarly, Kuroyuki creates an elaborate lie to make the heroine believe she has been disowned and only has him in the world, wanting her to be completely dependent on him. He wants her to be with him forever and threatens and even kills anyone who tries to get in the way.

Like the Caregiver, Toma and Kuroyuki become wracked with guilt due to deceiving their loved one, but put it aside, believing that protecting her and having her by their side is more important, thus also preventing the Lover's fear of being alone. The Caregiver's own fear is ingratitude, thus, if the heroine complains about the Yandere's cruel and sick actions,

he often focuses his violent behaviors towards her.

Players who like the Yandere trope might have both the Caregiver and the Lover active in their lives. In their life, these players might give more than they receive and thus, feel the need of support. They may want someone who will genuinely care about them and who will also fulfill their necessity of being adored, even in a twisted way. The Lover's necessity of being special can also be fulfilled with the Yandere, since the Player will be the sole receiver of the Yandere's obsession, for good or bad.

iii) Kuudere

Kuudere is a Japanese word that means "cold demeanor." It combines the word "*kuuru*" and "*dere*". As the name suggests, these characters seem cold and aloof at first and don't show their emotions to the heroine, keeping it all to themselves. They're usually highly intelligent and driven by logic, preferring to be rational rather than letting emotions cloud their judgment. These characteristics are seen in the Sage, who seeks knowledge and information, but who tends to isolate themselves from reality.

Saito Hajime from *Hakuoki* is an example of the Kuudere trope. He's a master swordsman and really observant, analyzing the situation rationally before an attack. In the story, when the heroine pretends to be a man in 19th century Japan, Saito is the first to find out she is a girl. Like the Sage, he's observant and has mastery, wisdom, and confidence in his skills. However, he also keeps his emotions to himself, and it takes time for the heroine to gain his trust and make him open up to her rather than only focus on his craft and duty.

Kent from *Amnesia* is another example. He has an intellectual mindset and analyzes relationships rationally as if they were simply another subject to be studied. Much like the Sage, he's attracted to intelligent people and those who stimulate knowledge. Due to his relationship with the heroine, Kent realizes that expressing his emotions is important, and begins to show more loving affection and being more present, not just focusing on his research.

Players interested in the Kuudere trope might have the Sage active in their lives and want to seek the truth and gain knowledge. They may want to learn for the sake of learning, and like the Sage, they can be attracted to intelligent people who stimulate them. Since the Kuudere is often shrouded in mystery, the players might also want to "study" him and slowly find out who he really is until they see the truth behind the Kuudere's cool mask.

iv) Dandere

The "*dan*" in Dandere comes from the Japanese word "*danmari*", meaning silence. Thus, a Dandere is a quiet and anti-social character, who can often be depicted as gloomy. Differently from the Kuudere, this reserved behavior is often due to shyness. They're reserved and take a long time to warm up to the heroine, but contrary to Kuuderes, the Dandere usually treats the heroine with kindness at first, even if they're distant.

Out of their desire not to cause any strain within his social circle, Danderes are willing to easily give up on the desire to express what is truly on their mind. This behavior can be seen in Senri from *Norn9*, who rarely leaves his room due to his fear of people and how they perceive him. He places heavy importance on being accepted, like the Everyman, whose basic desire is to connect with others. Senri, like the Everyman, also fears standing out and being cast out due to that.

At the beginning of their story, Danderes often feel alone and abandoned, like Nageki from *Hatoful Boyfriend*, who spends most of his time in the library and nobody, apart from the heroine, seems to notice him. However, as the story progresses, the heroine is able to gradually make him open up to her and be less shy, thus giving Nageki a feeling of connection with another person, which is the core desire of the Everyman, and with that, she also brings him peace.

Players who are attracted to the Dandere trope might have the Everyman active in their lives. They may yearn to connect with someone and want the Dandere to do the same, which occurs when he acknowledges his own needs and lets the connection happen. The Everyman likes the simplicity of things, and the Dandere can provide a calm and simple love after the player manages to get past their shyness and reach their loving personality.

v) Oresama

There are many ways to talk about oneself in Japanese, such as the more common "*watashi*". Oresama is an overly self-confident and narcissistic way of saying "me". They can be very charismatic and charming, but their arrogance overshadows those aspects of their personality. Oresamas often think they're a gift of god to mankind, usually due to extreme wealth, intelligence, or being highly talented at something. They treat the heroine with arrogance and harsh words at first and will spend the remainder of the game trying to control and dominate her.

