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A theory of the perception of character

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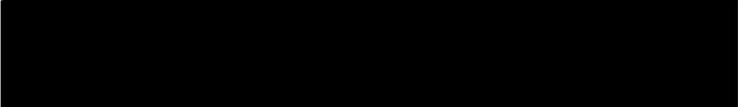
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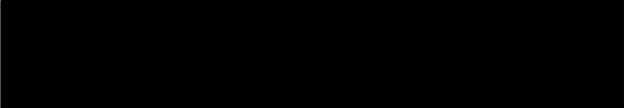
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In this thesis, the critical term "character" is
defined from a reader's perspective as a process involving
three elements: (1) syntactical character, the printed
words that delimit character in the order in which they
occur; (2) spatial character, these printed words organized
in the reader's mind into a pattern. These two together
are called grammatical character; and (3) a mental image
that results from reading these printed words.

This definition is then discussed in terms of such polar definitions as those of E. M. Forster, that characters are "people in books," and William Gass, that characters are simply "noises" or "verbal organizations." The discussion attempts to clarify both what readers do when they compare characters to people and what critics mean by such terms as "concrete universal" and "character type."

It concludes that by using this three-element definition, criticism of character can account for the traditional comparison between characters and people without confusing the two with such metaphors as "people in books" and without having to discard one of the elements with such phrases as "verbal organization."

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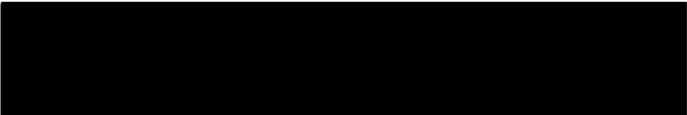
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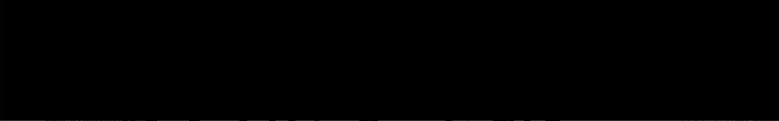
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A THEORY OF THE PERCEPTION OF CHARACTER

by

DONNA C. BROWN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
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1974

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN PEOPLE AND LITERARY CHARACTERS

Most often we think of characters in books as
though they were people. It's easy to do. Don't we
laugh at Falstaff and cry for Katrina Ivanovna? Don't
we feel we know them well, often better than we feel we
know our friends? But this feeling we have that charac-
ters are people cannot be transferred to criticism. For
instance, if I decide that Hamlet is person enough to be
like my brother, I have not communicated anything about
the Hamlet who is the character in the play _Hamlet_. I
would not want to say: "I read _Hamlet_; it is about my
brother;" but I might say: "I read _Hamlet_; and Hamlet is
like my brother." I might say this, but it is not
criticism, because it doesn't communicate critically any-
thing about the character Hamlet. If I were to go
another step and say that Hamlet is like my brother in
that Hamlet puns a lot and so does my brother, and then
drop out the part about the brother to say, "Hamlet puns
a lot," I move into criticism. The part about Hamlet
being person enough to be like my brother is irrelevant
to criticism, but it was useful in the process of

arriving at criticism. The impulse that makes us connect characters in books with various kinds of people in our lives should not be confused with criticism about character. The words on the page are not people; those words on the page are characters, and they resemble people no more than the alphabetical characters c, a, and t "resemble" a familiar pet.

George Wright's theory of character in The Poet and the Poem seems to work well when discussing character. He suggests that "characters in literature have no extension beyond the limits of the work in which they appear; they have, on the other hand, a kind of extendibility, a symbolic dimension that the matter-of-fact persons of our acquaintance do not have."[1] If the first part of this is accepted, it might be possible to say that a character is a collection of words divided into two parts: the part that can be called the body collection (actions, so-called, fit into this collection); and the part that can be called the mind collection (thoughts, so-called, fit here). These collections of words, when read and formed into a pattern by the reader, create an image in the reader's mind. But it is a little misleading to suggest that collections of words must be read in order to create an image. Whenever even one character word is read, an image is created. "Image," here, does not always mean "picture." If we are honest and look at

the words that delimit character, we find that there
are not enough words on the page to make a picture in
our minds. But, as Arnold Bennett has noticed, "the
honest written word possesses a mysterious and intimid-
ating power. This power has to do with the sense of
sight. You see something. You do not see your action
or your thought as it might be on the cinema screen --
happily! -- but you do see something in regard to the
matter."[2] This "something" might be called an image,
which Ezra Pound has defined as "an intellectual and
emotional complex in an instant of time."[3]

This image can be extended into verbal life, can be
extended, that is, not to people, but to what we are
willing to say about people. Of the various collections
of words that are in a book, syntactical characters are
those collections of words that can be distinguished
from other groups of words in perhaps two ways: the
first is that characters are groups of words we are
willing to say are people, or are willing, at least, to
say are like people once we have formed an image; the
second distinction is that characters couldn't possibly
refer to anyone outside the book.

Of course, as William Gass has noted in "The Concept
of Character in Fiction," "anything, indeed, which serves
as a fixed point, like a stone in a stream or that soap in
Bloom's pocket, functions as a character,"[4] but in this

paper only those fixed points around which the language of a work flows, those fixed points a reader would identify with "people" will be considered characters.

Much criticism of character is based on some form of this first assumption about character, the assumption that characters are words we would identify with people. But, unfortunately, the criticism sometimes confuses this identification with what a character is. Since there is a lot of criticism based on this assumption, it might be helpful when surveying it to classify it according to M. H. Abrams' schema for classifying general criticism. Criticism of character can fit into Abrams' four categories -- the mimetic, which is the relationship between the work of art and life; the expressive, which is the relationship between the work and the artist; the pragmatic, which is the relationship between the work and the audience; and the objective, which is the work itself.[5] In the criticism of character, the mimetic does not remain a category in itself; it divides into two parts and then falls into either the expressive or the pragmatic categories.

If it can be assumed that a character is a collection of words and the image that results from reading those words, we can say that "character" differs from a person in that a character is not expected to appear physically from behind this curtain of words; a character is not the

object of perception that a person can be.   Yet mimetic

criticism, like that of E. M. Forster, assumes that

characters are people in books who were once people in

life.   What, then, is the relationship between people

in a novel and people in an historical tract?   Forster

says that "there is bound to be a difference" between the

two:

> If a character in a novel is like Queen
> Victoria -- not rather like but exactly like --
> then it actually is Queen Victoria, and the
> novel, or all of it that the character touches,
> becomes a memoir.   A memoir is history, it is
> based on evidence.   A novel is based on evidence
> + or - x, the unknown quantity being the tempera-
> ment of the novelist, and the unknown quantity
> always modifies the effect of the evidence, and
> sometimes transforms it entirely.[6]

Forster seems to get carried away when he suggests that

the character "actually is Queen Victoria," because if

we were to accept that, words would be life, or, at

least, we'd be constantly giving birth, like Zeus, to

Anthenas out of our minds.   Surely he doesn't mean this.

