



A N G L A I S * L I T T É R A T U R E

**AN INTRODUCTION *to*
ENGLISH
LITERATURE**

From Philip Sidney to Graham Swift

**FRANÇOISE GRELLET
MARIE-HÉLÈNE VALENTIN**

5^e ÉDITION REVUE ET AUGMENTÉE

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SUPÉRIEUR

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To Denis Girard

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this book is to introduce English literature to students in their first years at university. Rather than offering a wide range of texts, we have chosen to select fewer writers but give the students real help in the fields of literary terminology, cross-reference and critical as well as contextual documents.

The book is divided into two parts:

A short introduction to critical vocabulary. This section provides students with the literary terms and concepts they are most likely to need to understand and use. These have been grouped under eleven headings (e.g. Narrative Technique; Wit, Humour, Satire and Irony) representing the most common areas with which students have difficulty. The definitions of terms and the explanations are usually followed by a few exercises for illustration and practice. References to relevant sections in this part will be found after most of the excerpts given in the book.

An anthology, arranged chronologically. For the sake of clarity, we have distinguished seven periods characterized by a specific spirit:

- The Elizabethan Age,
- From the Metaphysical poets to the Commonwealth,
- The Restoration and the Age of Pope,
- The Rise of the Novel,
- Romanticism,
- The Victorian Age,
- The Modern Age.

At the beginning of each of these sections, a few pages set out the social, philosophical or artistic background which influenced the literature of the period. Rather than commenting on this background, we chose to present it, whenever possible, through the writings of historians (e.g. Trevelyan), philosophers (e.g. Bacon or Locke) or critics (e.g. Ruskin). The student is thus given key-texts and invited to find out how the movements of ideas they illustrate were important for literature.

The texts that follow appear chronologically, by genre (poetry, then prose and drama).

A similar pattern can be found in the treatment of each author:

- a chronology of his life and works;
- a few introductory lines explaining the situation of the writer in his age, his main themes and his originality;

- a passage from his works;

(A minimum of footnotes appear, to avoid overloading the text. As a rule, we have tried to gloss the text when it contained obscure allusions, archaic words or unusual structures the student would have difficulty understanding. Words that are simply difficult or uncommon have not been glossed if they appear in standard dictionaries.)

- a number of texts and documents that throw light on the passage. These include:

- the writer's comments on his own work and art. Such texts are obviously particularly helpful and appear whenever possible, provided they are relevant to the excerpt selected. In a way, this book is therefore also an anthology of literary manifestos (e.g. passages from Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* or T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood*, James on the art of fiction, Hopkins on Sprung Rhythm, etc.);

- short critical passages about important aspects of the text. These are generally taken from well-known critics (e.g. Frye or Leavis) and open up new directions of study or suggest possible interpretations. In a few cases, however, the critical text chosen is an actual commentary on the passage given (e.g. Ian Watts's commentary on the passage from *Moll Flanders*). This, we have found, can provide the students with interesting examples of the ways a text can be analysed;

– parallel or contrasting passages, for comparison. One of the best ways of assessing the merit of a text is to compare it with texts related by form or content. This use of “counterpoints” could also provide examples for those students preparing for exams that include such comparative analysis of literary texts;

– documents (e.g. paintings) relating the passage to its social or artistic background. We have tried, as often as we could, to show the correspondences between literature and the arts. The works chosen rarely aim at merely illustrating the texts, but try to show how some currents of ideas can be reflected, for instance, in both literature and painting.

The aim of these various documents is obviously *not* to give students a ready-made analysis of the passages we propose, but rather to restore some of the context or suggest a few possible directions of study.

This conception of the book accounts for the relatively limited number of authors selected, but we believe that it is preferable to offer students a substantial amount of help rather than aim at breadth of coverage for its own sake.

Though we have tried to include lesser-known texts, it has often been difficult to avoid famous passages, unmatched in the author’s works, which it is essential that a student of English should be familiar with.

We hope this book will be enjoyable and lead to genuine appreciation of literature, but most of all that it will provide incitement to further reading.