This behavior can be seen in Li Zeyan from *Love and Producer*, who is the CEO of a financial group. He tries to dictate the heroine's life, often saying he knows what is best for her. When the heroine is hurt, he takes her to a hospital, but won't let her leave when she wants, often dismissing her pleas to go back home. Like the Ruler, Li Zeyan takes control to avoid chaos and provide safety. However, he forgets to consider the heroine's desires, like an authoritarian ruler that enforces his own wishes.

Ayato, one of the vampires from the game *Diabolik Lovers*, is known for being arrogant and often refers to himself as the strongest and the best. He acts possessive towards the heroine and gets irate when she's near other vampires, disobeying his orders. Like the shadow of the Ruler, he manipulates the heroine and has tyrannical behaviors. Even when he redeems himself in one of the game endings, he still makes the heroine swear an oath that she will stay with him forever, thus showing his ever-present Ruler necessity to be in control.

Players attracted to the Oresama trope might have the Ruler active in them and want more control and order in their lives. They might have the need for security and predictability, things that the Oresama can provide them with, since they will make

sure to have control over the situation and lead the way, even if the heroine wants it or not.

vi) Genki

"Genki" means healthy or energetic in Japanese. The Genki is often a redhead and has a boisterous, playful, and happy personality, to the point that he can be rather annoying sometimes. He is lively and ever-optimistic, always treating the heroine with kindness. Beneath his upbeat personality, the Genki tends to hide deep traumas and dark pasts, which he will reveal to the heroine as they grow closer. However, that rarely affects his cheerful attitude as they would much rather look on the bright side of life.

An example is Impey from *Code: Realize*. He's seen as upbeat and innocent, believing that one day will come where everyone will be able to smile together. Despite having a traumatic past, Impey doesn't have resentments, always remaining optimistic about life. This view of the world is similar to the Innocent, who dreams of a perfect future and a happy ending. The Innocent also values purity and kindness, which is shown by Impey when he disapproves of killing his enemies, even when they attack him.

However, the Genki also has characteristics of the Everyman when they treat everyone with kindness and integrity, since this archetype believes everyone should be treated the same. Otoya from *Uta no Prince-sama*, goes out of his way to help the heroine at the start of the game, even if he doesn't know who she is. From then on, he always treats her with kindness and is constantly trying to be friends with her. Impey also shows the Everyman's gift of empathy when he refuses to kill his enemies, being saddened when that is not possible. The realism of the Everyman often clashes with the Innocent's naivety in these characters and they can be serious when needed, but they much prefer to have a smile on their faces.

Players drawn to the Genki might have the Innocent active in their lives, thus being attracted to positive and hopeful ideas, and also the Everyman, who wishes for a more common and simple connection with others. The Genki, with his ever-present optimism and consistent idyllic view of the world, is able to fulfill that need and provide a kind and safe relationship.

vii) Childhood Friend

The Childhood Friend, as the name implies, is a character that grew up alongside the heroine. He usually has a very close relationship with her and acts as an older brother, always looking after the heroine and caring for her. The Childhood Friend is known for having unrequited feelings for the heroine and will try to prove he is worthy of her love.

Hino from *7'scarlet* spends a great part of the game wondering if he's worthy of the heroine's love and gets upset when he thinks he might not be good enough for her. Like the Hero, he's competitive and wants to be stronger to be able to protect the one he loves. When he faints in front of the heroine, he gets disheartened for showing weakness, thus displaying the Hero's fear of being weak and vulnerable. Hiro is even called a 'knight in shining armor' by another character due to his desire to protect the heroine.

Another example is Hiroya from *Period: Cube - Shackles of Amadeus*, who is also overprotective when it comes to the heroine, especially after her brother's disappearance. When Hiroya and the heroine are forced to play a dangerous game, he's always talking about getting stronger to protect her and asks the heroine to lean on him more and ask for his help. His goal is to be the number one in the heroine's life, wanting her love for him to surpass her love for her actual brother.

Players interested in the Childhood Friend trope may have the Hero active in their lives. They might want someone that has set values and convictions and that will do anything to protect what they believe and achieve what they want. Since the Childhood Friend has the Hero's necessity to protect those in need, players attracted to this trope might desire to be protected and cared for, which the Childhood Friend will be able to provide, even at the cost of his own safety.

viii) Shota/Younger Man

The Shota is younger than the heroine and often has a childish personality. He tends to appear naïve and innocent, in a way that makes the other characters feel protective over him. The Shota is generally very excitable and cheerful and is friendly towards the heroine from the start. Their romance is often "purer" than that of his older male counterparts, and the heroine's love for him may resemble a mother's love for her child at times.

