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**Basics of English Studies:  
An introductory course for students of  
literary studies in English.**

Developed at the English departments of the  
Universities of Tübingen, Stuttgart and Freiburg

## 1. Basic Concepts

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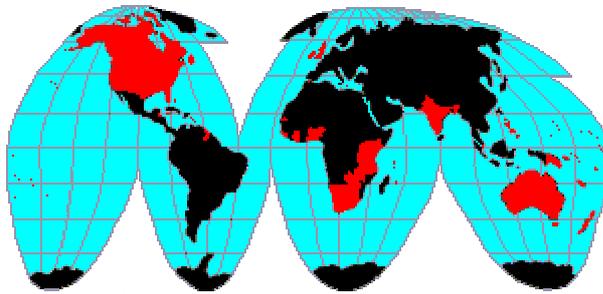
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# 1. Basic Concepts

## 1.1. What are English Literary Studies?

The question “What are English literary studies?” does not look complex at first sight. However, the answer is not as simple as one might imagine. One answer students may obviously give is that English literary studies deal with English literature. Thus, literary studies differ from other branches of the subject, namely **linguistics**, where the main focus is on the structures and uses of the English language, and **cultural studies** where students learn how the various cultures in English-speaking countries have been constructed over centuries.

And yet, what is English literature? First of all, do we talk about literature written in England or do we take into account other English-speaking countries such as Ireland, Canada, USA, Australia, etc.? And how about the diversity of cultures and literatures within the United Kingdom, e.g., Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish? To make matters even more complicated, a great many authors from former colonial countries in Africa, India, etc., write in English, and literature from immigrant writers in the US, e.g., Chicano literature, has increasingly received interest from literary scholars. In other words: It is very difficult to draw a clear line, and perhaps one cannot and should not delimit the subject area at all, given the diversity of texts written in English today.



English-speaking countries around the world.

Source: [http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language\\_1.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_1.htm)

Another question that arises is: What is literature? Although most people have some idea of what the term ‘literature’ means, the concept often remains vague and students, when asked about distinct features of literary texts, start to falter. In the following section, the concept of ‘literature’ will be discussed in more detail.

## 1.2. What is Literature?

In the attempt to define the term ‘literature’, one can distinguish between two general directions: a **broad** and a **narrow** definition. The broad definition incorporates everything that has been written down in some form or another, i.e., all the written manifestations of a culture (hence, there are terms such as ‘research literature’, ‘the literature on civil rights’, etc.). Needless to say that such a broad definition is problematic as it does not really facilitate communication about the topic. Furthermore, this concept

neglects the fact that in many cultures in the past and for a number of indigenous peoples today, literature has not been captured in written media but has been passed down in a long oral tradition of storytelling, myths, ritual speeches, etc. Attempts to come up with a narrow definition have, however, led to such a diversity of approaches that one can hardly talk about ‘the’ narrow definition. Nevertheless, it is possible to sift out some of the criteria scholars have applied in order to demarcate ‘literary texts’ from ‘non-literary texts’. These criteria include:

- fictionality
- specialised language
- lack of pragmatic function
- ambiguity

### 1.2.1. Fictionality

One characteristic feature of literary texts arguably is their fictionality. People usually agree that literary texts, even if they attempt to represent reality in some form or another, are ultimately products of a writer’s imagination and that at least the characters and their conversations are fictitious. Thus, some of the characters in Sir Walter Scott’s **historical novels**, for example, are pure inventions although they are situated in authentic historical contexts, and they have fictitious conversations with historical figures who actually existed. On the other hand, texts that are normally read as non-fiction, like a reportage, often display features that remind one of literature. Consider the following example:

Sesca Rompas climbed on to a plastic stool and peered through a dirty window at her brother, Aldo Kansil, lying motionless in a bed below. He was a pitiful sight: two drips attached, arms swathed in bandages, his face an angry mosaic of burns.

Taken out of its context, it is difficult to decide what type of text this is. If one looks at the way this passage is written, one can easily imagine this to be the beginning of a novel. First, it is a **descriptive** passage (see ch. 2.6.3.) which introduces a certain **setting**: (see chs. 2.3 and 3.4) the window is dirty and so high up that the woman needs a plastic stool to be able to peep through it. The brother’s desolate state is captured in epithets describing his motionless, afflicted body. Secondly, **characters** (see chs 2.4 and 3.6) are introduced and a mini **plot** (see chs. 2.2 and 3.3.1) is elaborated: A woman called Sesca Rompas visits her brother, Aldo Kansil, who is in hospital. Just like the beginnings of novels, this text passage is written in such a way as to urge the reader to read on and to find out more, e.g., who are these people, why is the brother in hospital, what happened? Moreover, the language used is reminiscent of literary texts. We can identify **rhetorical devices** (see ch. 1.6.3.) such as **alliteration** (“bed below”), **metaphor** (“angry mosaic of burns”), **asyndeton** and **ellipsis** (“two drips attached, arms swathed in bandages...”). In other words: The text uses embellishments to present a specific ‘story-world’ and to attract the reader’s attention. And yet, these are in fact the opening lines of a newspaper article (*The Independent*, 16 October 2002) which deals with the victims of a Balinese bomb attack. With this

information in mind, we suddenly stop regarding this text as fiction: We take it for granted that the people described here are real and that the events related in the text are also real.

What does this example tell us? First of all, we can say that the boundaries between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ are often blurred and by no means always identifiable. More importantly, whether a text is fictional or not, is perhaps less the consequence of some inherent quality of the text but of a reader’s attitude towards it. If I know the text above is from a newspaper I automatically assume that the ‘story’ must be real. By contrast, if this had been the beginning of a novel, I would undoubtedly have classified these characters and the setting as fictitious. In other words: We as readers are conditioned through education and cultural norms to approach texts in certain ways. In this view, fictionality is no longer an inherent feature of literary texts but part of our expectations of what a literary text should be. Likewise, literary language is partly determined by the fact that we want to read it as ‘literary’. This will be explored in the following section.

### 1.2.2. Specialised Language

It is often said that literary language is ‘special’ and that it differs considerably from normal everyday language. The linguist Roman Jakobson spoke of the **poetic function** of literary texts in his essay “Linguistics and Poetics: Closing Statement” (1960), i.e., the fact that literary texts draw attention to the language they employ. As the **Russian Formalists** maintained in the early twentieth century, literary texts make use of language in such a way that it becomes strange and unfamiliar in a given context. They called this process **defamiliarisation**. The following example from Charles Dickens’s novel *Bleak House* illustrates this process:

*Key terms:*

- poetic function
- defamiliarisation

Foot passengers, jostling one another’s umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest. (Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ch. 1)

The way the bad November weather in London is described here has hardly anything to do with the way people would normally talk about the weather. One thing is particularly conspicuous: the blending of a description of natural phenomena (“mud”, bad weather) with the jargon of the world of finance (“deposits”, “accumulating”, “compound interest”). By combining these two areas, the words are taken out of their usual context and put into another one, which thus becomes ‘new’ and ‘unfamiliar’ to the reader. We are attracted by this ‘strange’ linguistic description and we start to wonder why such language is used here. One explanation might be that London as one of the financial centres in the mid-nineteenth century has become so immersed in its business that even nature participates in it and is no longer ‘natural’.

One area where the ‘literariness’ of language seems to be particularly obvious is poetry. Poetry is often marked by a conspicuous shape (lines,

stanzas, etc.), a dense structure (thematically and linguistically), specific **prosodic features** (see chs. 4.3 and 4.4) and **rhetorical devices** (see ch. 1.6.3.). Now, as the example above from *The Independent* shows, even non-literary texts frequently use rhetorical devices and certain patterns to arouse the readers' interest. Still, we do not necessarily classify them as literature. We do not, for example, consider a telephone directory a literary text although it is indeed extremely structured and ordered in a special way. Nor do we regard the above-mentioned newspaper article as a poem, for example. And yet, is this really because the language in this article does not qualify for poetry or because we are simply not used to looking at newspaper articles in such a way? Consider the following sentence from the same article:

Just around the corner, an anxious-looking couple were standing close together, clutching plastic bags.

