The Anthem Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory

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Peter Auger

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Foreword

In the introduction to his influential study *Keywords* (1976), Raymond Williams recalled how, returning to Cambridge University in 1945 after several years in the army, he felt that he no longer had much in common with the students he had left behind. 'The fact is', he complained, 'they just don't speak the same language'.

It is a common phrase. It is often used between successive generations, and even between parents and children. I had used it myself, just six years earlier, when I had come to Cambridge from a working-class family in Wales. In many of the fields in which language is used it is of course not true. Within our common language, in a particular country, we can be conscious of social differences, or of differences of age, but in the main we use the same words for most everyday things and activities, though with obvious variations of rhythm and accent and tone… When we come to say 'we just don't speak the same language' we mean something more general: that we have different immediate values or different kinds of valuation, or that we are aware, often intangibly, of different formations and distributions of energy and interest.

Keeping this in mind, *Keywords* reveals that often it is the words we pass over without too much thought – 'culture', 'tradition', 'art' and so on – whose meanings have been contested most fiercely. Modified by some speakers, broken apart and put back together by others, such words baffle simple dictionary definitions. Across the centuries they have developed into lively sites of agreement and quarrel, solidarity and conflict. Put another way, Williams's study shows how a shared language is also the medium in which all sorts of historical or social differences can be asserted and tested; the flexibility of words that at first glance might seem flatly neutral – 'nature', 'popular', 'common' – reminds us that linguistically, as in so many other ways, there are many private worlds within our shared human world.

One common experience of readers coming to literary criticism for the first time is that critics, too, 'just don't speak the same language' as everyone else. No doubt part of this can be attributed to the private inflections which some critics give to everyday words (witness the philosophical contortions of 'absence' and 'presence' as they appear in the writings of Jacques Derrida, or the contradictory set of ideas that have clustered around a word like 'history'), so that reading a new critic can also mean learning to tune into the unique qualities of his or her voice – its modulations of thought, its nuances of vocabulary – in the same way that one might turn the dial on an old-fashioned radio to remove the hiss and crackle of other stations. But to a new student the most confusing, intimidating and sometimes downright irritating aspect of literary criticism tends to be the amount of specialised vocabulary used. Why do so many critics seem unable to say what they mean, the standard complaint runs, without disguising it in fancy or obfuscating terminology? Of course, critics are not alone in being tempted to dress up ordinary ideas in extraordinary language: witness the fondness in some parts of the world for referring to cups as 'beverage containers' or oranges sold as 'nutritious citrus snacks'. But literary criticism is especially vulnerable to such accusations, not least because unlike critics of the other arts (ballet or painting, for example), the critic of literature must work in the same medium as his or her subject, and there is often a noticeable gap between the clear-eyed precision of a literary work and the critic's far murkier efforts to explain it.

Take this example, from Homi Bhabha's study *The Location of Culture* (1994):

> If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable
> for the uses of discipline, soon the repetition
> of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories,
> superstition, spurious authorities and classification
> can be seen as the desperate effort to 'normalise'
> normally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting
> that violates the rational enlightened claims of its
> enunciatory ability.

That sentence won second prize in the annual Bad Writing Contest promoted by the journal *Philosophy and Literature*. (Just imagine how bad the first prize-winner was.) Of course, Bhabha might claim that such rhetoric is necessary if his argument – roughly, that 'normal' ways of thinking about the world are an illusion that needs to be disrupted – is to

be true to itself; in refusing to allow readers to take its words for granted, this is a piece of criticism that does what it says. Even so, there are times in reading some criticism when students might be forgiven for wondering whether the rhetoric is designed simply to put them off or keep them out. (It is worth noting that the verb 'to gloss', the root of 'glossary', can mean to cover up as well as to explain, as one might add a coat of gloss paint to make a surface shiny and hard enough to prevent it from being penetrated.) In these circumstances, critical terms can start to look less like keywords than passwords: little verbal passports to that strange parallel world where reading is a professional activity rather than a private pleasure.

Indeed, it is the professionalisation of literary criticism that has often been blamed for this movement of critical language away from ordinary speech. Before the rise of 'English' as a University discipline in the twentieth century, the story goes, critics and readers were far closer in approach, both in terms of the ideas they had and the words they used; it is only since the subject has needed to justify itself as the intellectual equal of subjects such as law or the sciences, that critics have felt the need to invent a more specialised vocabulary. Like most forms of nostalgia, this says rather more about present anxieties than it does about the past. The idea that literary criticism only became wordily opaque with the rise of University English certainly doesn't square with the evidence of Renaissance criticism, much of which is almost impenetrable to anyone without a handbook of classical rhetoric or a Latin dictionary to hand. As C. S. Lewis once remarked, this was 'a world of "prettie *epanorthosis*", *paronomasia*, *isocolon*, and *similiter cadentia*', and such terms tripped off a Renaissance critic's tongue just as easily as *metafiction* or *carnivalesque* would later rise to the lips of their twentieth-century heirs. Some critical terms, such as *metaphor*, are common to both periods, and to use them is to recognise that the history of literary criticism, like literature itself, involves continuity as well as change.

Even if the range of critical vocabulary has increased over the years, this is not necessarily to be regretted. There is some truth in the argument that critics are like other professionals – plumbers, for example – in needing a specialised vocabulary in order to talk to each other without spending all their time wondering 'now what on earth did s/he mean by *that*?' Plumbers can do their job much more efficiently if one says to another 'the ball valve is broken: turn off the stopcock', rather than 'the round thingie in that tank of water above the toilet isn't working: turn that little metal wheel under the sink round until the water stops gushing out' – by which time the odds on your house flooding will have risen sharply. Similarly,

critics can do their job much more efficiently if one says to another 'this sonnet is complicated by feminine line-endings', rather than 'this 14-line poem is given an unexpected twist by employing 11-syllable lines each of which ends with an unstressed syllable.' A crude analogy, perhaps, given how unlike plumbers critics are in most other respects (they are certainly less well-paid), but the general principle still holds: critical terms are an important part of a professional tool-kit. Whether rooted in classical rhetoric, or generated by more recent academic debates, all of which are generously represented in this Anthem Dictionary, employing them alongside a less specialised language can save time and prevent confusion. Nor is this process limited to the body of writing traditionally thought of as literature. One of the most important features of this book is that it shows how often 'literary terms' emerge from, or bleed into, many other areas of culture, such as music and film. If these terms offer helpful keyholes into the workings of individual literary texts, they also open up our views of literature as a whole; indeed, they show how learning to think more precisely about literature might also encourage us to look at the rest of the world with the same sort of care we usually restrict to the parts of it contained within the covers of a book.

One note of caution: although this Anthem Dictionary provides a critical tool-kit, it cannot substitute for practice in using these tools. It is never enough merely to learn a professional vocabulary without knowing how to apply it, any more than it would be to read a book about soccer skills and then turn up for a trial with Manchester United. Moreover, although Peter Auger supplies an unusually rich range of definitions, packed with helpful examples and inter-connections, these are offered as critical rules-of-thumb rather than rigid truths. Terms such as *tragedy* or *gothic* bring together a historical patchwork of beliefs and conventions which are joined as much by their differences as by their similarities. Nudged in a new direction by each original work, these terms are always on the move. Indeed, one might reasonably claim that all successful pieces of writing are exceptions to the rules they have helped to shape. When William Empson, aged 70, was asked to write a piece in honour of the 80-year-old I. A. Richards, his teacher at Cambridge, he observed that the trouble with getting old is that everyone becomes the same age. Similarly, the trouble with knowing what a *sonnet* should look like, and then spotting a few, can be that they all become the same poem, whereas a good piece of writing is more likely to attend to conventions without itself being conventional. The same it true of good criticism. Knowing how to spot an *iambic pentameter* is

no substitute for reading enough verse to train one's ear to recognise *how* metre is being used to control the movement of a line of thought. After all, learning to read is not just something we do as children and can then take for granted, like learning to ride a bicycle. It is something we continue to do.

For anyone wishing to read more carefully and more confidently, there are few better places to start than this Anthem Dictionary. With over 1000 definitions of terms ranging from *abbreviation* to *zeugma*, all of them explained in a lively and reader-friendly style, plus an index of main themes, a timeline of cited works, and an extensive checklist of further resources, it provides a map and a phrasebook for readers who want to get their bearings in an often bewildering world.