He means instead something like: there was a real Queen

Victoria who was observed, and certain observations, among

a multitude of possible ones, and only those certain

observations, were written down.   And so we know we have

picked up a book of memoirs.

What is Forster's corresponding assumption about

novels?   He assumes that there was a real Elizabeth Bennett,

say, who existed and was observed prior to the creation of

Middlemarch, and these felt observations ("temperament of the artist") were written down, felt observations which alter the affect of the original Elizabeth Bennett almost, often, to the point of completely changing the observations, and these, which we might call "observations," are written down. If we assume that there was a real Elizabeth Bennett, Middlemarch becomes not a record of the real Elizabeth Bennett, for that would make Middlemarch a memoir, but a record of the emotions of the novelist, or, as Castelvetro says, "the strife of the poet." This is a seemingly mimetic view of the novel that is actually an expressive view, a romantic view.

Critically, we don't know very much about character if we use Forster's thinking. Does it inform the character Hamlet to say that Hamlet is how Shakespeare felt about some real Hamlet? Not any more than discovering Hamlet is like one's brother helped us critically. Forster didn't take his criticism quite far enough. He begins with the assumption that characters are people in books and ends his discussion on a point that doesn't inform us about character; it informs us about novelists.

It would seem that if an expressive view isn't critically useful, an objective view might be, because an objective view concentrates on the book itself, on the book we read. It is on the objective level that character is a collection of words. Perhaps an analysis of a passage

from <u>Middlemarch</u> would be useful here:

> Caleb pushed his spectacles upward, listened,
> looked into his favorite's clear young eyes,
> and believed him.⁷

Caleb is a grammatical character in a book, a group of
words grammatically bound to a proper name. Caleb is
"pushed," "his spectacles," "listened, looked,"
"believed," and "Caleb." The grammatical character
"Caleb" is not yet someone who wears glasses. As the
image is formed from these words, the notion of "live
person" is added to them, because "Caleb" is the sort
of name a person would have, and because the verbs and
nouns that cluster around "Caleb" are the kinds of verbs
and nouns that would be associated with a live person.
And so Caleb becomes "someone" who wears glasses. So
the associations go on, but at the simple level of
words on the page, there is no person.

William Gass assumes that this simple level, words
on a page, is the only "reality" of character. In Gass's
schema, "Caleb" would be "(1) a noise, (2) a proper name,
(3) a complex system of ideas, (4) a controlling concep-
tion, (5) an instrument of verbal organization, (6) a
pretended mode of referring, and (7) a source of verbal
energy."⁸

Of course, this is not the alive-seeming Caleb

Garth we talk about when we discuss Middlemarch, because
we don't have the image yet; but, for us as readers, Caleb
Garth begins as words in a book. He begins as words, and
these words, which become patterned, or are realized to be
"a complex system of ideas," become almost simultaneously
a mental image. We need this image to account for our
sense that Caleb lives. Although Gass can account for
part of a reader's experience with character, his criti-
cism falls short of a full sense of that experience
because he calls character "a pretended mode of referring,"
instead of noting that character, as words on a page,
give rise to an image, an image that we can critically
refer to.

Pragmatic criticism, because it is concerned with the
relationship between the work of art and an audience,
would seem a likely place to find the missing part of our
experience with character, but, curiously, pragmatic criti-
cism seems to be another form of mimetic criticism that
fails to give us a full sense of character. Sir Philip
Sidney, one of the teach-and-delight critics, a pragmatic
critic therefore, says that poetry is made "to imitate,
and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move
men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight
they would flie as from a stranger...."[9] Even though Sidney
means the poet to imitate not people but "notable images
of virtues, vices, or what els,"[10] characters still become

speaking pictures, pictures not of men, but of vices:

"wisdom and temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valure

in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Eurialus."[11] The

reader is to be delighted by the pictures of embodied

virtues and vices that appear in the book. Sidney under-

stands that there are images associated with reading, but

he puts the images in the wrong place. The role of the

reader is more active than Sidney supposes. The reader

does not read an already-put-together picture book;

the reader reads words, and if there are images, the

reader must make them from those words.

It seems, then, that the question of the relationship

between characters in a book and people in life is still an

open question critically. Further, it seems that any

answer to the question must consider the three experiences

we have with character, the two experiences of the words on

the page and the experience of those words somehow coming

alive.

In this connection Wright's observation about charac-

ter is particularly useful, and this paper owes much of its

thought and organization to the implications of that obser-

vation. The second chapter of this paper will be based

mainly on Wright's contention that "characters in literature

have no extension beyond the limits of the work in which

they appear." The second chapter, then is concerned mainly

with objective criticism that finds that on the simple level

of words in a book, there are two of the three parts of
our experience with character. The first part is the
syntactical character, which is the occurrence on the
printed page of character words, character words as they
appear one after another as the book is read. The second
part is the spatial character, the recognition by the
reader that the name we have seen several times, with
its accompanying noun and verb clusters, is about the
same thing; spatial character is what Gass might be call-
ing an "instrument of verbal organization." The spatial
character relies at least partially on the image for its
organization.

Also in the second chapter, between objective criti-
cism and Wright's "symbolic dimension," is the image, the
"emotional and intellectual complex," which is the "some-
thing" we get in our minds at the first sight of a
character word and which moves and changes with each
additional character word as the reader patterns the syn-
tactical character. The image is fluid, because it depends
both on the words read in the past and on the words that
are being read, but it is in no sense symbolic of the words
being read, nor is it a translation into a picture of what
is being read. It is a "something" that the grammatical
character gives rise to. In the second chapter, then,
character is defined as these three elements -- syntactical
character, spatial character, and image.

The third chapter of this paper will discuss Wright's notion that characters in literature "have...a kind of extendability, a symbolic dimension that the matter-of-fact persons of our acquaintance do not have." The third chapter assumes that there is no relationship between people and characters in a book; rather, the relationship is between the grammatical character, the image, and what a reader is willing to say about people.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1] George Wright, The Poet in the Poem (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 8.

[2] Arnold Bennett, Self and Self-Management (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918), p. 43.

[3] Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," in Prose Keys to Modern Poetry, ed. Karl Shapiro (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 105.

[4] William Gass, Fiction and the Figures of Life (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 50.

[5] M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 8-29.

[6] E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1927), pp. 44-45.

[7] Lodovico Castelvetro, "The Poetics of Aristotle Translated and Annotated," in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1962), p. 312.

[8] George Eliot, Middlemarch (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1968), p. 171.

[9] Gass, p. 44.

[10] Sir Philip Sidney, The Defense of Poesie, a facsimile of the 1595 edition published by Scholar Press Limited (Menston, England, 1969), p. C3.

[11] Sidney, p. C3.

[12] Ibid., p. D2.

