

# A

## **abolitionist literature**

American literature written for the express purpose of opposing the institution of chattel slavery. Abolitionist literature ranged from philosophical tracts to emotionally inflammatory pamphlets, from personal narratives (see **slave narrative**) to sentimental novels.

The first anti-slavery pamphlet penned in the English colonies was likely Samuel Sewall's "The Selling of Joseph" (1700). Sewall, a devout Puritan, relied almost entirely on Biblical and theological arguments in his assertion of the 'brotherhood of man' [humanity]. His title's reference to the selling of Joseph by his brothers indicates the strength of Sewall's belief in 'the brotherhood of man.' The most widely disseminated piece of abolitionist literature was almost certainly Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, whose sales far outdistanced those of Frederick Douglass's true accounts of his life as a slave as well as almost all other pieces of pre-Civil War American fiction. Stowe's plot is heavy in pathos and sentimentalism, designed to provoke emotional reaction.

The white writer who should be most associated with the genre would be printer and activist William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison's writings and speeches combine righteous indignation with logical discourse, as he blended John Locke's assertions of human equality with Christianity-based moral claims.

Frederick Douglass heads the list of black abolitionists who we associate heavily with the written word. (Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth exhibited most of their eloquence in speeches.) The first two versions of his autobiography were published in 1845 and 1855, and stood as articulate accounts of the myriad evils of slavery.

Black writer William Wells Brown's fiction, drama, and true accounts likewise carried an abolitionist message. He penned the play, "The Escape; or A Leap for Freedom" as well as the novel *Clotel; or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*. *Clotel* was based on stories that Thomas Jefferson fathered a child by a black mistress. (Current evidence indicates Jefferson fathered a number of children by Sally Hemings and that all grew up in the Jefferson household and were sent off into the free world upon reaching adulthood.)

Abolitionist literature also includes newspapers, as many such papers beyond Garrison's own were published – in pre-Civil War America, the power of the press, extending to all who owned a press, included that of many a man who set his own type in his storefront shop.

## **absurd** (absurdist, Theatre of the Absurd)

derives from the philosophical notion of absurdity: that which is self-contradictory or logically impossible. In twentieth Century literature the term refers primarily to axiological absurdity: life should be about values and purpose, but there is no discernable purpose for life and no way to determine either purpose or values. [see also **existentialism**]

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is one of the finest examples of Theatre of the Absurd, as his characters pointlessly pass the time waiting for a Godot who never arrives, revealing their intrinsic emptiness in the process. The works of Harold Pinter ("The Dumbwaiter," "The Caretaker") and Edward Albee (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*) also fit into the genre. Albert Camus offers his philosophical explanation of the **absurd hero** in the essay "The Myth of Sisyphus." Fictional delvings into the absurdist include Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (noting that Yosarian seems too selfish to fit Camus's mold of the absurd hero, but certainly stands a representative of Everyman in an absurd world) and possibly Thomas Pynchon's *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, with the caveat that Pynchon's writing, with its skewed multiple foci, is considered very much in the post-modernist style.

While the heroic assertion of existential dignity is found in a variety of forms (Camus' heroes, Heller's Yosarian, J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye*) in many absurdist pieces, in others the protagonists may be fundamentally impotent or unheroic. Beckett and Albee are more inclined to create the hollow burn of despair in the pit of the viewer/reader's stomach than to offer a model for rebellion.

Absurdity is also used, with less philosophical intent, in sophisticated humor. James Thurber's famous cartoon "I thought I heard a seal bark," featuring a seal on the headboard of a couple's bed, demonstrates that form of absurdity. The seal's presence is logically untenable; the picture is delightfully humorous; there is no philosophical element to the humor (at least none I can determine).

### **absurd hero**

a figure particularly connected to Albert Camus's idea of the existential hero and explicitly discussed in Camus's "Myth of Sisyphus." The absurd hero is one who recognizes the self-contradictory (absurd) nature of the universe. Confronted with the choices of suicide, philosophical suicide (returning to a meaningless life), or rebellion, the absurd hero rebels. He chooses to battle the gods, knowing that he will lose, knowing that he will be brought low, but comforted by the knowledge that his quest is just and right. It is the universe or the gods themselves that are evil.

Camus sets high standards for his absurd hero. The heroes of *The Plague* commit themselves fully to battle for what must prove, at best, a temporary victory. Society will be beset by disease again; the battle must be forever fought. Yosarian of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is too selfish to qualify; Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is an existential hero, but his tinge of optimism as he waits in his lighted grave at the edge of Harlem reminds us that he is fighting the social order, not the fabric of the universe.