However, the Shota will usually go through a transformation during the game. Yeonho from *Nameless*, a delicate doll turned human, starts off as innocent and dependable on the heroine, making her feel a sense of protection towards him and treat him like a child, but as the story progresses, he becomes more mature and sure of himself. At the end of the game, the heroine and the other characters point out how Yeonho became a man, which happens often in Shota stories. This transformation from child to man is related to the Level Two of the Innocent and can be seen as the transition from the Innocent to the Hero. The Shota goes from someone that needs protection to someone who can protect others, especially the one he loves, the heroine.

Scarlet from *Ozmafia!!*, a level-headed boy with feminine features, despises being seen as weak and delicate from the beginning of the game. Like many Shotas, he hates being small and wants to grow taller and be respected by everyone, which is similar to the Hero's core desire to prove their worth. At the beginning of the game, Scarlet is averse to violence and takes orders from others, but at the end, he's ready to fight for what he believes.

Players who like the Shota trope might have not only the Innocent and Hero active in their lives, but also the Caregiver, since the Shota in his Innocent phase often makes players want to protect and care for him. The players may want a purer and innocent relationship with someone that has strong values, which the Shota can provide with his combined characteristics of the Innocent and the Hero.

ix) Mature/Older Man

The Mature Man is often much older than the heroine and, thus, more experienced. He acts like a supportive and

caring father figure, often giving advice to the heroine in tough situations and teaching her the ways of the world. The Older Man is mature and won't play games with the heroine's feelings, often being sincere and straightforward regarding his feelings, which are kind and sincere.

Since the heroine is surrounded by younger guys, the Older Man stands out. He gets self-conscious, thinking she won't be attracted to him. What he desires is to connect with the heroine, but he worries if he will be able to make her happy due to their age gap, thus feeling lonely. Shirabe from *Sweet Fuse: At Your Side* confesses to the heroine that she is important to him and his daughter, but then dejectedly says he is too old for her. When the heroine says it doesn't matter, he acts surprised and doesn't believe her for a moment. Like the Everyman, he is learning to connect, which is the Everyman's core desire.

The Everyman is also a hard worker and realist and those characteristics can be seen in the Older Man as well. Rindo Kaoru from *Café Enchanté* is a middle-aged man who works for the Government's Paranormal Measures bureau. He takes his job very seriously and keeps his problems to himself, a common trait in Mature characters, who see themselves as the mature and responsible adult. However, that enhances his feelings of loneliness, and, through the story, Rindo learns to see the heroine not as a child who needs protection, but someone he can count on and share his burdens with. He ends up realizing that holds true for other characters as well, thus fulfilling the Everyman need for connection and belonging.

Players attracted to the Older Man trope might have the Everyman active in their lives. They want a more realistic and ordinary romance, without the immaturity and games that might come from a relationship with younger men. With their life experience, the Older Man has a better understanding of the ways of the world and himself, thus being more realist. The Everyman isn't fond of dishonesty, so the Older Man will provide a truthful relationship. He's a hardworking man that can support the heroine, giving her life the Everyman's "common touch" that he exudes.

x) The Bad Boy/Villain

Bad boy/Villain is usually the delinquent or antagonist of the story. He tends to have strict ideals and beliefs and will do anything at his disposal to achieve his goals, whether in his own self-interest or in the self-interest of the heroine. He is aggressive, ruthless, and will often resort to violence, hurting foes and even allies if necessary. However, he almost always has a hidden side, a "magnetic pull" that leaves the heroine intrigued to know more about him. She often finds out that, despite his many flaws, the Bad Boy has some powerful redeeming qualities.

The Villain goes against the status quo and tries to destroy the current social structure. Zero from *Collar x Malice*, the leader of a terrorist cult, says he was born among the weak and wants to create a happier world, where people wouldn't suffer. To achieve that, he and his followers begin to kill those they deem "sinners". He wants a revolution, to create a new society, which is the core desire and goal of the Outlaw. This archetype seeks power to achieve their goals, and Zero does exactly that by recruiting more people to his cult and being their leader.