At first sight, this looks like a 'normal' sentence. There is nothing conspicuous about the words or the sentence structure. What happens if one pays attention to the rhythm of this sentence and displays it accordingly?

Just around the corner,  
An anxious-looking couple  
Were standing close together,  
Clutching plastic bags.

All of a sudden, one realises that the sentence actually follows a regular metrical pattern, namely a **trimeter** with alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. Does that make the sentence poetic? Again, one can see that the line between literary and non-literary language is a very fine one and that the decision whether a text is literary or not largely depends on the way we look at the text and perceive its language. A lot of contemporary poetry plays with our alleged 'knowledge' of the literariness of texts. Have a look at the following "Found Poem" by Ronald Gross:

All too often, humans who sit and stand  
Pay the price of vertical posture. Sitting  
And standing combine with the force of gravity,  
Exerting extra pressure on veins and tissues  
In and around the rectal area.  
Painful, burning hemorrhoids result.  
The first thought of many sufferers  
Is to relieve their pain and their discomfort.

Products, however, often used for this  
Contain no anesthetic drug at all, or one  
Too weak to give the needed pain relief,  
Or only lubricate. But now, at last  
There is a formulation which provides  
Pain-killing power, prolonged relief, on contact.  
(Gross/Quasha 1973: 475)

Although this text must originally have been an advert for anti-hemorrhoids medication, we can now read its language as literary language and thus perceive the text as a piece of literature simply because it has been transformed by means of formalisation and re-arrangement. Trained readers of literature may even identify this text as a **sonnet** because it follows the structural convention of 14 lines with an **octave** and a **sestet** (here presented as two **tercets**). What this example also shows is that the way we read texts depends very much on the context in which we read them. If we had read this text on an information leaflet we would never have dreamed of looking at it as poetry and paying closer attention to its language. As soon as it appears in the guise of a sonnet, however, our reading practice also changes and we can start treating it as 'literary', e.g., by attempting an interpretation. This leads us to the next criterion often mentioned in discussions of literary texts, namely their lack of a pragmatic function.

### 1.2.3. Lack of Pragmatic Function

Undoubtedly, texts derive their meaning partly from their context. I read a novel as a novel because it is presented in a certain way (bound, with a title on the front page, sometimes the word 'novel' in the subtitle, and a plot summary as well as commentary on the back cover). Moreover, I use the novel as a novel and not as a cookery book, a newspaper or an encyclopaedia of garden plants, for example. Why is that? One might argue that these texts, in contrast to literary texts, have a definite **pragmatic function**, i.e., they are written and used for a specific purpose, e.g., to assist with the cooking or gardening or, generally, to inform the reader. A piece of literary writing, on the other hand, need not have been intended by the author for any specific purpose. It sometimes seems as though literature was just written into time and space, to nobody in particular and without any function.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to take that as a basic rule. Even literary texts do have a purpose, e.g., to criticise, to educate or even just to entertain. The fact that authors like Salman Rushdie, for example, are persecuted by political and religious groups shows that something must be attributed to their writings which other people consider dangerous or at least influential in some way or another. While non-literary texts may have a more clearly defined and generally agreed-upon function, literary texts can have a range of purposes which again depend on the reader. Thus, I can read a book simply to have a good laugh or, for that matter, a good cry, or I draw analogies with my own life and try to gain consolation or advice from the text. The text as such may not necessarily tell me how I have to use it but the reading practices I have been taught in school, at university, etc. will certainly influence my approach to texts. In other words: Even if we claim that a literary text has no immediate pragmatic function, we usually start to ascribe one to it in our usage or treatment of that text. While non-literary texts seem to have an inherent pragmatic function, i.e., they were 'born' to be a telephone book, a time-table, a women's magazine, etc., literary texts gain their more specific and possibly individual pragmatic function in the reading process.

*Key terms:*

- pragmatic function

#### 1.2.4. Ambiguity

People generally accept the view that literary texts are far more ambiguous and thus often more complicated than non-literary texts. If one reads a recipe, for example, or a time-table or an instruction manual, the meaning expressed in these texts is presumed to be more or less fixed and not open to interpretation. In fact, these texts must not be open to interpretation because then they just would not ‘work’. A time-table has to be precise in order for people to be able to rely on it, and ten people using the same recipe for carrot cake should reach approximately the same result by following the step-by-step instructions.

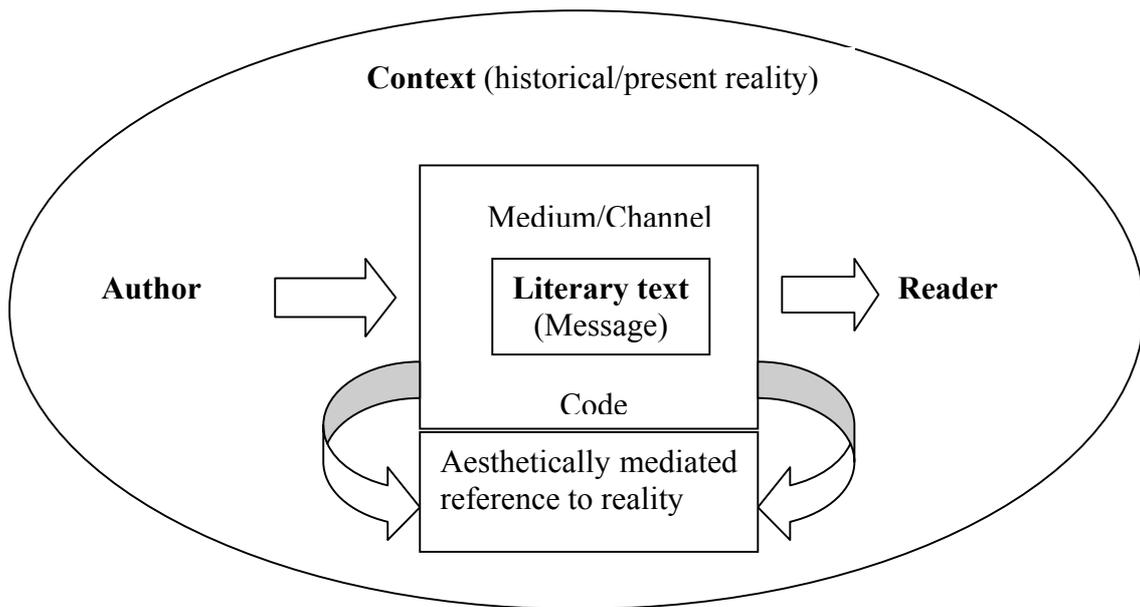
- This is certainly not the case if these ten people read a novel, for example. As classroom discussions show, different students can come up with rather different interpretations of what a specific literary text ‘means’ or what it tries to convey. This is also reflected in the vast amount of divergent critical interpretations of literary texts published over the years. So what is it that makes literary texts so ambiguous? For one thing, there is obviously the ‘human factor’: When we read a text we usually bring to bear on it certain expectations and interests, and inevitably we start looking for exactly those things that seem relevant to us. Thus, for example, Christina Rossetti’s long poem “Goblin Market” can be interpreted as a simple fairytale, as a hymn in praise of sisterly devotion, as a poem restating the biblical concepts of sin and redemption, as the indirect expression of repressed sexual fantasies, or indeed as a combination of all of these facets at the same time. No matter which interpretation one favours, one can find evidence for all of them in the text if one only searches through it thoroughly. This example illustrates that literary texts must indeed have some quality which makes them more ‘open’ than non-literary texts. One can say that literary texts always express meaning on different levels or in different layers. In other words: They express something beyond their literal ‘meaning’, and these other layers of meaning can be explored by attentive reading and analysis. It is a bit like archaeology: the deeper one digs the more interesting one’s findings are likely to be. At the same time, one needs suitable equipment for ‘digging out’ hidden meanings. That is where literary studies become important and where the fun begins once one has mastered the tools at hand.

