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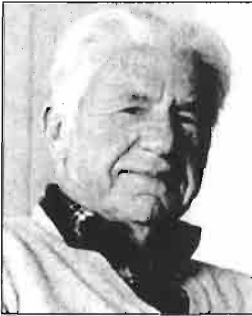
M.H. Abrams
Geoffrey Galt Harpham

A Glossary of Literary Terms

ELEVENTH EDITION



About the Authors



Courtesy of M. H. Abrams

M. H. Abrams, Class of 1916 Professor of English, Emeritus, at Cornell University, is a distinguished scholar who has written prize-winning books on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, literary theory and criticism, European Romanticism, and Western intellectual history. He inaugurated *A Glossary of Literary Terms* in 1957 as a series of succinct essays on the chief terms and concepts used in discussing literature, literary history and movements, and literary criticism. Since its initial publication, the *Glossary* has become an indispensable handbook for all students of English and other literatures.



Photo by Ron Jautz, courtesy of National Humanities Center

Geoffrey Galt Harpham has been a co-author of the *Glossary* since the eighth edition in 2005. He is president and director of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina and has written extensively in the fields of critical theory and intellectual history. Among his books are *The Character of Criticism*, *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society*, *Language Alone: The Critical Fetish of Modernity*, and *The Humanities and the Dream of America*.



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Preface

In 1957, M. H. Abrams, a forty-three-year-old literary scholar at Cornell University, already renowned for his magisterial study *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), agreed to update a modest pamphlet originally published in 1941 by two people then deceased, Dan S. Norton and J. Peters Rushton, called *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Abrams dedicated a summer to the task and produced a 105-page volume, stapled in the middle, which included over 100 new terms, including some that had gained in pronunence in literary study in recent years: *style, tension, humanism, ambiguity, and the new criticism*.

In the course of his work, Abrams found that it was easier, as well as more likely to be informative and pleasant for the reader, to compose each entry as an essay that incorporated in a single exposition not only the primary term but related terms as well. And, to aid the student interested to know more, he suggested further readings. But, as he declared in the prefaces to several subsequent editions, he retained the goal he announced in 1957: "to produce the kind of handbook the author would have found most valuable when, as an undergraduate, he was an eager but sometimes bewildered student of literature and literary criticism."

For more than a half century, Abrams tracked the rapid growth and extension of literary studies through successive editions of the *Glossary*. With each edition, entries were deepened, extended, and refined, and the list of suggested readings grew. The entry for *irony* in Abrams's first edition begins in the mode of a dictionary: " 'rhetorical' or 'verbal irony' is a mode of speech in which ..."; and the suggested readings include three works, the most recent of which was Cleanth Brooks's *The Well-Wrought Urn* (1947). The same entry in the tenth edition begins, "In Greek comedy the character called the *ciron* was a dissembler ..." and the suggested readings include texts ranging from Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* (1841) to Claire Colebrook's *Irony* (2003).

By that tenth edition, the book ran to 432 pages and covered 1,175 terms. Some of the entries had become substantial and even definitive essays in themselves: **Linguistics in Literary Criticism, Deconstruction, Interpretation**

and Hermeneutics, Psychological and Psychoanalytic Criticism, Feminist Criticism, Marxist Criticism, and Periods of English Literature—all expounded with grace, fairness, and precision. Amid all the changes, however, some passages demonstrated remarkable durability, as, for example, Norton and Rushton’s ridiculously efficient account of the plot of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, in which “the heroine, having lost her virtue because of her innocence, then loses her happiness because of her honesty, finds it again only by murder, and having been briefly happy, is hanged”—on which Hardy, in a spirit of **cosmic irony**, comments: “The President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess.”

A service-oriented book with a modest mission, the *Glossary* reflects the extraordinary gifts of one of the great scholars in the history of the American academy. As the example just cited suggests, among these gifts is an exuberant sense of humor—see the entries for **bathos**, **literature**, **bombast**, and **limerick**. The book can be read with and even for pleasure. It has often occurred to me that the *Glossary* is composed with Sir Philip Sidney’s “Defence of Poesie” in mind: “For he [the poet] doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect to the way, as will entice any man to enter into it. [...] He beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness, but he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion.”

