M. H. Abrams

A Glossary of Literary Terms

THIRD EDITION

A Glossary of Literary Terms

Third Edition

M. H. Abrams, Cornell University

Foreword to the Third Edition

This new edition of *A Glossary of Literary Terms* has provided the opportunity to make changes that I have long had in mind. I have shortened a few articles, expanded many others, and tried to clarify and sharpen all of them. The number of terms has been increased by about one-third. Some of the added items are traditional ones, such as *aestheticism and decadence; Bildungsroman; courtly love; deism; Menippean satire; periods of English literature; rhetoric and rhetorical criticism; surrealism*. Other terms indicate the directions taken by literature and literary criticism in recent years; for example, the *anatomy; black humor; distance and involvement; epiphany; literature of the absurd; persona, tone, and voice*. In addition, the examples used to illustrate a term have been extended to include more American writers, as well as recent works that a student is likely to have read.

The bibliographical references in the various articles have been brought up-to-date, and considerably enlarged, in the belief that an important function of the *Glossary* is to encourage the student to investigate a topic further. Books currently available in paperback are indicated by an asterisk before the title.

The most conspicuous change in the format is one that was recommended by many users: the provision of an Index of Terms at the end of the volume. This feature has made it possible to eliminate the many blank entries in the text whose only function was to serve as cross-references. All the articles of the text proper are still entered in alphabetic sequence; the terms defined and discussed within that article are printed in **boldface,** while important terms that occur in the article, but are defined elsewhere, are printed in *italics*. The most convenient way to use the *Glossary* is to refer first to the Index. There the reader will find, in **boldface,** the page number of the main discussion of a term; he will also find the page numbers of those occurrences of the term in other articles that clarify its significance and exemplify its uses. A number of entries in the Index are also supplemented by references to closely associated terms. These secondary references expedite the fuller exploration of a subject, as well as the finding of items that serve the needs of a particular course in literature. They identify, for example, the entries most relevant to the analysis of *style*, the articles that define the types of *figurative language* or literary *genres*, and the diverse articles that treat the species, component elements, history, and criticism of the *drama, lyric,* or *novel.*

To make the volume self-sufficient, simplified guides to pronunciation have been entered, in the Index of Terms, for terms that are most likely to be mispronounced by a student. The key to these guides will be found on the first page of the Index.

I have retained, although with some simplification, my original procedure of organizing the *Glossary* as a series of brief essays, in which minor terms are for the most part discussed under the major or generic terms to which they are related, and in which words that are often employed either in conjunction or as contraries (*distance and involvement, empathy and sympathy, objective and subjective, primitivism and progress*) are discussed together. The advantages of this procedure are many. A list of isolated dictionary definitions is not only forbidding but misleading, since the use and range of many terms only become clear in a context of the items to which they are related. Such a presentation also makes it possible to supplement the preferred definition of a word with enough indications of its semantic changes and of its diversity in present usage, to provide a chart by which to steer through the shifting referents and submerged ambiguities of standard literary discussion. Above all, the essay form provides an opportunity to write discussions that are readable as well as utilitarian, while the Index, and the use of **boldface** and *italic* type, make it easy to find any term that is incorporated within an essay.

My first acknowledgment must be to the late scholars Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton, whose *Glossary of Literary Terms* (1941) provided the original impetus for the present book. This new edition has profited greatly from the learning of various colleagues at Cornell, especially Professor Edgar Rosenberg, and from the generous advice of teachers at many universities, who suggested changes and additions that would make the book more useful to their students. I am especially grateful to: Thomas R. Arp, Southern Methodist University; G. N. Bergquist, Creighton University; Jack L. Capps, United States Military Academy; Ralph Flood, Temple University; Lloyd J. Kubenka, Creighton University; Robert E. Kuehn, Yale University; Daniel F. Littlefield, Oklahoma State University; Jerome J. McGann, University of Chicago; Alan H. Nelson, University of Chicago; and Leo Rockas, Briarcliff College, New York. Miss Margaret Ferguson has been a helpful and unfailingly cheerful research assistant, and Miss Marie Lonning and Miss Johnna Barto, of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, have been wise and patient editors. These advisers have helped me to come closer to my original goal: to write the kind of handbook that I wish had been available to me when I was a college student of literature.