Robert Browning's Childe Roland, from the nineteenth century poem "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," appears very much the absurd hero, choosing to confront a bleak destiny at the archetypal Dark Tower, although Browning claimed to write as a Romantic and predated Camus by nearly a hundred years. By an existentialist reading, Childe Roland deliberately allows the 'hoary cripple' to mislead him and turns to the Dark Tower because fealty to his original oath demands it. The quest for the Dark Tower has compromised the soul and essence

of his predecessors and he expects no more of himself. His only hope lies in his desire to prove 'worthy to fail,' worthy to join men who have received the judgment 'traitor.' That he reaches the Tower and dares to bring forth his horn and issue a challenge is his victory; the imagery suggests that his fate, inevitably, is hell. That a man would choose hell over cowardice is, by such a reading, the one victory within the human grasp.

**accented syllable** (heavy stress)

the syllable(s) of a word or poetic foot pronounced strongly.

In the phrase "the beating heart," 'the' is a light stress; 'beat' is a heavy stress; 'ing' is another light; 'heart' is a second heavy; within a line of verse, the phrase might read as two iambic feet.

**aesthetics**

the area of philosophy which studies artistic values: What makes a thing beautiful? What is the value of an artistically accomplished item? Why does art matter? (Art includes all forms of art, certainly music and literature as well as the visual arts.) In "The Republic," Plato suggested that art could be either pragmatically valuable or dangerous; Aristotle attempted a fuller explanation of both the value and effect of things artistic in his *Aesthetics*; philosophers have wrangled over how to link 'the beautiful' with 'the good' and 'the true' ever since.

Whether 'much,' 'most,' or 'all' literary criticism is a subset of the field of aesthetics is a question that would be answered differently by different philosophers and critics. Romanticist philosopher Benedetto Croce would offer his literary criticism as informed by his aesthetic theory. A Marxist critic might offer his/hers from the context of the Marxist theory of history, and might reduce the aesthetic to a set of devices for social manipulation.

**allegory**

a work whose surface elements, both in part and as a whole, correspond to an overtly developed "deeper meaning." Allegories generally carry either a religious, an ethical, or a political message.

John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegorical account of the soul's progress to heaven. Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Celestial Railroad" is a comic retelling of Bunyan's story, the modern nineteenth century railroad substituting for the footpath and the focus ethical rather than narrowly religious. Flannery O'Connor offers a 1950's variation in "A Good Man is Hard to Find," with the automobile excursion to heaven or hell taking the role of life's journey. Her story can be read as narrow religious allegory and, simultaneously, as broad satire.

Robert Frost's "The Road Less Traveled By" may be read as an allegory of choosing one's life's work and is often misread as an 'inspirational' piece inviting the reader to choose the road less traveled" – a reading directly at odds with the sigh at the end of the poem. Politically inspired allegories range from John Dryden's eighteenth century "The Hind and the Panther" to George Orwell's allegorical attack on twentieth century Communism, *Animal Farm*. Some readers claim allegorical references to early twentieth century politics and the 'free silver' issue mingle into L. Frank Baum's children's story *The Wizard of Oz*, though Baum would likely trace his own imagery to theosophical notions, from the

vaguely religious nineteenth century spiritualist movement. Reading Dorothy's companions as 'animal, vegetable, mineral' may be closer to Baum's intent than any references to greenbacks and political 'hot air.'

### **alliteration**

repetition of initial consonant sounds in a sentence; the technique is a standard of Anglo-Saxon verse and is found in some Middle English verse.

"Fish find Faulkner fine, / Finer than a fraying line" is a nonsense rendition. "Oft Scyld Scefing sceabena breatum" from *Beowulf* is an example of the Anglo-Saxon structure, with the initial consonant sound offered twice in the first half of the line and once in the second. Seamus Heaney retains the structure in his translation of the line, "There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes."

The anonymous fourteenth century author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* employed the old, Anglo-Saxon form, "Wel gay watz this gome gered in grene," translated by J.R.R. Tolkien as "Very gay was this great man guised all in green."

### **allusion**

an indirect or oblique reference to an outside item.

The "mad pursuit" in stanza one of John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" alludes to Dionysian revelry. Old Smallweed's reference to his 'friend in the city' is a sure allusion to the devil in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, though many of us have friends in the city who are not to be confused with Old Scratch. A reference to 'the flood' may be expected to lead the reader to thoughts of Genesis and Noah, though an archetypal mention of 'a flood' should suggest overwhelming emotion or an overwhelming series of events rather than biblical retribution. Whether the flood that washes Maggie out of existence in George Eliot's *The Mill and the Floss* represents biblical allusion, archetypal symbolism, or both is up to the discerning reader to decide.

### **ambiguity**

uncertainty of meaning in that the door is left open to two or more incompatible readings.

In Ernest Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," the reader will find extensive suggestions that Harry's destination at the top of the mountain represents reaching heaven and an approximately equal number suggesting his soul will be frozen like that of the denizens of the lowest levels of hell. I presume Hemingway's ambiguity was fully intentional.

### **analogy**

the suggestion that because one item shares some element of appearance or behavior with another, it will also share additional elements.

