



# **BREWER'S DICTIONARY OF 20TH-CENTURY PHRASE AND FABLE**



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# PREFACE

The first edition of Dr Ebenezer Cobham Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* was published in 1870. By the time a second edition had appeared in 1895, the publisher was able to claim sales of 100,000 copies – no mean achievement in an age in which only a small proportion of the population was able to benefit from secondary or higher education.

Clearly his formula of combining what was then called philology with classical, Celtic, and Norse mythology, all embellished with a wide range of literary allusion, was a winner. As John Buchanan-Brown says in his Introduction to the 14th (1989) edition:

'The *Dictionary* undoubtedly owed its popularity to the way in which its subject-matter, whether by intuition or by conscious design, responded to the needs of a reading public created by nineteenth-century conditions. From the rapidly growing towns and cities emerged a class of reader, literate if not educated in the academic sense, which looked beyond the pure entertainment of novels and poetry, the utility of self-education and the moral uplift of religious books to the satisfaction of simple intellectual curiosity. This is that spirit of enquiry which at one end of the scale leads to pure scholarship and at the other to the acquisition of what some would stigmatize as totally useless information.'

For Cassell, the publishers of the first and all subsequent editions of Dr Brewer's *Dictionary*, it has been an obligation to keep the book in print and to produce new and updated editions at regular intervals. These revisions have attempted to acknowledge the most striking developments in the language of the contemporary age without destroying the balance and charm of Dr Brewer's original. However, it has become increasingly apparent that developments in this century, being both rapid and voluminous, would justify an account in their own right; and hence a purely 20th-century version was conceived.

The brief for the new book has been much the same as that which Dr Brewer set himself in the 1860s, except that this book takes 1900 as its starting-point,

thus excluding any entry that does not truly belong to the 20th century. The compilers have attempted to pick up the threads of Dr Brewer's approach to his subject matter in the original volume, finding modern equivalents for – and developments of – the phrases and myths that first attracted him. Inevitably, this is not a Victorian book, but what it does share with the original is a taste for the unusual, even the bizarre, in language and event, as well as an enthusiasm for providing interesting information not available in conventional dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Since 1900 there has been a positive avalanche of new phrases in the English language. It has not been possible to include them all. What has been achieved is a selection of the most evocative and interesting words and phrases, choosing especially those about which there is something worthwhile to say. The selection has been made from the English spoken on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as in Australia and New Zealand.

Because the 20th century is not especially known for its fables, it has been necessary to interpret this word in the broader sense of 'myths'; these range from famous murders and military disasters to political scandals and legendary film stars. The 20th century is by no means short of myths, as the browser in this compilation will soon discover. Numerous quotations and copious anecdotal material have been included, in order to make *Brewer's Dictionary of 20th-Century Phrase and Fable* entertaining as well as informative. Because the 20th century has seen the most far-reaching developments in science in the whole history of mankind, it has been thought worthwhile to include a number of entries recording the milestones along this most exciting of routes.

The editors will welcome any correspondence on the individual entries in this book, or suggestions for new entries in subsequent editions.

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |            |       |            |
|--------|------------|-------|------------|
| Arab.  | Arabic     | Ital. | Italian    |
| Austr. | Australian | Jap.  | Japanese   |
| Dan.   | Danish     | Lat.  | Latin      |
| Dut.   | Dutch      | Port. | Portuguese |
| Fr.    | French     | Russ. | Russian    |
| Ger.   | German     | Sans. | Sanskrit   |
| Gr.    | Greek      | Sp.   | Spanish    |
| Heb.   | Hebrew     | Swed. | Swedish    |
| Hind.  | Hindustani | Turk. | Turkish    |

### **CROSS-REFERENCES**

These are indicated in the text by the use of SMALL CAPITALS.



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# A

**A** A former category of film classification indicating that in the opinion of the British Board of Film Censors a film was suitable for being shown to adults and children over 14 years of age and to children below that age only if accompanied by an adult. The symbol was first introduced in the UK in 1914 and finally dropped in the 1980s.