#### 1.3. A Model for Literary Communication

In analogy to the communication model applied in linguistics to face-to-face interaction (sender – message – receiver), literary scholars have come up with a model for literary communication. In a very schematised way, one can visualise the model like this:

*Key terms:*

- communication model
- text (message)
- code
- reference



According to this model, literary production and reception obviously require at least two participants: someone who writes a literary text and someone who reads it. The literary text itself functions as **message** between author and reader. Of course, the term ‘message’ must not be taken literally. It would be absurd to imagine that an author two hundred years ago, for example, sent a message to me, the present-day reader. However, literary texts are usually created for an audience, and by the same token literary texts only come to life when they are actually received by a readership. That author and reader are spatially and temporally deferred from one another in most cases must of course be kept in mind.

The message is conveyed in a specific material shape, e.g., as a book, a stage script, a screenplay, an audio tape, video or nowadays on the internet or CD-Rom. In other words: The channel or medium through which the literary text is presented can vary significantly. Nevertheless, literary texts depend on certain conventions of both producing and receiving literature. I always apply certain strategies when reading a novel, for example, such as accepting its **fictionality** (see ch. 1.2.1) or perhaps special uses of language, while I also bring to bear predefined expectations on literary texts. For example, we usually set our ‘autopilot’ on poetry-reading mode if we see a text which presents itself in the shape of a poem. Likewise, authors follow literary conventions when they create a piece of literature or they deliberately defy these conventions to create something new and innovative. At any rate, there is always some reference to what we might call the **code** of literary production and reception, i.e., rules for writing and reading texts. A banal and yet extremely important aspect is the fact that author and reader must share a language for communication to work at all. Another part of the literary code would be the way we classify literary texts in terms of **genre** (see ch. 1.4.2.). Needless to say that literary codes can change over time (as languages and cultures generally do) and that different periods have used different classificatory systems. This is also one of the reasons why literary texts themselves change: They accommodate in some way or

another to the existing literary code, even if they ostensibly move away from it.

The context of literary production and reception thus becomes very important. Both readers and authors are situated in a specific place, historical time and cultural context, which of course influence the way they read and write. At the same time, the literary text also refers to the external world either by imitating what can be found there or by creating an alternative world. **Reference** is a term used in linguistics to denote the relationship between a sign and the object it signifies. While this narrow concept is problematic for literary studies because objects and persons in a story-world, for example, do not strictly speaking refer to 'real' objects or people, the concept is useful if one allows for relationships between signs and mental models, concepts, ideas, etc. The reference of a literary text to the world is thus never direct but is always aesthetically mediated, i.e., it is embedded in certain literary conventions and makes use of special linguistic codes. Michael Ondaatje's bestseller, *The English Patient*, for example, undoubtedly depicts circumstances and events related to World War II but it does it in such a way as to leave enough room for poetic renditions of the characters' emotions and experiences.

Literary studies investigate various aspects of the processes shown in the communication model. Thus, one can look at the relationship between author and text or reader and text, one can focus on the text itself or on how it is embedded in its socio-historical and cultural contexts. Scholars have also considered the literary code and what it entails. In sum, one can say that literary studies offer a wide range of topic areas for research activities, and this introductory course can only provide a very first glimpse of what is actually out there. The next section gives a preliminary overview of some of the study areas within literary studies.

## 1.4. Topic Areas of Literary Studies

Some of the major concepts which students of English literature should be familiar with are the following:

- Literary History
- Poetics and Genre
- Literary Theory

### 1.4.1. Literary History

Names of literary epochs or periods have mostly been ‘invented’ in retrospect. The underlying assumptions are based on certain common features, this time not merely of texts but of socio-cultural developments and phases in the history of literary production. In English literature, historians for convenience often use the name of the sovereign in power at a certain time. Thus, they speak about the **Elizabethan Age** or the **Victorian Period**. Sometimes, approximately the same period of time can have various names, depending on the perspective adapted by the historian. The Elizabethan Age, for example, is also referred to as the **Early Modern Period** or the **Renaissance**. While the term ‘Early Modern’ focuses on the historical process of modernisation, ‘Renaissance’ is a term borrowed from art history and captures the idea of the ‘re-birth’ of antiquity in various art forms of the sixteenth century. Labels can also vary across nationalities. While in English, for example, ‘Victorian Period’ is a widely-used general label for the time between 1832 and the late nineteenth century, scholars of German literature have focused more on people’s attitudes, political developments and modes of writing in their classifications and therefore use different labels to denote shorter time spans of roughly the same period, e.g., *Biedermeier*, *Vormärz*, *Realismus*, *Naturalismus*. This example shows that labelling a literary period is often at the discretion of the literary historian and largely depends on which aspects a scholar considers important. Nonetheless, even though exact numbers, names and dates vary in books of literary history, one can come up with a general list of periods which underlies common practice (Abrams 1999: 210):

*Key terms:*

- Old English Period
- Middle English Period
- Renaissance (Early Modern Period)
- Neoclassical Period
- Romantic Period
- Victorian Period
- Edwardian Period
- Georgian Period
- Modern Period
- Postmodernism

**450-1066      Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) Period**

**1066-1500      Middle English Period**

**1500-1660      The Renaissance (or Early Modern Period)**

1558-1603	Elizabethan Age
1603-1625	Jacobean Age
1625-1649	Caroline Age
1649-1660	Commonwealth Period (or Puritan Interregnum)

**1660-1785      The Neoclassical Period**

1660-1700	The Restoration
1700-1745	The Augustan Age (or Age of Pope)
1745-1785	The Age of Sensibility (or Age of Johnson)

**1785-1830      The Romantic Period**

**1832-1901      The Victorian Period**

1848-1860      The Pre-Raphaelites

1880-1901      Aestheticism and Decadence

**1901-1914      The Edwardian Period**

**1910-1936      The Georgian Period**

**1914-            The Modern Period**

1945-            Postmodernism

One must not forget that periods are categories which do not necessarily encompass clearly demarcated time spans. Since literary developments evolve gradually and are often based on the co-existence of diverse movements, periods inevitably also overlap. As their names suggest, periods derive their labels from divergent sources. Frequently, they are analogous to philosophical movements such as the Age of Sensibility. Sometimes periods are named after artistic avantgarde movements, which also express the predominant mood of the time, e.g., **Aestheticism** and **Decadence**. The **Romantic Period** derives its name from a genre, the **Medieval romance** or **chivalric romance**, which was popular at the time and set an example with its fantastic and exaggerated subject matters. **Postmodernism** is given its name because it succeeds and goes beyond **Modernism** in terms of literary conventions, philosophical assumptions, etc. No matter which names literary periods are given, they are selected according to shared criteria and features which are considered characteristic of the time.

A division into literary periods is useful for our understanding and discussion of connections between literary and socio-historical developments. They help us compare texts within one period and also across periods. Nevertheless, they should not become coathangers for simplistic assumptions or even clichés. Therefore, good books on literary history set out very clearly right from the beginning what their motivating force is and why they arrived at a certain form of periodisation.

One study area which is influenced by historical developments is the area of poetics and genres since the conventions for writing literary texts and for setting up individual genre categories and genre systems depend on their socio-cultural context and thus change over time.