Oranges and grapefruits are both acidic-tasting fruits; both are good sources for Vitamin C (an experimentally validated analogy). Fire trucks and apples are both red; therefore both have loud sirens (false and invalid analogy; obviously, apples do not have sirens). Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and George Eliot's *Adam Bede* are long Victorian novels; both paint broad pictures of the English social structure (true, and contingent; the claim suggests a grounds for comparison rather than providing substantial insight into either novel; the analogy should lead the critic to a comparison of respective social messages of the middle class reformer Dickens and the conservative intellectual Ms. Eliot).

### **analogy, reasoning by**

the root of most creativity, the discovery of similarity between items.

While discovering similarities and connections is at the root of scientific progress, the process is used in the sciences to create **hypotheses**, which must be empirically tested to produce conclusions (**inductive** logic) in order to become theories (the sources for **deductive** logic). Loren Eiseley speaks of the importance of analogy to scientific understanding: "It is only by the hook of the analogy, by the root metaphor, . . . that science succeeds in extending its domain."

In literary criticism, analogic reasoning is the key element. Literature works through **metaphor**, the creation of links between similar and dissimilar items. Only the most outrageous misreadings of metaphor are closed off by inductive, deductive, and extrinsic means in literature, leaving the critic room to play amid the multiple references produced by metaphors.

Good criticism involves the gathering of patterns of images and patterns of metaphors and locating diverse elements that can be gathered into a unified theme. Good criticism involves finding the analogies.

Good works of literature function by opening the world, creating a range of imaginative possibilities in the minds of the readers and resonating with the reader by creating scenes sufficiently analogic to the reader's own experience to allow and create understanding.

Robert Frost's simple "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" first resonates with the reader's own experiences of snow, night travel, and solitary contemplation. It plays on standard metaphoric connections (journey = the journey of life; woods = unknown; frozen lake may = death). It offers specific metaphors ('house in the village' may = church; horse may = conscience). It combines the individual lines and words into a pattern of meaning which may be consistently read as one or another level of fatigue, depression, or suicidal thought. Is the poem a wistful desire to watch life rather than be caught up in it? Is it a contemplation of suicide? The reader's answers depend on his/her own precise reading of the tone and metaphors.

### **anapest**

a poetic foot consisting of two light accents followed by a heavy stress.

### **angst**

the inability to find purpose in life, marked by extreme dissatisfaction with one's present life but a complete inability to discern a more purposeful direction for life. Of the twentieth century psychological plagues *angst*, *ennui*, and *boredom*, angst is the one associated most with existential despair -- but is also associated with a standard adolescent psychological phase. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter suffers typical adolescent angst in the fifth book of her series. We may wonder if J.D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield, the protagonist of the highly influential *Catcher in the Rye*, is to be seen as one who has discovered the deep pain of existence or just a particularly disturbed adolescent. Angst tends to heavily involve projection ("they aren't 'real'"; "they're a bunch of hypocrites") of the thinker's own anxieties ("I don't know what I'm supposed to be or want to be"; "my behavior is not consistent, no matter how hard I try"). Critics have tended to suggest that Salinger's character reflects a deep seated anxiety, rather than only standing as a

young man suffering a Harry Potter phase. Further, they would credit him for making a genuine search for **authenticity**.

### **anima or animus** (Jungian)

(from the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung) the anima is the alter-ego or female creative principle found in a male's subconscious; the animus is the male alter-ego and will-to-power found in the female. Jung's writing calls to account earlier notions of the 'manly man' and the 'acquiescent female,' as he suggests a balanced male both recognizes and comfortably incorporates elements of his anima into his psyche while a balanced female can easily incorporate so-called 'male' rationality into hers.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" appears to offer two visions of the anima: the very frightening one offered by the "woman wailing for her demon lover" early in the poem and the affirmative center of creativity of "the damsel with the dulcimer" near the end of the poem. The anima may be identified as both the center of unbridled emotion and the source of creativity and nurturing. Coleridge links it to knowledge of the dream world and subconscious, establishing the link over a hundred years before Jung created the psychological labels.

A Jungian might claim to find Mary Shelley's animus in her Victor Frankenstein, the scientist whose cold intellect led him to create the monster and led to his revulsion for his own creation.

In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Margaret Fuller anticipates Jung, offering her demands for a society that respects the integrated personalities of both women and men. Her Miranda has incorporated the affirmative traits of her animus (reason) without compromising her positive female traits.

### **animism**

any of those religions whose deities are found in the natural world, inhabiting physical places or objects. Animist religions might have deities associated with particular aged or imposing trees or particular groves of trees, with mountains or prominent geological features, or with rivers or important water sources.

