

C. HUGH HOLMAN WILLIAM HARMON

FIFTH EDITION

A HANDBOOK TO *Literature*



Based on the original edition by William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard

A Handbook to Literature

fifth edition

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Based on the Original Edition

by William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard

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Preface to the Fifth Edition

Fifteen hundred chances to put in my two cents' worth have amounted to a good deal more than thirty dollars' worth of enjoyment. In preparing the newest edition of this *Handbook*, I have experienced two pleasures to which many are tempted but few are treated: amending a classic and improving a friend.

It has been my privilege, first, to tamper with the *Handbook* in the hope of making it handier. The first edition came out in 1936, and both William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard died during the 1940s, long before I could have a chance to meet them. They share the distinction of having inaugurated a *Handbook* that for fifty years has served many thousands of readers as an aid in the understanding and enjoyment of reading and as a stimulus to further reading; and the Thrall-Hibbard *Handbook* has achieved for many the stature and familiarity of a classic in its own right.

It has been my privilege, second, to try to make improvements in a friend. We seldom do such a thing with our friends, because we like them as they are, as we like ourselves, warts and all. But a reference work, which is obliged to remain a satellite orbiting an ever-changing body of material, can become a friend that is nothing but warts or—to shift the figure from the Cromwellian to the Johnsonian mode—a horse that is nothing but pasterns; and we have to supplement and revise.

Another pleasure, in fact, has come in the very witnessing of change in a world of new thresholds and new anatomies. O how the mighty have fallen, yes, but O how—at the same time—the humble have risen. Meek irony began, back in 1936, as a lowly figure, then inherited the earth and became *the* trope for a while, and now, as far as I can tell, survives chiefly in the cramped lexicon of sports announcers. Even meeker onomatopoeia—a figure so low that it may not belong to speech at all, being just raw noise—is now enjoying a vogue and may reap its reward in heaven. The world has turned upside down several times since 1936—which was before *Finnegans Wake*, *Four Quartets*, *Paterson*, *The Pisan Cantos*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Well Wrought Urn*, *Anatomy of Criticism*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and much else—and a handbook has to keep up. (A fourth pleasure: As I think of what I have done, revising a book that was first written by people I never knew and was published fifty years ago, before I was born, I think of another revision to be undertaken fifty years hence, after I am gone, by somebody not yet born whom I shall never know. To her or him or them, I say, "Look into your heart and rewrite! That's what I did, and that's what I'm sure Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman did before me.")

C. Hugh Holman, who was my close friend for many years, prepared revised editions that appeared in 1960, 1972, and 1980. Adding a lot and subtracting a little, I have left hardly a paragraph unchanged, but I think I have kept faith with Hugh's style.

He and Thrall were here at Chapel Hill for all of their teaching careers, and Hibbard spent many good years here before moving to Northwestern. Although I was not around to witness the publication of the first edition, I did get to Chapel Hill in time, fifteen years ago, to know three of the scholars—

Richmond Bond, Dougald MacMillan, and Robert Sharpe—whose help Thrall and Hibbard had acknowledged in 1936 and who were still on hand to give me help in the 1970s. Chapel Hill is like that, and this *Handbook* is, among other things, testimony to a spirit of cooperation that has animated this English Department for many decades.

I want to do some acknowledging of my own, although I can never hope to mention all who have helped so generously. Professors Seymour Chatman (Berkeley), Susan Wolfson (Rutgers), Robert Collier (Northern Kentucky), Charles Berger (Yale), and M. J. M. Ezell (Texas A&M) furnished criticism, information, and encouragement. Diana Francoeur has been an ideal editor. My children, Sally and Will, have helped with the index considerably more than filial obligation requires, and I daresay that my son knows more about Allardyce Nicoll than any other eleven-year-old on earth. This, finally, is the place to say that the errors are mine. All right: the errors are mine—and Thrall's, Hibbard's, and Holman's. I like to think of the four of us as a small phalanx of readers and teachers who have done our collective best in a continuing effort to be stimulating and helpful, so much so that we are willing to risk some small errors in the service of a large benefit to other readers.