#### 1.4.2. Poetics and Genre

Ever since Aristotle's *Poetics*, if not before, scholars have been concerned with classifying literary texts according to predefined categories. The groups or classes of texts have been labelled by means of group-specific names. Thus, Aristotle already divided ancient plays into **tragedies** and **comedies** (see ch. 3.9) and attributed certain features to each type of drama. The labels we attach to groups of texts with similar or correlated features can be summarised under the heading **genre**. The three major generic groups are **prose fiction**, **drama** and **poetry**. One must of course bear in mind that

*Key terms:*

- genre
- sub-genre
- literary competence

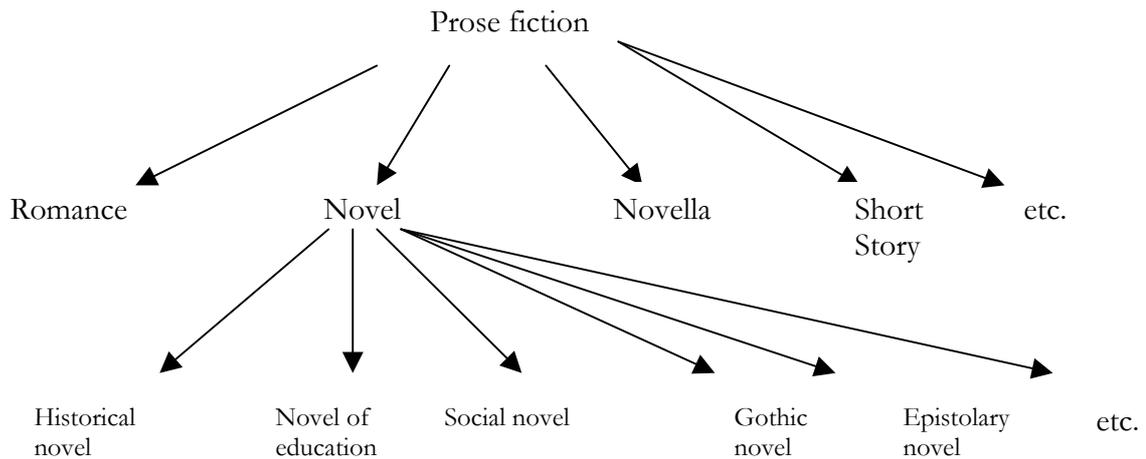
genres and genre systems are subject to historical changes and by no means closed categories.

Genres are defined by certain conventions, common recurring features which texts display. These features can be formal or structural or they can relate to themes and topics or forms of presentation. Thus, prose fiction is generally defined by the fact that it is not written in verse like poetry, for example, and that it is narrative while drama normally includes the direct presentation of a scene on stage. If one starts collecting features for each genre, one will soon find exceptions and it becomes clear that the boundaries of genres are blurred. In certain periods, people were not very strict about the limitations of different genres, as can be seen in the following quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where Polonius introduces the actors who have just arrived at the Danish court:

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited." (*Hamlet*, II, 2: 392-396)

Although plays in the **Early Modern Period** seemingly crossed generic boundaries, the basic major categories are still valid and are used as frames of reference. This is one of the main functions of genres: Genres allow us to talk about groups of texts rather than just listing individual examples. They help us communicate about structural and thematic features and enable us to state similarities as well as differences between texts. We can discuss the diachronic development of genres, i.e., throughout history, and see how the individual historical contexts shaped forms of drama, prose fiction and poetry. Put another way, the concept of genre helps us approach literary texts. Authors usually construct their texts within certain genre conventions. By labelling a text a 'tragedy' for example, they raise certain expectations in readers or spectators. These expectations can then be met or disappointed. Keeping generic features in mind, one should therefore always also look for deviations from standard patterns because this is often where a literary text is particularly innovative and interesting and where interpretations can yield fascinating results.

Over the centuries, analysis has become more and more fine-grained and consequently numerous **sub-genres** ( see chs. 2.9, 3.9. and 4.2.) have been identified for each main category. Again, historical developments play an important role. Some sub-genres like the **romance**, for example, have become obsolete while there is always a possibility for new sub-genres to emerge. The following tree diagram shows prose fiction and some of its sub-genres:



The other two main generic groups, poetry and drama, can of course also be subdivided into numerous sub-genres, such as: **ballad, sonnet, ode, comedy, tragedy, satire, tragicomedy, epic theatre**, etc. What one ought to bear in mind is that, although genres are defined according to common characteristic features, the allocation of texts to certain genres is still ultimately our decision.

Sometimes, texts pose difficulties because they cannot be classified definitely as belonging to one category. Where does one place 'long' narratives such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, for example: novella, novel or short story? For this reason, one also has to be careful not to oversimplify generic terms. In everyday parlance, people often use words like these in an undifferentiated way: "Oh, that accident was so tragic!" or "They had quite a little romance going on". Nonetheless, generic terms in literary studies are very useful since genres form part of readers' and writers' **literary competence** at a given time. Literary competence encompasses people's ability to produce and understand literary texts and their knowledge about literary texts in general.

The classification of genres is of course guided by theoretical considerations, and it is not only for this reason that literary theory must hold an important place in an introduction.

### 1.4.3. Literary Theory

An area of literary studies which students are often afraid of is literary theory. Theories in general can be defined as sets of elaborate, ordered and consistent categories which facilitate the systematic exploration and explanation of phenomena in a given study area. Literary theory is infamous for being complicated, boring or simply self-satisfying.

However, people who argue along those lines seem to forget that essentially, there is no reading of and no thinking about texts without theory. When we read a poem, for example, we approach the text in a certain way and, whether we are aware of this or not, we make assumptions about the text which, in a broad sense, already constitute a framework for decoding what the poem is, what it tries to express, etc. Since our reading practice and our world view in general is inevitably steeped in some 'theory' or another, we may just as well make an effort to become more familiar with this underlying theory. After a while, we may find that our vision has become clearer and that we can discern things in texts which we would not have noticed without a theoretical background.

In this sense, theory is a bit like wearing glasses. Glasses can help you sharpen your view, and aspects one did not notice before are suddenly thrown into greater relief. At the same time, however, glasses can be tinted in different colours and thus you may perceive an object one way while someone else sees it differently. The same applies to literary theory. Theory can help us identify small and often minute facets of a text. However, if one always wears the same theoretical lens, one risks missing out on a lot of other features which may be equally fascinating but which simply do not match the categories or concepts of one's theory. In order to avoid that, students should learn early on in their studies what types of theory are currently available and how to engage with them critically.

Literary theories can generally be located at the interface of components of the **communication model** (see ch. 1.3). Thus, one can find theoretical approaches which look primarily at the relationship between text and author, while others focus on the relationship between text and reader, text and historical reality or text and other texts. Theories are useful because they explain systematically premises, terms and research questions and because they develop clear hypotheses about the effects and functions of texts. Thus, theories also help us analyse texts and communicate our findings to others.

It is important to bear in mind that theory and **methodology** are closely related. On the one hand, theory informs methodology. Thus, the questions we ask about a text will determine which tools we are going to use to analyse it. On the other hand, methodology can yield results which may ultimately change an already existing theory. It is also important to note here that theories depend on the socio-cultural context in which they emerge and therefore undergo changes. Theoretical considerations go as far back as the classical **poetics**, i.e., works about the art of writing literary texts, such as the poetics by Aristotle or Horace. Early examples of theoretical writings about English literature are: Philip Sidney (*The Defence of Poesy*, 1595), Alexander Pope (*An Essay on Criticism*, 1711) and William Wordsworth (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800).

Today, one can distinguish among a whole range of different theoretical approaches, of which the following summaries can merely

#### Key terms:

- biographical criticism
- psychological/psychoanalytical criticism
- Elizabethan world picture
- Marxist criticism
- reader response theory
- reception theory
- New Criticism
- close reading
- structuralism
- Russian formalism
- narratology
- signifier
- signified
- referent
- poststructuralism
- deconstruction
- feminist criticism
- gender studies
- postcolonialism
- new historicism / cultural materialism
- literary canon
- cultural studies

provide a first overview. The list is by no means complete, and interested students should consult the bibliography for further references. Generally speaking, one can identify the following ‘groups’ of theoretical approaches (for the following see Korte/Müller/Schmied, 1997: 95-105):

- biographical approach
- psychological or psychoanalytical approaches
- contextual approaches
- reader-orientated approaches
- text-immanent approach and New Criticism
- structuralist and semiotic approaches
- poststructuralist approaches
- feminist approach and gender studies
- ethnicity and postcolonialism
- cultural materialism and new historicism

### Biographical Approach

As early as the nineteenth century, scholars considered literary texts against the background of the author’s biography. The aim was to find references to the author’s life, education and socio-cultural environment in a literary work. Ever since the French critic Roland Barthes announced the “death of the author” in 1968, the biographical approach has lost its appeal for many scholars: Barthes and critics following him have argued that an author’s biography is irrelevant since the meaning of a text only emerges in the reading process and the reader thus becomes the real ‘author’ of the text. One could argue against this radical viewpoint that there are texts where knowledge of an author’s biography can sometimes help us understand the text better because otherwise we would not be able to decipher certain allusions or references. D.H. Lawrence’s novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913), for example, draws heavily on Lawrence’s own family background. Bearing this knowledge in mind, it is then interesting to see where the literary text deviates from references to the author’s real life.

