Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (1966); Michael Murrin, *The Veil of Allegory* (1969); Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory* (1979); Jon Whitman, *Allegory* (1987).

For references to *allegory* in other entries, see pages *90, 97, 225.*

alliteration: "Alliteration" is the repetition of a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words. Usually the term is applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound is made emphatic because it begins a word or a stressed syllable within a word. In Old English **alliterative meter**, alliteration is the principal organizing device of the verse line: the verse is unrhymed; each line is divided into two half-lines of two strong stresses by a decisive pause, or *caesura*; and at least one, and usually both, of the two stressed syllables in the first half-line alliterate with the first stressed syllable of the second half-line. (In this type of versification a vowel was considered to alliterate with any other vowel.) A number of Middle English poems, such as William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, both written in the fourteenth century, continued to use and play variations upon the old alliterative meter. (See *strong-stress meters*.) In the opening line of *Piers Plowman*, for example, all four of the stressed syllables alliterate:

> In a sómer séson, when sóft was the sónne....

In later English versification, however, alliteration is used only for special stylistic effects, such as to reinforce the meaning, to link related words, or to provide tone color and enhance the palpability of enunciating the words. An example is the repetition of the *s*, *th*, and *w* consonants in Shakespeare's Sonnet 30:

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

Various other repetitions of speech sounds are identified by special terms:

Consonance is the repetition of a sequence of two or more consonants, but with a change in the intervening vowel: live-love, lean-alone, pitter-patter. W. H. Auden's poem of the 1930s, " 'O where are you going?' said reader to rider," makes prominent use of this device, with successive lines ending in "*rider* to *reader*," "*farer* to *fearer*," and "*hearer* to *horror*."[1]

Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowels—especially in stressed syllables—in a sequence of nearby words. Note the recurrent long *i* in the opening lines of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820):

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

[1] Lines from "O Where are you going," by W.H. Auden, from *Collected Poems of W.H. Auden* by W.H. Auden.

The richly assonantal effect at the beginning of William Collins' "Ode to Evening" (1747) is achieved by a patterned sequence of changing vowels:

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

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

alliterative meter: 13.

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allusion: "Allusion" is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage. In the Elizabethan Thomas Nashe's "Litany in Time of Plague,"

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

the unidentified "Helen" in the last line alludes to Helen of Troy. Most allusions serve to illustrate or expand upon or enhance a subject but some are used in order to undercut it ironically by the discrepancy between the subject and the allusion. In the lines from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) describing a woman at her modern dressing table,

> The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
> Glowed on the marble,[2]

the *ironic* allusion, achieved by echoing Shakespeare's phrasing, is to the description of Cleopatra's magnificent barge in *Antony and Cleopatra* (II. ii. 196ff.):

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

For discussion of a poet who makes persistent and complex use of this device, see Reuben A. Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* (1959); see also John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (1981); Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (2002), and *True Friendship: Geoffrey Hill, Anthony Hecht, and Robert Lowell Under the Sign of Eliot and Pound* (2010).

Since allusions are not explicitly identified, they imply a fund of knowledge that is shared by an author and the audience for whom the author writes. Most literary allusions are intended to be recognized by the generally educated readers of the author's time but some are aimed at a special coterie. For example, in *Astrophel and Stella,* the Elizabethan *sonnet sequence,* Sir Philip Sidney's punning allusions to Lord Robert Rich, who had married the Stella

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[2] Lines from "The Waste Land" from *Collected Poems 1909–1962* by T. S. Eliot.

of the sonnets, were identifiable only by intimates of the people concerned. (See Sonnets 24 and 37.) Some modern authors, including Joyce, Pound, and Eliot, include allusions that are very specialized, or else drawn from the author's private reading and experience, in the awareness that few, if any, readers will recognize them prior to the detective work of scholarly annotators. The current term *intertextuality* includes literary echoes and allusions as one of the many ways in which any text is interwoven with other texts. See Joseph Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in Western Literary Tradition* (1998); and Gregory Machacek, "Allusion," *PMLA*, Vol. 122 (2007).

ambiance (ăm′ bēäns): **20**.

ambiguity: In ordinary usage "ambiguity" is applied to a fault in style; that is, the use of a vague or equivocal term or expression when what is wanted is precision and particularity of reference. Since William Empson published *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), however, the term has been widely used in criticism to identify a deliberate poetic device: the use of a single word or expression to signify two or more distinct references, or to express two or more diverse attitudes or feelings. **Multiple meaning** and **plurisignation** are alternative terms for this use of language; they have the advantage of avoiding the pejorative association with the word "ambiguity."