**AA** A former category of film classification indicating that in the opinion of the British Board of Film Censors a film was not suitable for being shown to children under 14 years of age. An abbreviation for Accompanied by Adult, the classification was introduced in 1970 and dropped in the 1980s.

**A-bomb** See ATOM BOMB; NUCLEAR WEAPON.

**A-effect** (Ger. *V-Effekt*, *Verfremdungseffekt*) Alienation effect. The term coined by the playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) for his technique of deliberately distancing both actors and audience to his plays by various alienating devices, thereby controlling the degree to which they identify with the drama. Brecht's intention was to jolt the sensibilities of all participants in order to sharpen their objectivity and awareness. He achieved this A-effect in several ways, including the use of third person narrative, past tense, unusual or subversive design, and spoken stage directions embodied in the production. For example, an actor may step out of character during a scene to address the audience.

**A-Line** See DIOR.

**A side** The most commercially promising side of a pop-music single disc, i.e. the recording intended to enter the CHARTS. A 'double A side' single is one with potential chart material on both sides. See also B SIDE.

**A<sub>2</sub>** The virus identified as the cause of ASIAN FLU.

**A6 murder** The controversial murder case involving James Hanratty, a petty burglar, who in 1962 was convicted of murdering office worker Michael Gregston. The body of Gregston was discovered in a lay-by on the A6 at

Deadman's Hill near Bedford, in August 1961. Hanratty was convicted largely on the strength of his identification by Gregston's girlfriend, Valerie Storie, who had been seriously wounded by the couple's attacker. Hanratty was hanged on 4 April, in spite of doubts about his conviction expressed by some. Concern over the outcome of the case contributed to the abolition of the death penalty in the UK.

**h aardvark** British student pun of the late 1980s for hard work.

**Abadan Crisis** A political dispute between the UK and Iran following the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry in 1951. This threatened the interests of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (later renamed British Petroleum), which operated the large refinery at Abadan. The UK retaliated with a blockade of Iran, thereby damaging the Iranian economy. The crisis was resolved by the formation in 1954 of an international consortium of oil companies (including Anglo-Iranian) to run the Iranian oilfields.

**Abbey Theatre** A Dublin theatre, opened in 1904, renowned for staging works by contemporary Irish playwrights, including Yeats, Synge, George Russell (known as AE), and Lady Gregory. The Abbey Theatre was built at the instigation of Annie Horniman (1860–1937) and became the home of the Irish National Dramatic Society. A fire destroyed the original building in 1951 but a new playhouse was subsequently built, opening in 1966.

**ABDA** American, British, Dutch and Australian Command – the short-lived Allied command set up under Wavell (1883–1950) in the Pacific in early 1942.

**Abdication Crisis** The constitutional dispute between the uncrowned King Edward VIII and the British Establishment; it was caused by the king's intention to marry the American twice-divorced Mrs. Wallis Simpson. Edward had been an intimate friend of Mrs. Simpson for some

years before acceding to the throne after the death of his father, George V, on 20 January 1936. In the ensuing months he continued to escort Mrs. Simpson while she awaited her divorce from her second husband, Ernest Simpson. This was granted in October, and the couple hoped the final hurdle to their marriage had been cleared.

However, they reckoned without the Establishment. Prime Minister Baldwin, prodded and supported by various prominent figures alarmed by the constitutional implications, informed the king that marriage to Mrs. Simpson was unacceptable while he remained on the throne. Reaction among the British public was mixed. The king had been a popular figure noted for his concern for the unemployed and the poverty of the 1930s. But opposition to divorce was still widespread, a moral position staunchly upheld by the Church of England, especially by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, who who came out as a strong supporter of Baldwin.

With no hint of compromise from his prime minister, the king relinquished the throne on 11 December, to be succeeded by his brother, George VI. In a radio broadcast to the Commonwealth on the night of his abdication, the ex-king gave a moving account of his reasons for leaving: "... I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love."

Edward was created Duke of Windsor and given the title Royal Highness, although this was refused his wife after their marriage on 3 June 1937 in Paris. The Abdication, a mountain in Britain's moral landscape, retains its fascination for successive generations; at its heart it contains the dilemma of an individual torn between love and the highest office in the land.