### Psychological and Psychoanalytical Approaches

Following Sigmund Freud’s work on the unconscious and the interpretation of dreams, critics in the 1930s attempted to interpret literary texts with regard to the author’s psychological state or the psychology of the text itself. Thus, one question raised for Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, for example, was whether Hamlet suffered from the Oedipus complex. The reading process has also been considered from a psychological point of view. Furthermore, psychoanalytical approaches have made an inroad into **poststructuralist** (Jacques Lacan) and **feminist approaches** (Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous).

### Contextual Approaches

Contextual approaches go back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where scholars asked to what extent literary texts were rooted in the historical, political, economical, philosophical, religious, etc. contexts of

their production. E.M.W. Tillyard's (1943) study, for example, investigates instantiations of the **Elizabethan world picture** in Shakespeare's works, and Ian Watt (1957) asks to what extent Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is related to Puritanism and the rise of the middle class in the eighteenth century. Another example is **Marxist criticism** which regards the production of literary texts at the interface of material and socio-economic circumstances (Eagleton and Milne 1996). While after the Second World War contextual approaches, especially the Marxist tradition, were initially regarded as outdated, they have had a major comeback over the last two decades in approaches like **new historicism**, **cultural materialism** and **cultural studies**.

### Reader-orientated Approaches

The most well-known reader-orientated approaches to literary texts are **reader response theory** for Anglo-American criticism (e.g., Stanley Fish) and **reception theory** or **reception aesthetics**, which mainly originated in Germany (Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss). The questions reception theorists ask focus mainly on the relationship between text and reader. Thus, one can investigate what exactly happens during the reading process in the reader's mind, how readers react emotionally to texts and in what ways the reception of literary texts is influenced by socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, social class, education, etc. An important concept in reception theory is that of textual **gaps** or **blanks** which readers have to fill while reading a text. In filling the gaps, readers also contribute to the construction of a text's meaning. Other reader-orientated approaches take into account the historical dimensions of text reception and investigate how readings and interpretations of texts change over time. Thus, one can ask, for example, how Shakespeare's contemporaries are likely to have perceived his plays in comparison with modern theatre goers.

### Text-immanent Approach and New Criticism

In the first half of the twentieth century, a critical approach emerged which opposed prevailing practices of considering the biographies of authors, social contexts and literary history. This new approach, which came to be known under the name of **New Criticism**, focused on the literary work itself as an independent entity. Studies by authors such as Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren postulated the method of **close reading**, i.e., a detailed investigation of the overall composition of texts with regard to their unifying principles. At the centre of this approach was the idea that all the elements of a text ideally formed a coherent whole both on the formal and the content level. Further questions addressed the principles whereby literary texts create rich and varied meanings, which can ultimately lead to **ambiguities** (see ch. 1.2.3).

### Structuralist and Semiotic Approaches

Other approaches which deal primarily with the **code** in the literary **communication model** are the so-called **structuralist** and **semiotic approaches**. Structuralism and semiotics were greatly influenced by

**structuralist linguistics**, most notably by Ferdinand de Saussure's work on linguistic signs and later by Noam Chomsky's seminal work on transformational grammar. A first group of theorists under the title of **Russian Formalism** considered literary language as deviant from everyday language and postulated the concept of the **poetic function** of literary texts, i.e., the fact that literary texts always draw attention to their literariness by using language in unusual or 'unfamiliar' ways. This process is called **defamiliarisation**. Authors to be mentioned in this context are Roman Jakobson and Victor Shklovsky. The structuralist approach also had a great impact on **narratology**, i.e., a research area which focuses on narrative structures, in France (Tzvetan Todorov, A.J. Greimas, Gérard Genette) as well as in Great Britain and the USA (Robert Scholes, Jonathan Culler, Seymour Chatman). Generally speaking, structuralists assume that literary texts function on the basis of an underlying 'grammar' according to which individual parts of a text are structured. Thus, it is possible to sift out universal patterns, e.g., with regard to plot structures or the functions of characters (**protagonist, antagonist**, etc.).

Closely connected with structuralism is **semiotics**, i.e., the study of signs and sign systems and the process by which signs are assigned meaning. Semiotics goes back to Saussure's description of the linguistic sign consisting of a **signifier**, the sound image (TREE or TABLE), and a **signified**, the concept the sound image denotes (the concept of 'tree' or 'table'). Signifier and signified are inseparable like the two sides of a coin. According to Saussure, the relationship between 'signifier' and 'signified' is arbitrary, and a sign receives its meaning solely from the fact that it differs from other signs and not because it refers to an object in the real world, the **referent**. The 'reality' we perceive is thus only a projection of the meaning inherent in the linguistic system rather than a transcendental meaning beyond language. In a literary text, the semiotics of the story-world as 'reality', for example, can be achieved through a number of 'signifiers' such as speech, the characters' body language, spatio-temporal frameworks, etc.

### Poststructuralist Approaches

In reaction to structuralism and semiotics, **poststructuralist approaches** deny the existence of universal principles which create meaning and coherence. **Deconstructive theory**, for example, which was first propagated by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, maintains that even within the linguistic system there can be no ultimate 'meaning' because **signifiers** always refer to other signifiers and never to a **signified**. This can be exemplified by what happens when one tries to look up a word in a dictionary. What one usually finds is a definition or explanation of the word which in turn uses words that can be looked up and so on. Signifiers become traces, and meaning is constantly deferred. Derrida introduced the term **différance**, a combination of the French word for 'difference' (différence) and the gerund of the verb denoting 'defer/ postpone' (différant), to capture this process. Since words in a text are always reminiscent of other signifiers, one can never establish a 'fixed' or 'final' meaning of words and thus of texts. This poses questions for literary studies concerning the validity of interpretations: If there is no finite meaning, can one speak of texts at all? And can there be 'wrong' interpretations at all or do we have to allow for endless possibilities of reading a text?

While deconstructive theory focuses entirely on written texts, the so-called **poetics of culture** regards literature as a semiotic subsystem in which culture is reflected. The common underlying assumption is that cultural systems, like signs, do not consist of fixed binary oppositions. Michel Foucault's work, which applies **historical discourse analysis**, was very influential in this context. In his analyses of the history of medicine and of sexuality, for example, Foucault considers the social discourses about these areas and demonstrates how these discourses have changed concepts and ideas about medicine and sexuality over time. **Discourse** in Foucault's sense consists of collections of statements (both verbal and non-verbal) about a given topic that are culturally defined by institutions and through conventions. Discourse thus also becomes an area where knowledge is created and power is seized and maintained by leading social groups.

### Feminist Approaches and Gender Studies

**Feminist approaches** emerged along with the women's rights movement in the late 1960s and were initially a reaction against hitherto male-dominated literary studies, which neglected literature produced by women and which had perpetuated clichés and stereotypes about women. The main merit of feminist approaches was that they rediscovered a number of female authors who had been considered 'minor' and allocated them a more central place in literary history. At the same time, feminist approaches highlight the differences between 'male' and 'female' writing in terms of style, topics and structures. More recently, feminist approaches have opened up to more general **gender studies** where gender roles and gendered perspectives in literary texts come under closer scrutiny. So-called **queer theory** has started to address issues concerning literature by and about homosexuals.