Similarly, Kazama Chikage, the main antagonist of *Hakuoki*, is a ruthless demon that sees humans as greedy creatures who only fight for money and fame. He has an extreme sense of responsibility and loyalty to his clan, and like the Outlaw, he feels powerless and enraged at the humans, who forced the demons to live in isolation. Upon discovering the heroine is a demon as well, he becomes obsessed with her and will do anything to have her as his wife in order to create powerful pureblood demons. In the other character's stories, he is ruthless to achieve that goal, and the shadow of the Outlaw is active as he engages in evil acts to kidnap the heroine. However, in Kazama's own story, the Outlaw is active in other levels. He is still arrogant and ruthless, but he saves and protects the heroine. When they are forced to travel together, she sees another side of Kazama and realizes he holds his principles to a higher standard than others and that he has a soft heart. Even if at the end of his story his view of humans changes a little, he still refuses to conform to other people's standards, being loyal to his own views. Like other Villain stories, the heroine becomes a source of strength for the Villain, spurring him to be more powerful, which is one of the Outlaw's objectives.

Players drawn to Bad Boy or Villain characters may have the Outlaw active in their lives. They might wish to destroy or get rid of something in their lives and they might also want a shocking relationship that doesn't follow the usual standards. They might also be attracted to acting as the Outlaw in the Villain's story, destroying his warped view of the world and "saving" him from the Outlaw's shadow, which might or might not happen. Another charming point of the Villain can be that after they fall in love, his destructive behavior will be geared towards what he is fighting against but not at the heroine. She is the only one who will see that side of him and be the receiver of his love, while his passion burns the world around them.

xi) The Playboy

The Playboy is suave, charismatic, and handsome, often leaving a trail of broken hearts behind him as he goes. He is known for being pushy and not taking the heroine's feelings into consideration. These characters have no trouble getting dates and are often surrounded by admirers and fans, mostly women. His fans can be hostile towards the heroine, especially when the Playboy starts to get closer to her and pay less attention to them. Despite his Don Juan ways, once his heart has been successfully won over, the Playboy is devoted beyond compare.

The Playboy never stays with one woman for long. He's a free spirit that can't be restrained and confined. Goemon from *Nightshade* is a thief that never stays in one place for a long period of time and has that same attitude towards the women he involves himself with. This adventurer spirit is seen in the Explorer, who wants freedom and to be true to one's soul. Like the Explorer, the Playboy wants to experiment new things,

running away from the boredom of routine and being careful to not be tied to something or someone. Additionally, the Playboy also has the Lover active in him, but as its shadow, promiscuity, and is resistant to let the Lover be active in different levels in his life. However, that changes when he spends time with the heroine. In Goemon's story, as he and the heroine travel together, he begins to see her as someone special and, at the end of the game, wants a future by her side.

The same happens with Yuri from *Nameless*, who is a doll created to be the perfect man to all women. When he gets transformed into a real man, he still believes that is his purpose and thus flirts with other women indiscriminately, but never gives it too much thought or ties himself to anyone, hurting his admirers in the process. He does the same with the heroine, being relentless in his advances towards her but also being secretive and independent, not wanting to tell her where he goes at night. Like other Playboys, Yuri is the combination of the individuality of the Explorer and the shadow of the Lover. He gets confused when he begins to fall for the heroine because the concept is new to him and says he has never felt that way before. In their stories, Playboys learn how to love sincerely and finally accept the Lover in them, letting it be more active than the Explorer.

Players who are attracted to the Playboy trope might have the Explorer and the Lover active in their lives, but with the latter being stronger. They may admire the freedom of the Playboy and the excitement his character brings, but at the same time they may want an intimate connection, to be special, and they can achieve that by being the one to make the Playboy transition from the individualistic Explorer to the passionate and enamored Lover. After that happens, the Player will be the only one in the Playboy's mind, thus achieving the Lover's goal of feeling special.

