

Austen (3)

HETEROGLOSSIA

The novel orchestrates all its themes...by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions.... This movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization—this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel.

M.M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262–63.

ARGUMENTS ABOUT FICTION

- 2.1 To be convincing in literary studies, interpretations and explanations of cultural texts must be in terms of the components the texts are made out of.
- 2.2 In literary studies, discussions of fictions are obliged to recognize their fictionality.
 - 2.2.1 The mode of referentiality of fiction, as well as the truth of fiction, is a matter for investigation.
 - 2.2.2 As a convention for marking fictionality, story events are referred to in the present tense, not the past.

SOME MEANINGS OF “CHARACTER”

- 1. A distinctive mark impressed, engraved, or otherwise made on a surface (1350–)
- 3a. A member of a set of symbols used in writing or printing to represent linguistic elements (1490–)
- 4b. A particular person’s style of handwriting (1569–)
- 8a. The aggregate of the distinctive features of something (1577–)
- 9a. The sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a people, viewed as a homogeneous whole (1600–)
- 11. Recognized official rank or position (1629–)
- 12a. A description, delineation, or detailed report of a person’s qualities (1645–)
- 12b(a). A testimonial, especially one given by a previous employer (1693–)
- 13. Reputation, general estimation of qualities (1649–)
- 14. A person portrayed in a work of fiction, a drama, a film, a comic strip, etc. (1664–)

OED, 3rd ed., s.v. “[character](#), *n.*”

The novel is not just one kind of fictional narrative among others; it is the kind in which and through which fictionality became manifest, explicit, widely understood, and accepted.

What distinguished the new writers [eighteenth-century English novelists] from li-belers was the insistence that the human referent of the text was a generalization about and not an extratextual, embodied instance of a “species.”

Catherine Gallagher, “[The Rise of Fictionality](#),” in *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), 1:337, 1:342.

FICTIONAL CHARACTER: PRINCIPLES

A character is the effect that occurs when a figure is presented with distinctive, mostly human characteristics. (Bal, *Narratology*, 112)

- 4.1 The status of characters as types, symbols, individuals, group representatives, minds, or textual effects, is a matter for investigation.
- 4.2 Our cognitive capacity to mentally represent the beliefs, intentions, and feelings of others (called *theory of mind* or *metarepresentation* by cognitive scientists) is the stuff of character.
- 4.3 To understand how character works in a fiction, one must analyze how the character is produced by specific aspects of the materials of the fiction (medium, genre, discourse, *sjuzet*, *fabula*).
- 4.4 In the shaping of a narrative fiction, not all characters are equal. The *character-system*, or distribution of narrative attention, makes some characters *major* and some *minor*. The character-system is also part of fiction’s materials.

FLAT AND ROUND

We may divide characters into flat and round...[Flat characters] 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 test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is flat pretending to be round.

E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (1927; London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 46–47, 54.