### Ethnicity and Postcolonialism

Through the processes of colonialism and migration, an increasing amount of literatures by ethnic minorities has emerged in English-speaking cultures all over the world and has become the focal point for postcolonial theories, which investigate, for example, aspects of national identities, hybrid cultures, the significance of indigenous cultures and problems surrounding their 'own' history and language (Edward Said, Homi Bhaba, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). Concepts of race and ethnicity and the presentation of cultural suppression are also investigated in texts by African Americans, Chicano as well as Asian and Indian minorities.

### Cultural Materialism and New Historicism

The common assumption underlying both **cultural materialism** and **new historicism** is that literature does not form a realm of its own that can be viewed against the background of socio-historical developments, for example, but that it is as much part and expression of a culture as other, non-literary, texts (e.g., travelogues, religious tracts, historical documents and 'texts' in a much wider sense such as adverts, pop music, TV programmes, film, etc.). Both are influenced by **Marxist criticism**. They try to relate problems of interpretation to cultural-historical problems and are

concerned with the uncovering of power structures (economic, class, culture) as they become manifest in literary texts

Both movements are interdisciplinary in that they draw upon insights and methods from a number of disciplines, and they both question the notion of a **literary canon**, i.e., a set of 'important' or 'major' literary works agreed upon through convention that are considered to be of a higher quality than other texts. By incorporating non-literary expressions of a culture, cultural materialism and new historicism raise questions concerning the literariness of texts and the function of literature in general and thus, ultimately, the validity of disciplines involved in the study of literature. While some scholars nowadays wish to include literary studies in a broader discipline of **cultural studies**, others point towards the specifically artistic and aesthetic nature of literary texts, which requires a set of special, i.e., literary, analytical tools.

The aim of this introduction is to familiarise you with exactly those special tools and thus to enable you to engage critically with literary texts.

## 1.5. Theme

The first and foremost task of the analysis and interpretation of literature is to find out in some way or other **what the text is about**, to discover its **theme**, the abstract concept a text presents or deals with. On the face of it, this may seem silly. It would appear that all one has to do is read the text and then say what it is about. Why go through all this rigmarole of analysis with complicated terminology?

On a very general level one can of course simply read a text and then say something like: 'This text is about a woman who falls in love with the wrong sort of man and who dies in the end. But this sort of response leaves a great many questions unanswered: What then is the difference between Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* and Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott* and Dickens' novel *Bleak House*? All of these texts are in some way about a woman who falls in love with the wrong sort of man and dies. And how are all these texts different from last week's police report about the same problem? How is one to account for the different degree of sympathy and compassion one feels for Shakespeare's Juliet, Tennyson's fairy Lady of Shalott and Dickens' Lady Dedlock? Why do we derive different kinds of aesthetic pleasure from these texts? Why do we derive pleasure at all since they deal with a sad event? Such questions make it necessary to examine **how** a text creates meaning, since the difference between texts lies not simply in their topic but also in their way of **presenting** this topic. In fact, it is the modern critical position that the use of formal elements is part of the text's meaning (see esp. the relation of form and meaning in poetry ch. 4.6).

The question that is of interest here is how to analyse a text, how to unravel its formal and linguistic code in interpretation. Much of the meaning and effect of literary texts depend on patterns of repetition or contrast (which is a sort of negative repetition). This is particularly pronounced in poetry, but it is a phenomenon of all literary texts. These patterns can be created on all levels: rhythmic, metrical, phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic. It is these patterns that need to be uncovered and understood. The ability to decode and understand the use of

### Key terms:

- theme
- isotopy
- motif
- topos
- structure and development

form enables us to make certain aesthetic judgements, it enables us to explain to a certain extent why some texts have a notable impact on readers and other texts have not.

Once these patterns and especially their functions have been analysed separately, it usually becomes apparent that all the separate patterns of repetition taken together form new and larger patterns of thematic coherence. A useful concept for establishing such patterns of thematic coherence is the concept of **isotopy**, introduced by the French critic A.J. Greimas (Greimas 1966, see also Jahn 2002: P3.6). An isotopy is a sequence of expressions joined by a common 'semantic denominator'. Thus a series of expressions or formal elements in a text might relate to the contrast between life and death, or a development from despair to consolation, or an end and a new beginning and so on. Patterns of rhythm, sound or syntax aid or highlight thematic patterns. This is why it is worth analysing them. (For a practical demonstration of how this might work see ch. 4.6).

Literary texts usually develop their theme within a certain **structure**. Such structures can be created through plot developments (see ch. 2.2. and 3.2.), a change of setting (see ch. 2.3.), a change of narrative voice (see ch. 2.5), or with rhyme patterns or stanzas in poetry (see chs. 4.4. and 4.5.). A sonnet for instance might describe a problem in the octet and a solution in the sestet. Other poems might have a three-part structure cutting across stanzas. This could be, for instance: description of an event – reflection on the event – moral drawn from it. In the analysis of texts it is helpful to first of all decide on the general structure of the **development** that takes place within the text.

Related to theme and structure is the **motif**. This is a concept which derives from music and it forms a sub-unit of a text's overall theme; a motif can be the frequent repetition of one significant phrase, description or image within one work or it can be a type of situation or formula that occurs again and again in literature (see Abrams 1999: 169), such as the *carpe diem* motif or the enchanted prince. An older term, deriving from classical rhetoric, for the repetition of certain formulas in literature is **topos** (commonplace), such as for instance the 'modesty-topos', where the speaker or narrator claims to be incapable of doing his task well but promises to try his or her best (for a discussion of topoi see Curtius 1990).

## 1.6. Language in Literature

The effect a text has on its reader is to a very large extent determined by style. In its broadest definition, **style** is the way in which language is used (see Leech/Short 1981: 10 for a discussion of various definitions of style). Style is thus not a phenomenon that is restricted to literature; it is necessarily part of any utterance, because for each context one chooses the way one speaks: One uses different vocabulary and probably different syntax when talking to one's granny than one uses when talking to one's examiner in the final oral exam; a report in the newspaper is expected to display – and in most cases does – a different style than a love letter. Obviously, most people are limited in the range of styles they have at their command, and sometimes style expectations are deliberately flaunted: A newspaper report written in the style of a love letter will no doubt cause a

### Key terms:

- style
- diction
- syntax
- decorum
- poetic diction
- deviation
- poetic licence
- collocation

certain amount of surprise and thus possibly increase its effect. A love letter written in the style of a report will most likely cause trouble or appear simply ridiculous.

There are utterances where style is used with more deliberation than in others. Political speeches or manifestos may be counted among such, but also most literary texts. In fact, it is partly the calculated and deliberate use of language, or, the special attention the receiver pays to the use of language, that makes a text literary (see ch. 1.2.).

There has long been disagreement whether style, or form, can be separated from content or not. To put the question another way, are we saying the identical thing when we use different means of saying it, or is the meaning of the utterance (partly) produced by the way we say it? When A.E. Housman, for instance, says “Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters, trampled to the floor it spanned, and the tent of night in tatters, straws the sky-pavilioned land”, would it be the same as saying: “Get up mate, it’s daylight”? Or is there a difference in WHAT he says because of HOW he says it? Most modern criticism would agree that form and content are not in fact clearly separable, that one is intrinsically dependent on the other, and that a paraphrase never expresses exactly the same thing as the original utterance. Form, in other words, produces meaning. It is thus worth examining how it does that.

When examining the style of a text, one scrutinises mainly two aspects: **diction** (the choice and use of words) and **syntax** (the sentence structure). In other words, one examines which words are used and how these words are put together. Closely related to such questions is the use of rhetorical devices. Particularly in poetry and verse drama one also focuses on the rhythmical patterns and sound effects, though these can also be used effectively in prose. The question at the centre of such examinations is HOW the use of diction, syntax and rhetorical devices produce certain effects and are aimed to evoke certain responses in the reader.

Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short (1981) provide a list of categories for analysis on which most of the following is based. They also give several illuminating examples, demonstrating the use that can be made of style analysis in literary studies (see esp. their ch. 3).