THE AUTHORS

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An Approach to Critical Vocabulary

- Verse Form and Poetic Genres
- Versification
- Novel and Prose types
- Characters and Characterization
- Narrative Technique
- Presenting the Characters' Words and thoughts
- Tragedy
- Comedy
- Wit, Humour, Satire and Irony
- Figurative Language

Verse Form and Poetic Genres

Here are some common types of poems in English:

Type	Characteristics/Themes	Form
Ballad	A poem, originally meant to be sung, which tells a story. It was transmitted orally, with variants. Broadside ballads: ballads printed on broadside (piece of paper), usually about a current problem, and sung to a popular tune. Literary ballads: poems by well-known poets, imitating the form of traditional ballads.	– Several ballad stanzas (quatrains) 4 stresses ← 3 stresses ← 4 stresses ← 3 stresses ← rhyme – Use of refrains, very often.
Ode	Long lyric poem with – serious, dignified subject: usually the praise of sb., or sthg., – high, passionate tone, – complex structure.	Pindaric Ode: 3 stanzas, the first two being similar. But many poets have long since adapted it, giving each stanza a different pattern. Horatian Ode: All the stanzas have a similar form. The tone is quieter and more restrained. In either type, the stanzas have no distinctive form.
Sonnet	Short lyric poem.	Rhyme: Petrarchan sonnet a → b → b → a a → b → b → a c → d → e c → d → e Shakespearean sonnet a → b → a → b c → d → c → d e → f → e f → g → g
Epigram	Very short poem, about any subject, which is very condensed and incisive. Often concludes with a witty thought.	
Epic	Heroic poem: – Long narrative poem. – Serious subject. – Elevated tone. – Focused on a heroic figure who is often of national importance. The future of a race or nation depends on his/her actions.	– The narrator of the epic always starts by explaining his argument. – The narrator begins in <i>medias res</i> (right in the middle of the action).

	– Vast setting which can even be the whole world, or cosmic. – Superhuman deeds. – Supervised by the gods. A mock-heroic poem (or mock-epic) makes fun of the style and form of heroic poetry, treating an unimportant event or a low subject in a grandiose way. e.g. Pope's <i>The Rape of the Lock</i>.	
Pastoral	Poem which, through the description of the idyllic life of shepherds, expresses the poet's yearning for peace, a simple life and nature.	No given form.
Occasional poetry	Poems written for a special occasion (e.g. a death, a victory, etc.).	
Elegy	Poem of lament for sb's death, or sometimes only a poem of meditation about death or the passing of things.	
Dirge	Same as elegy but shorter, more solemn, and often meant to be sung.	
Epithalamion	Poem written in honour of a marriage.	
Light verse	– Informal tone. – The subject (which can be light or serious) is treated gaily, humourously or satirically.	

How would you define the following poems?

(A ♦ means that only an excerpt from the poem is given.) The titles are not given since many actually tell what kind of poem it is. But you will find them at the bottom of page 6.

- a Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty;
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will;
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still! W. WORDSWORTH

b ♦

ARIEL *sings*.

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell. *Burthen: Ding-dong* W. SHAKESPEARE

c ♦

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear night of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love. J. MILTON

d ♦

Like the vain Curlings of the Watry maze,
Which in smooth streams a sinking Weight does raise;
So Man, declining always, disappears
In the weak Circles of increasing Years;
And his short Tumults of themselves Compose,
While flowing Time above his Head does close.
Cromwell alone with greater Vigour runs,
(Sun-like) the Stages of succeeding Suns:
And still the Day which he doth next restore,
Is the just Wonder of the Day before.
Cromwell alone doth with new Lustre spring,
And shines the Jewel of the yearly Ring. A. MARVELL

e ♦

Here men walk alone
For most of their lives,
What with hydrants for dogs,
And windows for wives. O. NASH

f ♦

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat:
If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.
If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,
If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house.
If you put him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,
If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse.

Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat –
 And there isn't any call for me to shout it:
 For he will do
 As he do do
 And there's no doing anything about it!

T. S. ELIOT

g ♦ Mean while the Adversary of God and Man,
Satan with thoughts inflam'd of highest design,
 Puts on swift wings, and toward the Gates of Hell
 Explores his solitary flight; som times
 He scours the right hand coast, som times the left,
 Now shaves with level wing the Deep, then soars
 Up to the fiery concave towering high.

J. MILTON

h ♦ Calm was the day, and through the trembling air,
 Sweet breathing Zephyrus did softly play
 A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
 Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister fair:
 When I whom sullen care,
 Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
 In Prince's Court, and expectation vain
 Of idle hopes, which still do fly away,
 Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain,
 Walk'd forth to ease my pain
 Along the shore of silver streaming Thames,
 Whose rutty Bank, the which his River hems,
 Was painted all with variable flowers,
 And all the meads adorn'd with dainty gems,
 Fit to deck maidens' bowers,
 And crown their Paramours,
 Against the Bridal day, which is not long:
 Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my Song.