M. H. Abrams

Ithaca, New York
August 1970

A Glossary of Literary Terms

ACT. A major division in the action of a play. Such a division was introduced into England by Elizabethan dramatists, who imitated the Roman playwright Seneca by structuring the action so that it fell into five acts. Late in the nineteenth century, a number of writers followed the example of Chekhov and Ibsen by constructing plays in four acts. In the present century the most common form for nonmusical dramas has been three acts.

Acts are often subdivided into **scenes,** which in modern plays usually consist of units of action in which there is no change of place or break in the continuity of time. (Some recent plays dispense with the division into acts, and are structured as a sequence of scenes, or episodes.) In the conventional theater with a proscenium arch and curtain, the end of a scene is usually indicated by a dropped curtain, and the end of an act by a dropped curtain and an intermission.

AESTHETICISM and DECADENCE. Aestheticism, or "the Aesthetic Movement," was a European phenomenon during the latter nineteenth century that had its chief philosophical headquarters in France. Its roots lie in the German theory, proposed by Kant (1790), that aesthetic contemplation is "disinterested," indifferent both to the reality and to the utility of the beautiful object; it was also influenced by the view of Edgar Allan Poe (in "The Poetic Principle," 1850) that the supreme work is a "poem *per se*," a "poem written solely for the poem's sake." In defiance against the indifference or hostility of their society to any art that did not inculcate current utilitarian and social values, French writers developed the doctrine that art is the supreme value among the works of man because it is self-sufficient and has no aim beyond its own perfection: the end of a work of art is simply to exist, and to be beautiful.

French Aestheticism, as a self-conscious movement, is often said to date from Théophile Gautier's witty defense of his claim that art lacks all utility (Preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin,* 1835), and it was developed by Baudelaire, Flaubert, Mallarmé, and many other writers. A rallying cry of Aestheticism became the phrase "l'art pour l'art"— **art for art's sake.** This claim usually involved also the view of life for art's sake, with the artist envisioned as a priest who renounces the practical and self-seeking concerns of ordinary existence in the service of what Flaubert and others called "the religion of beauty."

Some proponents of Aestheticism also espoused views and values which developed into a movement called the **Decadence.** The term was based on the literature and art of the latter Roman Empire, and

1

of Greece in the Byzantine era, which were said to possess the subtle savor and beauties of a culture and art which have passed their vigorous prime and fallen into decay. Such was also held to be the state of European civilization in the later nineteenth century. The precepts of the Decadence were summarized by Gautier, in the "Notice" he prefixed to an edition of Baudelaire's poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in 1868. Central to this movement was the view that art is totally opposed to "nature," both in the sense of biological nature and of the standard, or "natural," norms of morality and sexual behavior. The thoroughgoing Decadent writer cultivates high artifice, and often the bizarre, in his subject matter and style, recoils from the fecundity and exuberance of instinctual and organic life, prefers elaborate dress over the living form and cosmetics over the natural hue, and often sets out to violate what is "natural" in human experience by resorting to drugs, depravity, or sexual deviation in the attempt to achieve (in a phrase often echoed from the poet Rimbaud) "the systematic derangement of all the senses." The movement reached its height in the last two decades of the century; an extreme product was the novel, *À Rebours* (*Against the Grain*), written by J. K. Huysmans in 1884. This period is also known as the *fin de siècle* (end of the century); the phrase connotes the lassitude, satiety, and ennui expressed by many writers of the Decadence.

The doctrines of French Aestheticism were introduced into England by Walter Pater, with his emphasis on painstaking artifice and stylistic subtlety, his recommendation to crowd one's life with the maximum of exquisite sensations, and his concept of the supreme value of beauty and of "the love of art for its own sake." (See his Conclusion to *The Renaissance*,[1] 1873.) Both the Aesthetic and Decadent Movements are represented by such writers of the 1890s as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson, and the artist Aubrey Beardsley. In the search for strange sensations, a number of English Decadents in this period experimented with drugs and with illicit or perverse amours; several of them died young. Representative literary products are Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and his play *Salomé* (1893); also the poems of Ernest Dowson.

The influence of certain aesthetic and decadent tendencies—such as the view of the "autonomy" (self-sufficiency) of art, the concept of the poem or novel as a constructed object, the distrust of spontaneous "nature" as against art and artifice—have been important in the writings of such prominent recent authors as W. B. Yeats, T. E. Hulme, and T. S.

---

[1] An asterisk before a title indicates that a paperback edition of the book is available (as listed in *Paperbound Books in Print*, 1969).