WILLIAM HARMON

To the User of This Handbook

The *Handbook* proper is an alphabetical listing of words and phrases pertaining to the study of English and American literature. The listings concentrate on definition, explanation, and illustration, with no attempt to be exhaustive or complete. As with the first edition, the fifth edition provides selected references for the more important, difficult, or controversial entries.

There are cross references at the proper places in the listing. The essential information on a given term appears in its alphabetical place. In the body of an article, a term used in a sense that is defined elsewhere in the *Handbook* is printed in SMALL CAPITALS. The term being defined and sometimes its synonyms and derivatives are printed in *italics*. If other articles in the *Handbook* seem helpful, the statement "See AN APPROPRIATE ARTICLE" is made at the end of the entry. For example, the entry on **Complication** includes the terms PLOT, RESOLUTION, DRAMATIC STRUCTURE, RISING ACTION, ACT, and TRAGEDY, all of which are defined in the *Handbook*; each therefore appears in SMALL CAPITALS that indicate that entries thereon may be consulted if one of them is not clear. Furthermore, the entry concludes with the statement "See DRAMATIC STRUCTURE, ACT," which means that these entries may help with the understanding of *complication*. The word *complication* itself is italicized since it is the term being defined.

This edition includes a new feature, the Index of Proper Names, which attempts to list names of all actual persons mentioned in the body of the *Handbook* proper. The Index gives the title (or short title) of the articles in which the person is mentioned.

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A

Abbey Theatre: Associated with the drama of The IRISH LITERARY REVIVAL, the *Abbey Theatre* was an outgrowth of an earlier group, the Irish Literary Theatre, founded by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory in 1899, which became the Irish National Theatre Society in 1902. In 1904 the company moved to the *Abbey Theatre* in Dublin. It endured, producing PLAYS with a markedly national emphasis, until the theater burned in 1951. W. B. Yeats was director of the *Abbey Theatre* until his death in 1939. Among the major playwrights of the company were Yeats, Lady Gregory, J. M. Synge, Sean O'Casey, James Stephens, and Lord Dunsany. See CELTIC RENAISSANCE.

Abecedarius: An ACROSTIC, the initial letters of whose successive lines (STROPHES or STANZAS) form the alphabet. Strictly speaking, each word in a line should begin with the same letter, although this difficult task is seldom attempted. See ACROSTIC.

Abridgment: A shortened version of a work, but one that attempts to preserve essential elements. See ABSTRACT, EPITOME, SYNOPSIS, PRÉCIS.

Absolute: A term applied to anything totally independent of influences, limitations, controls, or modifiers. In grammar, it refers to a word, such as "unique," which cannot be compared or qualified, or to a phrase that is free of the customary syntactical relationships to other parts of the sentence. In CRITICISM, it implies inviolable standards by which a work of art should be measured. An absolutist CRITIC holds that there are fundamental and immutable values that determine moral and aesthetic worth.

Abstract: A severe ABRIDGMENT that summarizes the principal ideas or arguments advanced in a much longer work. *Abstracts* of scholarly articles and dissertations are widely produced today. In reference to language, the term *abstract* is opposed to CONCRETE; it indicates words or statements that separate attributes from their physical or material embodiments. When art is being referred to, the term means nonrepresentational or nonobjective. See ABSTRACT POETRY.

Abstract Poetry: A term used by Dame Edith Sitwell to describe POETRY analogous in its use of sounds to abstract painting in its use of colors and shapes. In abstract painting, the meaning results from the arrangement of colors and shapes without the representation of objects; in *abstract poetry*, words are chosen not for their customary meanings but for the effect produced by tonal qualities, RHYMES, and RHYTHMS, thus frequently sacrificing sense to aural effects. See ABSTRACT.