CHAPTER II

THREE ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER

Character in prose and in poetry is a process that includes three separate elements, and, as a critical term, "character" means all three: (1) the words that delimit character in the order in which they occur on the printed page; (2) these printed words organized in the reader's mind to be a verbal pattern on the syntactical level; (3) a mental image that <u>results</u> from reading the printed words. The image is not memorized printed words, nor is it just a picture.

The first two elements, as I state in the first chapter, are suggested by Wright's claim that "characters in literature have no extension beyond the work in which they appear," and they refer as well to Northrop Frye's definition of the literal level of literature: "the literal basis of meaning...can only be its letters, its inner structure of interlocking motifs."[1] Frye's "meaning of its letters" corresponds to the first element, "the words of character as they appear on the printed page." This first element will be called <u>syntactical character</u>. The "inner structure of interlocking motifs," mentioned by Frye as part of his definition of "literal," corresponds to the

second element, the printed words of character ordered
into a pattern. This second element will be called the
spatial character. These two phases of character together
will be called the grammatical character.

The third element, the image, is extraliteral, mean-
ing not that character comes mysteriously from the air, nor
that character resides in the world, but that the image
comes mysteriously from the printed words; it is not, how-
ever like the words it comes from, nor is it the words
themselves. Images haunt our minds as the thing which the
grammatical character gives rise to.[2]

On the syntactic level, one of the most obvious facts
about character is the name, a name that is a nonsense
word. There will not be strong support for calling names
like "Artegall," "Dorothea Brooke," or "Odysseus" nonsense
words, but on the syntactic level they are, because all that
can be said about them, as William Gass has said, is that
they are either noises or proper names.

A discussion of a passage from The Faerie Queene might
help us here.

> Dread Soverayne Goddesse, that doest highest sit
> In seate of judgement in th' Almighties stead,
> And with magnificke might and wondrous wit
> Doest to thy people righteous doome aread,
> That furthest Nations filles with awful dread,
> Pardon the boldnesse of thy basest thrall,
> That dare discourse of so divine a read
> As they great justice, praysed over-all,
> The instrument whereof loe! here they Artegall.[3]

Here "Artegall" is simply a noise, a proper name, if we are
reading on the level of the syntactic character. We are not
concerned with the truth of the word, its reference to the
world. Spenser did not need an Artegall to write "Artegall"
any more than Lewis Carroll needed a vorpal sword in order
to write "vorpal sword." Nor do we, as we read, need a real
Artegall or a real vorpal sword in order to understand these
words. Syntax itself will allow us to create words that
have only literal meaning, which means that the "words can-
not be separated and attached to sign-values: all possible
sign values of a word are absorbed into a complexity of
verbal relationships."[4] In this understanding of the liter-
al level of the poem, Frye is talking about the meaning of
a whole poem, so the notion of literal meaning he uses might
be applied to only some words of a poem, say, to the names
and noun and verb phrases that are syntactic character.
"Soverayne Goddesse," for instance, is the name of a charac-
ter, a name that has possible sign value, but the sign values
have been absorbed into the poem. There is only one word in
the passage from The Faerie Queene that is a nonsense word,
a word that has no possible sign value. That word is "Arte-
gall." On the literal level, then, Artegall is where the
name is.

It is from a realization like this that William Gass
has said that "words are opaque, as opaque as my garden
gloves and trowel, objects which, nevertheless, may vividly

remind me of spring, earth, and roses."[5] Gass, here, is
talking about what can be called literal meaning. But such
a view as his seems to take a purely syntactic analysis
too far to be true of our perception of character.
Although literally a character is only where the name and
the nouns and verbs of it are, we don't want to say that
these words are opaque, because we have yet to get an image
from them. To continue Gass's metaphor, if we say these
words are opaque to us as readers, we have also said that
the trowel is opaque to us when we have gardening to do.
And, of course, we don't want to say that because just as
the trowel is a tool for gardening, so are words tools for
images. The words of character on the literal level are
opaque to Gass because character words are opaque to the
world. But syntactical character is not opaque to us as
readers the way <u>vorpal</u> <u>sword</u> is.

It is the realization that these words are not
opaque to us as readers that creates the need critically
for both the spatial character and the image. The spatial
character, as a pattern of character words, is what defines
syntactical character as a character for us rather than as
simply unassociated words. The image is the mental thing
that the grammatical character gives rise to; the image is,
therefore, on the mental side of the grammatical character.
In the passage from <u>The Faerie Queene</u>, for example, "Arte-
gall" means spatially "the instrument of thy justice."

Syntactically, the word "Artegall" means "Arthur's equal," and because "Artegall" is capitalized, we know that it is a proper name. But these grammatical and etymological meanings are not always what we mean critically when we discuss Artegall. There is a spatial meaning that seems closer to our notions of character than does "Arthur's equal." What we would probably say critically is that "Arthur's equal" is the meaning of a character's name; we would not finally say that the name or its meaning _is_ the character, but syntactically it is.

I know that a while back I said that syntactically, the words of character are nonsense. This meant that character words do not refer to the world; it also meant that syntactical character does not make sense as character until we put it all together, until we create spatial character. A regular reading of syntax was all that was necessary for us to understand that "Artegall" means not only "Arthur's equal," but that it means "instrument of thy justice" as well. With the addition, then, of the notion of spatial character, "Artegall" not only gets character meaning, but the words "instrument of thy justice," words which might have possible sign value, get subsumed into the literal level of the text, and, for the first time, critically, we have grammatical character, our first sense of full character.

Not all verbal patterns that we would call character center themselves on names, but the same process is always involved. Shakespeare's sonnets seem a likely place to find grammatical characters without names:

> My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
> Coral is far more red than her lips' red.
> If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun,
> If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
> I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
> But no such roses see I in her cheeks.
> And in some perfumes is there more delight
> Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
> I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
> That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
> I grant I never saw a goddess go,
> My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
>   And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
>   As any she belied with false compare.[6]

Syntactically, there are two characters here, "Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,/Coral is far more red than her lips' red./If snows be white," etc., which, when they are sorted out syntactically, become the two characters "Mistress" and "I." The grammatical character "mistress" means[7] spatially "eyes are nothing like the sun," "Coral is far more red than her lips' red," "her breasts are dun," "black wires grow on her head," "her cheeks," "And in some perfumes is there more delight/Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks," "her speak," "mistress," "she walks, treads on the ground," "love as rare/As any she belied with false compare." The grammatical character "I" means "my," "I have seen," "see I," "my," "I love to hear," "well I know/That music hath a

more pleasing sound," "I grant I never saw," "my,"

"I think."

It is customary to think that "I" means William

Shakespeare. Perhaps, but it doesn't add very much

critically to think that after each "I" there is a

parenthetical William Shakespeare. Syntactically, "I"

is simply a first person pronoun that governs the choice

of the verb; it also means that the speaker of a sentence

and the doer of it are the same. But, of course, this

sense of "I" seems cold.

Wright speaks well to our sense that "I" is somehow

alive and sacred.