Well, Mr. Baldwin! This is a pretty kettle of fish!  
QUEEN MARY, speaking to the prime minister.

**Aberfan disaster** A tragedy that befell the mining village of Aberfan in Mid Glamorgan on 21 October 1966. A vast tip of colliery waste slid downhill engulfing part of the village, including the school. 116 of the 144 lives lost were children. The disaster prompted an urgent review of the siting and maintenance of similar tips.

**Abgrenzung** (Ger. demarcation) The former policy of separation of the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Re-

public of Germany following the creation of two German states after World War II. Deeply resented by many Germans in both countries, it was finally and comprehensively dropped as official policy in 1990, when the two states reunited.

**able. able and willing to pull his weight** President Theodore Roosevelt's summary of the ideal American in a widely reported speech of 1902. The oft-repeated sentiment in full ran thus:

The first requisite of a good citizen in this Republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight.

**ableism** Discrimination on the grounds of able-bodiedness. Employers are accused of ableism when they discriminate in favour of hiring an able-bodied person for a job rather than a person with a physical or mental handicap who could have done the job equally well. The word is formed on the same basis of racism and sexism.

**ABM** Anti-Ballistic Missile. A weapon designed to shoot down an incoming enemy missile. ABMs were developed and deployed by America and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and early 1970s to preserve a retaliatory capacity even in the event of a first strike by the other side. The menace from ABMs was effectively neutralized by the SALT I accord (see SALT) in 1972.

**Abominable Snowman** Name, popularized by Eric Shipton's Everest Expedition of 1951, for the yeti, a rare, elusive, and supposedly bearlike animal of the Himalayas. Sir Edmund Hillary found the alleged footprints of a yeti in 1960 and explained its elusiveness thus: "There is precious little in civilization to appeal to a yeti." See also BIGFOOT.

**above-the-line** Advertising expenditure on which a commission is payable to an advertising agency. This includes all mass-media advertising. **Below-the-line** advertising, on which no commission is payable, includes direct mail, free samples, and point of sale material. The distinction is arbitrary but reflects the way in which company profit and loss accounts are prepared, with a horizontal line separating entries that show how the profit or loss is calculated (above the line) from those that show how it has been used or distributed (below the line).

**Absurd, Theatre of the A** form of drama that jettisons the conventions of narrative

plot and characterization to reflect the dramatist's belief in the meaninglessness of human existence. Absurdist theatre was first fully realized in Ionesco's *The Bald Prima Donna* (1948) and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952). In the latter work, two tramps wait in vain for the mysterious Godot, who never appears. Like all absurdist works, it hovers inconsequentially around the concepts of isolation, futility, and self-deception. The tramps' predicament is universal and the play's title has come to stand for that predicament. In his later works, Beckett reached the frontiers of the absurdist's world, with characters in bizarre settings and the minimal use of speech. For instance in *Happy Days* (1960), the main character, Winnie, is gradually immersed in sand, while *Breath* (1969) runs for just 30 seconds and includes sounds of both birth and death. Many of Harold Pinter's works, such as *The Room* (1957) and *The Caretaker* (1960), are described as absurdist or neo-absurdist.

**abuse** A well-established word that has taken on a new lease of life in the 20th century. It has acquired a sinister relevance in such combinations as **alcohol abuse**, **drug abuse**, **solvent abuse** (see GLUE SNIFFING), and **CHILD ABUSE**. The US psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1920– ) described **self-abuse** (masturbation) as "the primary sexual activity of mankind . . .", concluding that "in the nineteenth century it was a disease; in the twentieth it's a cure."

**Abwehr** The German military intelligence service. It was led from 1935 by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, who saw its authority increasingly curtailed before and during World War II. Hitler favoured the rival intelligence organizations, the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*) and the SS (*Schutzstaffel*). As a consequence, the Abwehr became a focus of opposition to Hitler. Several of its leaders, including Canaris, were implicated in the 1944 plot to overthrow the Führer, and Hitler ordered that it be merged with the SD in February 1944.