Absurd: A term applied in contemporary literature and criticism to the sense that human beings are cut off from their original religious and metaphysical roots and live in meaningless isolation in an alien universe. Although the literature of the *absurd* employs many of the devices of EXPRESSIONISM and

SURREALISM, its philosophical base is a form of EXISTENTIALISM that views human beings as moving from the nothingness from which they came to the nothingness in which they will end through an existence marked by anguish and absurdity. They live in a world where there is no way to establish a significant relationship between themselves and their environment. Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* is one of the central expressions of this philosophy. Extreme forms of illogic, inconsistency, and nightmarish FANTASY mark the literature expressing this concept. The idea of the *absurd* has been powerfully expressed in DRAMA (see ABSURD, THEATER OF THE) and in the NOVEL, where Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, Günter Grass, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. have practiced it with distinction. See ABSURD, THEATER OF THE, ANTI-HERO, ANTI-NOVEL.

[References: Arnold P. Hinchliffe, *The Absurd*, 1969; Wolodymyr T. Zyla, ed., *From Surrealism to the Absurd* (1970).]

Absurd, Theater of the: A kind of DRAMA that presents a view of the absurdity of the human condition by the abandoning of usual or rational devices and by the use of nonrealistic form. It expounds an existential ideology and views its task as essentially metaphysical. Conceived in perplexity and spiritual anguish, the *theater of the absurd* portrays not a series of connected incidents telling a story but a pattern of images presenting people as bewildered beings in an incomprehensible universe. The first true example of the *theater of the absurd* was Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950). The term was invented by the American CRITIC Martin Esslin. The most widely acclaimed PLAY of the school is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953). Other playwrights in the school, which flourished in Europe and America in the 1950s and 1960s, include Jean Genêt, Arthur Adamov, Edward Albee, Arthur Kopit, and Harold Pinter. See ABSURD; BLACK HUMOR.

[Reference: Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 3rd ed. (1980).]

Academic Drama: Plays written and performed in schools and colleges in the ELIZABETHAN AGE. See SCHOOL PLAYS.

Academies: Associations of persons brought together for the advancement of culture and learning within their special fields of interest. The term is derived from "the olive grove of Academe" where Plato taught at Athens. One general purpose of the literary *academies* has been, to quote the expressed purpose of *l'Académie française* (originated ca. 1629), "to labor with all care and diligence to give certain rules to our language and to render it pure, eloquent, and capable of treating the arts and sciences." A secondary objective has often been that of immortalizing great writers, though the success with which great writers have been recognized by such organizations is relatively small. In addition to the French Academy and the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, the following are important: The Royal Academy of Arts founded in 1768 (England); the *Real Academia Española* founded in 1713 (Spain); and the AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS founded in 1904. More like the original academy of Plato was the famous "Platonic Academy" led by Marsilio Ficino at Florence in the late fifteenth century, which disseminated the doctrines of Neo-Platonism.

Acatalectic: Metrically complete; applied to a LINE that carries out fully the basic metrical pattern of the POEM. See CATALEXIS.

Accent: In traditional English METRICS, the emphasis given a syllable in articulation. Perhaps no aspect of PROSODY has been the subject of greater disagreement than that dealing with *accent*; it is considered to be a matter of force, of timbre, of duration, of loudness, of pitch, and of various combinations of these. Customarily, however, it is used to describe some aspect of emphasis, as opposed to duration or QUANTITY. A distinction is sometimes made between *accent* as the normal emphasis on a syllable and STRESS as the emphasis required by the METER.

In VERSIFICATION *accent* usually implies contrast; that is, a patterned succession of opposites, in this case, accented and unaccented syllables. In traditional terminology ICTUS is the name applied to the STRESS itself, ARSIS the name applied to the stressed syllable, and THESIS the name applied to the unstressed syllable. It should be noted, however, that the Greek usage, predating this Latin usage, applied THESIS to the stressed and ARSIS to the unstressed syllables.

There are three basic types of *accent* in English: WORD ACCENT, or the normal placement of STRESS on the syllables of a word; RHETORICAL ACCENT, in which the placement of STRESS is determined by the meaning of the sentence; and METRICAL ACCENT, in which the placement of STRESS is determined by the metrical pattern of the line. If the METRICAL ACCENT does violence to the WORD ACCENT, the resulting alteration in pronunciation is called WRENCHED ACCENT, a phenomenon common in the FOLK BALLAD. See QUANTITY, METRICS, SCANSION, STRESS.

[Reference: R. M. Alden, *An Introduction to Poetry* (1909).]