Eliot, as well as in the theory of the *New Critics*. And the decadent emphasis in literature on drugged perception, sterile or deviant sexuality, and the deliberate inversion of conventional moral and social values, has recently reappeared, with modern variations, in the Beat poets and novelists and in the work of the French writer Jean Genêt.

See A. C. Bradley, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (1909); Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913); William Gaunt, *The Aesthetic Adventure* (1945); A. E. Carter, *The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, 1830–1900* (1958); Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (1957); Enid Starkie, *From Gautier to Eliot* (1960).

AFFECTIVE FALLACY. In an essay published in 1946 W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley defined the affective fallacy as the error of evaluating a poem by its effects—especially its emotional effects—upon the reader. As a result of this fallacy "the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear," so that criticism "ends in impressionism and relativism." This attempt to separate the appreciation and evaluation of a poem from its emotional and other effects on the reader has been severely criticized, on the grounds that a work of literature which leaves the reader unresponsive and impassive is not experienced as literature at all. M. C. Beardsley has since modified the earlier claim by the admission that "it does not appear that critical evaluation can be done at all except in relation to certain types of effect that aesthetic objects have upon their perceivers." So modified, the doctrine becomes a claim for *objective criticism*, in which the critic does not describe the effects of a work upon himself, but concentrates upon the analysis of the specific attributes and devices of the work by which such effects are achieved.

See Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy," reprinted in W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon* (1954); Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958), p. 491 and Chap. 11.

AGE OF SENSIBILITY. The period between the death of Alexander Pope (1744) and the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The older and alternative name for this half-century, the **Age of Johnson,** stresses the dominant position of Dr. Johnson (1709–1784) and his circle of fellow men of letters, including Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, James Boswell, and Edward Gibbon. These men on the whole represented a culmination of the literary and critical modes of *neoclassicism* and the world view of the *Enlightenment*. The more recent name, **Age of Sensibility,** instead places its stress

on the emergence, in the 1740s and later, of new cultural attitudes, theories of literature, and types of poetry—a growing sympathy for the Middle Ages, *cultural primitivism*, an intense interest in ballads and other folk literature, and a turn from neoclassic "correctness" and emphasis on judgment and restraint to an emphasis on instinct and feeling, the development of a *literature of sensibility*, and the exaltation of "original genius" and the "bardic" poetry of the sublime and visionary imagination. Thomas Gray expressed the new sensibility and values in his "Stanzas to Mr. Bentley":

> But not to one in this benighted age
> Is that diviner inspiration given,
> That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
> The pomp and prodigality of Heaven.

Other poets manifesting similar shifts in thought and taste were William Collins and Joseph and Thomas Warton (poets who, together with Gray, began in the 1740s the vogue for what Johnson slightingly referred to as "ode, and elegy, and sonnet"), Christopher Smart, William Cowper, and Robert Burns. Thomas Percy published his influential *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), which included many folk ballads and a few medieval metrical romances, and James Macpherson in the same decade published his greatly doctored versions of the poems of the Gaelic bard, Ossian (Oisin), which had an immense vogue throughout Europe. In the last decade of the period William Blake signaled the arrival of a new era in his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and his early books of visionary prophecy, written in what he called "the voice of the Bard," including *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Los*.

See W. J. Bate, *From Classic to Romantic* (1946); Northrop Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," in *Fables of Identity* (1963), and ed., *Romanticism Reconsidered* (1965); F. W. Hilles and Harold Bloom, eds., *From Sensibility to Romanticism* (1965).

ALLEGORY. An allegory is a narrative in which the agents and action, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived not only to .make sense in themselves, but also to signify a second, correlated order of persons, things, concepts, or events. There are two main types:

(1) Historical and political allegory, in which the characters and the action represent, or "allegorize," historical personages and events. So in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) King David represents Charles II, Absalom represents his natural son the Duke of Monmouth, and the biblical plot allegorizes a political crisis in contemporary England. (2) The allegory of ideas, in which the characters represent abstract concepts and the plot serves to communicate a doctrine or

thesis. Both types of allegory may either be sustained throughout a work, as in *Absalom and Achitophel* and Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), or exist merely as an episode in a nonallegorical work. One example of episodic allegory is the encounter of Satan with his daughter Sin, as well as with Death—the son born of their incestuous relationship—in *Paradise Lost* (Book II). Another example, so brief that it is a tableau rather than a developed narrative, is the passage in Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard":

> Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
> Or Flatt'ry sooth the dull cold ear of Death?