**Abyssinia!** A catchphrase, dating from the time of the Abyssinian War (1935–36), to mean 'I'll be seeing you'.

**ACAB** All Coppers Are Bastards. An abbreviation much used in the 1950s and 1960s in graffiti and in slogans on clothing, as

well as in chants at demonstrations and football matches.

**acanthaster** The crown-of-thorns starfish, which in the latter part of the 20th century was discovered to be posing a major threat to the survival of the world's coral reefs because of the destruction of its natural predator, the Pacific triton, by shell collectors. Feeding on coral, the acanthaster is capable of destroying 50 years worth of coral growth overnight; Australia's Great Barrier Reef is particularly at risk with a consequent significant loss in tourist revenue being reported in the 1980s.

**Acapulco Gold** A type of marijuana with golden leaves grown in the region around Acapulco, Mexico, and much prized for its potency. It was imported into America, particularly California, from the late 1960s.

**ACAS** Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service. In the UK, a government QUANGO set up in the 1970s to attempt to resolve industrial disputes before major damage could be done to the economic interests of the country.

**accepted pairing** In advertising, an admission that a rival's product has a particular strength in order to highlight the superior quality of that feature in one's own product.

**accommodation collar** US slang for an arrest made for motives not related to the alleged offence itself. Such an arrest is often made to meet a demand for police action and in the knowledge that the charges will fail for lack of evidence.

**according to plan** A catchphrase derived from communiqués issued during World War I, when the phrase became associated with official attempts to cover up military blunders and setbacks. It was thus employed ironically to describe things that did *not* go according to plan.

**AC/DC** Bisexual. The expression originated in America by analogy with electrical devices adaptable for either alternating or direct current. It became popular in the UK during the 1960s and early 1970s. Bisexual people are also said to 'swing both ways'. The sexual imagery of electricity is further elaborated in the tradition of 'male' and 'female' connectors in wiring etc.

**ace** The number one on playing cards or dice, from *as*, the Latin unit of weight. In World War I the French word, *as*, was applied to an airman who had brought down ten enemy aeroplanes; it was imported in its English equivalent, *ace*, and later extended to any especially expert flier, golfer, etc. Anything excellent or outstanding can now be referred to as 'ace'.

Live: pool . . . the city of the Beatles, *Brookside* and an ace football team is poised to storm back into fashion.

*The Independent*, 16 March 1991.

**ace in the hole** US expression for a reserve, often hidden, advantage or strength that is held until needed, especially for a crisis or opportunity, as in 'his friendship with the chairman is his ace in the hole'. It became popular in the 1920s and was derived from stud poker. A similar expression is 'ace up one's sleeve'.

**acey-deucey** US slang for partly good partly bad, or slightly dubious. Derived from a card game in which aces are high and twos (deuces) are low, it pre-dates World War II but is still sometimes heard.

**acid** A slang name for LSD.

**acid bath murders** The gruesome series of murders committed by John George Haigh in the 1940s. Haigh was arrested in 1949 for the murder of an elderly widow, Mrs Durand-Deacon, whom he had killed and whose body he dissolved in a bath of sulphuric acid. Haigh confessed to the crime, and to the murder of seven other people, two of which were fictitious. He claimed to have drained the blood from his victims prior to dissolving them, and to have drunk a cupful of blood from each. His plea of insanity was dismissed and he was hanged. The bath he used is preserved in Scotland Yard's Black Museum.

**acid head** One who is addicted to, and probably often mentally incapacitated by, LSD.

**acid house** or **house** A style of synthesized music with a repetitive hypnotic beat, originating from America and associated with the taking of hallucinogenic drugs, especially ECSTASY. As its popularity spread in the UK during the late 1980s, thousands of young people (many wearing 'A-c-e-e-e-d' T-shirts) congregated in deserted warehouses and club venues for all-night acid-house parties. These were frequently raided by the police in search of drugs, although party organizers

and acid-house fans have always denied any drug connection. *See also* ORBITAL.