Most African tribal religions would be described as animist, as would American Indian religions. (Reference to a single Great Spirit in American Indian religion is likely a result of Eurocentric misunderstanding, as Alexander Pope's suggestion in his "Essay on Man" clearly links to his attempt to place all the universe under his deity and James Seaver's claim in his recounting of Mary Jemison's captivity story reflects a desire to make Indian culture appear non-threatening.)

E.M. Forster utilizes a great tree with a spring flowing from its root as an animist place of worship in his "The Road from Colonus." His resonating metaphors ("the tree of life," "new water," etc.) allow the reader to see the sense of metaphor implicit in animism as well as provide the fabric of a modern story. Forster also touches on how animist folk elements have been integrated into modern religion, as the objects in the shrine become iconic offerings to the Virgin Mary or God of the inhabitants' Eastern Orthodox faith.

Animism, in which particular items are given particular supernatural powers, is different from, but not necessarily exclusive from, much **polytheism**, where the

deities generally inhabit realms beyond the physical, and **pantheism**, where all things are part of an all-encompassing divine.

### **antagonist**

in a work of literature, the figure who works in opposition to the ends and goals of the protagonist; the “bad guy.”

While older literature, some quality fiction, and contemporary genre fiction quite often are constructed on a protagonist vs. antagonist scheme, much quality fiction from the invention of the novel forward tends to reject the creation of a single or central antagonist. One has no difficulty identifying Iago as the antagonist of Shakespeare’s *Othello*; likewise one knows Javert as the antagonist of Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*. J.R.R. Tolkien’s extraordinary fantasy novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, offers an easily discerned primary antagonist (Sauron) and secondary antagonist (Sauron).

Henry Fielding’s eighteenth century *Jonathan Wild* turns the structure on its head, Fielding centering his action on the vicious Wild and leaving the virtuous Heartfree as secondary figures.

Conversely, one may read a number of Charles Dickens’s best novels, novels full and overflowing with nasty people, without finding one worthy to assume the central role of antagonist. *Bleak House* includes Old Smallweed, Harold Skimpole, the predatory lawyer Vholes, the vicious Tulkinghorn, and others, but no one save Smallweed’s “Friend in the City” himself or perhaps the institution of the Chancery itself has the stature to stand as the book’s antagonist.

The protagonist of Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, Pip, must deal with vicious relatives (Pumblechoke), an old lady who is as much to be pitied as condemned (Mrs. Havisham), and a well-intentioned convict (Magwich). His real antagonist, as so often is the case in this world, resides in his own foolish heart and mind, not in any of those petty or confused characters.

### **Antebellum literature**

American literature written before the American Civil War; the term primarily applies to literature written by Southerners between about the beginning of the nineteenth century and the Civil War.

Poet Hugh Swinton Legare and novelists John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms are Antebellum writers. Legare, like most of his contemporaries, wrote Romantic verse. Simms is credited with the border novel for his novels of the Southern frontier (*Border Beagles, a Tale of Mississippi*). Kennedy, more negatively, is credited with the plantation novel (*Swallow Barn, or A Sojourn in the Old Dominion*), a genre viciously ridiculed by Mark Twain in the Grangerford section of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The plantation novel featured the all-knowing patriarch, comfortable in his white linen suit and sipping bitters on the porch of his white mansion while his black servants toil contentedly in his fields. In Twain’s variation, the patriarch leads a pointless feud, sending his offspring to violent death.

Along with bad fiction, Antebellum literature included a direction of humor that precedes Twain and Faulkner. Examples include Thomas Bangs Thorpe’s “The Big Bear of Arkansas”; the anonymously rendered Davy Crockett tales; and the originals for Joel Chandler Harris’s ‘Uncle Remus’ tales, a semi-scholarly

collection of black Antebellum folklore published in the 1880s. The ‘down-home’ style of Thorpe’s tale-teller seems a direct antecedent to Twain’s style in the raft story (found both in *Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*) and “The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” Harris [writing later] places real African-American folktales, involving the combined African heritage and southern American experience of generations of slaves, in the mouth of his unfortunately stereotyped narrator.

### **anthropomorphism**

attributing human characteristics to a deity or inappropriately attributing human characteristics to an animal; may be used in reference to a literary technique, but the term is often used pejoratively referring to an error of understanding.

The Greek gods were often portrayed as larger than life humans, with human jealousies and rivalries. Statues of the bearded Zeus grasping his lightning bolt as well as myths of Zeus seducing mortal women are anthropomorphic portrayals. Richard Garnett’s short story “Twilight of the Gods” features Prometheus and an array of deities wandering the earth. Anthropomorphic renderings of Satan and his lesser demons abound in **Faustian** literature. Milton created unintentional sympathy for his Satan by anthropomorphic elements of *Paradise Lost*, particularly those scenes in the early books in which Satan and his minions gather in a parliamentary conclave. Contemporary novelist Neil Gaiman fully humanizes his Jungian renderings of the deities in *American Gods*.