The central device in the typical allegory of ideas is the personification of abstract entities such as virtues, vices, states of mind, and types of character; in the more explicit allegories, such reference is specified by the character's name. Thus Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* allegorizes the doctrines of Christian salvation by telling how Christian, warned by Evangelist, flees the City of Destruction and makes his way laboriously to the Celestial City; en route he encounters such characters as Faithful, Hopeful, and the Giant Despair, and passes through places like the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Vanity Fair. A passage from this work will indicate the nature of a clear-cut allegorical process:

> Now as Christian was walking solitary by himself, he espied one afar off come crossing over the field to meet him; and their hap was to meet just as they were crossing the way of each other. The Gentleman's name was Mr. Worldly-Wiseman; he dwelt in the Town of Carnal-Policy, a very great Town, and also hard by from whence Christian came.

Allegory is a strategy which may be employed in any literary form or genre. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a moral and religious allegory in a prose narrative; Spenser's *Faerie Queene* fuses moral, religious, historical, and political allegory in a verse romance; the third book of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (the voyage to Laputa and Lagado) is an allegorical satire directed primarily against philosophical and scientific pedantry; and William Collins' "Ode on the Poetical Character" is a formal lyric poem which allegorizes a topic in literary criticism—the nature, dignity, and power of the poet's creative imagination.

Various literary forms may be regarded as special types of allegory, in that they narrate one coherent set of circumstances which signify a second order of correlated meanings. A **fable** is a short story that exemplifies a moral thesis or a principle of human behavior; usually in its conclusion either the narrator or one of the characters states the moral in the form of an *epigram*. Most common is the **beast fable,** in which

animals talk and act like the human types they represent. In the familiar fable of the fox and the grapes, the fox—after vainly exerting all his wiles to get the grapes hanging beyond his reach—concludes that, they are probably sour anyway: the express moral is that men belittle what they cannot get. An early set of beast fables was attributed to Aesop, a Greek slave of the sixth century B.C.; in the seventeenth century a Frenchman, Jean de la Fontaine, wrote a set of witty fables in verse which are the classics of this literary kind. Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale,* the story of the cock and the fox, is a beast fable; John Gay wrote a collection of fables in the eighteenth century; James Thurber's *Fables for Our Time* (1940) is a recent set of short fables; and in *Animal Farm* (1945) George Orwell expanded the beast fable into a sustained satire on the political and social conditions of our age.

A **parable** is a short narrative presented so as to stress the implicit but detailed analogy between its component parts and a thesis or lesson that the narrator is trying to bring home to us. The parable was one of Christ's favorite devices as a teacher; examples are His parables of the good Samaritan and of the prodigal son. Here is Christ's parable of the fig tree, Luke 13:6–9:

> He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" And he answering said unto him, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

An **exemplum** is a story told as a particular instance of the general text of a sermon. The device was extremely popular in the Middle Ages, when extensive collections of exempla were prepared for use by preachers. In Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* the Pardoner, preaching on the thesis "Greed is the root of all evil," incorporates as exemplum the tale of the three revelers who set out to find Death, but find a heap of gold instead, then kill one another in the attempt to gain sole possession of the treasure. By extension the term "exemplum" is also applied to tales used in a formal, though nonreligious, exhortation. Thus Chaucer's Chanticleer borrows the preacher's technique in the ten exempla he tells in a vain effort to persuade his skeptical wife, Dame Pertelote the hen, that bad dreams forebode disaster.

See *Didactic* and *Symbol;* and consult C. S. Lewis, **The Allegory of Love* (1936), Chap. 2; Edwin Honig, **Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory* (1959); Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964). On the exemplum, see G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (2d ed., 1961), Chap. 4.

ALLITERATION   is the repetition of speech sounds in a sequence of nearby words; the term is usually applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound occurs in a conspicuous position at the beginning of a word or of a stressed syllable within a word. In Old English **alliterative meter**, alliteration is the organizing device of the verse line: each line is divided into two half-lines of two stresses by a decisive pause, or *caesura*, and at least one, and usually both, of the two stressed words in the first half-line alliterates with the first stressed word of the second half-line. (In this versification a vowel was considered to alliterate with any other vowel.) A number of Middle English poems, such as "Piers Plowman" and *Gawain and the Green Knight*, continued to use and play variations upon the old alliterative meter. (See *strong-stress meters*.) In the opening line of "Piers Plowman," for example, all four of the stressed words alliterate:

> In a *s*omer *s*eson, whan *s*oft was the *s*onne . . .