**acid pad** A place, particularly someone's home, where LSD, and probably other drugs, are regularly used.

**acid rain** Originally a term used to describe the heavily polluted rainfall in the Manchester area in the 19th century. Then, as now, it refers to rain containing sulphuric and nitric acids formed from sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides present in the atmosphere as a result of burning fossil fuels on an industrial scale. The combustion of petrol and oil in vehicles without cleaning the exhaust gases now also contributes these acid-forming oxides to the environment. It is believed that acid rain can destroy crops, trees, and fish as well as causing damage to buildings. In 1985, 19 countries agreed to reduce their emissions of sulphur dioxide by 30% by 1993.

**acid rock** A type of rock music popular in the 1960s and early 1970s involving amplified electronic effects and bizarre lighting, suggestive of disorientating hallucinatory drugs.

**ack. ack-ack** Slang from World Wars I and II meaning anti-aircraft guns (from signalling code for AA).

**ack emma** *See* PIP EMMA.

**ackers** (Egypt. *akka* currency unit) Money. This word has been used by the British forces and the working class since the 1920s, but re-emerged in the 1980s along with other humorous synonyms for money including **spondulicks** and **rhino** in the speech of middle-class imitators.

**ACORN** A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods, a directory of 39 different neighbourhoods in the UK, used by companies selling goods or services on the assumption that the inhabitants of particular neighbourhoods are likely to have similar interests and disposable incomes. It is much used by door-to-door and telephone salespeople offering swimming pools, double glazing, insurance, finance, etc. It also provides information on which areas to omit in a sales drive.

**acqua alta** (It. high water) Italian term used of the water that periodically floods central Venice. The city was badly damaged in such floods in November 1966. In the late 1960s, in an attempt to prevent further inundations (and to halt the city's rapid deterioration in the late 20th-century from air pollution), UNES-

CO launched a programme of scientific and technical research. A series of flood barriers is also planned for the city. The *Venice in Peril* campaign aims to promote the city's protection.

**Acrobat** The codename for a British offensive into Tripolitania, N Africa, in late 1941. The plan to capture Tripoli was frustrated by Rommel, and by January 1942 the British, led by Auchinleck, were forced to retreat.

**acrophobe** A person who is afraid of heights. The name became increasingly relevant in the 20th century with the building of SKYSCRAPERS.

**action. action level** The amount of a toxic or other undesirable substance in a foodstuff that warrants official investigation in America.

**Action Man** A nickname acquired by Prince Charles in the years before his marriage to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. Derived from the tradename of a toy soldier figure, it referred humorously to the prince's adventurous lifestyle, which included service in the Royal Navy and various sporting interests.

**action painting** A term coined by the US art critic Harold Rosenberg in 1952 to describe works produced by a group of Abstract Expressionists, the best known of whom were Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. The style is characterized by dynamic spontaneous gestures, spilling, splattering, and dripping paint onto canvas laid on the floor. The finished work is intended to reflect a creative interplay between the artist and his materials, free from the constraints of preconceived form or subject matter. It placed more value in the act of creation rather than in the final product.

On the floor I am more at ease, I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be 'in' the painting.

JACKSON POLLOCK, in 1947, quoted in Tomassoni's *Pollock* (1968).

Abstract Expressionism was invented by New York drunks.

JONI MITCHELL, interview on BBC television, 1965.

**action replay** The repetition of a section of a TV broadcast, usually in SLOW MOTION, to analyse a key moment in a sports event such as a goal, winning putt, etc.

**Actors' Studio** The New York-based workshop for professional actors founded in 1947 by Elia Kazan, Robert Lewis, and

Cheryl Crawford. Under the artistic direction of Lee Strasberg (from 1948), the Studio became known as the US home of the acting technique known as the METHOD and nurtured many leading theatre and film stars, including Marlon Brando. The Studio is primarily a forum for exploration and experimentation, away from the pressures of commercial production. The costs are met by voluntary subscription, and membership is by invitation following audition.