Television nature shows are sometimes pejoratively accused of anthropomorphism, as many of the older ones talk about animals as though they experience human emotions. [It is to be noted that animals, particularly mammals and birds, do share a number of human emotions even while also noting that the various species have their own individual behavioral patterns. The accusation should be offered with caution.]

### **antinomy**

a philosophical term for an insoluble question, usually one with two mutually exclusive possible answers both of which contain inherent self-contradiction or inconsistencies; in literature we may use the term for an insoluble ambiguity. In philosophy, the question of whether free will exists is a standard example: a yes answer appears to require the potential for absolutely random behavior (“we can do as we will, but can we will as we will?”); a no implies that the entire history of the universe was determined by some single past event, that event a violation of the determinist standard. In literature we can define the term more broadly, and thus argue as to whether Harry’s destination at the end of “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (see **ambiguity**, above) truly stands as an antinomy.

### **antonym**

a word that holds an exact converse relationship to another word; an opposite. The antonym of ‘love,’ by accepted usage, is ‘hate.’ Definitions of the two terms would reflect ‘affection for’ and ‘distaste for’ some object of the term. One might suggest, instead, that the antonym of ‘love’ is ‘unlove’ (“...voyage whose chartings are unlove,” Robert Hayden’s “Middle Passage”), a callous and complete absence of affection or concern.

### **aphorism**

a short, pithy saying; an aphorism is expected to communicate either folk wisdom or some deep understanding; it may or may not be humorous.

Benjamin Franklin, writer of *Poor Richard's Almanac*, and George Herbert, English clergyman and poet, were the two most notable collectors of aphorisms. "A penny saved is a penny earned" is one attributed to Franklin. Composers of aphorisms include philosopher Frederick Nietzsche, who wrote some of his works as strings of aphorisms and writer Oscar Wilde, who peppered his conversation and his plays with witty and satiric aphorisms ("It is personalities, not principles, that move the age"). W.H. Auden was of the opinion that folk-sayings, even if they fit the other characteristics of the definition, do not qualify as aphorisms, thus his collection of aphorisms does not include a single Franklin quote. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* and the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, however, heavily quote (respectively) Franklin and Herbert.

### **apocalyptic literature**

literature whose plot focuses on "the end of the world," or, more generally, the end of civilization as we know it. Such literature generally depicts the world that remains following some great disaster. Standard themes are post-nuclear holocaust depictions (Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*; Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence*) and post world-purging epidemic depictions (Stephen King's *The Stand*).

Ray Bradbury's post-nuclear short story, "There Will Come Soft Rains," with its nuanced metaphor, may be the best example of a genre that dates at least to Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is a recent example, offering a man and his son trudging through a nuked landscape. Pretexts for these 'fallen' worlds often reflect 'topics of the day,' with nuclear war the standard for the 1950's and 1960's, population pressures a standard in the 1970's, the dread disease (often human-engineered) a recurrently chosen theme that was in particular favor after the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Environmental disaster is the 'doom' currently in favor, with John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (mid-1970's) a prescient example.

Many apocalyptic pieces seem written as a pretext for the author to offer his or her low opinion of humanity, as many of the 'after' worlds have collapsed into a Hobbsian 'war of all against all.' Exceptions include Huxley's *Ape and Essence* with its deteriorated and deteriorating, but still organized, society and Shute's *On the Beach* in which his doomed Australians demonstrate a very British 'stiff upper lip.' One may argue that Shute's exploration of 'we're all going to die' provides a deeper topic than any of the countless explorations of so-called 'human depravity.'

### **Apollonian and Dionysian** (from Frederick Nietzsche)

understanding takes two forms: that offered by knowledge and the intellect, symbolized by the Sun, daylight, and the god Apollo; and that offered by instinct, deep desires, and hidden impulses, symbolized by the Moon, the god Dionysus and the wild celebrations performed in Dionysus's name. The former is the root of order, the latter of creativity.

The philosophy of Plato and Aristotle exemplifies the Apollonian. Socrates offers the motto “to know the good is to do the good.” John Keats's appeal to serenity and timeless beauty in his “Ode on a Grecian Urn” is Apollonian in tone, even though he is describing a piece of pottery cast to celebrate the festivals of Dionysus. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's “Kubla Khan,” with its references to “woman wailing for her demon lover” and pictures of nature at its wildest exemplifies the Dionysian. In the Coleridge poem, the observer of this realm returns with dangerous knowledge and must be confined by the proper incantation (“weave a circle round him thrice”).

The Dionysian exuberance of the music of the late 1960's contributed to the demise of a number of its performers: drugs and intoxication played various roles in the deaths of Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, and Gram Parsons. Some might equate the Dionysian to C.G. Jung's ‘shadow,’ but I would caution against doing so. The Shadow can refer to any deliberately buried or repressed characteristics, not just to those creative, impulsive, or instinctive. The desire to repress those instinctive impulses which would be judged anti-social does contribute, more than a little, to the building of the Shadow, but the Shadow would include many elements that are simply drab, vicious, and banal.