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Preface

My aim has been to write a no-nonsense introduction to the different ways that people read English literature. It is intended to help readers develop critical reading skills and make up their minds about what literature is. While researching the material for this book, I also looked at the different ways people have written literary dictionaries: I have had particular reference to the works by Chris Baldick, M.H. Abrams, J.A. Cuddon and Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray. My final authority on nitty-gritty poetic, rhetorical and spelling/etymological matters has been *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* by Richard A. Lanham and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

I've been fortunate to write this book in the supportive surrounds of two Oxbridge colleges: Pembroke College, Cambridge and Merton College, Oxford. In particular, I'd like to thank the English fellows at Pembroke who helped shape the opinions given in this book, as well as furnishing me with a few of the examples here. I've written this book while receiving financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), for which I'm very grateful. My parents have provided accommodation, financial support and much else besides for a far longer period, and I dedicate this work to them as a small token of gratitude. Finally, I want to mention someone who was notably absent during the writing of this work: Zen Cho. She was the ideal reader I had in mind while writing, and was often in my thoughts otherwise.

Peter Auger
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A

abbreviation   A shortened form of a word or phrase. There are numerous abbreviations commonly used in written English, many of which are formed from Latin phrases and can be confusing for the Latin-less reader. As with all literary terms, abbreviations are only helpful if the audience is familiar with them. This book uses a few abbreviations that direct the reader quickly to further information: 'e.g.' (*exempla gratis*, 'for example'), 'i.e.' (*id est*, 'that is'), CF. (*confer*, compare), C. (*circa*, around), p./pp. (page/s) and l./ll. (line/s). There are short entries on several others (see p. 349 for a list). In general, using other abbreviations is frowned upon in formal writing, particularly if they involve SLANG or COLLOQUIALISMS. An exception is the use of ACRONYMS (a word formed from the initial letters of several others).

abjection   An act of expulsion that occurs when something is considered repellent or unworthy. In CULTURAL STUDIES, the term is associated with Julia Kristeva and fits into PSYCHOANALYTIC thinking: the thing 'abjected' exists on the boundaries of our notion of EGO (i.e. what we consider part of ourselves). We assert our self-identity by establishing a distance between ourselves and the thing that horrifies us. This describes the process by which minority groups are marginalised, and so is potentially relevant to such diverse fields as FEMINIST CRITICISM, QUEER THEORY and DISABILITY STUDIES. These ideas have been applied to specific literary texts and GENRES, such as the GOTHIC NOVEL and HORROR STORY.

abridgement   The shortening of a work, often without the AUTHOR'S consent. The two main reasons this is done are to remove CONTENT considered inappropriate (i.e. BOWDLERIZE it), and to make the work suitable for another MEDIUM, such as a film ADAPTATION or modernized EDITION. Abridgements are useful if they make a text more accessible; however, the process risks distorting the original, and so are to be treated with caution. Full-length versions are usually preferable when available. For an example of a comic abridgement, see the entry for HAIKU.

absence/presence   In DECONSTRUCTION it refers to the crucial difference between something that is there, and so possesses meaning and authority,

and something that has no fixed existence or significance. Speech is often assumed to be based on a speaker who is present, and guarantees meaning (i.e. you said it, therefore it has a single meaning). However, DECONSTRUCTION argues that this doesn't count as 'presence', since different interpretations are still available. The reason given is that Western language, both in spoken and written forms, is LOGOCENTRIC: it is based upon the MYTH of a ever-present LOGOS (the Word) that gives everything meaning.

abstract language   A form of expression suggesting a quality, action or state of being, such as 'delicious', 'delivery' and 'deceit'. Abstract language describes general concepts that have no physical existence; by contrast, CONCRETE LANGUAGE describes particular objects that can be sensed. 'Wet paint' is concrete, but 'wet' by itself is abstract. This distinction isn't relevant to ABSTRACT and CONCRETE POEMS. By itself, 'abstract' also means a summary of a long written argument (in a book, article or ESSAY).

The idea of abstract language has attracted plenty of philosophical speculation. Some philosophers would dispute that 'wet', for example, exists as an abstract concept, on the grounds that a conception of 'wet' requires us to imagine a wet object. This contradicts PLATONIC philosophy, which describes a 'theory of forms' in which abstract concepts (i.e. forms) have a separate existence to the shadowy, concrete realm that we experience. This theory led Plato to dismiss poetry on the grounds that it is an IMITATION of sensory experiences in our lower world, which makes it twice removed from actual truth. And it's true that poetry is generally more CONCRETE than abstract in its DICTION: i.e. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE and IMAGERY hint at abstract concepts through CONCRETE language. Literary writers have been responding to this objection ever since. Philip Sidney, with Plato's objection in mind, argued that poetry combines the best elements of philosophy and history: it describes abstract philosophical truth using examples taken from history. ALLEGORY is a fine example of this. The take-home message from this discussion is that poetic 'truth' involves a combination of abstract and CONCRETE ideas: it appeals to both thought and feeling.

abstract poem   A term devised by Edith Sitwell to describe poetry in which words are chosen primarily for their sound rather than their meaning. These 'patterns of sounds' evoke strong emotions, even though in some cases they sound similar to NONSENSE VERSE.

academic drama (school drama)   Plays performed at British schools and universities in the sixteenth century. They were based on Roman DRAMA (the comedies of Plautus and Terence, and Senecan tragedy), and were mostly

performed in Latin, though sometimes in the VERNACULAR. The earliest surviving COMEDY in English was written by a schoolmaster called Nicholas Udall, and was probably performed by pupils of Westminster school. It's called *Ralph Roister Doister* (1552), and is written in DOGGEREL VERSE.

acatalectic (eh-cat-a-**lek**-tik; Greek 'not coming to a sudden end')   A line of VERSE that has the expected number of SYLLABLES. It neither lacks the final syllable (is CATALECTIC), nor has an extra syllable (HYPERMETRICAL).

accent   The EMPHASIS placed on a spoken SYLLABLE. It is similar in meaning to STRESS ('Oh *yes*'), though accent can also refer to EMPHASIS created by changes in pitch (' "oh yes!", he squealed') or lengthening ('oh yesssss!'). It is the basis of ACCENTUAL VERSE. More generally, accent refers to a variation in how a language is spoken (e.g. American accent), where the changes don't create a DIALECT.

There are broadly three kinds of syllable accent. A word accent is the natural EMPHASIS placed on a word when spoken; e.g. '*sil*ent' or 're*mem*ber'. A sense accent draws attention to one part of a phrase, and can change a sentence's meaning: if I say 'Remember *me*, when *I* am gone away', then I am asking you to remember me, rather than my friends, family or anyone else, whereas if I say '*Remember* me, when I am gone away', then I am asking not to be chased, forgotten or mourned, but remembered. Finally, a metrical accent (the term 'STRESS' is sometimes used for this type) is a stressed BEAT created by the metrical pattern. The first two lines of Christina Rossetti's sonnet 'Remember' have an IAMBIC pattern: R*e*m*e*mb*e*r *me*, when *I* am *gone* aw*ay* | Gone *far* aw*ay* in*to* the *sil*ent *land*.' As this example shows, poetry subtly combines different types of accent, and often creates effects that influence meaning: e.g. the stresses on 'mem', 'me' and 'I' are metrical stresses that match the word accents. This draws attention to the repeated 'me' and emphasises the speaker's presence ('me'). Accents sometimes clash as well; in particular, a WRENCHED ACCENT occurs when the metrical accent does not match the word accent.

accentual verse   METRICAL writing in which only the number of STRESSES per line is fixed. There is therefore no limit on the number of unstressed SYLLABLES per line or the total LINE length. Most English VERSE is ACCENTUAL-SYLLABIC; i.e. it has a set number of stressed and unstressed SYLLABLES. Nonetheless, accentual verse has a secure place in English literary history: most OLD ENGLISH verse is accentual, as is MEDIEVAL poetry in ALLITERATIVE METRE. Gerald Manley Hopkins revived the tradition when developing what he called SPRUNG RHYTHM. Here is an example from *Gawain and the*

Green Knight (ll.1952–53). The first LINE contains four stressed SYLLABLES (in italics) and nine unstressed, and the second LINE four STRESSED and seven unstressed:

> With *mer*þe and *myn*stralsye, wyth *metez*
>   at hir *wy*lle,
> þay *ma*den as *me*ry as any *men mo*ȝten