Accentual-Syllabic Verse: VERSE dependent for the establishment of its RHYTHM both on the number of syllables to the LINE and on the pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. The basic METERS in English POETRY are *accentual-syllabic*. See METER, FOOT.

Accismus: A form of IRONY, a pretended refusal that is insincere or hypocritical. Caesar's refusal of the crown, as it is reported by Casca in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (I, ii), is an example of *accismus*, as is Richard's disavowal of his kingly qualities in Shakespeare's *Richard III* (III, vii).

Acephalous: "Headless"; see HEADLESS LINE.

Acronym: A word formed by combining the initial letters or syllables of a series of words to form a name, as "radar," from "radio detecting and ranging." An *acronym* is a type of ACROSTIC.

Acrostic: A composition, usually VERSE, arranged in such a way that it spells words, phrases, or sentences when certain letters are selected according to an orderly sequence. It was used by early Greek and Latin writers as well as by the monks of the Middle Ages. Though creditable verse has appeared in this form, *acrostics* are likely to be tricks of versifying. An *acrostic* in which the initial letters form the word is called a *true acrostic*; one in which the final letters form the word is called a TELESTICH. An example of a *true acrostic-telestich* presented through a RIDDLE follows: 1. By Apollo was my first made. 2. A shoemaker's tool. 3. An Italian patriot. 4. A tropical fruit. Answer: *Lamb* and *Elia*:

1. L	yr	E
2. A	w	L
3. M	azzin	I
4. B	anan	A

An acrostic in which the middle letters form the word is called a MESOSTICH; one in which the first letter of the first LINE, the second letter of the second line, the third letter of the third line, etc., form the word is called a *cross acrostic*, of which Poe's "A Valentine" is an example. An *acrostic* in which the initial letters form the alphabet is called an ABECEDARIUS.

Act: A major division of a DRAMA. The major parts of the Greek PLAYS were distinguished by the appearance of the CHORUS, and they generally fell, as Aristotle implies, into five parts. The Latin tragedies of Seneca were divided into five *acts*; and when English dramatists in the ELIZABETHAN AGE began using *act* divisions, they followed their Roman models, as did other modern European dramatists. In varying degrees the five-*act* structure corresponded to the five main divisions of dramatic action: EXPOSITION, COMPLICATION, CLIMAX, FALLING ACTION, and CATASTROPHE. Freytag wrote of the "*act* of introduction," the "*act* of the ascent," the "*act* of the climax," the "*act* of the descent," and the "*act* of the catastrophe"; but such a correspondence, especially in Elizabethan plays, is by no means always apparent. The five-*act* structure was followed until the late nineteenth century when, under the influence of Ibsen, the fourth and fifth *acts* were combined. In the twentieth century, the standard form for serious drama has been three *acts*, for MUSICAL COMEDY and COMIC OPERA usually two; but great variation is used, with serious plays frequently divided into EPISODES or SCENES, without *act*-division. Late in the nineteenth century a shorter form, the ONE-ACT PLAY, developed. See DRAMATIC STRUCTURE, FREYTAG'S PYRAMID.

Action: In any work of FICTION, the series of events that constitute the PLOT, what the characters say, do, think, or in some cases fail to do. In the crudest sense, the *action* of a PLAY, a SHORT STORY, a NARRATIVE POEM, or a NOVEL is the answer to the question "What happened?" See PLOT.

Adage: A PROVERB or wise saying made familiar by long use. Examples: "No bees, no honey" (Erasmus, *Adagia*); "A stitch in time saves nine." See PROVERB.

Adaptation: The rewriting of a work from its original form to fit it for another medium; also the new form of such a rewritten work. A NOVEL may be "adapted" for the stage or motion pictures or television; a PLAY may be rewritten as a novel; the new form of such a modification is called an "*adaptation*." The term implies an attempt to retain the characters, actions, and as much as possible of the language and tone of the original; *adaptation* thus differs significantly from the reworking of a SOURCE.

Adonic Verse: In Greek and Latin PROSODY, the METER that consists of a DACTYL and a SPONDEE, as — — — | — —, or TROCHEE, as — — — | — —, probably so called after the Adonia, the festival of Adonis.