**archetype** (from Carl Gustav Jung)

a universal concept, one which is part of the “collective consciousness” therefore evident to all discerning readers. Wood Avens offers the following definition: “Archetypes are the personifications which, for our convenience, the subconscious offers us in order that we can make contact with the various different forces which power the human psyche. They are called archetypes because they are recognizable from the earliest myths, stories, representations and records of the human race.” The deities of polytheistic religions generally carry archetypal properties.

The slithering snake in Emily Dickinson's “Narrow fellow in the grass” archetypically represents slyness and duplicity. Journeys usually represent the course of life, thus the hero's journey of myth (Joseph Campbell provides an extensive Jungian account of the stages of the hero's journey and how this journey recurs in epics and in fiction). The river in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the scene for Huck's journey into maturity, a journey that is truncated when Tom Sawyer arrives on the scene. The highways of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* suggest an inherently incomplete journey, as the trip becomes travel for its own sake and the destination (the hero's triumph) fades into indeterminate purposelessness. The indeterminate journey, similarly, plays a standard role in folk and popular culture, as “the highway goes on forever ...” in “Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight.”

**argument**

for the purpose of college writing, a reasoned essay which seeks to establish or demonstrate a significant claim. Key words in the evaluation of such an argument are “reasoned” and “significant.” While the specific form and requirements for a piece of scholarly writing vary in terms of individual assignments as well as across the disciplines, certain basic requirements are universal. 1) A scholarly argument must utilize the types of evidence and forms of reasoning appropriate

for the discipline and level of study. 2) A scholarly argument must demonstrate a point that holds some intellectual value.

**assonance**

the poetic device of repeating vowel sounds to increase **euphony**. In Claude McKay's "The Harlem Dancer," "She sang and danced on gracefully and calm" offers two different repeated 'a' sounds – 'sang' and 'gracefully' have hard a's, 'danced' and 'calm' soft ones, providing a pattern of smooth repetition within the line.

**atheist** (in context)

while the obvious and contemporary definition of 'atheist' is 'one who firmly believes that no deity exists,' in earlier centuries the word was often used in a much different context. Often the definition was 'anyone who is a member of my culture but does not share my beliefs regarding the nature and dictates of my deity.' It is in this latter sense that the term was applied by contemporaries to Christopher Marlowe, whose supposed 'school of atheism' far more likely referred to Roman Catholic or other heretical beliefs than any belief that there was no god. In New England Thomas Morton was accused of operating a 'school of atheism' by William Bradford. Morton's offense against the Puritan Bradford and his colony was a belief in the religious forms of the Church of England, further rendered dangerous by a hearty secular appreciation of Classical knowledge and a hedonistic approach to life.

**atmosphere**

tone created by the physical background of the work.

Gothic works tend to take place against a dark and ponderous backdrop, as Edgar Allan Poe creates bizarre ruined labyrinths as his settings. Washington Irving gathers darkness for his gothic tales by picturing great stone castles. The woods in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" are dark but those at the end of his "Ethan Brand" are beautiful manifestations of Divine nature. William Faulkner gives "Barn Burning" a final hopeful tone through the sun rising on a wood filled with singing birds.

Atmosphere plays quite heavily in folk pieces, ghost stories and the like. The barren moors give life to Emily Bronte's gothic *Wuthering Heights* as well as many a minor ghost story, while the smoke and alcohol of pubs, be they convivial or drab, bring life to Dietrich Knickerbocker (Washington Irving) as well as the narrators of traditional ghost stories like "The Body Snatcher" (Robert Louis Stevenson). Such tales often have first-person narrators who take only minor roles, contributing to the atmosphere as they 'tell' a dominantly third-person story.

The coal-smoke smog of late nineteenth century London permeates George Gissing's fiction, turning a walk through a lower class neighborhood in *New Grub Street* into an excursion into the smoky depths of hell. Contemporary writers like Sarah Waters (*Fingersmith*) offer prose that wallows in the filth of the Victorian world, just as contemporary filmmakers ("Gangs of New York," TV's "Copper") develop a passion for the sepia-toned mud of their imaginary Five Points.

**authenticity** (as a philosophical or psychological concept)

one of the major directions of existential seeking is the search for authenticity. In this context, a protagonist may discover that his/her life is lacking in purpose, is not true to his/her own values, or is morally empty. The protagonist may, consciously or unconsciously, embark on a search for meaning, or authenticity. In traditional literature, the protagonist finds meaning by stepping into some cause that is larger than himself (as Ralph Ellison's protagonist in *Invisible Man* becomes a voice for The Brotherhood) or experiences religious redemption (as Sister Sharon Falconer does prior to her meeting with the title character in Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry*).