In 2003, Mike asked me to join him as he prepared the eighth edition. Over the next nine years and three editions, we worked together. For the most part, we allocated terms and worked separately, but on occasion we pooled our resources, as, for example, in the entry on **rap**, a newcomer to the eighth edition. I had taken the first crack and had sent my effort to Mike. To my dismay, it came back with many questions: “Is it composed solely to be performed in public, or can it be written? What musical instruments produce the beat—drums, guitar, piano, plucked bass? (I’m guessing.) To what extent is it extemporized? Is the rap you describe as ‘misogynist’ also known as ‘gangsta rap?’” I conducted further research and returned a revised version, which seemed to meet Mike’s approval. But when the book appeared, I was amazed to see in this entry two passages I hadn’t written. The first is not to be found in any of the standard accounts of rap: “There is an interesting parallel between rap and the strong-stress meter and the performance of Old English poetry; see under *meter*.” And—most astonishing—Mike had sought to qualify my suggestion that rap was misogynistic, homophobic, and sociopathic by quoting a more positive verse from Queen Latifah.

In truth, both Mike and I—total age over 150—were **freestyling** when it came to rap. And since there was an element of competition—I claimed that rap was an acronym for “rhythm and poetry,” and he insisted that “rap” was archaic slang for “talk”—it would be accurate to say that this entry itself emerged from competitive freestyling, or more precisely, **battle-rapping**. We did agree, however, that rap in general should be considered, along with **poetry happenings** and **poetry slams**, as forms of **performance poetry**. In the end, we were so pleased with the collaborative result that we put an image of this page on the cover of the ninth edition.

After the tenth edition, Mike handed over the *Glossary* to me. (He did not stop working, however; in the summer of 2012, he celebrated his 100th birthday with a weekend of festivities at Cornell, marked with an exclamation point by the publication of a new book, *The Fourth Dimension of a Poem*.) In preparing this edition, I have tried to preserve all the qualities for which the book is justly celebrated. I have, however, also tried to bring the book into phase with itself and with the present moment. As readers of the *Glossary* know, the book often introduces an historical dimension into its definitions. But, having been composed over the course of more than half a century, it has its own history of evolving emphases, concerns, and understandings. Sometimes, in earlier editions, the influence of very different eras in a single essay resulted in a lack of clarity or even coherence, as when a book published in 1940 was described as “recent.” For this edition, I have, in addition to hunting down and extirpating most uses of *recent*, *current*, and *contemporary*, added over twenty new terms, overhauled or edited countless others, and tried to bring everything, the suggested readings in particular, up to date. I have extended some essays and cut some others in the interests both of making the book useful to contemporary readers and preserving its character as what Mike called a “handbook” as opposed to a “desk book.”

Like its predecessors, this edition of the *Glossary* aspires to utility. But—and this has dawned on me slowly, over the years—it also provides, without trying, a response to the perennial question of what literary study is or ought to be. In the *Glossary*, one learns, in addition to the definitions of **monometer**, **morpheme**, and **mummer’s play**, that there is a discipline devoted to the study of literature; that this discipline, like others, involves a specialized vocabulary; that the terms it deploys, like stars in the night sky, anchor a series of conceptual constellations specific to the field; and that knowledge of this field can be a source of enduring interest and pleasure. Perhaps Mike’s greatest gift to the profession, and indeed to the world, is the sturdy confidence, manifest in this and in all his books, that literature is a thing well worth knowing, and that the effort invested in learning it is repaid by a lifetime of rewards, no matter how long the lifetime might be.



How to Use This Glossary

All the terms discussed in the *Glossary* appear in a single alphabetic sequence. Each term that is not itself the subject of the entry it identifies is followed, in **boldface**, by the number of the page in which it is defined and discussed. This is then followed by the page numbers, in *italics*, of the occurrences of the term in other entries, in contexts that serve to clarify its significance and illustrate how it is used in critical discourse.

Some of the listed terms are supplemented by references to a number of closely related terms. These references expedite for a student the fuller exploration of a literary topic and make it easier for a teacher to locate entries that serve the needs of a particular subject of study. For example, such supplementary references list entries that identify the various types and movements of literary *criticism*, the terms most relevant to the analysis of *style*, the entries that define and exemplify the various literary *genres*, and the many entries that deal with the forms, component features, history, and critical discussions of the *drama*, *lyric*, and *novel*.