Adventure Story (or Film): A STORY in which ACTION—always exterior, usually physical, and frequently violent—is the predominant material, stressed

above CHARACTERIZATION, MOTIVATION, or THEME. SUSPENSE is engendered by the question, "What will happen next?" rather than "Why?" or "To whom?" In a broader sense, as Henry James insisted in "The Art of Fiction," everything in FICTION can be thought of as an adventure; he said, "It is an adventure—an immense one—for me to write this little article." In FILM CRITICISM a recognizable subgenre of the *adventure film* is the outdoor-adventure film, of which the WESTERN is the most popular form.

Adversarius: The CHARACTER in a FORMAL SATIRE who is addressed by the PERSONA of the SATIRE and who functions to elicit and to shape that speaker's remarks or comments. Arbuthnot is *adversarius* to Pope in "The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." Such a character serves to create a dramatic situation within which he or she may speak or play a role similar to that of a STRAIGHT MAN in a MINSTREL SHOW.

Aesthetic Distance: A term used to describe the effect produced when an emotion or an experience, whether autobiographical or not, is so objectified by the proper use of FORM that it can be understood as being independent of the immediate experience of its maker. The term is also used to describe the reader's or audience's awareness that art and reality are separate. In this sense it is sometimes called "psychic distance." It is closely related to T. S. Eliot's OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE. See OBJECTIVITY.

Aestheticism: A late nineteenth-century literary movement that rested on the credo of "ART FOR ART'S SAKE." Its roots reached back to Theophile Gautier's preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), which claimed that art has no utility, Poe's theory of "the POEM *per se*" and his rejection of the "heresy of the didactic," Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and Mallarmé. Its origins had a close kinship to the reverence for beauty of the Pre-Raphaelites. Its dominant figures were Oscar Wilde, who insisted on the separation of art and morality, and Wilde's master, Walter Pater. The English PARNASSIANS—Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Andrew Lang, and Edmund Gosse—were a part of the movement but were primarily concerned with questions of form rather than sharp separations of art from moral issues. Tennyson angrily paraphrased "ART FOR ART'S SAKE" as meaning:

The filthiest of all paintings painted well
Is mightier than the purest painted ill!

Aesthetics: The study or philosophy of the beautiful in nature, art, and literature. It has both a philosophical dimension—What is art? What is beauty? What is the relationship of the beautiful to other values?—and a psychological dimension—What is the source of aesthetic enjoyment? How is beauty perceived and recognized? From what impulse do art and beauty arise? The aesthetic study of literature concentrates its attention on the sense of the beautiful rather than on moral, social, or practical considerations. When pursued with great vigor, it leads to "ART FOR ART'S SAKE" and AESTHETICISM.

Aet., Aetat.: Abbreviations for the Latin phrase *aetatis suae*, of his or her age. The term is used to designate the year of a person's life at which an

event occurred, a picture was made, or a work composed. A picture of Henry David Thoreau bearing the legend "*aet.* 35," would be one made during Thoreau's thirty-fifth year, that is, when he was thirty-four years old.

Affective Fallacy: A term used in contemporary criticism to describe the error of judging a work of art in terms of its results, especially its emotional effect. It was introduced by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and M. C. Beardsley (see *The Verbal Icon*, by Wimsatt) to describe the "confusion between the poem and its result (what it *is* and what it *does*)." It is a converse error to the INTENTIONAL FALLACY. Notable examples of the *affective fallacy* are Aristotle's CATHARSIS and Longinus' "transport."

[Reference: W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (1954).]

Affective Stylistics: A study, promoted by the practical and theoretical criticism of Stanley Fish, that recognizes the essential impossibility of isolating an ideal text or work that is not "always already" the product of a prior act of reading and interpretation by the original writer or some subsequent editor. Since no ideal text can be found, the reader is forced to rely on affective responses that can be traced or related to stylistic elements. Such responses need not be vitiated by hopeless relativism, inescapable subjectivity, or whimsical impressionism that add up to the vagaries of "irresponsible response." Rather, such relativism and irresponsible subjectivism are countered by the concept that an "ideal reader" possesses common or public information that permits the understanding of all pertinent frames of literary and historical references as well as the aesthetic or linguistic conventions that govern and shape the text. This information is shared and respected by so-called interpretive communities.