> [With amusements and minstrelsy, with dishes
>   to their pleasing,
> They enjoyed themselves, as any man might]

accentual-syllabic verse METRICAL writing which contains a fixed number of STRESSED and unstressed SYLLABLES per line. The VERSE falls into a regular pattern that can be classified according to the repeated units of stressed and unstressed syllables (called FEET), and the number of syllables per line (i.e. how many FEET it contains). The majority of English VERSE uses this system. For example: a LINE contains eighteen syllables, six of them stressed. The repeated unit has one stressed syllable and two unstressed, so can be identified as DACTYL (– o o). It takes six dactyls to fill the line, and therefore can be called a DACTYLIC HEXAMETER. Variations from the basic METRE create poetic effects, and so does the combination of different ACCENTS and stresses. It is important to know how accentual-syllabic verse works in order to hear and describe AURAL and RHYTHMIC poetic effects.

acephalous (**adj.**; eh-**sef**-a-lus; Greek, 'headless') A VERSE LINE that lacks the first SYLLABLE expected by the METRE. The most common acephalous lines are IAMBS that have lost their first unstressed syllable. An acephalous line is HYPOMETRICAL. It is generally found less frequently than its opposite, CATALECTIC lines (missing syllables at the end). It can be contrasted with ANACRUSIS, which is the addition of an extra syllable(s) at the beginning of a line.

acronym A word formed from the initial letters of several others, as in U.S.A. (United States of America) and A.I.D.S. (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). It is a form of ABBREVIATION used in both formal and informal DISCOURSES. When writing LITERARY ESSAYS, however, acronyms of literary works (*KL* for *King Lear*) are often considered inelegant: e.g. *Two Gentlemen* is preferable to *TGV* for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

acrostic poem (Greek, 'top of the line') A poem in which the initial letters of each line spell out a word. The term also applies when words are spelt from the middle or final letters of each line, or in a diagonal pattern.

Acrostic poems have been used for intimate or secret communication: e.g. in early Christian worship, and lovers writing to their beloved. They are occasionally found in LITERATURE, such as in the introductory 'Argument' to Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1612). As this book's author knows from experience, some school-children's first verse composition is an acrostic poem based on their name.

act   A section within a PLAY, usually beginning and ending with all the ACTORS off-stage. Acts are normally composed of individual SCENES, each involving different characters onstage. There is no agreed number of acts in plays: three and five are common, but many plays are simply divided into scenes. When quoting from plays, using act, scene and LINE numbers is preferable because this allows people with different EDITIONS to use the same references.

In modern THEATRE, drawing theatre curtains or using music normally makes the cues in the script obvious. In Greek DRAMA CHORAL speeches marked a change in scene, and the five-act division was initiated in Roman theatre (i.e. in SENECAN TRAGEDY). This was picked up by ELIZABETHAN and JACOBEAN dramatists, but was not established until the seventeenth century. Many EARLY MODERN plays have act-divisions that were added by later editors, William Shakespeare among them. Amidst this potential confusion, the safest CRITERION for an act-division is that everyone leaves the stage, because a dramatist always does this deliberately to create a lull in the action.

actor (actress)   An individual who performs a ROLE in a play. Careful critics are always precise about the difference between the individual performer and the CHARACTER being brought to life. All Hamlets will speak the words 'To be or not to be' (unless using the first QUARTO text, which doesn't have this speech), but it is up to each actor to breathe emotion into the CHARACTER's words during a performance.

adage (**add**-idge)   A SAYING or PROVERB that has been around for centuries. Desiderius Erasmus published numerous volumes containing thousands of adages in the early sixteenth century, beginning with *Adagiorum collectanea* (1500). These were crucial publications for the development of HUMANISM, because they exemplified the process of mining CLASSICAL texts for quotations that could be reused.

adaptation   The reworking of a text into a different MEDIUM; e.g. DRAMATIZED version, TV adaptation, novelization, ABRIDGEMENT or BOWDLERIZED EDITION. In terms of pure literary merit, adaptations will not

necessarily contribute much to an understanding of the TEXT, particularly when the new work is 'inspired by', 'based on' or 'a new version of' the original. Yet there's no grounds to be sniffy about adaptations outright, since some are serious engagements with the original, and have the power to bring a work to a new audience. Many adaptations succeed on their own merits, regardless of their fidelity to the original: e.g. the film version of Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2007) was warmly received—winning one Academy Award and being nominated for numerous others—but this says nothing about how faithful or otherwise it was to the book. British KITCHEN SINK DRAMAS offer several more examples of successful film adaptations, partly because they are REALIST works that translate well to film.

Adaptation is a form of TRANSLATION. It offers an insight into how different cultures and media understand a work. For example, Nahum Tate rewrote William Shakespeare's *King Lear* with a happy ending. This may seem a strange thing to do now, but it reflects how people were reacting to the play in the late seventeenth century. A more respected adaptation is Grigori Kozinstev's film *Korol Lir* (1971), which grapples with Shakespeare's portrayal of human fragility whilst drawing connections with the plight of Russian peasants. Arguments could be had about whether these adaptations are still truly Shakespearean, but then you could ask what being 'faithful' really is, and whether that is even desirable. Adaptations offer the chance to explore how people have reacted to texts over time, and this makes them potentially fascinating.

adjective (comparative; superlative; adverb)   A word that describes a NOUN: e.g. 'silver', 'scintillating' and 'sympathetic'. An **adverb** describes a VERB, and usually ends in '-ly': e.g. 'patiently' and 'stubbornly'. A **comparative** adjective shows that something possesses a quality in a different degree from something else: e.g. 'smarter' and 'more delicate'. A **superlative** adjective shows that something possesses a quality in the greatest degree among others: 'the best', 'most marvellous'. If the original adjective has one or two syllables '-er'/ '-est' is added; if three or more then 'more'/'most' is used.

adynaton (Greek, 'feeble')   A FIGURE involving exaggeration that exceeds the bounds of possibility. It is a FORM of HYPERBOLE that consciously reaches the limits of what language can express. As such, it is related to APORIA (when the speaker cannot find the right words) and gestures to the SUBLIME. An example from Andrew Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress' (ll. 13–18):

> An hundred years should go to praise
> Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze.

Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest.
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.

aesthetic (**n. and adj.**; **aesthetics**; Greek, 'able to be perceived by the senses')   As an adjective, it means concerned with beauty and/or perception of beauty. As a noun, it means the principles or theory upon which an idea or expression of beauty is based. It's possible to speak of a writer's aesthetic (e.g. 'Hemingway's aesthetic involves the use of simple DICTION'). **Aesthetics** is the branch of philosophy that thinks hard about beauty.

Many thinkers about aesthetics mull over the relation between beauty, goodness and truth: i.e. whether beauty indicates moral virtue, and/or SUBLIME truth. To put it simpy, the debate is whether beauty really is only in the eye of the beholder. Some POST-STRUCTURALIST and MARXIST CRITICS argue that it definitely is, and claim that the idea of higher beauty is an IDEOLOGICAL belief that has no basis in reality.

aesthetic distance   The relation between a LITERARY work and its audience. Aesthetic distance provides the necessary detachment that allows an audience to have a shared response to a TEXT, regardless of personal reaction or thoughts. Aesthetic distance means that the audience treats the work as an artistic FICTION (ripe for AESTHETIC experience), and not a version of reality. Aristotle's notion of *CATHARSIS* results from aesthetic distance. The notion of aesthetic distance has been challenged by MARXIST, FEMINIST, POSTCOLONIAL and NEW HISTORICIST critics amongst others, who argue that aesthetic reaction is not detached from personal experience, but is determined by CONTEXTUAL factors, such as the audience's class or GENDER.

aestheticism (aesthete)   An intellectual current in the nineteenth century that held that art should be enjoyed for its sheer beauty. Moral, DIDACTIC and social considerations were accordingly considered irrelevant. Aestheticism has roots in the earlier ROMANTIC idea that art should move the individual. It has philosophical origins in Immanuel Kant's claim that artistic merit rests on an ability to detach oneself from society, whilst remaining part of it. This notion of critical DISINTERESTEDNESS justified the social self-exclusion of the **aesthete** (as those who followed aestheticism were known). It also connected aestheticism with a social élite. Art is appreciated for its own intrinsic worth, not for its possible practical

value: this is art for art's sake (*'l'art pour l'art'*). Aestheticism is associated with numerous VICTORIAN figures. The PRE-RAPHAELITES were major players: its leading POETS were Christina Rossetti and Charles Swinburne. Walter Pater was the movement's unofficial philosopher. Oscar Wilde is SYNONYMOUS with aestheticism too. Literary DECADENCE is a French relative of the movement.