> There are always two levels of speech in a work
> of literature -- that on which the characters
> speak to each other, to themselves, to an implied
> audience, or to God, and that on which the writer
> speaks to us. In the lyric poem more than in any
> other genre these levels tend to become confused.
> We can sense rather easily the presence of the two
> levels in a fairly formal lyric, say a love sonnet.
> On the surface we can read the following personae:
>   1st person: singer of love song
>   2nd person: singer's mistress
>   3rd person: singer's love for mistress.[8]

The first two persons are the "I" and the "mistress" of

Shakespeare's sonnet. The third person is not "in"

the words of the poem; it is associated with the image as

can be seen in Wrights's second level of speech:

```
1st person:   composer of song
2nd person:   we as readers or hearers
3rd person:   human passion, one aspect of the
              human world.9
```

This third person is clearly different from the 2nd

person because human passion is larger than any one per-

son's private notion of it, just as the poet is larger

than any "I" of a poem. Wright says that when a poet

tries to give us his world view, a view requiring for

its full formulation those "particular events, situations,

emotions, and tones," he could never express it "by an

'I' within the poem. The poet's point of view is always

larger than any 'I' for the 'I,' like the other surface

materials of the poem, is only a conventional element."

It is possible, then, to consider the 'I' of a poem

as separate from the writer of the poem. Of course,

Wright's contention that the poet's point of view is

always larger than any 'I' of the poem, falls out of our

view of this paper since it deals with the relationship

between artist and work, and this paper deals with the

relationship between work and audience. But it is possible

to replace Wright's first person with the syntactical

aspects of the poem -- its rhyme, its rhythm, its sounds,

and so on. We could then say that the 'I' of any poem,

or maybe any character of a poem, is only one part of a

poem; the poem is always larger than any character. Or,

to play on Aristotle, you can always have a poem without a

character, but you cannot have a character without a poem.

Our sense that "I" is somehow alive and sacred
comes, then, from the third person, "human passion, one
aspect of the human world," and the sense of human
passion resides in the second person, the readers or
hearers. But this anticipates the third chapter and
so will wait until then.

The "I," of Sonnet 130 can be spoken of as separate
from William Shakespeare and can be said to take its
meaning as a character, rather than as a word, from the
spatial character, so that as a spatial character "I"
both is and means "My," "I have seen," and all those other
phrases that were listed before.

Throughout this discussion of grammatical character,
phrases have been used that imply the presence of the
image. When I said that the "I" of Sonnet 130 gets its
meaning from syntax, the grammatical character "I" was
certainly being pointed at, but so was the image. Perhaps
critically the image can best be seen when it replaces
the grammatical character in criticism. Percy Lubbock,
in a brilliant discussion of why Emma Bovary is in
Madame Bovary, replaces the grammatical character with
its image:

> Here is the clue, it seems, to his treatment
> of the theme. It is pictorial, and its object
> is to make Emma's existence as intelligible and
> visible as may be. We who read the book are to
> share her sense of life....The fact of Emma is
> taken with entire seriousness of course; she

is there to be studied and explored, and no means
of understanding her point of view will be
neglected.[10]

When Lubbock says "the fact of Emma," and not "the fact

of 'Emma'," and when he talks about the visible sense of

the book, he is replacing grammatical character with the

image.

When we say that Red Crosse Knight killed the dragon

Error instead of quoting the passage, we are usually

referring to the image and not to the grammatical character

"Red Crosse Knight." What is the image?

Unfortunately, a critic cannot point to the images

and say, "there they are"; one must simply appeal to one's

experience. I've said before that the image could best be

understood as "an intellectual and emotional complex

presented in an instant of time," and that the image is

not the words themselves; it is a sort of Gestalt.[11]

Before discussing the obvious complication that we

often understand "image" only as though it translates

"picture," we might examine how the grammatical character

is perceived by the reader; for, it is in the perception

of the grammatical character that the image first arises.

In order to facilitate the later discussion of mental

pictures, it may be helpful to look at Sonnet 130 again,

since it would be difficult to get a picture of either of

the two characters in that poem.

It was noticed before that there are two grammatical
characters in Sonnet 130, the "I" and the "mistress," and
all the phrases that cluster around either word. "Syntacti-
cal character" is the phrases as they occur in the order in
which we read them. Spatial character is these phrases
patterned. If we look again at the first six lines of
the sonnet, we can see that there are at least two ways to
explain how the reader patterns the syntactical character.

> My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
> Coral is far more red than her lips' red.
> If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun,
> If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
> I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
> But no such roses see I in her cheeks.

By the time we have read "My Mistress'" we have two syntac-
tical characters. Then, at the end of the second line,
we read "her lips' red," and we link together "Mistress'"
and "her lips," thereby creating the beginning of a gram-
matical character centered around "Mistress'." There are
at least two ways of talking about this link; "her" refers
syntactically to "Mistress'," and we can say that there is
a link by image; we recognize, probably because of the
grammatical link, that "Mistress'" and "her" are about the
same thing. This "thing" is the image. We began creating
the image at the same time that we read the word "Mis-
tress'." There might be a confusion here. I am not
talking about understanding the words, for, as Ludwig
Wittgenstein has remarked, "it is no more essential to

the understanding of a proposition that one should imagine

anything in connection with it, than that one should make

a sketch from it."[12] We understand the syntactical characters

"Mistress'" and "I," and we understand these words as they

take on literal meanings from spatial character; we don't

need the image, in the sense of a picture, an analogy or

a "something" in order to understand.

The image exists, however, and is used in criticism.

In this sense Wittgenstein is again useful.

> Instead of "imaginability" one can also say
> here: representability by a particular
> method of representation. And such a repre-
> sentation _may_ indeed safely point a way to
> further use of a sentence. On the other
> hand a picture may obtrude itself upon us
> and be of no use at all.[13]

The clause here that is particularly useful is "And such

a representation may indeed safely point a way to further

use of a sentence." We use our images in criticism, and

criticism is a further use of a passage. Perhaps if we

look at a passage from _Madame Bovary_ and then look again at

Lubbock's discussion of Emma, we can see that the image is

not necessarily a picture, but that the image _is_ used

critically.

> Once she was standing there on a day of thaw,
> when the bark of the trees in the farmyard was
> oozing sap and the snow was melting on the roofs.
> She went inside for her parasol, and opened it.
> The parasol was of rosy iridescent silk, and the
> sun pouring through it painted the white skin of
> her face with flickering patches of light.
> Beneath it she smiled at the springlike warmth;
> and drops of water could be heard falling one by
> one on the taut moire.[14]

If this passage gives rise to a picture in our minds,
presumably we see a woman, because of "she," with a white-
skinned face and a smile, with no body, holding, without
hands, a rosy-red parasol. William Gass, when he is dis-
cussing Mr. Cashmore in The Awkward Age, suggests that
as "a set of sensations Mr. Cashmore is simply impossible;
as an idea he is admirably pungent and precise."[15] The
same thing can be said of Emma Bovary; as a grammatical
character she is "mostly empty canvas," but as an image
she is a wonderful idea.