Those terms, mainly of foreign origin, that are most likely to be mispronounced by a student are followed (in parentheses) by a simplified guide to pronunciation. The following markings are used to signify the pronunciation of vowels as in the sample words:

ā	fate	ī	pin
ă	pat	ō	Pope
ä	father	ö	pot
ē	meet	oo	food
ë	get	ü	cut
ī	pine		

Authors and their works that are discussed in the text of the *Glossary* are listed in an "Index of Authors" at the end of the volume. To make it easy to locate, the outer edges of this "Index" are colored gray.



Literary Terms



abstract (language): 62; 172.

absurd, literature of the: The term is applied to a number of works in drama and prose fiction which have in common the view that the human condition is essentially absurd, and that this condition can be adequately represented only in works of literature that are themselves absurd. Both the mood and dramaturgy of absurdity were anticipated as early as 1896 in Alfred Jarry's French play *Ubu roi* (*Ubu the King*). The literature has its roots also in the movements of *expressionism* and *surrealism*, as well as in the fiction, written in the 1920s, of Franz Kafka (*The Trial*, *Metamorphosis*). The current movement, however, emerged in France after the horrors of World War II (1939–45) as a rebellion against basic beliefs and values in traditional culture and literature. This tradition had included the assumptions that human beings are fairly rational creatures who live in an at least partially intelligible universe, that they are part of an ordered social structure, and that they may be capable of heroism and dignity even in defeat. After the 1940s, however, there was a widespread tendency, especially prominent in the *existential philosophy* of men of letters such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, to view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe; to conceive the human world as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning; and to represent human life—in its fruitless search for purpose and significance as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the nothingness where it must end—as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. As Camus said in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942),

In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile.... This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity.

Or as Eugène Ionesco, French author of *The Bald Soprano* (1949), *The Lesson* (1951), and other plays in the **theater of the absurd**, has put it: "Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless." Ionesco also said, in commenting on the mixture of moods in the literature of the absurd: "People drowning in meaninglessness can only be grotesque, their sufferings can only appear tragic by derision."

Samuel Beckett (1906–89), the most eminent and influential writer in this mode, both in drama and in prose fiction, was an Irishman living in Paris who often wrote in French and then translated his works into English. His plays, such as *Waiting for Godot* (1954) and *Endgame* (1958), project the irrationalism, helplessness, and absurdity of life in dramatic forms that reject realistic settings, logical reasoning, or a coherently evolving plot. *Waiting for Godot* presents two tramps in a waste place, fruitlessly and all but hopelessly waiting for an unidentified person, Godot, who may or may not exist and with whom they sometimes think they remember that they may have an appointment; as one of them remarks, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful." Like most works in this mode, the play is absurd in the double sense that it is grotesquely comic and also irrational and nonconsequential; it is a parody not only of the traditional assumptions of Western culture but of the conventions and generic forms of traditional drama, and even of its own inescapable participation in the dramatic medium. The lucid but eddying and pointless dialogue is often funny, and pratfalls and other modes of slapstick are used to give a comic cast to the alienation and anguish of human existence. Beckett's prose fiction, such as *Malone Dies* (1958) and *The Unnamable* (1960), presents an *antihero* who plays out the absurd moves of the end game of civilization in a nonwork which tends to undermine the coherence of its medium, language itself. But typically Beckett's characters carry on, even if in a life without purpose, trying to make sense of the senseless and to communicate the uncommunicable.

Another French playwright of the absurd was Jean Genet (who combined absurdism and diabolism); some of the early dramatic works of the Englishman Harold Pinter and the American Edward Albee are written in a similar mode. The early plays of Tom Stoppard, such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966) and *Travesties* (1974), exploit the devices of absurdist theater more for comic than philosophical ends. There are also affinities with this movement in many works that exploit **black comedy** or **black humor**: baleful, naive, or inept characters in a fantastic or nightmarish modern world play out their roles in what Ionesco called a "tragic farce," in which the events are often simultaneously comic, horrifying, and absurd. Examples are Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), Thomas Pynchon's *V* (1963), John Irving's *The World According to Garp* (1978), and some of the novels by the German Günter Grass and the Americans Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and John Barth. Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) is an example of black comedy in the cinema. Some playwrights living in totalitarian regimes used absurdist techniques to register social and political protest. See, for example, *Largo Desolato* (1987) by

the Czech Václav Havel and *The Island* (1973), a collaboration by the South African writers Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona.