affective   Relating to the emotions. It describes how someone responds to a work with feeling. This isn't be confused with 'EFFECTIVE', which means something that does its job (and is a bit vague as a critical term). Readers are affected by literary works, though some critics would argue this is no basis for an interpretation—see the next entry.

affective fallacy   The error of basing an interpretation on the reader's SUBJECTIVE impressions, rather than a work's OBJECTIVE properties. While not denying that literature 'affects' reader in diverse imaginative and emotional ways, affective fallacy suggests that this provides a superficial basis on which to study a work. W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley devised this term, along with its counterpart, INTENTIONAL FALLACY. They were setting out the grounds for analysing a text as an AUTOTELIC (self-contained) AESTHETIC object. This cornerstone of NEW CRITICISM has been challenged by READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM, which focuses precisely on individual reactions to a text.

affective memory   The ability to remember past emotions and feelings. METHOD ACTING requires ACTORS to use such memories when presenting similar emotions and frames of mind onstage. The actor's INTERPRETATION is based on personal experience. It has always been a controversial idea.

after-piece   A short one-act COMEDY performed after the main PLAY. The earliest after-pieces in English theatres were JIGS, and they made a comeback in the eighteenth century as an innovation that made it easier for theatre owners to charge an entry fees for latecomers.

agitprop drama   An ABBREVIATION for 'agitation propaganda' that refers specifically to Soviet DRAMA intended to promote revolutionary ideas to the masses. Like SOCIALIST REALISM, it was written to be DIDACTIC, inspirational and in tune with the common people. FOLK and AVANT-GARDE LITERATURE influenced its development. Later it came to describe any play with strong IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT, including DOCUMENTARY THEATRE. Agitprop drama has affinities to Bertolt Brecht's EPIC THEATRE, though the two shouldn't be confused.

agon (ah-**gone**; Greek, 'contest')   A verbal contest, especially in Greek DRAMA. An agon takes place between a PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST, as those names suggest; indeed, most plays revolve around a central DRAMATIC CONFLICT (see also 'tension'). STICHOMYTHIA is a rapid, often competitive exchange of LINES. 'Agony' derives from 'agon'.

alba   An alternative term for AUBADE; i.e. a poem featuring lovers at dawn who are about to part.

alexandrine   In English PROSODY, another term for a six-stress, twelve SYLLABLE line; i.e. an IAMBIC HEXAMETER. Its name is taken from the French alexandrine, which is a crucial element in French PROSODY. Its English equivalent is much less significant, and there are few examples. The final line of the SPENSERIAN STANZA is an alexandrine, and it was used occasionally by the seventeenth-century poet Michael Drayton, among others.

allegory (Greek, 'speaking otherwise')   An extended METAPHOR: any work in which the NARRATIVE contains some secondary, NON-FICTIONAL meaning. The allegory's LITERAL sense is a VEHICLE for deeper ABSTRACT or political/historical ideas. The IMAGES make it easier to comprehend complex meaning. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the best known allegorical works: the adventures of the main CHARACTER, Christian, are intended to be read as an exposition of Christian theology. PERSONIFICATION is often a give-away that allegorical meaning is present: Bunyan, for example, gives characters names like Mr Worldly Wiseman, Faithful, and Hopeful to encourage allegorical READING. Allegories do not contain SYMBOLS: the difference here is that allegorical IMAGES only make sense within their immediate FICTIONAL CONTEXT, and do not have existence outside of the STORY, as SYMBOLS do. Allegory contains clues for its INTERPRETATION within itself, unlike PARABLES, FABLES, and EXEMPLA, where INTERPRETATION can only begin once the story has ended.

Allegorical writing has been used in many different ways in Western literature. The Bible is strongly allegorical, particularly in the way that the Old Testament anticipates the New (the suffering servant in Isaiah, for example, is routinely read as a 'TYPE' or 'figure' identified with Israel by Jewish interpreters, and with Jesus by Christians). Most CLASSICAL MYTHS can be (and have been) given an allegorical interpretation. Allegory was a popular FORM in MIDDLE ENGLISH, William Langland's *Piers Plowman* being a major example. DREAM VISIONS (e.g. Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*) use allegory to establish a safe distance between the AUTHOR and the political meanings suggested by the POEM. Other notable allegories in English

include Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 96), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), and also Richard Adams's *Watership Down* (1972).

'Allegory' not only describes a FORM of writing, but also refers to a STYLE of READING (see also 'Four Levels of Meaning'). An allegorical reader must anticipate how the parts of the allegory fit into a larger STRUCTURAL whole, before having read the entire WORK: this creates an INTERPRETATIVE dilemma known as the HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE. This thought makes INTERPRETATION seem like a game that the writer has set up, with the reader hunting for a 'correct' READING that doesn't necessarily exist. There is a awkward POSTMODERN suggestion that all INTERPRETATIONS are actually allegorical READINGS: readers always find different meanings from what is literally written, if indeed the TEXT has a meaning. In a recent cinema advert, for example, the speaker claims that the film *The Wizard of Oz* is actually all about teenagers and their loss of respect for the elderly. This is a neat allegorical reading, but few would agree that Dorothy really is a public nuisance in the film. The postmodern view is that all interpretations are flawed, so this eccentric INTERPRETATION is ultimately as acceptable as any other: any critical view is a SUBJECTIVE opinion.

In this way allegory provokes deep questions about READING, such as whether the reader has to read a book as the AUTHOR intended, what a 'correct' INTERPRETATION would look like, and whether NON-FICTIONAL meaning should be given priority over FICTIONAL. This sort of question shows how allegory is connected to fundamental issues about how LITERATURE binds together meaning and expression, CONTENT and FORM (see also 'metaphor').

alienation effect (A-**Effect**; German, *Verfremdungseffekt* or *V-Effekt*)   A key strategy in Bertolt Brecht's EPIC THEATRE that forced the audience to be aware that it was watching a FICTIONAL DRAMA. Brecht didn't want his audiences to become immersed in the FICTIONAL reality of the PLAY, but to be detached (or alienated) from it. This could be achieved in various ways, such as by making ACTORS just speak the script rather than transform themselves into the CHARACTERS they represent (cf. METHOD ACTING), and by having CHARACTERS/ACTORS comment on the action. This turns the PLAY into a sort of PARABLE that encourages audiences to use the lessons of the PLAY in their own lives. Brecht was totally against Aristotle's idea of *CATHARSIS*, which used the DRAMATIC illusion to guide the audience's reaction, and so drain all emotions that could be dangerous to society. Alienation, by contrast, rouses revolutionary energy and tells the audience

to go out and change the world. The theoretical prose works *A Short Organum for the Theatre* (1949) and *The Messingkauf Dialogues* (published 1963) explain these ideas in more detail. The alienation effect is partly derived from the RUSSIAN FORMALIST idea of poetic DEFAMILIARIZATION. Marxism and MARXIST CRITICISM are important CONTEXTS too.

The ALIENATION EFFECT is exemplified in Brecht's major plays from the 1920s onwards. *The Threepenny Opera* (*Die Dreigroschenoper*, 1928) and *The Good Person of Szechwan* (*Die gute Mensch von Sezuan*, 1943) are CLASSIC works of EPIC THEATRE. Both plays use the *DEUS EX MACHINA* DEVICE (a sudden and unlikely PLOT intervention) to create an alienation effect. *The Threepenny Opera*'s ending, which sees Macheath miraculously pardoned, is so out-of-the-blue that the audience cannot help but recall that this wouldn't have happened in real life. *The Good Person of Szechwan* PARODIES the *DEUS EX MACHINA*: the Three Gods arrive on stage towards the ending, but pointedly decide not to intervene.

alliteration   A FIGURE involving the REPETITION of the same letter(s) at the beginning of nearby words: e.g. 'Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivellèd snow' (Gerald Manley Hopkins, 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', l.103). The DEVICE is sometimes used to give POETRY STRUCTURE and RHYTHM; this is known as ALLITERATIVE METRE, which is found in *Beowulf* and medieval poems of the alliterative revival. Its usage in post-fourteenth-century British LITERATURE is largely decorative, and not restricted to POETRY. SIBILANCE is alliteration based on 's' sounds.