In later English versification, however, alliteration is used only for special stylistic effects, such as to reinforce the meaning, to link related words, or to provide tone color. An example is the repetition of the *s*, *th*, and *w* sounds in Shakespeare's Sonnet XXX:

> When to the *s*essions of *s*weet *s*ilent *th*ought
> I *s*ummon up remembrance of *th*ings past,
> I *s*igh the lack of many a *th*ing I *s*ought
> And *w*ith old *w*oes new *w*ail my dear time's *w*aste.

Various other repetitions of speech sounds are identified by technical terms. **Consonance** is the repetition of a sequence of consonants, but with a change in the intervening stressed vowel: live–love, lean–alone, pitter–patter. W. H. Auden's " 'O where are you going?' said reader to rider," makes prominent use of this device; the last stanza reads:

> "Out of this house"—said *rider* to *reader*,
> "Yours never will"—said *farer* to *fearer*,
> "They're looking for you"—said *hearer* to *horror*,
> As he left them there, as he left them there.[1]

Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds— especially in stressed syllables—in a sequence of nearby words. Note the recurrent long *i* in the opening lines of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
> Thou foster child of silence and slow time.

[1] From "O where are you going?" Copyright 1934 and renewed 1962 by W. H. Auden. Reprinted from *Collected Shorter Poems, 1927–1957*, by W. H. Auden, by permission of Random House, Inc., and Faber and Faber Ltd.

The assonantal effect at the beginning of William Collins' "Ode to Evening" depends on a sequence both of similar and of identical vowels:

> If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song,
> May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy pensive ear.

For a special case of the repetition of vowels and consonants in combination, see *Rhyme*.

ALLUSION   in a work of literature is a brief reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage. In Thomas Nashe's "Litany in Time of Plague,"

> Brightness falls from the air,
> Queens have died young and fair,
> Dust hath closed Helen's eye,

there is an explicit allusion to Helen of Troy. Most allusions serve to enlarge upon or enhance a subject, but some are used in order ironically to undercut it by the discrepancy between the subject and the allusion. In the lines from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, describing a modern woman at her dressing table,

> The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
> Glowed on the marble,[1]

the ironic allusion, by the indirect mode of echoing Shakespeare's words, is to *Antony and Cleopatra* (II. ii. 196 ff.):

> The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
> Burn'd on the water.

For discussion of a poet who makes persistent and complex use of this device, see Reuben A. Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* (1959).

In older literature the author assumed that his allusions would be recognized by the educated readers of the day. But a number of modern authors (including Joyce, Pound, and Eliot) often employ allusions that are highly specialized, or else are based on the author's private reading and experience, in the knowledge that very few readers will recognize them without the help of scholarly annotation.

AMBIGUITY.   In ordinary usage "ambiguity" is commonly applied to a fault in style: the use of a vague or equivocal expression when what is wanted is precision and singleness of reference. Since William Empson published *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), however, the

---

[1] From *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot (1922). Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., and Faber and Faber Ltd.

term has been widely used in criticism to identify a special poetic device: the use of a word or expression such that two or more distinct references, or else two or more diverse kinds of connotation, are equally relevant. **Multiple meaning** and **plurisignation** are alternate terms for this use of language; they have the advantage of avoiding the pejorative aspect of the word "ambiguity."

When Shakespeare's Cleopatra, exciting the asp to a frenzy, says (V. ii. 306 ff.),

> Come, thou mortal wretch,
> With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
> Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
> Be angry, and dispatch,

her speech is richly multiple in significance. For example, "mortal" means "fatal" or "death-dealing," and at the same time signifies that the asp is itself mortal, or subject to death. "Wretch" in this context serves to express both contempt and pity (Cleopatra goes on to refer to the asp as "my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep"). And the two meanings of "dispatch"—"make haste" and "kill"—are both relevant.

"Intrinsicate" in the same passage exemplifies a special type of multiple meaning, the **portmanteau word**. The term was introduced into literary criticism by Humpty Dumpty, the expert on semantics in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. He is explicating to Alice the meaning of the opening lines of "Jabberwocky":

> 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.

"Slithy," Humpty Dumpty explained, "means 'lithe and slimy'. . . . You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." A portmanteau word thus is coined by fusing together two or more words. Shakespeare's "intrinsicate," for example, is a fusion of "intrinsic" and "intricate." James Joyce exploited this device to the full in order to sustain the multiple levels of meaning in his dream narrative *Finnegans Wake*; an example is his comment on girls who are "yung and easily freudened."