See also *wit, humor, and the comic*, and refer to: Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (rev. 1968); David Grossvogel, *The Blasphemers: The Theatre of Brecht, Ionesco, Beckett, Genet* (1965); Arnold P. Hinchliffe, *The Absurd* (1969); Max F. Schultz, *Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties* (1980); Enoch Brater and Ruby Cohn, eds., *Around the Absurd: Essays on Modern and Postmodern Drama* (1990); and Neil Cornwell, *The Absurd in Literature* (2006).

For references to the *literature of the absurd* in other entries, see pages 49, 187, 228.

absurd, theater of the: 2; 58, 120.

academic novel, university novel, or campus novel: A novel set primarily in a college or university community in which the main characters are academics, often employed by the English department. Like *detective stories* or *murder mysteries*, many of which are set in British country houses, academic novels frequently exploit the fictional possibilities created by a closed environment in which a number of highly distinct, often idiosyncratic personalities are thrown together. In the case of the murder mystery, the insularity of the setting can produce a sense of heightened tension, but in the academic novel, the sequestered character of the campus often results in an atmosphere of comic inconsequentiality. Most academic novels are humorous, and many explore the implications of the variously attributed maxim that academic politics are so vicious because the stakes are so low. Even so, academic novels have on occasion addressed more serious themes, including power, sex, class, and banishment and exile.

The satirical portrayal of dreamily impractical thinkers is as old as Aristophanes' *the Clouds*, which depicts Socrates riding through the heavens in a basket. And novels such as George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1874), Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925), and Dorothy L. Sayers's *Gaudy Night* (1935) dealt with academic settings or characters. But the modern academic novel is generally thought to date from the mid-twentieth century, with the beginning marked by the appearance, in Great Britain, of C. P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951) and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), and, in the United States, of Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1951).

Among the most widely known British academic novels are Malcolm Bradbury, *The History Man* (1975), and the trilogy by David Lodge: *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984), and *Nice Work* (1988). Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) is considered a **varsity novel**, a predominantly British genre, generally set at Oxford or Cambridge, in which the primary characters are undergraduates rather than faculty.

Noteworthy American instances of the academic novel are Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading* (1957) and *Pale Fire* (1962); John Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966), in which, through an elaborate allegory, the Universe is refigured as

a University; Alison Lurie, *The War Between the Tates* (1974); Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1985); Michael Chabon, *Wonder Boys* (1995); Richard Russo, *Straight Man* (1997); and Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* (2000).

Over the years, the academic novel has registered not only the currents of the larger culture but also the changing nature of academic life. If many of the earlier instances of the genre depicted the college or university community as a pseudo-pastoral enclosure with its own quaint rules and conventions, more recent novels have treated the same setting as a microcosm, a more tightly focused or intensified version of the larger world, in which ideas and values circulating through the broader culture emerge in high relief. The tone of the academic novel in the first years of the twenty-first century darkened as the working conditions of many teaching faculty deteriorated and the educational mission of the university was superseded by the economic priorities of increasingly corporatized institutions. For the **adjunct novel**, in which the primary characters are marginalized, underpaid, and untenured faculty whose positions expose them to uncertainty, deprivation, and anxiety rather than protecting them from it, see Jeffrey J. Williams, "Unlucky Jim: The Rise of the Adjunct Novel," *The Chronicle Review*, 16 November 2012, B12–14.

See Ian Carter, *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post War Years* (1990); and Elaine Showalter, *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (2005).

accent (in meter): 218.

accentual meter: 218.

accentual-syllabic meter: 218.

accentual verse: 222.

accidie (ak' sidē): 363.

act and scene: An act is a major division in the action of a play. In England, this division was introduced by Elizabethan dramatists who imitated ancient Roman plays by structuring the action 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 twentieth century, the most common form for traditional 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 more 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** that frames the front of the stage, the end of a scene is usually indicated by a dropped curtain or a dimming of the lights, and the end of an act by a dropped curtain and an intermission.

action: 48.

adjunct novel: 4.

adversarius (adversār' ūs): 353.

aesthetic distance: 94; 235. See also *empathy and sympathy*.