[Reference: Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (1972).]

Afro-American Literature: Frequently called BLACK LITERATURE, both terms refer to writings by American Negroes. The formal study of such writing, long a neglected area of American literary scholarship, is increasingly important in America. This heightened interest in the work of Americans of African ancestry has come about for two primary reasons: the growing recognition in the last half century of black people as a significant part of American culture and the development during the same period of a body of Negro writing of impressive scope and quality.

For all practical purposes, *Afro-American Literature* began in the eighteenth century with the poetry of two Negro slaves, Jupiter Hammon and Phillis Wheatley. The first half of the nineteenth century saw further efforts by slave poets, among them George Moses Horton, but it was particularly marked by a flood of autobiographical records of the slaves' terrible experiences, known as SLAVE NARRATIVES, of which the most famous is that by Frederick Douglass. There was also a flood of polemical pamphlets and fiery sermons by Negroes, and in 1853 William Wells Brown, an escaped slave, published the first novel by an American Negro, *Clotel, or, the President's Daughter*. As the century closed, Charles W. Chesnutt began publishing the novels that established him as an important literary figure.

In the twentieth century a host of skillful Negro writers have produced

work of high quality in almost every field. There have been poets such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks (who was in 1949 the first American Negro to receive the PULITZER PRIZE), Michael Harper, Nikki Giovanni, Don L. Lee, Ethridge Knight, and Clarence Major. The century has been particularly rich in Negro novelists, including such writers as W. E. B. DuBois, Walter White, Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Ann Petry, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Ishmael Reed. There have been a number of Black playwrights, among them Hall Johnson, Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, Ossie Davis, and Imamu Baraka.

These American Negroes, by writing with passion and conviction of the place they and their race have occupied and endured in a predominantly white society, have broadened the range, enriched the sympathy, and deepened the quality of American literary expression. Their contributions, notable most obviously for their power, are major forces changing the earlier American literary monolith of the white middle class.

[References: Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Black Literature in America* (1971); Henry-Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (1984); Darwin Turner, ed., *Black Literature: Essays* (1969); William D. Washington, ed., *Black Literature: An Anthology of Outstanding Black Writers* (1972).]

Age of Johnson in English Literature: The interval between 1750 and 1798 was a markedly transitional age in English literature. The NEOCLASSICISM that dominated the first half of the century was yielding in many ways to the impulse toward ROMANTICISM, although the period was still predominantly neoclassical. The NOVEL, which had come into being in the decades before 1750, continued to flourish, with sentimental attitudes and GOTHIC horrors becoming a significant part of its content. Little was accomplished in DRAMA, except for the creation of “laughing” COMEDY by Sheridan and Goldsmith in reaction against SENTIMENTAL COMEDY. The chief POETS were Burns, Gray, Cowper, Johnson, and Crabbe—a list that indicates how thoroughly the pendulum was swinging away from Pope and Dryden. Yet it was Dr. Samuel Johnson, poet, lexicographer, essayist, novelist, journalist, and neoclassic critic, who was the major literary figure, and his friend Boswell’s biography of him (1791) was the greatest work of the age, challenged for such an honor, perhaps, only by Gibbon’s monumental history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). An interest in the past, particularly in the Middle Ages, in the primitive, and in the literature of the folk was developing and was feeding with increasing strength the growing tide of ROMANTICISM. In recent criticism and literary history it is often called the AGE OF SENSIBILITY, emphasizing the emergence of new attitudes and the development of SENSIBILITY as a major literary expression. See NEOCLASSIC PERIOD, AGE OF SENSIBILITY, SENSIBILITY.

Age of Reason: A term often applied to the NEOCLASSIC PERIOD in English literature and sometimes to the REVOLUTIONARY AND EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, because these periods emphasized self-knowledge, self-control, rationalism, discipline, and the rule of law, order, and decorum in public and private life and in art. See NEOCLASSIC PERIOD, REVOLUTIONARY AND EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD IN AMERICAN LITERATURE.