E. SPENSER

i ♦ Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun,
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too –
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river salallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

J. KEATS

j ♦ The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
 The furrow followed free;
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
 'Twas sad as sad could be;
 And we did speak only to break
 The silence of the sea!

S. T. COLERIDGE

a WORDSWORTH, *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*
 b W. SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest*
 c J. MILTON, *Lycidas*
 d A. MARVELL, *The First Anniversary of the Government under O. C.*
 e OGDEN NASH, *The City*
 f T. S. ELIOT, *The Rum Tum Tugger*
 g J. MILTON, *Paradise Lost*
 h E. SPENSER, *Prothalamion*
 i J. KEATS, *To Autumn*
 j S. T. COLERIDGE, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Versification

Rhythm and accentuation

English poetry is based on rhythm rather than on the number of syllables in a line (as often in French verse) or on quantity (that is to say the alternance of long and short syllables, as in ancient Greek and Roman poetry). Rhythm consists in the succession of stressed and unstressed syllables. Each line can be divided into a number of **feet** or **beats**, each foot being made up of a number of syllables (usually 2 or 3) which contain at least one stressed syllable.

Here are the most common types of metrical feet:

The iamb

Weak (= unstressed) syllable + strong (= stressed) syllable: u –

u – u – u – u – u –
I grant/indeed/that fields/and flocks/have charms. G. CRABBE

The trochee

Strong syllable + weak syllable: – u (the reverse of the iambic foot)

It is often found at the beginning of a line, to convey strength.

– u u – u – u – u –
Flutters/in blood/and pant/ing beats/the ground. A. POPE

The anapest

Two weak syllables + one strong syllable: u u –

The effect produced is rapidity.

u u – u – – u u –
And the good/south wind/still blew/behind. S. T. COLERIDGE

The dactyl

One strong syllable + two weak syllables: – u u

– u u – u –
Wind of the/western/sea. LORD TENNYSON

The spondee

Two strong syllables: – –

It is rare, except at the beginning of lines.

– –
Speak, spirit!.. P.B. SHELLEY

Remarks

- When the foot ends with a strong syllable, one speaks of a **rising rhythm** (iambes, anapests), as opposed to a **falling rhythm** (trochees, dactyls).
- In regular lines of verse, the same kind of metrical foot is repeated:

u u – u u – u u –
I perceive/a young bird/in this bush!/
= **anapaestic trimeter** (anapests - 3 feet) or

u – u – u – u – u –
Who gave/the ball/or paid/the vi/sit last? A. POPE

= **iambic pentameter** (iambes - five feet)

This verse pattern (also called **blank verse**) is usually considered as the basic English one, though its regularity would soon make it very monotonous, and a number of variations (e.g. a trochee at the beginning of a line) can usually be found.

One speaks of **monometers** (lines of 1 foot), **dimeters** (2), **trimeters** (3), **tetrameters** (4), **pentameters** (5), **hexameters** (6), **heptameters** (7) and **octameters** (8).

■ Here is how a few lines can be scanned:

u u – u – u –
 How the chim/ney swee/per's cry
 – u – u – u –
 Every/black'ning/church ap/pals
 u u – u – u –
 And the hap/less sol/dier's sigh
 – u – u – u –
 Runs in/blood down/palace/walls. W. BLAKE

Note the similarity of rhythm between lines 1 and 3 (both start with an anapest) and lines 2 and 4 (heavy trochaic rhythm).

■ Endings

In iambic rhythm it is common to find an extra unstressed syllable at the end of the line. This is called a **feminine ending** as opposed to a **masculine ending** when the line ends with a strong syllable. e.g. Lines 2 and 3 have a feminine ending in the following passage from *Prometheus Unbound*:

Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
 Will hunt the undefended through wide Heaven!
 How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
 Gape like a hell within! P. B. SHELLEY

Feminine endings are often less heavy and tend to open up the line.

■ When the pause falls at the end of a line, the line is said to be **end-stopped**:

The grey gaunt days dividing us in twain
 Seemed hopeless hills my strength must faint to climb. T. HARDY

The following two lines, on the contrary, are **run-on lines** (one also speaks of **enjambments**):

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
 Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
 Borne, like thy bubbles, onward... LORD BYRON

■ Other kinds of English verse

Sprung rhythm, which can be found in the poems of G. M. Hopkins (cf. p. 216). It is a strong-stressed rhythm based on clusters of several stressed syllables, often followed by successions of weak syllables. The effect conveyed is strength and a panting, stammering rhythm, with sudden powerful bursts, which is reminiscent of speech or music.