**actress. as the actress said to the bishop** An expression added to what seems a perfectly straight-forward innocent remark to create a sexual double entendre. Typical examples might include "I never knew I had it in me" or "I'd bend over backwards to please you". The phrase was popular in the RAF in the 1940s, although its origin is said to be Edwardian. An alternative form of this expression is **as the art mistress said to the gardener**, which was popularized by the British actress Beryl Reid when playing the part of Monica in the BBC radio series *Educating Archie* (broadcast in the 1950s).

**AD** Drug Addict. An abbreviation used mostly in America by both drug addicts and the police. It is formed by taking the first two letters of addict, or by reversing the initial letters of the two words, thereby distinguishing it from DA for District Attorney. DA, however, was the more fashionable expression in the UK in the 1960s.

**ad. admass** Coined by J. B. Priestley in *Journey Down a Rainbow* (1955) to describe the vast mid-20th-century proliferation of commercial advertising and high-pressure salesmanship, especially in America. The word has now come to mean the vast mass of the general public to which advertisers address their publicity.

**adperson** An employee in the advertising business.

**advertorial** An article in a newspaper or magazine that appears to be editorial matter but on closer examination, is intended to promote a particular product or service. See also PLUGUMENTARY.

**Ada** A computer-programming language developed for the US Department of Defense. It was named after Augusta Ada Lovelace, daughter of Lord Byron, wife of the Earl of Lovelace, and co-worker of Charles Babbage (1792-1871), the British

mathematician. Babbage is given credit for the invention of computers as he built a calculating machine regarded as the forerunner of the electronic computer. The machine is preserved, unfinished, in the Science Museum in London.

**Adam** See ECSTASY.

**Adams, Bodkin** See BLUEBEARD OF EASTBOURNE.

**ADAPTS** Air Deliverable Antipollution Transfer System. A system of dealing with oil pollution employed by the US coastguard. The system relies upon entrapping the oil with inflatable nylon bags and then pumping it off the water.

**admiral. Admiral's Cup** The trophy presented by the Admiral of the Royal Ocean Racing Club to the winners of the biennial series of races for yachts in the 29-60 foot class. The three-boat teams compete in five races along the English Channel, including the famous FASTNET Race. The competition was inaugurated in 1957, when a British team won the trophy.

**The Admiral of the Atlantic salutes the Admiral of the Pacific** A telegram from the German emperor Wilhelm II to Czar Nicholas II in 1905. Sent during a naval exercise, it reflected Germany's determination to assert itself as a world power, a desire that contributed to the outbreak of World War I.

**advance man** A public relations officer who paves the way for a politician on a campaign tour. The term was formerly used of publicity agents for touring circuses and similar entertainment troupes.

**adventure playground** A children's playground furnished with climbing frames and other equipment, especially designed to encourage exploration and develop physical skills.

**AE** The pseudonym of the Irish poet and playwright George William Russell (1867-1935). It was derived as a contraction of his one-time signature 'aeon'. Russell's output was considerable and varied and includes several volumes of poetry and the play *Deirdre* (1902). He also helped found Dublin's ABBEY THEATRE.

**aequorin** A secretion produced by the jellyfish *Aequorea aequorea*. Its luminous qualities make it useful in microscopy.

**aerial ping-pong** A facetious name for Australian Rules Football, in which much

of the game is played in the air because of the high jumps and kicks involved in the style of play.

**aero-. aerobics** (Gk. *aer* air, *bios* life)

Programmes of exercise designed to improve the body's uptake of oxygen and thus benefit general health. Aerobic exercises first became popular in the 1960s and soon won converts throughout the western world; noted proponents of the system have included the film actress Jane Fonda.

**aerogram** An airmail letter in the form of a sheet of thin paper which can be folded and posted overseas.

**aerophobe** A person who is petrified of air travel. The term was first coined in the 1960s.

**aerosol** A type of pressurized spray can much used in perfumery, polishes, paints, etc. until the 1980s. The use of chlorofluorocarbons (see CFC) as propellants in aerosols caused concern when it was alleged that the proliferation of such substances in the atmosphere was damaging the OZONE LAYER. New NONAEROSOLS were developed in response to public doubts.