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

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

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

A special type of multiple meaning is conveyed by the **portmanteau word**. "Portmanteau" designates a large suitcase that opens into two equal compartments and was introduced into literary criticism by Humpty Dumpty, the expert on semantics in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). He is explicating to Alice the meaning of the opening lines of "Jabberwocky":

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

"Slithy," Humpty Dumpty explained, "means 'lithe and slimy'.... You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." James Joyce exploited this device—the fusion of two or more existing words

—in order to sustain the multiple levels of meaning throughout his long dream narrative *Finnegans Wake* (1939). An example is his comment on girls who are "yung and easily freudened"; "freudened" combines "frightened" and "Freud," while "yung" combines "young" and Sigmund Freud's rival in depth psychology, Carl Jung. (Compare *pun.*) "Différance," a key analytic term of the philosopher of language Jacques Derrida, is a portmanteau noun which he describes as combining two diverse meanings of the French verb "différer": "to differ" and "to defer." (See *deconstruction.*)

By his analysis of ambiguity, William Empson helped make current a mode of *explication* developed especially by exponents of the *New Criticism*, which greatly expanded awareness of the complexity and richness of poetic language. The risk is that the quest for ambiguities will result in **over-reading**: excessively ingenious, overdrawn, and sometimes contradictory explications of a literary word or passage.

For related terms see *connotation and denotation* and *pun*. For a warmly appreciative assessment of Empson's contribution, see Christopher Norris and Nigel Mapp, eds., *William Empson: The Critical Achievement* (1993). For a critique of Empson's theory and practice, refer to Elder Olson, "William Empson, Contemporary Criticism and Poetic Diction," in *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane (1952).

American literature, periods of: 273.

American Renaissance: 274.

anachronism (anăk′ rŏnism): **300.**

anagnorisis (anagnō′ rĭsĭs): **296;** *406.*

anapestic (anapēs′ tik): **219.**

anaphora (ană′ fora): **344.**

anastrophe: 344.

anatomy (in satire): **353.**

anecdote: 364; *139.*

Anglo-Norman Period: 280.

anglophone authors: 285.

Anglo-Saxon Period: 279.

annals: 53.

antagonist (in a plot): **294.**

anthropocentric: 99.

anticlimax: 28.

antifoundationalism: 308.

antihero: The chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that of the traditional protagonist, or *hero*, of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, clownish, or dishonest. The use of nonheroic protagonists occurs as early as the *picaresque* novel of the sixteenth century, and the heroine of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) is a thief and a prostitute. The term "antihero," however, is usually applied to writings in the period of disillusion after the Second World War, beginning with such lowly protagonists as we find in John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953) and Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954). Notable later instances in the novel are Yossarian in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), Humbert Humbert in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), and Tyrone Slothrop in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). The use of an antihero is especially conspicuous in dramatic tragedy, in which the traditional protagonist had usually been of high estate, possessing dignity and courage (see *tragedy*). Extreme instances are the characters who people a world stripped of certainties, values, or even meaning in Samuel Beckett's dramas—the tramps Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* (1952) or the blind and paralyzed old man, Hamm, who is the protagonist in *Endgame* (1958).

See *literature of the absurd* and *black comedy*, and refer to David Simmons, *The Anti-Hero in the American Novel: From Joseph Heller to Kurt Vonnegut* (2008). For references to *antihero* in other entries, see page 2.

antimasque: 211.

antinovel: 258.

antipathy (antĭp′ athy): **107.**

antistrophe (antĭs′ trŏfē): **262.**

antithesis (antĭ′ thesis): A contrast or opposition in the meanings of contiguous phrases or clauses that manifest **parallelism**—that is, a similar word order and structure—in their *syntax*. An example is Alexander Pope's description of Atticus in his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" (1735), "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike." In the antithesis in the second line of Pope's description of the Baron's designs against Belinda, in *The Rape of*

the Lock (1714), the parallelism in the syntax is made prominent by *alliteration* in the antithetic nouns:

> Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
> By *force* to ravish, or by *fraud* betray.

In a sentence from Samuel Johnson's prose fiction *Rasselas* (1759), chapter 26, the antithesis is similarly heightened by alliteration in the contrasted nouns: "Marriage has many *p*ains, but celibacy has no *p*leasures."

antithetical criticism: 176.

antitype: 182.

anxiety of influence: 176.

aphorism (ăf′ ŏrism): **113.**

apocrypha (ăpŏk′ rĭfa): **43.**

apologue: 10.

aporia (ăpŏ′ rēa): **83.**

apostrophe (apŏs′ trŏfē): **345.**

apothegm (ăp′ othĕm): **113.**

applied criticism: 71.

appropriation (in reading): **247.**

approximate rhyme: 349.

Arcadia (arkā′ dia): **269.**

archaism: The literary use of words and expressions that have become obsolete in the common speech of an era. Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* (1590–96) deliberately employed archaisms (many of them derived from Chaucer's medieval English) in order to achieve a poetic style appropriate to his revival of the medieval *chivalric romance.* The translators of the King James Version of the Bible (1611) gave weight, dignity, and sonority to their prose by a sustained use of archaic revivals. Both Spenser and the King James Bible have in their turn been major sources of archaisms for Milton and many later authors. When Keats, for example, in his ode (1820) described the Grecian urn as "with *brede* / Of marble men and maidens *overwrought,*" he used archaic words for "braid" and "worked [that is, ornamented] all over." Abraham Lincoln achieved a ritual solemnity by biblical archaisms in his "Gettysburg Address," which begins, "Fourscore and seven years ago."