Age of the Romantic Movement in England, 1798–1832: Although a major Romantic POET, Robert Burns, had died in 1796, William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* had appeared in 1789, and adumbrations of ROMANTICISM had been apparent in English writing throughout much of the eighteenth century, the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798 is often regarded as marking the beginning of a period of more than three decades in which ROMANTICISM triumphed in British letters, a period that is often said to have ended in 1832, with the death of Sir Walter Scott. During these thirty-four years, the poetic careers of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats flowered; Scott created the HISTORICAL NOVEL and made it a force in international literature; Wordsworth and Coleridge articulated a revolutionary theory of Romantic POETRY; Jane Austen wrote her NOVELS OF MANNERS; Mary Shelley uncannily combined the GOTHIC NOVEL and SCIENCE FICTION, along with philosophic vision; and Lamb, DeQuincey, and Hazlitt raised the PERSONAL ESSAY to a high level of accomplishment. ROMANTICISM did not die with Sir Walter Scott, but the decade of the thirties saw it begin a process of modification as a result of the varied forces of the Victorian world that played upon it. See ROMANTICISM, ROMANTIC PERIOD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE, and *Outline of Literary History*.

Age of Sensibility: A name frequently applied by contemporary critics and literary historians, such as W. J. Bate, Harold Bloom, and Northrop Frye, to the last half of the eighteenth century in England, the time called by older historians and critics the AGE OF JOHNSON. The use of the term *Age of Sensibility* results from seeing the interval between 1750 and 1798 as a seedfield for emerging ROMANTIC qualities in literature, such as PRIMITIVISM, SENSIBILITY, and the originality of the individual talent. The older term, AGE OF JOHNSON, tends to emphasize the strong continuing NEOCLASSIC qualities in the literature of the time. See AGE OF JOHNSON, NEOCLASSIC PERIOD, AGE OF THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT, ROMANTIC PERIOD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

Agon: Literally a contest of any kind. In Greek TRAGEDY it was a prolonged dispute, often a formal debate in which the CHORUS divided and took sides with the disputants. In the OLD COMEDY in Greece this debate, called epirrhetic *agon*, involved an elaborate and stylized series of exchanges between the CHORUS and the debaters, and addresses to the audience. In discussions of PLOT, it has come to mean simply "conflict." The CHARACTERS in a work of FICTION are designated in terms of their relationship to this conflict; PROTAGONIST, ANTAGONIST, DEUTERAGONIST, and so on.

Agrarians: Literally people living close to the land, in an agricultural society, or espousing the merits of such a society, as the Physiocrats did. In this sense most espousers of pastoral traditions are *agrarians*. Thomas Jefferson was a noted early American *agrarian*. In current literary history and criticism, however, the term is usually applied to a group of Southern American writers who published in Nashville, Tennessee, between 1922 and 1925, *The Fugitive*, a LITTLE MAGAZINE of POETRY and some CRITICISM championing agrarian REGIONALISM but attacking "the old high-caste Brahmins of the Old South." Most of its contributors were associated with Vanderbilt University; among

them were John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren, and Merrill Moore. In the 1930s they championed an agrarian economy as opposed to that of industrial capitalism and issued a collective manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*. They were active in the publication between 1933 and 1937 of *The American Review*, a socioeconomic magazine that also analyzed contemporary literature. They found an effective literary organ in *The Southern Review* (1935–1942) under the editorship of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. In addition to their poetry and novels, the *Agrarians* have been prominent among the founders of the NEW CRITICISM.

Agroikos: A CHARACTER added by Northrop Frye to the traditional three STOCK CHARACTERS of Greek OLD COMEDY. The usual *agroikos* is a rustic who is easily deceived, a form of the country bumpkin. See OLD COMEDY, STOCK CHARACTERS.

Alazon: The braggart in Greek COMEDY. He takes many forms: the quack doctor, the religious fanatic, the swaggering soldier, the pedantic scholar—anyone who is pretentious through his sense of self-importance and who is held up to ridicule because of it. From Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* he enters English literature where he is a STOCK CHARACTER in ELIZABETHAN DRAMA. He has been widely used in other literary forms, particularly the NOVEL. James Fenimore Cooper's Dr. Obed Battius, in *The Prairie*, is a good example of a later mutation of this character. See MILES GLORIOSUS.