– u – u u u – – u – u –
 Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing... G. M. HOPKINS

Free verse is verse which follows no regular pattern as far as stress, rhyme, or the form of the poem, are concerned. One can already find instances of free verse in some of Shakespeare's last plays, but it prevails among a number of 20th-century writers such as T. S. Eliot.

What kind of verse patterns do the following lines exemplify?

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.	W. BLAKE
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now.	W. SHAKESPEARE
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut.	W. SHAKESPEARE
When they said "Is it small?"	
He replied, "Not at all."	E. LEAR
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.	P. B. SHELLEY

Scan the following lines. Can you find any regular iambic pentameters? Find instances of iambs, trochees, anapests and dactyls. How do they contribute to break the rhythm and underline the ideas expressed?

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

W. SHAKESPEARE

Rhyme and alliteration

Rhyme

One can distinguish:

End-rhyme (at the end of lines)

Gus is the cat at the Theatre Door.
His name, as I ought to have told you before,
Is really Asparagus. That's such a fuss
To pronounce, that we usually call him just Gus. T.S. ELIOT

Internal rhyme, inside a line

The body of my brother's son
Stood by *me*, knee to *knee*. S. T. COLERIDGE

Sight rhyme (or Eye rhyme)

The words look alike but are pronounced differently.

"There was an Old Man who said "Hush!"
I Perceive a young bird in this bush!" E. LEAR

Slant rhyme

Imperfect rhyme (often used by 20th-century poets as a reaction against the constraints of regular rhyme):

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces,
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams and stare, snow-dazed,
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses. W. OWEN

Masculine rhyme

Single stressed syllables:

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw –
For he's the master criminal who can defy the law. T. S. ELIOT

Feminine rhyme

Stressed syllables followed by unstressed syllables:

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity. T. S. ELIOT

NOTE: When iambic pentameters rhyme in pairs (**aa, bb, cc...**) they are called “heroic couplets”:

Youth, beauty, graceful action seldom fail:
But common interest always will prevail,
And pity never ceases to be shown
To him who makes the people’s wrongs his own. J. DRYDEN

Alliteration

Alliteration

The repetition of initial consonants:

Full fathom five thy father lies... W. SHAKESPEARE

It was a common feature of Old English verse, in which alliteration was almost compulsory.

Wyth *ch*ynne and *che*ke full swete... *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Consonance

The repetition of consonants:

Alone, alone, *all*, *all* alone... S. T. COLERIDGE

Assonance

The repetition of vowel sounds within a line:

Of power, of honour, of omnipotence... C. MARLOWE

Study the rhyme and alliteration patterns of the poems on pages 91, 173, 212 and 266.

Novel and Prose Types

Match the following passages and the different kinds of "genre" mentioned below:

- 1 Detective story.
- 2 Gothic/Horror story.
- 3 Realistic novel.
- 4 Psychological novel.
- 5 Guidebook.
- 6 Scientific treatise.

a Sophia walked alone, with tired limbs, up the damaged oak stairs to the flat. [...] The stairs, which smelt of damp even in summer, disgusted Sophia. She thought of the flat with horror and longed for green places and luxury.

b Edward opened the door of the drawing-room and cast a glance round the hall. He stood for a moment, his hand on the doorknob, listening. Then he seemed to make up his mind and Brenda saw him cross the hall and go up the stairs quickly and noiselessly.

c Turn right when leaving the dining-room and you will find yourself back in the hall. Before going upstairs to visit the bedrooms, pause for a moment to admire the graceful lines of the spiral staircase which is original mahogany. It is a masterpiece of craftsmanship and elegance. Go up the stairs and turn left on the first floor landing.

d She began to go slowly upstairs, with her hand on the banisters, as if she had left a party, where now this friend now that had flashed back her face, her voice... Like a nun, withdrawing, or a child exploring a tower, she went upstairs, paused at the window, came to the bathroom.

e ... hastily closing the door, she took her lamp, and passed up the staircase. Trembling came upon her as she ascended through the gloom. To her melancholy fancy this seemed to be a place of death, and the chilling silence that reigned confirmed its character.

f The first thing that a man does when he ascends by steps is to free the leg which he wishes to raise from the weight of the trunk which is resting upon this leg, and at the same time he loads the other leg with his entire weight including that of the raised leg. Then he raises the leg and places the foot on the step where he wishes to mount...