When Lubbock said "the fact of Emma," he wasn't
talking about the grammatical character nor was he really
talking about a picture in our minds. Why, then, does it
make so much sense when he says "it is pictorial, and its
object is to make Emma's existence as intelligible and
visible as may be"? What is he talking about? I think
he's talking about the idea, the thing we "see" with
respect to character, not exactly the "seeing" in which we
understand what something means, the sense with which we
"see what it means," but in the visual sense, that Frye
calls "doodle."

> The two elements of subconscious association which
> form the basis for lyrical melos and opsis,
> respectively, have never been given names. We may
> name them if the terms are thought dignified
> enough, babble and doodle.[16]

"Doodle" is opsis, the visual aspect of art; it is imagism,
of which Frye says:

There are thousands of lyrics so intently focused
on visual imagery that they are, as we may say,
set to pictures. In the emblem an actual picture
appears, and the poet-painter Blake...engraved
lyrics in the emblem tradition...The movement
called imagism made a great deal of the pictorial
element in the lyric.[17]

Just on the level of style alone, it is easy to see
the critical difference between using the grammatical
person and using the image. As a group of words, Emma
Bovary is a point of view; as an image it is possible for
her to have a point of view. And it is one step from
Emma's having a point of view to our being able to say that
Emma becomes a kind of person. At the beginning of the
book, when she was just the words "standing there on a day
of thaw" and "she smiled at the springlike warmth," we
could not say that Emma was anything except several words,
a point of view.

Gass has a warning about images, a warning that
should be noted: "We tend to pay attention to our picture,
and lose sight of the meaning. The novelist's words are
not notes which he is begging the reader to play, as if
his novel needed something more to be done to it in order
to leap into existence."[16] I think the novel does have
more done to it than to be simply understood, as Gass is
suggesting, but he is right that readers must avoid
impressionistic criticism. We must be careful that we
don't image a purple cow from Faulkner's "The Old People;"
the words won't support such an image.

Now this criticism has come full circle. The grammatical character must again be referred to, even if we have arrived at an image. The images are a kind of representation that are used to talk about grammatical character. Returning to the grammatical character, realizing that grammatical character is words, prevents such critical comments as Forster's that characters are people in books and Sidney's that characters are pictures of virtues and vices.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 77.

[2]It might be argued that the image is really the meaning of the words, but the meaning and the image are two different things. Words carry their own meaning. The image is a mental pantomime or a visual sense of a scene or a character that follows from understanding words. The image is not verbal; meaning is.

[3]Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, Vol. 11 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1910; rpt. 1969), p. 151.

[4]Frye, p. 78.

[5]Gass, pp. 48-49

[6]William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 130," in Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed., G. B. Hardison (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1968), p. 1619.

[7]This verb "means" may seem odd; "is" would scan better, and grammatically "is" would seem appropriate because at that level "is" is the same as "means." I chose "means" to emphasize that I am talking about the grammatical level here. "Is" often works with the image as well as with the grammatical person.

[8]Wright, p. 19.

[9]Wright, pp. 19-20.

[10]Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), p. 84.

[11]"Gestalt" simply means that "perception includes more than is found in separate sensations." (S. Stansford Sargent, Basic Teachings of the Great Psychologists (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. 133). For character this simply means that the perception of character is more than the sum of the words of character; the image adds at least emotions and concepts to the grammatical character.

[12]Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans., G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd Ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 120e.

[13] Wittgenstein, p. 120e.

[14] Gustav Flaubert, <u>Madame Bovary</u>, trans. Francis Steegmuller (New York: The Modern Library, 1957), p. 20.

[15] Gass, p. 46.

[16] Frye, p. 275.

[17] Ibid., p. 274.

[18] Gass, p. 47.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERS IN BOOKS AND PEOPLE IN LIFE

Most often we think of characters in books as though they were people in life. At the beginning of the first chapter, I suggested that this is easy to do. But now that it might be possible to isolate three phases of character, it might also be difficult to think of characters in books as though they were people. If "characters in books" means solely grammatical character, means, in other words, a group of words on a page, there can be no resemblance between characters in books and people in life. But, we keep thinking, there _is_ some kind of resemblance. Perhaps the relationship is that characters in books, if they are said to resemble anything, resemble what the reader is willing to say about life.

This last, "what people are willing to say about life," is implicit in most discussions of character. Aristotle, when he discusses the universal, is discussing what readers would be willing to say about life; he is not discussing life.

> For poetry tells us rather the universals,
> history the particulars. 'Universal' means
> what kind of thing a certain kind of person
> will say or do in accordance with probability
> or necessity, which is what poetic composition
> aims at, tacking on names afterward; while
> 'particular' is what Alcibiades did or had done
> to him.[1]

The phrase "a certain kind of person" implies speech; it implies speech because it implied selection. I think Aristotle is pointing at a situation like this: there is a student named "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark" who is mourning the death of his father; he is presented with a ghost that says his father was murdered by his uncle; the student could, among other things, ignore the ghost, take his uncle to the courts, become very confused, take revenge, laugh as at a joke. This last might not seem to many of us a possible reaction, because most of us would not want to say that a student would think the murder of his father a laughing matter. If Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, chose revenge, he would become the Hamlet of Shakespeare's play. In order to see these possibilities, and in order to see that any particular action is one of several possible actions, the reader has to say something about life.

Similarly, it was noted in the second chapter that our sense that "I" is somehow alive and sacred comes from "human passion, one aspect of the human world." This means not that "I" means a real passion, but that we transfer our personal use of "I," the use that I use "I" when I refer to myself, and myself is somehow more alive and more sacred than themselves. But it is the transference of our individual uses of the word "I" and not the "I" of any poem, that makes the first person of a poem so special and alive.

It seems that there are four possible comparisons between grammatical characters and what a reader would say about people in life: (1) Hamlet is the character who is like my brother; (2) Hamlet is the character who is an example of some set of generalizations about life; (3) Hamlet is a type of person -- a melancholic, a Dane, a man; (4) Hamlet is both an individual and some sort of universal, which is close to, but not quite the same as, Hamlet is a concept embodied. This last category is the "concrete universal," which is the old theory that a thing is simultaneously individual and general.[2]

The first possibility, that Hamlet is like my brother, is often found in biographical criticism, student literary papers, and memoirs. It's quite relaxing criticism and is often felt to be very enlightening about both Hamlet and the brother. But, of course, this is not criticism; it is impressionism.

The second possibility, that a character is an example of some set of generalizations about people in life, ethical, or political generalizations, has its two kinds of expressions. One kind is expressed in novels like Middlemarch and the other kind is expressed in criticism like that of W.K. Wimsatt in The Verbal Icon. There is, in George Eliot's Middlemarch, a grammatical character that is an example of a grammatical generalization.