William Empson (who named and enlarged upon a literary phenomenon that had been noted by earlier writers) helped set current a mode of explication which has greatly expanded our sense of the complexity and richness of poetic language. The risk, exemplified both by Empson and other recent critics, is that the intensive search for ambiguities easily leads to **over-reading**: ingenious, overdrawn, and sometimes self-contradictory explications that violate the norms of the English language and ignore the controls upon reference exerted by the context of a literary passage.

For related terms see *Connotation and Denotation* and *Pun*. Refer to Empson, and to Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (1954), especially Chap. 4. For critiques of Empson's theory and application of the concept of ambiguity, see John Crowe Ransom, "Mr. Empson's Muddles," *The Southern Review*, IV (1938), and Elder Olson, "William Empson, Contemporary Criticism and Poetic Diction," in *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane (1952).

ANGRY YOUNG MEN   designates a group of British novelists and playwrights of the 1950s and later who—in an era of greatly increased upward mobility of the social classes—manifest hostility toward the traditions, standards, and manners of what has come to be called "the Establishment." A number of their works depict in comic or satiric fashion the oppressiveness, hypocrisy, and stultifying values in the English school or university, or in the social, commercial, or industrial world. Examples are novels such as Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Alan Sillitoe's *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1960), and plays such as John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1957). The mode survives in the late 1960s, in the cinema *If . . .* , directed by Lindsay Anderson, and has influenced the English *literature of the absurd*. See John Russell Taylor, *Anger and After* (1962).

ANTITHESIS   is a contrast or opposition in meaning, emphasized by a parallel in grammatical structure. An example is Alexander Pope's description of Atticus in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike." In the second line of Pope's description of the Baron's designs against Belinda, in *The Rape of the Lock*, the grammatical parallelism is strengthened by alliteration in the nouns:

> Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
> By *f*orce to ravish, or by *f*raud betray.

An example of antithesis in prose is this sentence from Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, Chap. 26: "Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures."

ARCHAISM.   The use in literature of words and expressions that have become obsolete in common speech. Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* deliberately employed archaisms (many of them derived from Chaucer's English) in the attempt to achieve a specialized poetic style, and one that is particularly appropriate to his revival of the medieval *chivalric romance*. The translators of the King James Version of the Bible (1611) gave weight, dignity, and sonority to their prose by

archaic revivals. Both Spenser and the King James Bible have in their turn been major sources of archaisms in Milton and many later poets. When Keats, for example, described the Grecian Urn as "with *brede / Of marble men and maidens overwrought*," he used archaic words for "braid" and "worked [that is, ornamented] all over." Until recent times many poets have continued to say "I ween," "methought," "steed," "taper" (for candle), and "morn," but only in verse.

ARCHETYPE.   On the one side the literary theory of the archetype derives from the school of comparative anthropology at Cambridge University, of which the basic work is J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915); this book traced elemental patterns of myth and ritual which, it claimed, recur in the legends and ceremonials of the most diverse cultures. On the other side the theory derives from the depth psychology of C. G. Jung, who applied the term "archetype" to "primordial images," the "psychic residue" of repeated types of experience in the lives of our very ancient ancestors which, Jung said, are inherited in the "collective unconscious" of the human race and are expressed in myths, religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in works of literature.

The term has been much employed in literary criticism, especially since the appearance of Maud Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934). In criticism "archetype" is applied to narrative designs, character types, or images which are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams, and even ritualized modes of social behavior. Similarities within these diverse phenomena are held to reflect a set of universal, primitive, and elemental patterns, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the reader. Some archetypal critics have dropped Jung's theory of the collective unconscious; in the words of Northrop Frye, this theory is "an unnecessary hypothesis," and the recurrent archetypal patterns are simply there, "however they got there."

Among the prominent practitioners of various forms of archetypal criticism, in addition to Maud Bodkin, are G. Wilson Knight, Robert Graves, Philip Wheelwright, Richard Chase, and Joseph Campbell. In a remarkable and widely influential book, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye developed the archetypal approach into a radical and inclusive revision of the traditional grounds both of the theory of literature and the practice of literary criticism. Since all these critics tend to emphasize the underlying mythical patterns in literature, on the assumption that myths are closer to the elemental archetype than are the artful products of sophisticated writers of literary works,