Alliteration is a form of CONSONANCE and ASSONANCE (most writers don't restrict alliteration's definition to repeated consonants). Like those techniques, alliteration occurs when language is shaped to create artificial effects beyond everyday usages. Many tongue-twisters are phrases so dense with alliteration that they become tricky to pronounce: e.g. 'Three thrushes threw themselves through the thicket.' In LITERATURE, it can (amongst other uses) be EMPHATIC or ONOMATOPOEIC, or lend a musical quality to phrases. Although it can be spotted without difficulty on the page, it is worth considering what AURAL effects it has when heard: the Hopkins quotation above, for example, uses alliteration in a much subtler way than simply clustering 'w's together on the page.

alliterative metre   A form of ACCENTUAL VERSE (based on the number of STRESSES per line), as found in OLD ENGLISH and some MIDDLE ENGLISH VERSE. Each LINE is divided two half-lines (or HEMISTICHS) with two stresses each. In general, ALLITERATION (repetition of consonants/vowels) connects together the two (sometimes one) STRESSES in the first half with at least one of the

STRESSES in the second half. It is used in the Old English EPIC POEM *Beowulf*, and was still a standard PROSODIC FORM during the late fourteenth-century 'Alliterative Revival', which is associated with William Langland and the *Gawain*-poet. However, as alliterative metre developed, the number of unstressed SYLLABLES became more flexible. As English LITERATURE followed Chaucer's example by introducing RHYMED PENTAMETER lines, ALLITERATION became a decorative DEVICE independent of METRE. In poems like *Piers Plowman*, however, it still provided the METRICAL backbone:

> Wolleward and weetshoed wente I forth after
> As a recchelees renk that of no wo reccheth,
> And yede forth like a lorel al my lif tyme,
> Til I weex wery of the world and wilned eft
>   to slepe,
> And lened me to a Lenten—and longe tyme
>   I slepte   (XVIII.1–5)

> [Without shirt or shoes I went on, like a reckless man who doesn't care about suffering, and went on like an idler all my life, until I grew weary of the world and often desired to sleep again, and I lazed around until Lent—I slept a long time]

altar poetry   A kind of PATTERN POETRY in which the poem's LINEATION resembles an altar. The poem's CONTENT complements its shape. It is closely associated with seventeenth-century poets in English, such as George Herbert, Francis Quarles, and George Wither, though Dylan Thomas has also contributed to the tradition.

ambiguity   A word or phrase with a vague or double meaning. 'The food wasn't that bad' is ambiguous on the page, since it could mean the food was fairly good, or that it was pretty awful. In this, as in most everyday examples, TONE of VOICE and EMPHASIS would make the intended meaning apparent. PUNS and *DOUBLE ENTENDRES* are other everyday occurrences of ambiguity. True ambiguity is a hindrance to communication in everyday language, but in LITERATURE, and POETRY in particular, it is normally a virtue. This is because it allows a writer to drive towards secondary meaning beneath the surface of a WORD. Ambiguity appears most often as PARADOX, IRONY and other TROPES. Certainly it is one of the easiest ways to introduce complexity, and potentially OBSCURITY, into a LITERARY WORK. Ambiguity puts a burden on the reader to decide on meaning: poetic truth is shown, not stated.

It has been a prominent literary term ever since William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). Empson extended the meaning of ambiguity to cover other ways in which a poem's meaning is unsettled, and relies on CONNOTATIONS and ALLUSIONS. INTERPRETATIONS of ambiguity are potentially ingenious but far removed from the original TEXT, unless regulated by the specific CONTEXT from which it comes. Ambiguity within poetic texts is a major interest of NEW CRITICISM, and is attractive in so far as it encourages readers to pick at the hidden riches and tensions within a WORK. DECONSTRUCTION-influenced critics (sometimes using the word POLYSEMY instead of ambiguity) pushed the concept of ambiguity further, to suggest that language is inherently unstable. According to this argument, ambiguity is not just basic to literature—it is present in all forms of communication.

amoebean verse (ah-me-**be**-an; Greek, 'interchanging') A style of POETIC writing based on rapid exchanges between two parties, which developed from CLASSICAL PASTORAL POETRY. It typically involves a competition, and is similar to a FLYTING and STICHOMYTHIA. 'August' in Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) is a shining example in English:

> *Perigot.* I saw the bouncing Bellibone, [pretty girl]
> *Willye.* Hey ho Bonibell,
> *Per.* Tripping ouer the dale alone,
> *Wil.* She can trip it very well:
> *Per.* Well decked in a frock of gray, [dressed]
> *Wil.* hey ho gray is greete,
> *Per.* And in a Kirtle of greene saye,
> [skirt; quality cloth]
> *Wil.* the greene is for maydens meete:
>
> (ll. 62–68)

amphibrach (Greek, 'both ends short') A METRICAL FOOT consisting of a STRESSED SYLLABLE with an unstressed one either side (o – o). Rare in English VERSIFICATION, though words like 'alarming' and 'excitement' are single-word examples.

amphimacer (cretic) A METRICAL FOOT consisting of an unstressed SYLLABLE with an stressed one either side (– o –). Rare in English.

amplification   A vague term that describes expansion upon an idea. It covers accumulation of material, comparison, HYPERBOLE, PERIPHRASIS and use of rhetorical FIGURES to develop a point. According to RHETORICAL THEORY, COPIA (copiousness) was a skill possessed only by the finest minds. Although literary writers sometimes strive to keep it brief (if writing EPIGRAMS, for example), most forms of literary writing involve amplification of some type (see 'periphrasis'). The term is too general to be of much use in critical writing.

anachronism (Greek, 'backwards-timing')   An event, object or person that has been placed in a time period where it doesn't belong. Anachronism disrupts the WILLING SUSPENSION OF BELIEF; i.e. it is a reminder that the work is FICTIONAL. Many movie mistakes are unintentional anachronisms: the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) notes that the film *Gladiator* (2000), for example, shows numerous items on screen (sunglasses, a gas cylinder, lycra shorts etc.) that did not exist in CLASSICAL Rome. This kind of anachronism is found in literature as well: William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* makes reference to a clock ('The clock hath stricken three.' (2.1.191)) that hadn't been invented by the CLASSICAL period. Anachronism isn't necessarily bad, though, just as historical accuracy isn't the only CRITERION for worthwhile literature. It is used deliberately, for example, in modern-dress productions of Shakespeare's plays. The 2005 production of *Richard II* starring Kevin Spacey, for instance, had the ACTORS wearing suits and used projector-screens to show news reports. By doing this, the production kept the play fresh, stressed that the work is in some sense timeless, and encouraged the audience to draw connections between politics in the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries.

anacoluthon (ana-co-**loo**-thon, Greek, 'inconsistent') A FIGURE involving a sudden shift in a sentence that leaves the beginning incomplete. It is sometimes used to suggest that a speaker is overcome with emotion: 'I saw his face for the first time and—oh, he was so beautiful!'. It is sometimes purely persuasive: 'I was going to offer you…but I'm sure you wouldn't be interested' is intended to make the listener interested. In the following uncollected Marianne Moore poem, 'All of It, as Recorded', the pointed anacoluthon becomes obvious in the second stanza:

> Down the village street, a lame boy
> And the women leaned on
> The half-open doors and said nothing.
> Down the village street, a lame old man

And the women leaned on
The half-open doors and said nothing.

Down the village street, a bier
And the children saw it as the actor
Sees the letter which he writes
In the second act of the play.

anacrusis (Greek, 'striking up [a tune]') The placing of an additional (EXTRAMETRICAL) SYLLABLE(s) at the start of a VERSE LINE. The extra SYLLABLE is usually unstressed. It rarely occurs in English PROSODY, in part because IAMBIC metres (the most common variety) already begin with an unstressed syllable. In contrast, ACEPHALOUS describes lines that have lost syllable(s).

anadiplosis (Greek, 'duplication') A FIGURE involving REPETITION of the end of one phrase at the beginning of the next. It chains together phrases, often leading to a CLIMAX. As a structural feature in POETRY it is known as a CORONA, the best known example being John Donne's 'La Corona'. It is similar to EPANALEPSIS, which is repetition at the beginning and end of the same line. Wallace Stevens uses fluid anadiplosis in 'The Load of Sugar-Cane' (1923):

The going of the glade-boat
Is like water flowing;

Like water flowing
Through the green saw-grass,
Under the rainbows;

Under the rainbows
That are like birds,
Turning, bedizened,   [dressed up]

While the wind still whistles
As kildeer do,   [a bird-species]

When they rise
At the red turban
Of the boatman.

anagnorisis (Greek, 'recognition') Aristotle's term for the moment in a TRAGIC PLOT when the HERO gains crucial knowledge that leads him/her out of ignorance (*HAMARTIA*) and causes a reversal in fortune (*PERIPETEIA*).