> We are all of us born in moral stupidity,
> taking the world as an udder to feed our
> supreme selves; Dorothea had early begun to
> emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had
> been easier to her to imagine how she would
> devote herself to Mr. Causabon and be wise
> and strong in his strength and wisdom, than
> to conceive with that distinctness which is
> no longer reflection but feeling -- an idea
> wrought back to the directness of sense,
> like the solidity of objects -- that he had
> an equivalent centre of self, whence the
> lights and shadows must always fall with a
> certain difference.[3]

There are three generalizations in this passage from Middlemarch: (1) "We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves;" (2) "to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling -- an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects;" (3) "an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference." Enmeshed in these generalizations, generalizations that take up 63 of the 105 words in the paragraph, are "Dorothea" and "Mr. Causabon." "Dorothea" is early linked with the first generalization; she had "early begun to emerge from that stupidity," "that stupidity" referring to "moral stupidity" from the first part of the sentence. Notice, too, that this paragraph is one sentence.

W. K. Wimsatt would call this kind of grammatical character a "concrete illustration."

> The fact is that all concrete illustration has
> about it something of the irrelevant. An
> apple falling from a tree illustrates gravity,
> but apple and tree are irrelevant to the pure
> theory of gravity. It may be that what
> happens in a poem is that the apple and the
> tree are somehow more than usually relevant.[4]

"Dorothea," as a grammatical person, because Mr. Causabon

is subordinate to her, is the group of words from

"Dorothea" to "feeling" and from "that" to "difference."

Most of these words are "moral" words, words that echo

back spatially and antithetically to "We are all of us born

in moral stupidity," etc. "Dorothea," "Mr. Causabon,"

"her," "she," "his," and "he," then, are syntactically

linked with the set of moral words, making a grammatical

character who is "born in moral stupidity" and is working

her way to moral feeling, and who is, because of the

tight linking, a relevant concrete illustration.

Hamlet as a type of human being, the third kind of

relationship, is linked critically with the Theophrastan

Character sketch, of which Benjamin Boyce has said: "Theo-

retically speaking, the Character exists in order to typify

a group; the portrait, to separate a man from the group."[5]

This statement is an example of one kind of type criticism,

where the critic, looking at several works in a genre, has

decided what kind of relationship that genre has to real

groups of people; in fact, the definition of the "Overburian

Character" in Hollander and Kermode's The Literature of

England involves this kind of criticism:

> An 'Overburian character' existed in order to
> represent the deft, tight, single, long
> paragraph of characterization of a type of
> actual person, rather than a virtue or vice
> embodied.[6]

It would seem that there is a difference between the genre

and its relationship to life. To demonstrate this I would

like to look at one of the Overburian characters.

An Amorist

> Is a man blasted or planet-strooken, and is the
> dog that leads blind Cupid; when he is the best
> his fashion exceeds the worth of his weight. He
> is never without verses and musk confects, and
> sighs to the hazard of his buttons. His eyes
> are all white, either to wear the livery of his
> mistress' complexion or to keep Cupid from
> hitting the black. He fights with passion and
> loseth much of his blood by his weapons; dreams,
> thence his paleness. His arms are carelessly
> used, as if their best use was nothing but
> embracements. He is untrussed, unbuttoned, and
> ungartered, not out of carelessness, but care;
> his farthest end being but going to bed. Some-
> times he wraps his petition in neatness, but he
> goeth not alone; for then he makes some other
> quality moralize his affection, and his trimness
> is the grace of that grace. Her favour lifts
> him up as the sun moisture; when he disfavours,
> unable to hold that happiness, it falls down in
> tears. His fingers are his orators, and he
> expresseth much of himself upon some instrument.
> He answers not, or not to the purpose, and no
> marvel, for he is not at home. He scotcheth time
> with dancing with his mistress, taking up of her
> glove, and wearing her feather, he is confined to
> her colour, and dares not pass out of the circuit
> of her memory. His imagination is a fool, and it
> goeth in a pied coat of red and white. Shortly
> he is translated out of a man into folly; his
> imagination is the glass of lust, and himself
> the traitor to his own discretion.[7]

It does seem necessary, when discussing "An Amorist,"

to talk about people in life the same way Forster found it

necessary to talk about people in life, what he calls
"flat" and "round" characters. We find that there is in
his criticism a recognition that there is a grammatical
character of a certain kind that can be called "flat"
and that this "flat" kind of character is different from
a character that can be called "round." Although
Forster's remarks about flat and round characters apply
more directly to the discussion of the concrete universal
(a discussion I keep dangling like a critical carrot),
some remarks will be useful here.

Forster complains of Mrs. Micawber that Mrs. Micawber
never says anything except that she will never desert
Mr. Micawber. He complains about this instead of asserting
it as a fact about a grammatical character, because he
doesn't think that life presents us with such monomaniacs.

The Amorist is grammatically monomaniacal. All of
the sentences that contain "he" or "his" also contain some
word about seduction, the same kind of linking talked about
earlier with respect to Dorothea. There are, besides these
recurrent links, several phrases that are either universals
or are, by grammatical synecdoche, further limitations of
the scope of the character. Of the first, the generaliza-
tions, there is "an amorist," "a man," and a "he" that
refers either to "an amorist" or to "a man," both universals.

The second kind of phrase, a phrase that indicates a
kind of synecdoche on the grammatical level occurs three

times: (1) "His arms were carelessly used, as if their best use was nothing but embracements;" (2) "He is untrussed, unbuttoned, and ungartered, not out of carelessness, but care;" (3) He answers not, or not to the purpose, and no marvel, for he is not at home." With the negative phrases, two things are accomplished, some other possibilities are posited, and he is denied them. He is concretized into amorous language.

It could be said that "An Amorist" is linked grammatically with "mistress" and "passion" because wolves in real life, as Boyce says, perfectly conform to one another. If we agree that some men are essentially wolfish that would not be information about the grammatical person. It might be useful now to look at a character type that is not so clearly what we would say is characteristic of some people, one of Nathalie Sarraute's Tropisms.

> He was smooth and flat, two level surfaces --
> his cheeks which he presented first to one
> then to the other, and upon which, with their
> pursed lips, they pressed a kiss.
> They took him and they crunched him, turned
> him over and over, stamped on him, rolled,
> wallowed on him. They made him go round and
> round, there, and there, and there, they
> showed him disquieting painted scenery with
> blind doors and windows, towards which he
> walked credulously, and against which he
> bumped and hurt himself.
> They had always known how to possess him entirely,
> without a moment's respite, how to devour him to
> the last crumb. They surveyed him, cut him up
> into dreadful building blocks, into squares,
> traversed him in every direction; sometimes they
> let him run, turned him loose, but they brought
> him back as soon as he went too far, they took
> possession of him again. He had developed a

> taste for this devouring in childhood --
> he tendered himself, relished their bitter-
> sweet odor, offered himself.
>   The world in which they had enclosed him, in
> which they surrounded him on every side, was
> without issue. Everywhere their frightful
> clarity, their blinding light that levelled
> everything, did away with all shadows and
> asperities.
>   They were aware of his liking their attacks, his
> weakness, so they had no scruples.
>   They had emptied him entirely and restuffed
> him and they showed him everywhere other dolls,
> other puppets. He could not escape them. He
> could only turn politely towards them the two
> smooth surfaces of his cheeks, one after the other,
> for them to kiss.[8]

Syntactically, one of the ways we understand that this

character is a type is that the "he" refers only to "he,"

there is no proper name. The second clue is that "He was

smooth and flat, two level surfaces." Early on in the

sketch, "he" becomes "him," the object, while "they"

becomes the subject. "They" acts on "him." The verb

that is the syntactical relationship between "they" and

"him" is, at first "took," then "crunched," then "turned

over." As we read syntactically building spatial character,

we realize the "they" hurt the "him," so that when "him"

becomes "he," it is not surprising that "he bumped and

hurt himself," or that later "He could not escape them."

