

of the movement was to create a distinctive national literature by going back to Irish history, legend, and folklore, as well as to native literary models. The major writers, however, wrote not in the native Irish (one of the Celtic languages) but in English, and under the influence of various non-Irish literary forms. A number of them also turned increasingly for their subject matter to modern Irish life rather than to the ancient past.

Notable poets in addition to Yeats were AE (George Russell) and Oliver St. John Gogarty. The dramatists included Yeats himself, as well as Lady Gregory (who was also an important patron and publicist for the movement), John Millington Synge, and later Sean O'Casey. Among the novelists were George Moore and James Stephens, as well as James Joyce, who, although he abandoned Ireland for Europe and ridiculed the excesses of the nationalist writers, adverted to Irish subject matter and characters in all his writings. As these names indicate, the Celtic Revival produced some of the greatest poetry, drama, and prose fiction written in English during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

See Herbert Howarth, *The Irish Writers* (1958); Phillip L. Marcus, *Yeats and the Beginning of the Irish Renaissance* (1970), and "The Celtic Revival: Literature and the Theater," in *The Irish World: The History and Cultural Achievements of the Irish People* (1977). Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (1996), deals with the Irish writers as exemplary modernists. For the influence of anthropology on Irish revivalists, see Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (2001).

character and characterization:

1. **The character** is the name of a literary *genre*; it is a short, and usually witty, sketch in prose of a distinctive type of person. The genre was inaugurated by Theophrastus, a Greek author of the second century BC, who wrote a lively book entitled *Characters*. The form had a great vogue in the early seventeenth century; the books of characters then written by Joseph Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, and John Earle influenced later writers of essays, history, and fiction. The titles of some of Overbury's sketches will indicate the nature of the form: "A Courtier," "A Wise Man," "A Fair and Happy Milkmaid." See Richard Aldington's anthology *A Book of "Characters"* (1924).
2. **Characters** are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the **dialogue**—and from what they do—the **action**. The grounds in the characters' temperament, desires, and moral nature for their speech and actions are called their **motivation**. A character may remain essentially "stable," or unchanged in outlook and disposition, from beginning to end of a work (Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Micawber in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, 1849–50), or may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual process of development (the title character in Jane Austen's *Emma*, 1816) or as the result of a crisis (Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations*). Whether a character remains stable or changes, the reader of a traditional and realistic work expects "consistency"—the character should not

suddenly break off and act in a way not plausibly grounded in his or her temperament as we have already come to know it.

E. M. Forster, in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), introduced new terms for an old distinction by discriminating between flat and round characters. A **flat character** (also called a **type**, or "two-dimensional"), Forster says, is built around "a single idea or quality" and is presented without much individualizing detail, and therefore can be described adequately in a single phrase or sentence. A **round character** is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity; such a character therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us. A *humours character*, such as Ben Jonson's "Sir Epicure Mammon," has a name which says it all, in contrast to the roundness of character in Shakespeare's multifaceted Falstaff. Almost all dramas and narratives, properly enough, have some characters who serve merely as functionaries and are not characterized at all, as well as other characters who are left relatively flat: there is no need, in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, for Mistress Quickly to be as globular as Falstaff. The degree to which, to be regarded as artistically successful, characters need to be three-dimensional depends on their function in the plot; in many types of narrative, such as in the detective story or adventure novel or farce comedy, even the protagonist is usually two-dimensional. Sherlock Holmes and Long John Silver do not require, for their excellent literary roles, the roundness of a Hamlet, a Becky Sharp, or a Jay Gatsby. In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye has proposed that even lifelike characters are identifiable variants, more or less individualized, of stock two-dimensional types in old literary genres, such as the self-deprecating "eiron," the boastful "alazon," and the "senex iratus," or choleric old father in classical comedy. (See *stock characters*.)

A broad distinction is frequently made between alternative methods for **characterizing** (that is, establishing the distinctive characters of) the persons in a narrative: showing and telling. In **showing** (also called "the dramatic method"), the author simply presents the characters talking and acting, and leaves it entirely up to the reader to infer the motives and dispositions that lie behind what they say and do. The author may show not only external speech and actions, but also a character's inner thoughts, feelings, and responsiveness to events; for a highly developed mode of such inner showing, see *stream of consciousness*. In **telling**, the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters. For example, in the terse opening chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Jane Austen first shows us Mr. and Mrs. Bennet as they talk to one another about the young man who has just rented Netherfield Park, then (in the quotation below) tells us about them, and so confirms and expands the inferences that we have begun to make from what has been shown.

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper.

Especially since the novelistic theory and practice of Flaubert and Henry James, a critical tendency has been to consider “telling” a violation of artistry and to recommend only the technique of “showing” characters; authors, it is said, should totally efface themselves in order to write “objectively,” “impersonally,” or “dramatically.” Such judgments, however, privilege a modern artistic limitation suited to particular novelistic effects, and decry an alternative method of characterization which a number of novelists have employed to produce masterpieces. (See *point of view*.)

Innovative writers in the twentieth century—including novelists from James Joyce to French writers of the *new novel*, and authors of the dramas and novels of the *absurd* and various experimental forms—often presented the persons in their works in ways which ran counter to the earlier mode of representing lifelike characters who manifest a consistent substructure of individuality. Structuralist critics undertook to dissolve even the lifelike characters of traditional novels into a system of literary conventions and codes which are *naturalized* by the readers; that is, readers are said to project lifelikeness upon codified literary representations by assimilating them into their own prior stereotypes of individuals in real life. See *structuralist criticism* and *text and writing (écriture)*, and refer to Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), chapter 9, “Poetics of the Novel.”

See *plot and narrative and narratology*. For the traditional problems and methods of characterization, including discussions of showing and telling, see in addition to E. M. Forster (above), Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (1926); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), especially chapters 1–4; and W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (1965). On problems in determining dramatic character, see Bert O. States, *The Pleasure of the Play* (1994); and on the disappearance of traditional characterization in postmodern drama, Elinor Fuchs, *The Death of Character* (1996). On the formal distinction between primary characters (*protagonists*) and minor characters, see Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (2003).

haracter, the (a literary form): 42; 287.

haracterizing: 43. See also *distance and involvement; empathy and sympathy*.

hiasmus (kīāz' mūs): 314.

hicago School (of criticism): 126; 135.

hivalric romance: Chivalric romance (or **medieval romance**) is a type of narrative that developed in twelfth-century France, spread to the literatures of other countries, and displaced the earlier *epic* and heroic forms. (“Romance” originally signified a work written in the French language, which evolved from a dialect of the Roman language, Latin.) Romances were at first written in verse, but later in prose as well. The **romance** is distinguished from the epic in that it does not represent a heroic age of tribal wars, but a courtly and chivalric age, often one of highly developed manners and civility. Its standard plot is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady’s favor; frequently its central inter-