However, Ellison's protagonist soon enough learns that The Brotherhood is just out to manipulate him for less than desirable purposes. His true awakening comes much later. Sister Sharon's dreams and church are burned by her taking in the duplicitous Gantry. The existentialist suggestion is that neither of these persons had discovered themselves. Authenticity requires individual decision and is hard to maintain. One must put aside easy choices and probably all successes in favor of brutal self-honesty. The protagonist is likely to find himself "alone in the land he loves" like the hero of Albert Camus's "The Guest." He may carry an ugly secret and an irrevocable commitment to some duty like Senator Ransom Stoddard in the John Ford movie "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence." She must be as willing to die as the heroine who occupies one of the graves in David Bradley's *The Chaneyville Incident*, the one who would lead her people to freedom whatever the cost. Or she may simply toil away at her poetry in her attic, without a chance of worldly success, to be discovered as Emily Dickinson after her death.

**axiology**

that branch of philosophy which studies values, axiology includes aesthetics ("what is beautiful?") and ethics ("what is the good?").

# B

**ballad**

technically, a traditional narrative form consisting of a series of quatrains, normally written in lines of iambic tetrameter alternating with iambic trimeter. Popularly, the term is applied to a traditional or folk narrative written in verse. The written ballad quite often has oral antecedents.

Thomas Percy's "Barbara Allen's Cruelty" is a traditional ballad, similar to and presumably derived from the anonymously attributed "Barbara Allan." The anonymous "Thomas the Rhymer," recounting the poet and seer's disappearance into Elfland, is a delightful example of the genre. The best known piece we associate with the ballad genre, Robert Burns's "Tam O'Shanter" is not written in quatrains. Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" is neither a traditional piece nor written in quatrains, yet the narrative is in the style of a ballad.

### **ballad measure**

the standard rhyme scheme of a ballad: Iambic 4x 3a 4x 3a which indicates that lines one and three (the x lines) consist of four feet and do not rhyme; lines two and four are each three feet and rhyme; the meter is short-long / short-long.

### **bard**

a poet or a recounter of oral tales in the Gaelic culture; generally used for such a tale-teller or a professional poet through the medieval period in British literature. In general usage, a bard might sing or tell some traditional epic, either learned or of his own composition, at a feast or celebration. *Beowulf* alludes heavily to the telling of such tales (but not the tale-teller) following the defeat of Grendel and Grendel's mother. The more precise use is that of a professional poet with specified duties and obligations, as delineated in the Irish, Scot, and Welsh medieval traditions. The Bard, as used to denote William Shakespeare, is a complimentary title, declaring him the first among all poets.

### **Beat Generation**

a generation of writers from the 1950's in America, the Beats involved themselves in a culture of non-conformity and individualistic self-assertion. The Beat movement existed in reaction to the ostensible values of the 1950's ("heaven is a small house in the suburbs, 2.6 children, a new blue automobile in the driveway and a television broadcasting snowy images of Milton Berle into the living room"). The Beats, either marginalized by their culture or choosing to marginalize themselves, set out to connect with the other America, that of the dispossessed. Jazz, drugs, sex, and wanderlust characterized their writings and their lives. Some, such as Allen Ginsberg, found meaning in political protest, or in alternative (Eastern) religion. Some, like Neal Cassady, were in the vanguard of the counter-culture movement of the 1960's.

Major Beat writings include Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* and Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*. *On the Road* is just that, a narrative of a cross-country journey in which the process, the journey, is of far more importance than the destination. Kerouac's narrative 'I' suggests that many elements of the journey are autobiographical, with driver, car-thief, and former juvenile delinquent Dean Moriarty a pseudonym for Neal Cassady and Kerouac's poet Carlo Marx, Allen Ginsberg. The original draft was typed on a single 'scroll' of paper, creating the head-long feel of the novel, though it was edited variously thereafter. *Howl*, a book-length poem first read at Lawrence Ferlingetti's City Lights Book Store and originally published by City Lights Books, likewise matched its name, as it offered a voice of outrage at a society which was, in Ginsberg's estimation, driving all its best to insanity. *Howl* was declared obscene upon publication, prompting legal action and generating publicity that took the poem onto the best seller lists.

The writings of many of the Beats were time-driven and conscious of the moment, giving them a head-long impressionistic direction. Kerouac, a lover of jazz improvisation, created continuous-feed paper for his typewriter, using glue or tape, to allow him to write without losing the spirit of the moment. Ginsberg used long lines and erratic structure to achieve a similar head-long effect in his poetry. Lawrence Ferlingetti's elegy to the assassinated Robert Kennedy, "Assassination

Raga,” was written in the three days following Kennedy’s death, with the actual haste of composition combining with the chosen techniques to give the poem its tone of uncontrolled shock, rage, and sorrow.