Alba: A Provençal lament over the parting of lovers at the break of day, the name coming from the Provençal word for "dawn." It has no fixed metrical form, but each STANZA usually ends with "*alba*." The medieval *albas* were inspired in large part by Ovid. With the TROUBADOURS the *albas* grew to a distinct literary form. On occasion they were religious, being addressed to the Virgin. See AUBADE.

Alcaics: VERSES written according to the manner of the ODES of Alcaeus, usually a four-stanza POEM, each STANZA composed of four lines, the first two being HENDECASYLLABIC, the third being nine syllables, and the fourth DECASYLLABIC. Since the CLASSICAL pattern is based on quantitative DACTYLS and TROCHEES, exact English *Alcaics* are practically impossible. The most notable English attempt is in Tennyson's "Milton," which begins:

Ō | mighty- | mouth'd in | ventor of | harmon | lies,
 Ō | skill'd to | sing of | Time or E | ternit | y,
 God- | gifted | organ- | voice of | England,
 Milton, a | name to re | sound for | ages.

Alexandrianism: The spirit prevailing in the literary and scientific work of Hellenistic writers flourishing in Alexandria for about three centuries after 325 B.C. The literature is distinguished by originality, novelty, learning, and devotion to ancestral models. The academic studies are distinguished by

bibliophilia, attention to detail, the establishment and collection of canons, and thoroughgoing editing and annotating. The greatest names associated with *Alexandrianism* are those of Callimachus, Philetas, Theocritus, and Lycophron.

Alexandrine: A VERSE with six IAMBIC feet (IAMBIC HEXAMETER). The form, that of HEROIC VERSE in France, received its name possibly from the fact that it was much used in Old French romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries describing the adventures of Alexander the Great, or possibly from the name of Alexandre Paris, a French poet who used this METER. Its appearance in English has been credited to Wyatt and Surrey. Perhaps the most conspicuous instance of its successful use in English is by Spenser, who, in his SPENSERIAN STANZA, after eight PENTAMETER lines employed a HEXAMETER line (*Alexandrine*) in the ninth. Both the line and its occasional bad effect are described in Pope's COUPLET:

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.

Some *Alexandrines*, far from needless, are used to avoid the monotony and patness of PENTAMETER in certain STANZAS, such as RHYME ROYAL (see Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence") and the SONNET (see Keats's "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again" and Longfellow's "Mezzo Cammin").

Alienation Effect: This term—which translates the German *Verfremdungseffekt*—was put forward by the playwright Berthold Brecht as a desirable quality of theater, by means of which the AUDIENCE is kept at a distance such that unthinking emotional and personal involvement is inhibited while political messages are delivered. The *alienation effect* can be achieved by any device that departs from representational REALISM and fidelity to everyday experience: masks, alien setting, disturbances of time sequence, rupturing of the FOURTH WALL. The *alienation effect* in some ways resembles the "defamiliarization" of the RUSSIAN FORMALISTS and the general notion of AES-THETIC DISTANCE.

Allegory: A form of extended METAPHOR in which objects, persons, and actions in a NARRATIVE, either in PROSE or VERSE, are equated with meanings that lie outside the NARRATIVE itself. Thus, it represents one thing in the guise of another—an abstraction in that of a concrete IMAGE. By a process of double signification, the order of words represents actions and characters, and they, in turn, represent ideas. *Allegory* often clarifies this process by giving patently meaningful names to persons and places. The characters are usually PERSONIFICATIONS of abstract qualities, the action and the setting representative of the relationships among these abstractions. *Allegory* attempts to evoke a dual interest, one in the events, characters, and setting presented, and the other in the ideas they are intended to convey or the significance they bear. The characters, events, and setting may be historical, fictitious, or fabulous; the test is that these materials be so employed that they represent meanings independent of the action in the surface story. Such meaning may be religious, moral, political, personal, or satiric. Thus, Spenser's *The Faerie*