Even as a subject, he cannot act at all or cannot act

without being hurt. The relationship established, then,

between"they" and "him" is that "they" controls and hurts

"him."

There is a new aspect of "he" added in the third
paragraph; "He had developed a taste for this devouring
in childhood -- he tendered himself, relished their
bitter-sweet odor, offered himself." The new part is
"had developed a taste for this devouring," but this new
part is still within the framework of the relationship
with "they." "This devouring" is their devouring; of course,
it is "their bitter-sweet odor."

Both sketches, "An Amorist" and the tropism, end
with lines that imply that "he" does not refer to "man."
The first ends with "Shortly he is translated out of man
into folly; his imagination is the glass of lust, and himself
the traitor to his own discretion." The second ends with
"and they showed him everywhere other dolls, other puppets."

This second sketch, then, is a type for the same
kinds of grammatical reasons "An Amorist" is a type. Can
it be said that in either case "he" is a "type of actual
person"? Of course the question "Is this a type of person?"
is not a question about the grammatical characters, because
words are not people. This is a question about the image
and about what a reader is willing to say about life. One
question that could be asked about the second sketch in
order to determine its human type is: what would we title
it? Would it be titled, among other possible titles, "A
Twentieth-Century Man," "A Paranoid Man," "A Loser,"
"Hamlet"?

The title of the sketch would depend upon what we are

willing to say about people, and it would depend upon

how we "saw" the character. I, for instance, would be

willing to say that most people have felt manipulated,

but that few people have enjoyed it. It seems to me,

then, that an eerie, nameless individual is being

described here. But if one could believe as George Lukács

has that "modern ideology (denies) the individual,"[9] and that

part of this denial is a feeling of persecution, one could

title this sketch "A Twentieth-Century Man."

It seems, then, that there is a genre, the grammatical

type, that depends on a reader's view of people and on

his view of the character, rather than upon the grammatical

character, for its typicality. If I can take the argument

one step further, it would seem that if one would say that

"he" in Saurraute's sketch is typical of a kind of

person, the sketch itself would be what one would say

about a kind of person. One could say, then, "The sketch

speaks for me." It is then that the grammatical person

would be what one would have said about a kind of person,

but it cannot itself be a kind of person.

The concrete universal, the fourth way of talking

about the relationship between characters in books and

people in life, is said to be a grammatical character that

is at once individual and general. So far it has been

suggested that there is a grammatical character that is on

the grammatical level, both individual and an example of

some sort of generalization; Dorothea Brooks in <u>Middlemarch</u>

was used as an example of this type of character.

And it was seen that there is the grammatical type

that might be considered universal if one were to agree

that what is written is the essence of some people.

The concrete universal seems to be a category that puts

together the specific of "Dorothea" with the notion that

"Dorothea," and her surrounding noun and verb clusters is

what one would say is the essence of some people.

This mingling seems clear in W. K. Wimsatt's definition

of the concrete universal.

> A literary work of art is a complex of detail
> (an artifact, if we may be allowed that metaphor
> for what is only a verbal object), a composition
> so complicated of human values that its interpre-
> tation is dictated by the understanding of it,
> and so complicated as to seem in the highest
> degree individual -- a concrete universal.[10]

His definition places "human values" inside a work of art,

and a work is so full of these human values that the work's

interpretation is dictated by the understanding of "it" and

an understanding of it seems to be an understanding of human

values. This seems to be quite like what I said earlier

about grammatical types, that, as far as a reader agrees

that what is written is the dominant trait of some people,

the grammatical type can be said to be what one would say

is a type of actual person.

The characteristic that seems to distinguish the grammatical type from the concrete character for Wimsatt is the word "complicated." It was seen earlier that "An Amorist" is not complicated; grammatical type seems to center around one or two words.

> Falstaff or such a character of self-conscious
> 'infinite variety' as Cleopatra are concrete
> universals because they have no class names,
> only their own proper ones, yet are structures
> of such precise variety and centrality that
> each demands a special interpretation in the
> realm of human values.[11]

It seems, then, that for Wimsatt, the concrete universal is the same thing as Forster's "round character."

The notion that a grammatical character is both individual and universal could simply be another kind of type criticism where we could say, for instance, that Hamlet is a kind of person, perhaps a manic-depressive, where clearly the idea of his type is in our minds not in the play. It also seems possible, however, to say that some characters, even some very simple characters, are simultaneously individual and universal. "Julia," in Hericks's "Upon Julia's Clothes," is one character that might be a concrete universal in this sense.

> Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
> Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
> That liquefaction of her clothes.
> Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
> That brave vibration each way free,
> Oh, how that glittering taketh me![12]

As a grammatical person, "Julia" is both "Julia" and "her

clothes." Julia and her clothes are individual in this poem because they do not extend beyond the limits of the poem "Upon Julia's Clothes." In other words, they are concrete because they are grammatical character; they are only "themselves." But in this sense, too, the grammatical character type is also concrete and therefore individual.

There is a way, though, that we can talk about a concrete universal. An individual proper name is one way of making a character both individual and universal. This simultaneity lies in our understanding of the name:

> The name of a human being designates him or her as both an individual and as a person; for this reason the name has male or female gender. But the first and second personal pronouns, which we use when addressing each other as persons have no gender. The third person pronoun has gender and is therefore, strictly speaking, impersonal. It is grammatically convenient, when speaking to say He or She, but if, when we do, we think of them as He or She, not as John and Sheila, then we are thinking of them, not as persons, but as individuals.[13]

It can be said that "Julia," the grammatical character, is, in the image, the woman who wore clothes in the poem "Upon Julia's Clothes;" Julia is both "Julia" the person who, and "her," the woman who. There is no general statement in the poem of which "Julia" is the example; "Julia" is a concrete who is, by the making of the mental recreation and the understanding of the language, a universal.

The concrete universal is, as I suggested earlier,
like, but not quite the same as, a virtue of a vice
embodied. In a number of cases the difference is simply
in a name. The Faerie Queene is a place in which to find
several examples of virtues and vices embodied.