The open verse or free verse direction was used by some Beat writers as an invitation to abandonment of all sense of order. William Burroughs experimented with poetic ‘cuttings,’ created by slicing through portions of magazine pages so that lines from one page might be read into lines from another, producing such “poetry” as “On his broad back, flaxen haired solid head which towers between them.” Such phrases are deemed poetic, I suppose, because only the reader’s imagination can serve to give them context or meaning. **Found poetry** also reflects such experiments.

Major figures include novelists Kerouac, Richard Brautigan (*Trout Fishing in America*), and William Burroughs (*The Naked Lunch, Junkie*); poets Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Michael McClure and Amiri Baraka (born LeRoi Jones); poet and owner of San Francisco’s City Lights Bookstore Lawrence Ferlinghetti; and inspiration Neal Cassady.

Beat writings – and writers – tend to reflect a very male sensibility, in some cases reflecting the sex and sexual predispositions of the writers (the gay Allen Ginsberg), in others reflecting the prevalent culture of the time (the aggressively male image manifested in the predominately heterosexual Neal Cassady).

### **belief**

the acceptance of the veracity of a claim, concept or assertion. An individual may base belief on any standard of truth or even on pure impulse. The word ‘belief’ may be used, with equal correctness, to describe an individual’s acceptance of: an empirically valid theory (evolution by natural selection); a metaphysical proposition subject to indirect empirical verification (the “Big Bang”); a metaphysical proposition not subject to empirical verification (“life is the Universe’s attempt to perceive and understand itself”); an assertion of ethical values (“to take human life is immoral”); an assertion of aesthetic values (“impressionistic art is inferior to Pre-Raphaelite art because of the lack of attention to detail in the former”); a theological proposition (Transubstantiation); a statement of folk wisdom (“red in the morning, sailors take warning”); or even a personally accepted piece of rank foolishness (“the Loch Ness monster is a relative of the dragon slain by St. George”). Thus referring to something as a ‘belief’ should not be taken as a comment on the validity or invalidity of that particular belief.

Objects directly perceived by the senses are generally accepted, rather than ‘believed in.’ Therefore, few besides Bishop George Berkeley and his philosophical descendents are of the opinion that it is necessary to believe in the wall before one’s face, for all that it is possible to hold belief or disbelief regarding the theoretical existence of walls. **Facts** (empirical data) are accepted, disputed, or doubted; ideas are believed or disbelieved.

### **Black Mountain poets**

a school of poetry founded by Charles Olson and associated with the Black Mountain College (a small, experimental college in Asheville, North Carolina, 1933-1957). In very general terms, Olson’s goal was for the poet to recognize

him/herself as a “creature of nature” rather than an artificially separate entity. Poems should be about events or experiences, rather than “the individual as ego.” Theoretically, the Black Mountain poetic vision is the converse of the **confessional** poetic vision.

Notable Black Mountain poets include Olson, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Ed Dorn, and Joel Oppenheimer.

### **blank verse**

unrhymed iambic pentameter; blank verse is considered a “high” form of writing, and, historically, is utilized in most English language tragedies, tragic poems, and similarly formal and serious pieces.

The nobility in William Shakespeare’s tragedies speak in blank verse while the clowns (not being of proper social stature) speak prose; John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is written in blank verse as are Alexander Pope’s poetic essays.

### **bowdlerize**

(named for Thomas Bowdler, famous for his *The Family Shakespeare*) to purge a literary work of ‘distasteful’ passages; to ‘take out all the bad words.’ An insidious form of censorship, bowdlerizing is the replacing of an author’s original words with less incendiary phrasing or the removal of ‘offensive’ passages. The word ‘shit’ becomes ‘stuff’ in a TV-suitable version of “Back to the Future III,” with little damage to the humor of the original line as Biff’s ancestor still must be extracted from a wagon-load of manure. Far less forgivably, Jim is referred to as an ‘n\_\_\_\_\_’ rather than a ‘nigger’ in a bowdlerized *Huck Finn* – somehow, I fail to see the improvement, as the phrase’s negative connotations remain as clear and the latter form merely calls attention to the word by slowing the reader’s progress. ‘Damn’ becomes ‘darn’ (and at least one misguided or inattentive editor has inadvertently created a ‘beaver darn’). Whole passages related to sexual or scatological undertakings may be omitted. The result may inconvenience the reader slightly or the result may significantly damage the tone and substance of the bowdlerized work.

Yet, despite the most intense of efforts, a censor may completely fail to eliminate an allusion. A would-be ‘cleaner’ of *David Copperfield* would, I suspect, be thoroughly stumped if s/he took on the task of eliminating the allusions to masturbation in the physical description of Uriah Heep, with his cold, clammy hands and a body that bears a curious resemblance to a penis.

### **Breton lai**

a type of **romance** derived from Norman (Breton) minstrels; the Breton lai is short, tends to focus on emotion rather than event, and tends to be narrow in focus.

“The Franklin’s Tale” in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* is a Breton lai.