IV. Discussion

Fictional stories and characters are an important part of humanity and many old stories are still relevant today [22]. Fiction not only brings pleasure to those who partake in it [23], but it also allows humans to simulate and learn from the fictional experience, providing an outlet for developing new knowledge and perspectives. [24] One of the reasons for this growth can be due to the parasocial relationships people develop with fictional characters. This phenomenon is not entirely new and also happens in otome games, where players devote themselves to their favorite characters and will go to great lengths to show their love for them. This game genre has its own popular character tropes, which are so cherished that they keep repeating in old and new games alike. Players don't seem to get tired of them and choose to romance characters with their favorite tropes in different otome games and still create strong PSRs with these characters. Nevertheless, research on the nature of the PSRs between players and fictional characters is scarce. Thus, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of these relationships and why certain otome character tropes are so popular, this study sought to analyze eleven popular otome character tropes and associate

them with one of the twelve archetypal profiles of the typology developed by Mark and Pearson [7], with the intention of comprehending if the tropes' popularity is due to a connection with the collective unconscious and archetypes. The results of the Trope - Archetype relationship are as follows:

- Tsundere – Lover
- Yandere – Caregiver and Lover
- Kuudere – Sage
- Dandere – Everyman
- Oresama – Ruler
- Genki – Innocent and Everyman
- Childhood Friend – Hero
- Shota/Younger Man – Innocent and Hero
- Mature/Older Man – Everyman
- Bad Boy/Villain – Outlaw
- Playboy – Explorer and Lover

Out of the eleven tropes studied, all of them had at least one dominant archetype active in them, showing that popular otome game tropes are indeed connected to the collective unconscious and archetypes and thus, have characteristics that are ancient, universal, and that upon discovered, can bring a feeling of connection to people. Although the way to tell stories has changed and developed, these popular otome game tropes still carry the ancestry of the old stories in them, even if they're masked by a more modern exterior.

It is important to notice that not all of the twelve archetypes Mark and Pearson coined appeared in the studied otome game tropes and some even repeated in distinct tropes. However, even if two or more tropes share the same archetype, the latter can be active in different levels, an example being the Genki and the Dandere, who share the archetype of the Everyman. While the Genki has the Level 3 of the Everyman more active and believes everyone has their strengths and should be treated equally, the Dandere has the Level 2 active, meaning he is learning to connect and fit in.

Regarding the archetypes that did not appear in the results, namely the Creator, the Sage, and the Joker, they might be active in otome tropes that were not part of this study's scope. Additionally, if such archetypes are not preeminent in otome game characters, this can be a great opportunity for game developers to harness the power of the archetypes and the collective unconscious to create profound characters capable of motivating players to create stronger and more meaningful PSRs with them. The same can be done with the existing popular tropes by exploring the other levels of the archetype they embody.

The limitations of this research revolve around the lack of otome game players' input in whether the hypotheses presented in each character trope's analysis regarding the players' reasons for preferring that trope are correct. Until research involving players as one of the subjects is carried out, the hypotheses created in this study will remain as hypotheses. Nevertheless, this study's findings are still valuable considering they can be the basis for future research, which can explore even further the complex nature of PSRs between players and fictional characters.

Finally, this study shows how archetypes might influence the player's preferences regarding their favorite characters. In otome games you have the option to choose which character you want to romance, however, as we can see from the connection of character tropes to the ancient archetypes, perhaps the choice isn't really there. The player, with their particularities and their own archetypes active in their lives, was already fated to choose a certain type (or types). The moment they start playing, the character, be it the dangerous Bay Boy or the reserved Kuudere, has already "chosen" the player, who then goes to them willingly, ready to be part of that character's story and let a relationship unfold between the two.

V. Conclusion

Otome games are a new medium used by humans to tell stories, which are a fundamental part of humanity. Comparably to how humans have developed strong parasocial relationships with fictional characters in the past, the same happens with otome game players. Yet, research on PSRs between players and video game characters is scarce. To analyze the possibility of popular otome character tropes being connected to the collective unconscious, this study sought to characterize eleven tropes, present two characters from different otome games that correspond to each profile, and, later, associate the trope with one of the twelve archetypal profiles of the typology developed by Mark and Pearson [7]. This typology was used due to its ability to enable the practical, even if adapted, application of Jung's theory, and due to otome games' connection with marketing, which was the typology's original targeted field.

Nevertheless, this strategy is not limited to an economic aspect. This research's findings contribute to a better understanding of the PSRs between fictional characters and humans and the reason for their intensity. The analysis can also be beneficial to game developers who wish to create more complex characters which harness the archetypes' powers. Furthermore, this study provides useful information to aid players in perceiving the connection between their love for a character and their internal necessities and desires, thus providing them with a new perspective about themselves.

Finally, it is worth noting that the statement "do you choose or are you chosen", despite appearing to be deterministic, works as a provocation regarding the power of archetypes in otome game players' behaviors. In this sense, it operates as an argument to inspire new research that can investigate whether such a claim can be proven or not.

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