> And greedy Avarice by him did ride
> Upon a camel loaden all with gold;
> Two iron coffers hung on either side,
> With precious metal full as they might hold;
> And in his lap an heap of gold he told;
> For of his wicked pelf his god he made,
> And unto hell himself for money sold.
> Accure'd usury was all his trade,
> And right and wrong alike in equal balance weighed.[14]

The name is "Avarice." "His lap" is the body; by rhetorical
synecdoche "And right and wrong alike in equal balance
weighed" is the syntactical mind. With the aid of the
image, "him did ride" gives Avarice more body, as do
"he told" and "his trade." All these phrases cluster
around the name Avarice, a vice. This kind of monomaniac
is a grammatical type. Because of the name "Avarice,"
he is called a vice embodied. If his name had been
"Alfred," for instance, he would be called a grammatical
type, a "flat character." But, he is also a concrete
universal in the sense that he is a single uncopied grammati-
cal type, and in the sense that he, the image, acts as we
would say an avaricious person would.

It seems, then, that there are two basic relationships
between characters and people in life. One is whether or
not the grammatical character agrees with what we would

say about people and the other is whether or not the

image, the image in the sense of a character's point of

view or actions or thoughts, agrees with what we would

say about people. Of the first, we can say that a

grammatical character type, because it is a character

based upon only one or two concepts, is a grammatical

character that is typical of some people if we agree with

what is written. Percy Lubbock's discussion of Emma

Bovary is an example of criticism based upon the image,

because the criticism discusses Emma's point of view and

replaces the grammatical person with the image as the

fact of the character, but it is possible, as in the

discussion of "On Julia's Clothes," to combine the two

basic relationships in the "concrete universal," to say

that although the grammatical character is unique, it is

also typical of some people.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1] Gerald Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 301.

[2] It is also possible to compare two grammatical characters and to compare two images. If we do this, we are doing either formalist criticism or new criticism.

[3] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, pp. 156-157.

[4] W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (University of Kentucky Press, 1954), p. 76.

[5] Benjamin Boyce, *The Polemic Character 1640-1661* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), p. 46.

[6] John Hollander and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literature of Renaissance England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 1022.

[7] Sir Thomas Overbury, "An Amorist," in *The Literature of Renaissance England*, eds., John Hollander and Frank Kermode (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 1023.

[8] Nathalie Sarraute, sketch number XIX, *Tropisms*, trans., Maria Jolas (New York: George Braziller, 1963), pp. 46-47.

[9] George Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p. 43.

[10] Wimsatt, p. 77.

[11] Wimsatt does reject simply numerical arguments: "Yet it cannot be that the difference between the round and flat character is simply numerical; the difference cannot be merely that the presiding principle is illustrated by more examples in the round character. Something further must be supposed -- a special interrelation in the traits of the round character" (p. 78). But, as the quote in the text shows, he still ends up with a numerical argument.

[12] Robert Herrick, "Upon Julia's Clothes," in Hollander and Kermode, p. 617.

[13] W. H. Auden, *Secondary Worlds* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 123.

[14]Edmund Spenser, <u>The Faerie Queene</u>, Bks. 1 & 2, ed., Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 121.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This paper was an attempt to describe what happens
when we as readers compare literary characters with people.
Literary character is a process that includes three separate
elements: (1) syntactical character, the words that delimit
character in the order in which they occur on the printed
page; (2) spatial character, syntactical character patterned.
These two elements together are called "grammatical charac-
ters"; (3) the image, a mental recreation of the syntactical
and spatial characters. These elements can be isolated,
but they are so intimately connected while we read that we
are rarely conscious of their individual roles, and to
further complicate the critical matter, we tend in our
discussions of character to rely on the old relationship
between characters and people.

The isolation of these three elements, an isolation
that seems important to discussions of character, becomes
a confusing process when critics compare literary characters
to people. E. M. Forster and Sir Philip Sidney, for
instance, by calling characters "people in books"[1] and
"images of virtues and vices,"[2] make it difficult to dis-
tinguish between grammatical character and the image,
making it difficult as well to discuss HCE from Finnegans

Wake, Mrs. Malaprop, or an omniscient narrator.

William Gass's reaction to these mimetic views is that character is "(1) a noise, (2) a proper name, (3) a complex system of ideas, (4) a controlling conception, (5) an instrument of verbal organization, (6) a pretended mode of referring, (7) a source of verbal energy."[3] Gass's objective view, which confines us to the grammatical character, makes discussions of characters like Emma Bovary or Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay dead and lifeless.[4]

The isolation of the three elements of character does not eliminate the relationship between characters in books and people; it just clarifies it. It is now possible to recognize that there are two distinct comparisons between character and people. We can compare the words we might say about people to the words with which a book presents character; they may be grammatically alike. And we can compare the image element of character with what we might imagine of people. The image, of course, is more directly related to what we make of people than is the grammatical character. This is easily seen in criticism -- Gass's criticism, which leaves out the image, is more dead and lifeless than Sidney's, which leaves in the image. But, as we have seen, it is confusing to make the book alive by saying in effect that what we imagine is the same sort of thing as what we say -- that characters are "people in books." Grammatical character is like what we would say

about people in life; the image is like what we would
imagine about people.

Finally from the separation of character into three
elements and from the recognition that the grammatical
character and the image approach in different ways a
reader's perceptions of people, comes a clearer understand-
ing of the four different ways of comparing characters in
books with what a reader is willing to say or to imagine
that people are like.

We can now say that characters compare with people
in these four ways: (1) the grammatical character or the
image is like someone a reader knows. This is not precisely
criticism, but impressionism; (2) a grammatical character
is an example of some grammatical generalization about
life; (3) a character is a type of person, which means that
a grammatical character, usually a "flat character," is
like what a reader would say is the dominant characteristic
of some people. The image can also be used here to say
things like "this character's attitude toward food is like
some people's attitude toward food"; (4) a character is a
concrete universal, which means that a character is
simultaneously individual and typical of some people.
This is the most complex of comparisons. Grammatical
character is always individual; it is a unique set of
words. If this set is "complicated" of several basic
concepts, it can be considered to be like what a reader

would say is typical of some people. And a grammatical
character can be considered a concrete universal if its
name is seen as simultaneously individual and general,
since a name is both one's personal name and is indicative
of sex and sometimes of class. The image can be used
here too, to say, for example, that a character's change
in attitude is like a change in attitude we have named
from life.

This criticism, then, a criticism based on the
separation of our experiences of character into three
separate elements, allows us to account for the traditional
comparisons between characters and people, at the same
time allowing us to discuss both the words and the images
without confusing the two in a labyrinth of metaphors.

FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1]Forster, p. 47.

[2]Sidney, C3.

[3]Gass, p. 36.

[4]He does suggest that there is a kind of spurious image: "from any given body of fictional text, nothing necessarily follows, and anything may (p. 36). But it goes quickly, because images become, in his argument, simply free associative.

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