Archaism has been a standard resort for *poetic diction*. Through the nineteenth century, for example, many poets continued to use "I ween," "methought," "steed," "taper" (for candle), and "morn," but only in their verses, not their everyday speech.

archetypal criticism: In literary criticism, the term **archetype** denotes narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes, and images that recur in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams, and even social rituals. Such recurrent items are often claimed to be the result of elemental and universal patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the attentive reader because he or she shares the psychic archetypes expressed by the author. An important antecedent of the literary theory of the archetype was the treatment of myth by a group of comparative anthropologists at Cambridge University, especially James G. Frazer, whose *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915) identified elemental patterns of myth and ritual that, he claimed, recur in the legends and ceremonials of diverse and far-flung cultures and religions. An even more important antecedent was the depth psychology of Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) who applied the term "archetype" to what he called "primordial images," the "psychic residue" of repeated patterns of experience in our very ancient ancestors, which, he maintained, survive in the *collective unconscious* of the human race and are expressed in myths, religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in works of literature. See *Jungian criticism*, under *psychoanalytic criticism*.

Archetypal literary criticism was given impetus by Maud Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934) and flourished especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Some archetypal critics dropped Jung's theory of the collective unconscious as the deep source of these patterns; in the words of Northrop Frye, this theory is "an unnecessary hypothesis," and the recurrent archetypes are simply there, "however they got there."

Among the prominent practitioners of various modes of **archetypal criticism**, in addition to Maud Bodkin, were G. Wilson Knight, Robert Graves, Philip Wheelwright, Richard Chase, Leslie Fiedler, and Joseph Campbell. These critics tended to emphasize the persistence of mythical patterns in literature, on the assumption that myths are closer to the elemental archetype than the artful manipulations of sophisticated writers (see *myth critics*). The death/rebirth theme was often said to be the archetype of archetypes and was held to be grounded in the cycle of the seasons and the organic cycle of human life; this archetype, it was claimed, occurs in primitive rituals of the king who is annually sacrificed, in widespread myths of gods who die to be reborn, and in a multitude of diverse texts, including the Bible, Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the early fourteenth century, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in 1798. Among the other archetypal themes, images, and characters frequently traced in literature were the journey underground, the heavenly ascent, the search for the father, the Paradise/Hades dichotomy, the Promethean rebel-hero, the scapegoat, the earth goddess, and the fatal woman.

In his influential book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye developed the archetypal approach—which he combined with the *typological interpretation* of the Bible and the conception of the imagination in the writings of the poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827)—into a radical and comprehensive revision of the foundational concepts of both the theory of literature and the practice of literary criticism. Frye proposed that the totality of literary works constitute a "self-contained literary universe," which has been created over the ages by the human imagination so as to assimilate the alien and indifferent world of nature into archetypal forms that satisfy enduring human desires and needs. In this literary universe, four radical **mythoi** (that is, plot forms, or organizing structural principles), correspondent to the four seasons in the cycle of the natural world, are incorporated in the four major *genres* of comedy (spring), romance (summer), tragedy (autumn), and satire (winter). Within the archetypal mythos of each of these genres, individual works of literature also play variations upon a number of more limited archetypes—that is, conventional patterns and types that literature shares with social rituals as well as with theology, history, law, and, in fact, all "discursive verbal structures." Viewed archetypally, Frye asserted, literature turns out to play an essential role in refashioning the impersonal material universe into an alternative verbal universe that is humanly intelligible and viable because it is adapted to universal human needs and concerns. Frye continued, in a long series of later writings, to expand his archetypal theory, to make a place in its overall scope and on different levels for including many traditional critical concepts and procedures, and to apply the theory both to everyday social practices and to the elucidation of writings ranging from the Bible to contemporary poets and novelists. See A. C. Hamilton, *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism* (1990).

In addition to the works mentioned above, consult C. G. Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art" (1922), in *Contributions to Analytical Psychology* (1928), and "Psychology and Literature," in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933); G. Wilson Knight, *The Starlit Dome* (1941); Richard Chase, *The Quest for Myth* (1949); Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theater* (1949); Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (rev. 1961); Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," in *Fables of Identity* (1963); Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (rev. 1968); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2nd ed., 1968). In the 1980s, *feminist critics* developed forms of archetypal criticism that undertook to revise the male bases and biases of Jung and other archetypists. See Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Woman's Fiction* (1981), and Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht, *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought* (1985). Some forms of *Darwinian* criticism might be seen as adaptations of archetypal criticism to the premises of evolutionary thinking.

For discussions and critiques of archetypal theory and practice, see Murray Krieger, ed., *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism* (1966); Robert Denham, *Northrop Frye and Critical Method* (1978); Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (1980), chapter 1. For references to *archetypal criticism* in other entries, see pages *77, 141, 150.*