**Aertex** A type of fabric woven into a pattern of small squares and widely used for clothing in the mid-20th century. Originally a tradename (belonging to William Hollins and Company), constructed from the words *airy* and *texture*, it is now used loosely for any material of a similar kind; the fabric itself was first invented in 1888.

**aesthéticienne** A female beautician; an anglicized form of the French *esthéticienne*, which has the same meaning. There has always been a marked French influence on the beauty and fashion worlds of the UK and America and this tendency, with its overtones of Parisian elegance and luxury, increased as the cosmetics industry became more competitive and more profitable in the 1960s.

**affluence. Affluent Society** A phrase, popular from the later 1950s, denoting the overall growth in material prosperity of British society. It is measured by the increasingly widespread ownership of cars, television sets, washing machines, refrigerators, etc. in a society further cushioned by its 'free' social services. J. K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* was published in 1958.

**affluenza** A new coinage derived by combining affluence and influenza to describe



a condition originating in America and affecting those who have so much money and so many possessions that their mental health has suffered. The resulting psychological changes and disturbances are seen as the symptoms of affluenza.

**Afghanistanism** Journalists' slang for unusual interest in events in remote parts of the world over and above happenings at home. The term was first used in the 1950s but acquired new relevance when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1980.

**Africa. Afrikaans** A language of South Africa that has evolved from the Dutch originally spoken by 17th-century settlers and their descendants, the Afrikaners. It had become distinct as a spoken language by 1800, and in 1925 was made an official South African language (with English).

**Afrika Korps** The combined force of two armoured divisions and one infantry division that was led to devastating effect by Erwin Rommel (see *DESERT FOX*) as part of the German offensive in North Africa during World War II. Formed in February 1941, the Korps enjoyed a string of military successes until halted and ultimately repulsed at ALAMEIN. The Korps finally surrendered in May 1943, although Rommel had been ordered home by Hitler in March.

**African. African lager** Guinness. So called in some London pubs in the 1970s, because the most popular beer in the pubs of Southern England was lager and Guinness is black.

**African National Congress** See *ANC*.

**African woodbine** A cannabis cigarette, a reefer, a joint. Woodbines are a cheap brand of cigarettes that were especially popular in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Afro** A large spherical bushy haircut of tight curls popular with Black people in the 1960s and 1970s, also imitated by Whites during this period.

**Afroism** Sympathy with the culture and interests of Black Africa. In some definitions it includes the promotion of BLACK POWER.

**Afro-Saxon** Any Black person who is seen as a collaborator with the white community.

**after. afterbirth** (1) Army and school slang for rhubarb, used in both the UK and America. (2) A rare US expression for excessive paperwork.

**after you, Claude - no, after you, Cecil** The catchphrase of the broker's men Cecil and Claude in the BBC radio comedy 'ITMA', which was very popular during the 1940s.

**Agadir Crisis** The dispute between France and Germany triggered by the despatch of the German warship *Panther* to the Moroccan port of Agadir in July 1911. Germany held that this was needed to protect German interests in response to the arrival of French troops in Morocco. The affair raised tensions throughout Europe but was settled by an agreement signed between France and Germany on 4 November. However, hostility between the two nations remained, while the crisis served to strengthen Franco-British relations.

**ageism** Discrimination on the grounds of age, usually referring to the older rather than the younger members of the community. Coined by Dr. Robert Butler, director of the Institute of Aging, by analogy to racism, the term is most commonly applied in the field of employment. Discrimination on the grounds of age is particularly prevalent in times of wide unemployment as in the 1980s in the UK.

**agenbite of inwit** Remorse of conscience.

The phrase was popularized in the 20th century by James Joyce in the novel *Ulysses* (1922) and was widely heard in the UK in the 1960s. Joyce in turn derived it from a medieval manuscript, the *Ayenbite of Inwyte*.

**Agent Orange** A defoliant used in jungle war, especially by US forces in the VIETNAM WAR, during which it gained its name as its containers had orange rings painted round them. It is highly toxic to humans. Chemically it consists of 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyethanoic acid. Less toxic versions were **Agent Blue**, **Agent Purple**, and **Agent White**.