This CLIMAX arouses pity or fear at the hero's FATE. It is an essential concept in Aristotle's writing on tragedy; more generally, recognition or discovery forms the heart of many plots, either in a sudden twist or the final DÉNOUEMENT.

analogy (**analogue; adj. analogous;** Greek, 'proportion')   An extended comparison (or SIMILE) that places together two images or ideas sharing something in common. Analogies are often used in arguments to explain a point more clearly. **Analogous** is similar to 'similar', but suggests that two items are similar in one aspect only: a fish's bone structure may be analogous to a human one (since both have backbones), but that doesn't mean they are similar. An **analogue** is a story that is a parallel version of another with a different origin. For example, no direct source is known for Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Miller's Tale', but various other tales, including French FABLIAUX, are spoken of as analogues.

analysis (**adj. analytical;** Greek, 'breaking down')   The breaking down of something into its parts, with the aim of finding out more about the whole. Its opposite is SYNTHESIS, which means joining two things together. The term's first recorded use is in the 'generall argument' of Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* (1579, though the word is written in Greek there). The semi-scientific study of texts was championed by FORMALIST and NEW CRITICS, since both deemed analytical study crucial in discovering how a text functions. This assumption of AUTOTELIC, organic unity in a TEXT was fiercely contested by structuralist and other critics, who maintained that a TEXT belongs within a DISCOURSE, and that INTERTEXTUAL relations produce and affect individual TEXTS; in other words, pure analysis is flawed, because meaning is not produced from the text in isolation. A possible compromise is to conclude that analysis is a useful tool, whilst being sensitive to aspects of literature that work only within larger READING CONTEXTS, and cannot be dissected.

anapaest (adj. anapaestic)   A METRICAL FOOT consisting of two unstressed SYLLABLES followed by a STRESSED one. 'Supersede', 'Middle-Earth' and 'anapaest' are anapaests. Along with DACTYLS it forms the basis of TERNARY METRES, though it can be hard to divide up a sequence of three-beat FEET into anapaests and DACTYLS. An anapaestic METRE creates a RISING RHYTHM. Anapaests sound humorous to many twenty-first-century ears, in part because they are the dominant FOOT in LIMERICKS: e.g. 'there was an old man from Nantucket'. However, it has been used in more serious poems, such as Lord Byron's 'The Destruction of Sennacharib'. Here is

the second stanza, where you can sense that the metrical pattern controls Byron's writing:

> Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
> That host at the sunset with their banners were seen: [army]
> Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
> That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

anaphora (Greek, 'carrying back')   A FIGURE involving REPETITION of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive CLAUSES. It often builds to a CLIMAX, is EMPHATIC, or is used to create a list. It has been widely used in English literature from Geoffrey Chaucer (e.g. *Troilus and Cressida*) to T.S. Eliot ('The Waste Land'). Elizabeth Bishop wrote a poem called 'Anaphora' (1946), the closing words of which can be read as encapsulating anaphora's ability to convey relentless beauty: 'the fiery event of every day in endless | endless array.' Anaphora was frequently used to stirring, quasi-biblical effect by Walt Whitman in 'Leaves of Grass' (note also the use of EPISTROPHE at line-ends):

> The law of the past cannot be eluded,
> The law of the present and future cannot be
>   eluded,
> The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is
>   eternal,
> The law of promotion and transformation
>   cannot be eluded,
> The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be
>   eluded,
> The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons,
>   not one iota thereof can be eluded.

anastrophe (Greek, 'turning back')   A FIGURE involving unusual word-order, for poetic effect or to fit the METRICAL pattern. In CLASSICAL RHETORIC it referred to the inversion of two words, but its use tends now to be broader. It is closely related to HYPERBATON, and similar to HYSTERON PROTERON. Anastrophe is found in the opening lines of Richard Crashaw's 'An Epitaph upon Husband and Wife who Died and were Buried Together':

> To these, whom death again did wed,
> This grave's the second marriage-bed.
> For though the hand of Fate could force,
> 'Twixt soul and body a divorce,

> It could not sever man and wife,
> Because they both lived but one life.

'To these' is placed first to stress the poem's subject. 'Divorce' is delayed to create a rhyme with 'force', but it also complements the sense: it weakens 'divorce' by pushing it to the end, and so stresses the inseverable union between 'man and wife' in the following COUPLET (which has regular word-order). Anastrophe makes 'divorce' sound unnatural.

anecdote   A short, amusing story that appeals more for its CONTENT than how it's told. They are usually small DIGRESSIONS within a larger NARRATIVE, such as a BIOGRAPHY. Anecdotes can be a form of gossip, and this made them particularly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Angry Young Men (c.1950s)   A group of British playwrights and novelists who protested against the marginalisation of working-class values in society and culture. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) is the key work that launched a trend for other KITCHEN-SINK DRAMAS. The term is too broad to be that useful, and was rejected by some of those it described.

anonymous (Greek, 'no name')   A work with no identified AUTHOR. 'Anonymous', 'anon' and 'A.N. Other' have a great many works attributed to them. Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1340–1400) was the first English writer to advertise himself through his works; before then, AUTHORS did not put their name to their works, and CONVENTION has us speak of the '*Gawain*-poet' or '*Beowulf*-poet' as major medieval AUTHORS. Medieval anonymity is connected to religion: it would have been inconsistent for the religious individual who wrote *The Cloud of Unknowing* (c.1350–1400) to have put his or her name to the work. Anonymous works written from the EARLY MODERN period onwards (particularly DRAMA and POETRY) have tended to be neglected, which is not necessarily connected to the quality of the work. See 'death of the author' for critical assaults on the author-figure's prominence in the literary CANON. John Mullan's *Anonymity: A Secret History of Literature* (2008) explores at greater length why AUTHORS across literary history chose anonymity.

antagonist   An opponent or rival in a literary work who is set against the main CHARACTER or PROTAGONIST. The word 'AGON' (contest) in the word's middle is a reminder that the 'antagonist' is the second person in a CONFLICT that the work will resolve. The antagonist is the ANTITHESIS of the protagonist. Antagonists are not necessarily 'evil' VILLAINS, though in many CONVENTIONAL STORIES the antagonist presents a challenge or

temptation that the good CHARACTER must resist. The antagonist is neither a HERO/ HEROINE nor an ANTIHERO (i.e. someone who doesn't live up to the expectations of a HERO).

anthem   A song that asserts an identity or shared values: e.g. a national anthem. Wilfred Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' uses the word with bitter IRONY.

anthology (Greek, *anthos-logia,* 'flower-collection') A published collection of literary extracts. The Ancient Greeks produced anthologies, and there are numerous EARLY MODERN English anthologies: the first was Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*, better known as *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). Some early anthologies relished the comparison of literary works with flowers, since RHETORICAL FIGURES were described using botanical METAPHORS (see p. 386 for the Silva Rhetoricae—the rhetorical wood). Modern anthologies (see p. 385) provide one of the best ways to encounter new material There is a tendency to judge anthologised AUTHORS by how much of their material is included, but it's worth paying attention to quality over quantity.

anthropomorphism (Greek, 'becoming human') The process of attributing human characteristics to something non-human, in particular the gods/God. A popular anthropomorphic image of the Christian God is the old man with a white beard who lives in the clouds surrounded by angels. The term also describes animals that are given human personalities, as in BEAST FABLES. PATHETIC FALLACY is something different: it describes the error of giving human attributes to nature.

anticlimax   An unexpected slide from noble, grand feelings to the trivial, especially during a passage of mounting intensity (CLIMAX). It undercuts what has gone before, often with IRONY: e.g. 'He's extremely handsome…at least he says he is.' It is a rhetorical FIGURE consciously used by the speaker or writer, unlike BATHOS, which is often unintended, and is identified by the audience. Anticlimax is usually used for COMIC or SATIRIC effect, and is particularly found in MOCK-HEROIC literature.

antihero (antiheroine)   A leading CHARACTER in a NARRATIVE or DRAMATIC work who fails to meet CONVENTIONAL 'heroic' expectations: e.g. courage, nobility, high achievement. It is often confused with 'ANTAGONIST' (a CHARACTER who rivals another), and with VILLAIN (someone willing to perpetrate wicked or criminal acts). Antiheros are failures who do not live up either the audience's or their own hopes. Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is a CLASSIC antihero: he is an unsuccessful salesman nearing the

end of his career who daydreams and ends up killing himself. In this case, the antihero is also a TRAGIC HERO, and Loman is arguably more representative and EFFECTIVE as a tragic CHARACTER precisely because he is an ordinary person (whereas in earlier TRAGEDY heroes belonged to a social élite (see 'STYLE')).