Aesthetic ideology: "Aesthetic ideology" was a term applied by the *deconstructive* theorist Paul de Man, in his later writings, to describe the "seductive" appeal of *aesthetic* experience, in which, he claimed, form and meaning, perception and understanding, and cognition and desire are misleadingly, and sometimes dangerously, conflated. De Man traces the aesthetic ideology to Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), which describes a process of education that would eventually produce an "Aesthetic State," a concept that, de Man argued, anticipated Joseph Goebbels's concept of "the plastic art of the state." In de Man's view, the concept of the aesthetic came to stand for all *organicist* approaches not only to art but to politics and culture as well. The experience of literature, he argued, minimizes the temptation of aesthetic ideology to confuse sensory experience with understanding, since literature represents the world in such a way that neither meaning nor sense-experience is directly perceptible. See de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (1996); and Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman* (1996).

In *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990), the *Marxist* theorist Terry Eagleton provided both a history and *critique* of "the aesthetic," noting the many "ideological" perversions and distortions in the history of the concept but, in contrast to de Man, also identifying an "emancipatory" potential in a concept that had, Eagleton pointed out, originally been articulated in terms of freedom and pleasure. (See *ideology* under *Marxist criticism*, and for essays on this subject, refer to George Levine, ed., *Aesthetics and Ideology*, 1994.)

aesthetic movement: 5.

Aestheticism: In his Latin treatise entitled *Aesthetica* (1750), the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten applied the term "aesthetica" to the arts, of which "the aesthetic end is the perfection of sensuous cognition, as such; this is beauty." In present usage, **aesthetics** (from the Greek, "pertaining to sense perception") designates the systematic study of all the *fine arts*, as well as of the nature of beauty in any object, whether natural or artificial.

Aestheticism, or alternatively the **aesthetic movement**, was a European phenomenon during the latter part of the nineteenth century that had its chief headquarters in France. In opposition to the dominance of science, and in defiance of the widespread indifference or hostility of the middle-class society of their time to any art that was not useful or did not teach moral values, French writers developed the view that a work of art is the supreme value among human products precisely because it is self-sufficient and has no use or moral aim outside its own being. The end of a work of art is simply to exist in its formal perfection; that is, to be beautiful and to

be contemplated as an end in itself. A rallying cry of Aestheticism became the phrase “l’art pour l’art”—**art for art’s sake**.

The historical roots of Aestheticism are in the views proposed by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), that the “pure” aesthetic experience consists of a “disinterested” contemplation of an object that “pleases for its own sake,” without reference to reality or to the “external” ends of utility or morality. As a self-conscious movement, however, French Aestheticism is often said to date from Théophile Gautier’s witty defense of his assertion that art is useless (preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, 1835). Aestheticism was developed by Baudelaire, who was greatly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe’s claim (in “The Poetic Principle,” 1850) that the supreme work is a “poem *per se*,” a “poem written solely for the poem’s sake”; it was later taken up by Flaubert, Mallarmé, and many other writers. In its extreme form, the aesthetic doctrine of art for art’s sake veered into the moral and quasi-religious doctrine of life for art’s sake, or of life conducted as a work of art, with the artist represented as a priest who renounces the practical concerns of worldly existence in the service of what Flaubert and others called “the religion of beauty.”

The views of French Aestheticism were introduced into Victorian England by Walter Pater, with his emphasis on the value in art of high artifice and stylistic subtlety, his recommendation to crowd one’s life with exquisite sensations, and his advocacy of the supreme value of beauty and of “the love of art for its own sake.” (See his Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, 1873.) The artistic and moral views of Aestheticism were also expressed by Algernon Charles Swinburne and by English writers of the 1890s such as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, and Lionel Johnson, as well as by the artists J. M. Whistler and Aubrey Beardsley. The influence of ideas stressed in Aestheticism—especially the view of the “autonomy” (self-sufficiency) of a work of art, the emphasis on the importance of craft and artistry, and the concept of a poem or novel as an end in itself, or as invested with “intrinsic” values—has been important in the writings of prominent twentieth-century authors such as W. B. Yeats, T. E. Hulme, and T. S. Eliot, as well as in the literary theory of the *New Critics*.