### 1.6.1. Diction

The analysis of diction involves answering a series of questions, all relating to the use of vocabulary: its origin, its effect, its grammatical categories. These could be questions such as:

- Is it simple or complex?
- Latinate or anglo-saxon?
- Abstract or concrete?
- Neutral, evaluative, emotionally charged?
- Formal or informal?
- Vulgar or refined?
- Any particular sociolect?
- Any jargon (subject-specific or technical language)?
- Appropriate or inappropriate in the context?

Are words used in unusual combinations?

Which lexical categories are used frequently and which are used little or not at all: nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, auxiliaries, and so on?

What rhetorical devices are used on the levels of individual sound or word?

Most important of all remains the question: **What effect does the use of diction have in this particular text?**

In classical rhetoric styles were classified into three main levels: the **grand** style, the **middle** style and the **low** (or plain) style. Certain types of diction were thought appropriate for certain stylistic levels. This was called the principle of **decorum**, which was an influential concept well into the eighteenth century. John Dryden, for example, famously agonised over the appropriateness of the word 'marjoram' (the herb) for the middle style (he eventually decided it was too low a word). Poetry, perhaps more than other types of literary texts, tends to use words or phrases that are not current in ordinary conversation, so-called **poetic diction**.

### 1.6.2. Syntax

Just like the analysis of diction, the analysis of syntax involves answering a series of questions relating to the use of sentence structure. These are questions such as:

#### **What kind of sentences are used?**

Simple or complex?

Long or short?

Paratactic or hypotactic?

Statements, exclamations, questions, or commands?

etc.

#### **Is there a type of clause that is preferred?**

Relative clause?

Adverbial clause?

Interrogative clauses?

That-clause?

Finite or non-finite clause?

etc.

#### **How are sentences linked (sentence cohesion)?**

Are there cross references and what type?

Are sentences connected with logical links? Or are they purely associative?

Are any particular sentence structures repeated?

Are any particular words repeated which create cross references?

What rhetorical devices are used on the sentence level

Once again, the most important question is: **What effect does the use of syntax achieve?** There are no fixed answers to this question. The effect of stylistic devices will differ from text to text and within texts, depending on the immediate context.

### 1.6.2.1. Syntactical Deviations

In literary texts generally, and especially in poetry, syntax can differ from everyday usage. There is, on the one hand, a certain amount of **poetic licence** which makes it quite acceptable for a poet to deviate slightly from ordinary syntax to accommodate the sentence to the line form and metre. Such accommodations can be, for instance, **inversions**, that is a change in word order: “The King's real, or his stamped face / contemplate” (Donne, *Canonization*) instead of 'Contemplate the King's real or his stamped face'.

A deviation from common **collocation**, the way words are combined with other words, can achieve interesting effects. Geoffrey Leech (1969: 29-31) illustrates this kind of deviation using the title of Dylan Thomas' poem *A Grief Ago*. Usually, the expression 'ago' is only combined with time measurements: two years ago, an hour ago, a week ago, etc. To combine 'ago' with 'grief' is a deviation from common usage. It is unusual and thus the expression is particularly noticeable, though we still interpret it as a time measurement. The deviation draws the reader's attention to the importance that grief has assumed in the speaker's life; it has become so dominating that it has replaced other time measurements. A rather different effect would be achieved by an expression like 'two wives ago'. This collocation, though one can easily work out its meaning, makes the speaker sound rather frivolous, perhaps a little callous even, since one expects a wife to take a more central part in a man's life than merely as a time measurement. Also, in our culture it is still unusual to change wives regularly and often enough to make them convenient as time measurements.

### 1.6.3. Rhetorical Devices

Style is part of classical rhetoric and a number of rhetorical devices are worth considering in any analysis of style. For the analysis of literature, a knowledge of rhetorical devices is indispensable since there is often a considerable density of rhetorical figures and tropes which are important generators and qualifiers of meaning and effect. This is particularly the case in poetry. Especially the analysis of the use of imagery is important for any kind of literary text. (For further details see chs. 1.6.3.2 and 1.6.3.3)

Figures of speech in classical rhetoric were defined as “a form of speech artfully varied from common usage” (Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* IX.i.2). The forms of figurative languages are divided into two main groups: schemes (or figures) and tropes.

**Rhetorical schemes** describe the arrangement of individual sounds (phonological schemes), the arrangement of words (morphological schemes), and sentence structure (syntactical schemes). **Rhetorical tropes** are devices of figurative language. They represent a deviation from the common or main significance of a word or phrase (semantic figures) or include specific appeals to the audience (pragmatic figures).

The following definitions are mainly based on Abrams 1999, Corbett 1971, Homan/Harmon 1992, Preminger 1993, Jahn 2001, Scaif, n.d.

## 1. Schemes: Phoneme-level (level of individual sounds)

<b>alliteration</b>	<p>the same sound is repeated at the beginning of several words or stressed syllables in words that are in close proximity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Fire<b>f</b>rore<b>f</b>iddle, the <b>F</b>riend of the <b>F</b>ell (T.S. Eliot, <i>Book of Practical Cats</i>)</li> <li>✘ Moping <b>m</b>elancholy <b>m</b>ad (Housman, <i>Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff</i>)</li> <li>✘ Dombey and Son had often dealt in <b>h</b>ides but not in <b>h</b>earts. They left that fancy war to <b>b</b>oys and girls, and <b>b</b>oarding-schools and <b>b</b>ooks. (Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>assonance</b>	<p>the same or similar vowel sounds are repeated in the stressed syllables of words that are in close proximity while the consonants differ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ <b>B</b>reathing like one that hath a <b>weary dream</b> (Tennyson, <i>Lotos-Eaters</i>)</li> <li>✘ <b>G</b>un, <b>d</b>rum, <b>t</b>rump<b>e</b>t, <b>b</b>lunder<b>u</b>ss and <b>t</b>hunder (Pope, <i>Imitations of Horace</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>consonance</b>	<p>two or more consonants are repeated, but the adjacent vowels differ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ <b>F</b>riend/<b>f</b>rowned</li> <li>✘ <b>k</b>illed/<b>c</b>old,</li> <li>✘ <b>h</b>orse/<b>h</b>earse</li> </ul>
<b>onomatopoeia</b>	<p>the sound of the word imitates the sound of the thing which that word denotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ clatter, bash, bang, rumble, sniff, howl, etc.</li> <li>✘ [...] aspens quiver, Little breezes dusk and shiver (Tennyson, <i>Lady of Shalott</i> - imitates the sound of the breeze in the leaves)</li> <li>✘ Hear the loud alarum bells – Brazen bells! What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells! [...] How they clang, and clash and roar! (Poe, <i>The Bells</i>)</li> </ul>

## 2. Schemes: Word-level

<b>anadiplosis / reduplicatio</b>	<p>(Greek for “doubling back”) the word or phrase that concludes one line or clause is repeated at the beginning of the next</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ A wreathed garland of deserved praise, Of praise deserved, unto thee I give, I give to thee, who knowest all my ways, My crooked winding ways, wherin I live. (Herbert, <i>A Wreath</i>)</li> <li>✘ [...] if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, [...] furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps [...]. (E.M. Forster, <i>My Wood</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>anaphora</b>	<p>a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses or lines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ <b>Because I do not hope</b> to turn again <b>Because I do not hope</b> <b>Because I do not hope</b> to turn. (T.S. Eliot, <i>Ash-Wednesday</i>)</li> <li>✘ <b>So long</b> as men can breathe or eyes can see, <b>So long</b> lives this and this gives life to thee. (Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 18</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>climax / gradatio</b>	<p>(Greek for “ladder”) arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of ascending power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. (Shakespeare, <i>Twelfth Night</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>epistrophe</b>	<p>a word or expression is repeated at the end of successive phrases, clauses or lines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ There chiefly I sought <b>thee</b>, there only I found <b>thee</b>; Her glance was the best of the rays that surround <b>thee</b>. (Byron, <i>Stanzas Written on the Road between Florence and Pisa</i>)</li> <li>✘ We cannot learn from <b>one another</b> until we stop shouting at <b>one another</b>.</li> </ul>