antimasque   A brief COMEDY or FARCE performed before a main MASQUE. It is a BURLESQUE of the main performance: a GROTESQUE, chaotic and crude PLAY that reverses the refinement, order and elegance of the MASQUE. The earliest example of an antimasque is found in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609).

antimetabole (anti-meh-**tab**-oh-ly, Greek, 'turning about')   A FIGURE in which two words are repeated in reverse order: 'all for one and one for all'. Like CHIASMUS (*abba* pattern), it can sharpen the sense or highlight ANTITHESIS. Antimetabole only involves word-switching, whereas chiasmus is more sophisticated because it inverts whole ideas and structures. This difference is apparent from the first COUPLET of William Shakespeare's Sonnet 147, which contrasts 'fever/disease' and 'longing/longer'. The repetition is not just a matter of elegance, as is normally the case with antimetabole: it is a CHIASMUS that expresses a subtle causal relationship between the opposites:

> My love is as a fever, longing still
> For that which longer nurseth the disease.

antipathy (Greek, 'against-feeling')   Hostility towards other beings or things. It is an ANTONYM for SYMPATHY, and is an important way of creating reaction in an audience; for example, by feeling loathing for the bad guy/ANTAGONIST.

antiphon (**antiphonal;** Greek, 'sounding in turn')   A VERSE composition or HYMN in which two sets of voices alternate, or which takes the form of call and response. It is particularly associated with devotional works. STICHOMYTHIA and AMOEBEAN verse are related forms.

antiphrasis (an-**tif**-rah-sis, Greek, 'expression through opposites')   Single-word IRONY; for example, 'quiz' for 'exam' and 'the pond' for 'the Atlantic Ocean'. It is often combined with LITOTES (understatement) in contemporary English.

antistrophe (an-**ti**-strow-fee, Greek, 'turning about')   A FIGURE of REPETITION that refers either to repetition at the end of consecutive phrases (also known as EPISTROPHE), or with inversion (compare with CHIASMUS). Given this vagueness, it is preferable to use more specific terms. Antistrophe

is also the second section of a Greek choral ode (as found particularly in tragedies), which responds to a STROPHE using the same METRICAL pattern, and is followed by an EPODE (which has its own pattern).

antithesis (**pl. antitheses**; Greek, 'opposition')   A FIGURE in which contrasting ideas are placed together. It creates a sense of balance and symmetry (particularly if combined with ANTIMETABOLE or CHIASMUS). It can clarify dilemmas and suggest a solution; alternatively, it can lead to PARADOX. In this way, this RHETORICAL FIGURE is linked to its other, philosophical meaning: in DIALECTICAL reasoning, antitheses are a challenge to a THESIS that leads to the discovery of a SYNTHESIS (resolution). Antithesis is found especially regularly in AUGUSTAN POETRY and throughout William Shakespeare's works. Here are the antithetical first six lines of sonnet 116:

> Let me not to the marriage of true minds
> Admit impediments; love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove,
> O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken.

antonym   A word which is opposite in meaning to another. 'Good' is an antonym of 'bad', 'tall' is an antonym of 'short' and 'SYNONYM' is an antonym of 'antonym'.

anxiety of influence   A term coined by the American critic Harold Bloom to describe the fear (supposedly suffered by writers after John Milton) that there is no longer anything new to write about. In a 1973 book of the same name, Bloom argued that the writer is afraid of copying the work of previous writers, and can only generate new work by through a creative misreading (or misprison) of other works. This was a bold reinterpretation of the role of ORIGINALITY, IMITATION and TRADITION in literature. These concepts tie in with PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM and the OEDIPUS COMPLEX, the major symptom of which is a son who wants to gain self-identity by destroying his father. 'Anxiety of influence' presents literary writing as a defensive act that attempts to protect the AUTHOR'S sense of uniqueness. Bloom also described an 'ANTITHETICAL criticism' that explored these relations between writers further. Bloom's writing on the anxiety of influence is fairly male-centred, but has been expanded by some FEMINIST CRITICS.

aphorism (apophthegm)   A general truth expressed within a few words. *Sententia* (or sentence) is a slightly posher, more literary SYNONYM. Oscar

Wilde is particularly known for his aphorisms: e.g. 'The only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about'. ADAGES, PROVERBS, EPIGRAMS and maxims can all be aphorisms, but don't have to be. An **apophthegm** (a-**pe**-thim) is a concise prose saying.

apocrypha (**adj. apocryphal;** Greek, 'hidden way')   Works of doubtful authenticity. The term originally referred to biblical writings that were not included in the Old or New Testament. It is often applied to works that have been dubiously attributed to CANONICAL AUTHORS: e.g. *Arden of Faversham* and *Locrine* are among the Shakespeare apocrypha.

Apollonian/Dionysian   Adjectives used to describe the main characteristics of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo is the god of wisdom and prophecy, and is associated with rational thought, self-consciousness and RHETORIC. Dionysus (Bacchus in Roman mythology) is the god of wine: intoxicated, instinctive, ecstatic, UNCONSCIOUS. Related to this fundamental tension are other sweeping dichotomies, like CLASSICISM/ ROMANTICISM and HELLENISM/HEBRAISM. As with all such divisions, it's usually more helpful to think in terms of more/less than either/or. This opposition was taken up by Friedrich Nietzsche to explain the origins of tragedy (see 'chorus'). It has been probed by numerous others before and after: e.g. D.H. Lawrence was preoccupied with the THEME. It is central to Peter Schaffer's play *Equus* (1973), in which the leading CHARACTERS are a psychiatrist called Martin Dysart and Alan Strang, his patient. Dysart is made to question whether he, as an Apollonian figure, has any right to 'cure' Alan's full-blooded, Dionysian practices (which in the play involve doing strange things with horses).

apology   In LITERARY CRITICISM 'apology' has a meaning that is the opposite of the everyday sense of 'apologise' or 'excuse oneself': it means a defence or justification of one's actions and beliefs. Plato's *Apology* (c.400 B.C.E.) is an account (largely fictionalized, probably) of the philosopher Socrates' defence speech in the trial that led to his execution, on the charge of not showing reverence to the gods. An apology of a different variety is Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595) which sets out to defend the importance and relevance of poetry as an art.

aporia (Greek, 'doubt')   A state of uncertainty. It has roots in Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, but as a RHETORICAL term means a dilemma, for which Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy is an extended and famous example. In this sense, the doubt can be either sincere or feigned. 'Aporia' overlaps with ADYNATON when it describes an inability to find the right

words. It is often represented on the page with points ('…') or a dash ('—'). In DECONSTRUCTIONIST criticism 'aporia' refers to an irresolvable interpretative dilemma; in other words, a PARADOX that leaves meaning UNDECIDABLE. At this point intended meaning departs from the meaning understood, and DIFFÉRANCE is apparent.

aposiopesis (Greek, 'becoming silent')   A FIGURE in which the speaker breaks off mid-sentence, either from overwhelming passion, or for rhetorical effect. e.g. 'why I oughta….'; 'I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe | With how deprav'd a quality—O Regan!' (*King Lear*, 2.4.136–37). It can expose language as insufficient, where it is related to APORIA and can result in ADYNATON (exaggeration containing an impossibility). Or it can leave the audience to complete the sentiment (its function in this case is like understatement, or LITOTES). It is usually marked on the page with points ('…') or a dash ('—').

apostrophe (Greek, 'turning away')   A FIGURE in which the speaker breaks off to address a person (living or dead) or a PERSONIFIED idea as if it were living. The term's ETYMOLOGY probably refers to the ACTOR literally turning away from the stage to address the audience. It is an EFFECTIVE means of conveying deep-seated emotion or projecting feelings onto a scene (compare with PATHETIC FALLACY). An apostrophe is also a PUNCTUATION mark (') that indicates ELISION ('don't'; 'it's', meaning 'it is') or possession ('a child's rattle'). Here is a RHETORICAL apostrophe from John Milton's MASQUE-DRAMA *Comus*:

> O night and shades,
> How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
> Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin
> Alone, and helpless!
> (Second brother, ll.579–82)

apparatus   The supporting materials included in an scholarly EDITION of a work. Textual apparatus can include any or all of the following: footnotes, bibliography, textual notes, appendices, GLOSSARY, introduction and so on.