For related developments, see *aesthetic ideology*, *decadence*, *fine arts*, and *ivory tower*. Refer to William Gaunt, *The Aesthetic Adventure* (1945, reprinted 1975); Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (1957); Enid Starkie, *From Gautier to Eliot* (1960); R. V. Johnson, *Aestheticism* (1969). For the intellectual and social conditions during the eighteenth century that fostered the theory, derived from theology, that a work of art is an end in itself, see M. H. Abrams, “Art-as-Such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics,” in *Doing Things with Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory* (1989). An influential treatise on philosophical aesthetics was Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (2nd ed., 1980). Useful collections of writings in the Aesthetic Movement are Eric Warner and Graham Hough, eds., *Strangeness and Beauty: An Anthology of Aesthetic Criticism 1848–1910* (2 vols., 1983); Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880–1900* (2000). A useful

descriptive guide to books on the subject is Linda C. Dowling, *Aestheticism and Decadence: A Selective Annotated Bibliography* (1977). The concepts of the aesthetic and beauty have been revisited, often in a spirit of renewed appreciation, by philosophers and literary critics alike. See George Levine, ed., *Aesthetics and Ideology* (1994); Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999); Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (2003); Denis Donoghue, *Speaking of Beauty* (2003); John Armstrong, *The Secret Power of Beauty* (2004); Jonathan Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics: Autonomy, Indifference, and Postmodernism* (2005); and Susan Stewart, *The Open Studio: Essays on Art and Aesthetics* (2005). Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (2nd ed., 2005) is a useful collection of historical and descriptive essays on the aesthetic. A comprehensive reference work is Michael Kelly, ed., *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 4 vols. (1998).

aesthetics: 5.

affective fallacy: In an essay published in 1946, W. K. Wimsatt 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.” The two critics wrote in direct reaction to the view of I. A. Richards, in his influential *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1923), that the value of a poem can be measured by the psychological responses it incites in its readers. Beardsley later 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 altered, the doctrine becomes a claim for *objective criticism*, in which the critic, instead of describing the effects of a work, focuses on the features, devices, and form of the work by which such effects are achieved. An extreme reaction against the doctrine of the affective fallacy was manifested during the 1970s in the development of *reader-response criticism*.

Refer to Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy,” reprinted in W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (1954); and Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958), p. 491 and chapter 11. See also Wimsatt and Beardsley’s related concept of the *intentional fallacy*.

affective stylistics: 331.

African-American writers: 273. See also *Black Arts Movement*; *Harlem Renaissance*; *performance poetry*; *slave narratives*; *spirituals*.

Age of Johnson: 283.

Age of Sensibility: 283.

Age of Transcendentalism: 274.

Agrarians: 277.

agroikos (ägroi' kōs): 377.

alazon (äl' äzōn): 377; 185.

Alexandrine (alexan' drīn): 220.

alienation effect: In his *epic theater* of the 1920s and later, the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht adapted the *Russian formalist* concept of “defamiliarization” into what he called the “alienation effect” (*Verfremdungseffekt*). The German term is also translated as **estrangement effect** or **distancing effect**; the last is closest to Brecht’s notion, in that it avoids the negative connotations of jadedness, incapacity to feel, and social apathy that the word “alienation” has acquired in English. This effect, Brecht said, is used by the dramatist to make familiar aspects of the present social reality seem strange, so as to prevent the emotional identification or involvement of the audience with the characters and their actions in a play. His own aim in drama was instead to evoke a critical distance and attitude in the spectators, in order to arouse them to take action against, rather than simply to accept, the state of society and behavior represented on the stage.

On Brecht, refer to *Marxist criticism*; for a related aesthetic concept, see *distance and involvement*.

allegorical imagery: 9.

allegorical interpretation (of the Bible): 183.

allegory: An “allegory” is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the “literal,” or primary, level of signification and at the same time to communicate a second, correlated order of signification.

We can distinguish two main types: (1) Historical and political allegory, in which the characters and actions that are signified literally in their turn represent, or “allegorize,” historical personages and events. So in John Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), the biblical King David represents Charles II of England, Absalom represents his natural son the Duke of Monmouth, and the biblical story of Absalom’s rebellion against his father (2 Samuel 13–18) allegorizes the rebellion of Monmouth against King Charles. (2) The allegory of ideas, in which the literal characters represent concepts and the plot allegorizes an abstract doctrine or thesis. Both types of allegory may either be sustained throughout a work, as in *Absalom and Achitophel* and John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), or else serve merely as an episode in a nonallegorical

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