**aggiornamento** (It. bringing up to date)

The liberalization of policy that was officially sanctioned in the Roman Catholic church in the 1960s. It was the main feature of the Vatican Council of 1962-65 and the result of pressure by Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI to reform the church in line with developments in the modern world. It included reform of the liturgy and promotion of the ecumenical movement.



**aggro** Aggressive trouble-making; in the 1960s and 1970s aggro was associated with thuggish behaviour, football hooliganism, etc., but in later usage it was employed in the less threatening sense of mild irritation, as in 'I don't need this kind of aggro'.

**agit- agitpop** The use of pop music to put across a political message. The pop star Billy Bragg, for example, has used his music to espouse many left-wing causes. The word derives from the Russian AGIT-PROP.

**agitprop** (Russ. *agitatsiya propaganda* agitation propaganda) A term coined by Georgy Plekhanov and later elaborated by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done* (1902). 'Agitation' implied the use of political slogans and half-truths to exploit mass grievances and mould public opinion while 'propaganda' meant to employ rational, scientific, and historical arguments to enlighten the educated and provide for the political training and indoctrination of Communist party members. In 1920 the Department of Agitation and Propaganda was established by the Central Committee of the CPSU; in its various forms it has controlled internal and external Soviet Communist party propaganda ever since. The term is also used more loosely to refer to any dramatic, literary, or artistic work, both at home and abroad, intended to promote Communist ideology.

**Agnewism** The policies and political ideas espoused by the US vice-president Spiro T. Agnew (1918- ). Agnew was particularly noted for his attacks on the critics of the president, Richard Nixon, and for his support of law and order. He resigned his office in 1973 after a federal tax case and was given a fine and a suspended prison sentence.

**agony. agonizing reappraisal** The process of restarting a project from scratch because its first realisation has been a failure. The term first appeared in a speech made by John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State, at a NATO meeting in 1954. In common with many clichés it had a short vogue before proving to be ephemeral.

**agony aunt** A woman who conducts an advice column or page in a newspaper or magazine (especially a women's magazine) and often appears on television or radio answering correspondents who seek help with their problems. Most of the letters are from girls and women and are mainly

concerned with family relationships, marital problems, sex, and boy friends. The male equivalent is, inevitably, an **agony uncle**.

**agony column** Originally, a column in a newspaper containing advertisements for missing relatives and friends. Now commonly applied to the columns in which an AGONY AUNT offers advice.

**agronomics** The branch of economics that is concerned with agriculture and the agricultural distribution and management of land. The related discipline of **agronomy** is concerned with crop production in relation to soil management and the cultivation of land. The commercial aspects of farming are sometimes summarized as **agribusiness**.

**AGS** Abort Guidance System. A FAIL-SAFE mechanism that comes into operation when the primary guidance system of a spacecraft fails.

**aha reaction** A term used in psychology for a sudden insight in solving a problem. First heard in the 1970s, it replaced such earlier equivalents as the **aha experience** and the **ah-ah experience**, heard in the 1940s and 1950s.

**ahh Bisto!** A trade slogan for gravy brown-ing. It was first used by the Cerebos company in an advertising campaign of 1919. The name 'Bisto' is said to have been derived from the additional slogan 'Browns, Seasons, Thickens in One'. Two cartoon characters who appear in advertising for the product became known as 'the Bisto kids'.

**AI** Artificial Insemination. This involves semen from a male being injected into a female to cause pregnancy. The technique was developed by Soviet livestock breeders in the early 20th century and is now widely used in the agricultural industry, especially for breeding cattle, as it enables rapid improvements in the genetic quality of a herd and better control of venereal disease. With the development of research to solve the problems of human infertility, the practice of AI was extended to humans (see AID; AIH; IVF; SPERM BANK).

**AID** Artificial Insemination by Donor. AID is used in cases in which the male of a couple trying to conceive is infertile and semen from an unidentified donor is injected into the female partner. Because of the similarity between the abbreviations AID and AIDS, the name for this pro-