arcadia (also **arcady**)   An ideal rural landscape inhabited by shepherds living an honest, simple life away from the city. Arcadia originally referred only to a hilly region in Greece that provides the setting for Virgil's *Eclogues*. Later PASTORAL poetry adapted the idea of Arcadia, and Philip Sidney took it as the title for his immensely popular prose romance *Arcadia* (1590). In Virgil a tension exists between the harsh

realities of a shepherd's life and a rosy portrayal of their lifestyle. By the Renaissance, however, Arcadia only connoted an idyllic landscape filled with abundant natural resources, pleasant pastimes and SONG, opposed to the miseries of city life. The phrase '*et in Arcadia ego*' is associated with the art of Nicholas Poussin; it means 'and I also in Arcadia' and is a reminder that death lurks everywhere.

arch rhyme   A set of consecutive RHYMING words in the pattern *abba*: e.g. rust/old/mould/dust. It is a CHIASTIC pattern, which appears in QUATRAIN-FORM in PETRARCHAN SONNETS. It can also be formed from CROSSED RHYME.

archaism (archaic)   The deliberate use of a word that sounds old-fashioned or is no longer in use. 'Thee' is an archaic FORM of the informal 'you'; 'perambulator' of 'pram'. It instinctively feels like a form of POETIC DICTION, since it reaches beyond the normal bounds of language, and recalls the past (like ANACHRONISM). It has been an established technique in English poetry for centuries, and underlines a writer's awareness of and contribution to existing TRADITION. It can be also used for PARODIC or SATIRICAL effect. Edmund Spenser made extensive use of Chaucerian DICTION (in what were strictly MEDIEVALISMS) to recall the past. Spenser's earliest readers would have recognised phrases like this one as archaic:

> Ah foolish old man, I scorne thy skill,
> That wouldest me, my springing youngth to spil.
> I deeme, thy braine emperished bee
> Through rusty elde, that hath rotted thee.
> ('Februarie', ll.51–54)

archetypal criticism   A critical approach that seeks to identify and analyse universal THEMES, MOTIFS, TOPICS, SYMBOLS, IMAGES and other aspects of literature found across the globe. MYTHIC CRITICISM has similar interests, and both are inspired by Karl Jung's notion of the COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS and literary STRUCTURALISM. POSTMODERN and POST-STRUCTURALIST criticism have both found that archetypal criticism lacks awareness of the historical and geographical uniqueness of works, which makes it impossible to pull out patterns that transcend historical periods and cultures.

archetype (Greek, 'first image')   An original element found in MYTH and LITERATURE considered to represent a universal aspect of human experience. An archetype is a master MOTIF or TYPE. IMAGES (e.g. sun and

moon), SYMBOLS (circles), ideas (love and death) and certain CHARACTERS have all been considered archetypes. The idea has been pursued by anthropologists, psychologists and literary critics alike, and has given rise to ARCHETYPAL and MYTHIC CRITICISM. A major charge against this approach is that it ignores cultural differences, seeking to find uniformity without being sensitive to the ultimate diversity of literary expression.

architectonics The logical STRUCTURE and design of a TEXT. The architectonics of Edmund Spenser's poetry has been a particular area of interest, for it has been shown that some of his poems have detailed numerical structures with SYMBOLIC significance. His EPITHALAMION, for example, contains 24 stanzas and 365 long lines to suggest that the wedding day belongs within a yearly cycle.

argument In a specifically literary CONTEXT, a summary (or ABSTRACT) found at the beginning of a long section of a work. Generally, it means a point made with reasoning and supporting evidence (see 'rhetoric'). Each CANTO in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 96) contains an argument QUATRAIN: e.g. 'The knight with that old Dragon fights | two dayes incessantly: | The third him ouerthrowes, and gayns | most glorious victory'(I.xi.Argument.1–4).

article A word placed before a noun to clarify whether something specific or unspecific is meant. 'A' or 'an' is the **indefinite** article; 'the' is the **definite** article.

arts Academic disciplines and cultural practices that are not banded under the heading 'science' or 'social science': e.g. theology, history, modern languages, literature, performing arts, film. The 'fine arts' refers specifically to artistic creation in 'high' culture, particularly in visual forms like painting and architecture. 'Arts' describes a wide area of culture. With regard to academic subjects, it is nearly SYNONYMOUS with 'HUMANITIES', which emphasises that the arts are concerned with SUBJECTIVE human experience and expression. It is important for those engaged in the arts to ask themselves at some point 'why do we need the arts?' and, to quote the title of a recent book by John Carey, *What Good Are the Arts?* (2005). That book argues that art is anything anyone has ever considered a work of art, and that the arts enlarge our sense of the world, making us more sensitive and attentive to it. The arts offer an alternative form of human accomplishment that affect us deeply in many different ways, and remind us that there is more to life than endless progress towards an undefined goal.

aside   A brief speech spoken apart from other CHARACTERS onstage. By CONVENTION, the other characters are understood not to have heard what was said—if they really couldn't hear, then the audience wouldn't know what was said either. By contrast, a SOLILOQUY is spoken when a character is alone onstage or being overheard. Asides can be spoken to other characters or directly to the audience. Since it relies on stage CONVENTION, it is not found in truly NATURALISTIC DRAMA. Comic asides often work well:

> 1. *Lord*   Did you hear of a stranger that's
>   come to court [to-]night?
>   *Cloten*   A stranger, and I know not on't?
> 2. *Lord* [*Aside*] He's a strange fellow himself,
>   and knows it not.
>   (William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 1.6.32–36)

assonance   The REPETITION of the same vowel(s) within nearby words where consonants differ. Although it can be spotted when reading, it is essentially an AURAL effect, even more so than CONSONANCE (consonant repetition): e.g. 'the rush of thunder', 'the gleaming screen'. Whereas RHYME involves matching vowels and consonants ('bat' and 'cat'), assonance only requires the same vowels ('bat', 'car'). It can create musical effects, as at the beginning of Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn':

> Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
> Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time.

Assonance at the beginning of words is usually called ALLITERATION. As with CONSONANCE, if you pick up on similar vowel sounds when reading, it is appropriate to describe it as assonance. Then it is worth considering whether the AUTHOR uses assonance for a particular reason here, and how it interacts with the sense. Assonance marks a point at which language becomes musical and/or literary, and depends on keen-eared readers to detect its subtle influence.

asyndeton   (Greek, 'unconnected')   A rhetorical FIGURE in which CONJUNCTIONS (or, less often, PRONOUNS) are omitted from consecutive CLAUSES. Perhaps the most famous example is Caesar's '*Veni, vidi, vici*' (I came, I saw, I conquered), where asyndeton adds pomp and distinctiveness to the phrase. POLYSYNDETON is the opposite. It is related to ELLIPSIS and PARATAXIS, since asyndeton is a means of compressing thoughts without directly indicating the connections between them. It has been used by

various writers across literary history, including twentieth-century AUTHORS like John Berryman:

> Books drugs razor whisky shirts
> Henry lies ready for his Eastern tour,
> swollen ankles, one hand,
> air reservations, friends at the end of the hurts,
> a winter mind resigned: literature
> must spread, you understand.
>
> (*Dream Songs*, 169.1–6)

aubade (oh-**bahd**)   A LYRIC POEM set at day-break involving two lovers who are about to be separated. Also called ALBA. It is a timeless literary situation, which has been described in English by such diverse writers as Geoffrey Chaucer (in *Troilus and Crisede*), John Donne in 'The Sunne Rising' and Philip Larkin, whose 'Aubade' (published in 2003) begins:

> I work all day, and get half drunk at night.
> Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
> In time the curtain edges will grow light.

Augustan poets (c.1700–50)   The term originally referred to the major Latin poets writing during the reign of the Emperor Augustus: Horace, Ovid and Virgil. It was taken up to describe NEOCLASSICAL poets in eighteenth-century Britain who styled themselves after the Romans, with Alexander Pope as the most important figure, followed by writers like John Gay and John Philips.

author (**co-author; adj. authorial;** from Greek, 'increase, originate')   A person who creates a work using his or her intellectual and imaginative abilities. A **co-author** is someone who shares creative responsibility for a work. 'Co-author' is also used as a verb, though 'author' seldom is. The term 'authoress' is not used much anymore.

The concept of the 'author' has been a major critical battle-ground. A naïve view of the literary author is that he or she communicates a set message to an audience through a literary work. Our task as readers is then to absorb the meaning that the author intended: all interpretation is controlled by what the author thinks, and anything the author would not have thought is irrelevant. This is known as the INTENTIONAL FALLACY. Related to this is the BIOGRAPHICAL FALLACY, which states a work largely reflects events that occurred in an author's life. The problem with both opinions is that they ignore the interpretative (HERMENEUTIC) difficulties of