- a ... d ...
b ... e ...
c ... f ...

- a Arnold BENNETT, *The Old Wives' Tale*.
d Virginia WOOLF, *Mrs Dalloway*.
e Ann RADCLIFFE, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.
f Leonardo DA VINCI, from the *Notebooks*.

Characters and Characterization

■ Characters can be described as:

Humours (or Characters of Humour)

They are characters conspicuous for one prevailing feature, or humour, such as greed, cowardice, boastfulness (cf. **Comedy of Humours**, p. 24). Here is how Congreve defined Humour:

I take it to be a singular and unavoidable manner of doing, or saying anything, Peculiar and Natural to one Man only; by which his Speech and Actions are distinguish'd from those of other Men... A Man may change his Opinion, but I believe he will find it a Difficulty, to part with his Humour...

W. CONGREVE, *A Letter to John Dennis Concerning Humour in Comedy*, 1695.

Round or flat

According to the distinction made by E. M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (cf. p. 13):

We may divide characters into flat and round.

Flat characters were called “humours” in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round. The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as “I will never desert Mr Micawber”. There is Mrs Micawber – she says she won’t desert Mr Micawber; she doesn’t, and there she is. [...] One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in. [...] A second advantage is that they are easily remembered by the reader afterwards. [...] The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat.

Consistent or inconsistent

A character’s behaviour is consistent if it is in keeping with his usual temperament. It is inconsistent if it changes in a random and haphazard way.

Static or dynamic

Some characters remain the same throughout a work; others are less predictable and change and develop.

Reliable or unreliable

A character/narrator is reliable when the reader can “trust” him, when his vision of himself or the world is not contradicted in the rest of the book. He is unreliable when his vision of things is distorted, when (often unconsciously) he relays to us facts and ideas that are different from those of the implied author and that are often corrected by another character.

Stock characters

They are recurring, conventional character types in a given genre: e.g. the buffoon in a comedy.

■ Character presentation:

Telling

The author tells us about the characters, their ideas, their motivations, etc.

Showing

We see the characters behaving and talking, and draw our own conclusions from this.

Cf. « Narrative Technique », p. 15.

Now read the passages mentioned below and decide how you would describe the characters and their presentation:

	Characters	Characterization
<i>The History of Clarissa</i> , p. 141		
<i>Joseph Andrews</i> , p. 146		
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , p. 191		
<i>Portrait of a Lady</i> , p. 236		

Further reading:

We may divide characters into flat and round.

Flat characters were called “humours” in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round. The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as “I never will desert Mr Micawber”. There is Mrs Micawber – she says she won’t desert Mr Micawber; she doesn’t, and there she is. Or: “I must conceal, even by subterfuges the poverty of my master’s house”. [...]

One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in – recognized by the reader’s emotional eye, not by the visual eye which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name. In Russian novels, where they so seldom occur, they would be a decided help. It is a convenience for an author when he can strike with his full force at once, and flat characters are very useful to him, since they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere – little luminous disks of a prearranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars; most satisfactory.

A second advantage is that they are easily remembered by the reader afterwards. They remain in his mind as unalterable for the reason that they were not changed by circumstances; they moved through circumstances, which gives them in retrospect a comforting quality, and preserves them when the book that produced them may decay. The Countess in *Evan Harrington* furnishes a good example here. Let us compare our memories of her with our memories of Becky Sharp. We do not remember what the Countess did or what she passed through. What is clear is her figure and the formula that surrounds it, namely, “Proud as we are of dear papa, we must conceal his memory”. All her rich humour proceeds from this. She is a flat character. Becky is round. She, too, is on the make, but she cannot be summed up in a single phrase, and we remember her in connexion with the great scenes through which she passed and as modified by those scenes – that is to say, we do not remember her so easily because she waxes and wanes and has facets like a human being. All of us, even the sophisticated, yearn for permanence, and to the unsophisticated permanence is the chief excuse for a work of art. We all want books to endure, to be refuges, and their inhabitants to be always the same, and flat characters tend to justify themselves on this account. [...]

As for the round characters proper, they have already been defined by implication and no more need be said. All I need do is to give some examples of people in books who seem to me round so that the definition can be tested afterwards:

All the principal characters in *War and Peace*, all the Dostoyevsky characters, and some of the Proust – for example, the old family servant, the Duchess of Guermantes, M. de Charlus, and Saint Loup; Madame Bovary – who, like Moll Flanders, has her book to herself, and can expand and secrete