	(Nixon, <i>Inaugural Address</i> ) ✘ We meet <b>tonight</b> and part <b>tonight</b> . (Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i> )
<b>epizeuxis / geminatio</b>	the repetition of the same words immediately next to each other ✘ Peace, peace seems all (Browning, <i>The Bishop Orders His Tomb</i> )
<b>homonym</b>	words with the same pronunciation and / or spelling but with different meanings ✘ their – there ✘ ball (toy) – ball (dance event) ✘ hear – here
<b>polyptoton / metabole</b>	one word is repeated in different grammatical or syntactical (inflected) forms. A special case of polyptoton is the <b>figura etymologica</b> which repeats two or more words of the same stem ✘ There hath he <b>lain</b> for ages, and will <b>lie</b> (Tennyson, <i>The Kraken</i> ) ✘ [...] love is not love Which <b>alters</b> when it <b>alteration</b> finds, Or bends with the <b>remover</b> to <b>remove</b> . (Shakespeare, Sonnet 116) – figura etymologica
<b>portmanteau words (blend, contaminatio)</b>	words formed by blending two words into one ✘ spellotape (spell + sellotape in <i>Harry Potter</i> ) ✘ brunch (breakfast + lunch)
<b>symploce</b>	A combination of anaphora and epistrophe, so that one word or phrase is repeated at the beginning and another word or phrase is repeated at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences ✘ <b>Much is your</b> reading, but not the Word of <b>GOD</b> <b>Much is your</b> building, but not the House of <b>GOD</b> . (T.S. Eliot, <i>The Rock</i> )
<b>synonym</b>	use of words with the same or similar meanings ✘ alter – change, brief – short, assist – help ✘ I hate inconstancy - I loathe, detest, Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made Of such quicksilver clay [...] (Byron, <i>Don Juan</i> )
<b>tautology</b>	one idea is repeatedly expressed through additional words, phrases, or sentences ✘ small dwarf ✘ With malice toward none, with charity for all. (Lincoln, <i>Second Inaugural</i> )

### 3. Schemes: Sentence-Level

<b>aposiopesis</b>	the speaker fails to complete his sentence, (seemingly) overpowered by his emotions ✘ Sir Leicester's gallantry concedes the point; though he still feels that to bring this sort of squalor among the upper classes is really – really – (Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> )
<b>asyndeton</b>	the omission of conjunctions to coordinate phrases, clauses, or words (opposite of polysyndeton) where normally conjunctions would be used ✘ What can the sheepdog make of such simplified terrain? no hills, dales, bogs, walls, tracks (C. Day Lewis, <i>Sheepdog Trials in Hyde Park</i> ) ✘ I may, I must, I can, I will, I do Leave following that which it is gain to miss (Sidney, <i>Astrophil and Stella</i> ) ✘ that government of the people, by the people, for the people (Lincoln, <i>Gettysburgh Address</i> )
<b>chiasmus</b>	from the shape of the Greek letter 'chi' (X); two corresponding pairs are arranged in inverted, mirror-like order (a-b, b-a) ✘ At a dinner party one should eat wisely but not too well, and talk well but not too wisely. (W Somerset Maugham) ✘ Gross as her sire, and as her mother grave (Pope, <i>Dunciad</i> ) ✘ Fair is foul and foul is fair. (Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> )

	<p>✘ Swans sing before they die – ‘twere no bad thing Did certain persons die before they sing. (S.T. Coleridge, <i>Epigram on a Volunteer Singer</i>)</p>
<b>ellipsis</b>	<p>a word or phrase in a sentence is omitted though implied by the context</p> <p>✘ A mighty maze! but not without a plan. (Pope, <i>Essay on Man</i>)</p>
<b>hyperbaton</b> (see also <b>inversion</b> )	<p>(Greek for “stepping over”) a figure of syntactic dislocation where phrase or words that belong together are separated</p> <p>✘ I got, <b>so far as the immediate moment was concerned</b>, away. (James, <i>Turn of the Screw</i>)</p> <p>✘ Were I, <b>who to my cost already am</b>, One of those strange, prodigious creatures, <i>Man</i>. (Rochester, <i>Satire Against Mankind</i>)</p>
<b>hypotaxis</b>	<p>clauses and sentences are arranged with subordination, usually longer sentence constructions (opposite of parataxis)</p> <p>✘ The house had a name and a history; the old gentleman taking his tea would have been delighted to tell you these things: how it had been built under Edward the Sixth, had offered a night’s hospitality to the great Elizabeth (whose august person had extended itself upon a huge, magnificent and terribly angular bed which still formed the principal honour of the sleeping apartments), had been a good deal bruised and defaced in Cromwell’s wars, and then, under the Restoration, repaired and much enlarged; and how, finally, after having been remodeled and disfigured in the eighteenth century, it had passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker, who had bought it originally because (owing to circumstances too complicated to set forth) it was offered at a great bargain; bought it with much grumbling at its ugliness, its antiquity, its incommodity, and who now, at the end of twenty years, had become conscious of a real aesthetic passion for it, so that he knew all its points and would tell you just where to stand to see them in combination and just the hour when the shadows of its various protuberances – which fell so softly upon the warm, weary brickwork – were of the right measure. (James, <i>Portrait of a Lady</i>)</p>
<b>inversion</b>	<p>the usual word order is rearranged, often for the effect of emphasis or to maintain the metre (a type of hyperbaton)</p> <p>✘ Sometime <b>too hot</b> the eye of heaven shines, And <b>often is</b> his gold complexion dimmed (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18) (instead of: ‘Sometime the eye of heaven shines too hot and his gold complexion is often dimmed’)</p>
<b>parallelism</b>	<p>the repetition of identical or similar syntactic elements (word, phrase, clause)</p> <p>✘ Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals. (Wilde, <i>Picture of Dorian Gray</i>)</p> <p>✘ Though the heart be still as loving And the moon be still as bright (Byron, <i>So We’ll Go no More A-Roving</i>)</p> <p>✘ Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age. Son about eight-and-forty minutes. Dombey was rather bald, rather red, and though a handsome well-made man, too stern and pompous in appearance, to be prepossessing. Son was very bald, and very red, and though (of course) an undeniably fine infant, somewhat crushed and spotty in his general effect, as yet. (Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i>)</p>
<b>parataxis</b>	<p>clauses or sentences are arranged in a series without subordination, usually shorter sentence constructions (opposite of hypotaxis)</p> <p>✘ My hot water bottle was red, Manchester United’s colour. Sinbad’s was green. I loved the smell off the bottle. I put hot water in it and emptied it and smelled it. I put my nose to the hole, nearly in it. (Doyle, <i>Paddy Clarke</i>)</p>
<b>polysyndeton</b>	<p>the unusual repetition of the same conjunction (opposite of asyndeton)</p> <p>✘ It is a land with neither night <b>nor</b> day, <b>Nor</b> heat <b>nor</b> cold, <b>nor</b> any wind, <b>nor</b> rain, <b>Nor</b> hills <b>nor</b> valleys. (Ch. Rossetti, <i>Cobwebs</i>)</p> <p>✘ Match’d with an aged wife, I mete and dole Unequal laws unto a savage race, That hoard, <b>and</b> sleep, <b>and</b> feed, <b>and</b> know not me. (Tennyson, <i>Ulysses</i>)</p>
<b>reditio / kyklos</b> <b>/ framing</b>	<p>a syntactic unit or verse line is framed by the same element at the beginning and at the end</p>

	<p>✘ <b>Haste</b> still pays <b>haste</b>, and <b>leisure</b> answers <b>leisure</b>;  <b>Like</b> doth quit <b>like</b>, and <b>Measure</b> still for <b>Measure</b>.  (Shakespeare, <i>Measure for Measure</i>)</p> <p>✘ <b>Vanity</b>, saith the preacher, <b>vanity!</b> (Browning, <i>The Bishop Orders his Tomb</i>)</p>
zeugma	<p>(Greek for “yoking”) one verb controls two or more objects that have different syntactic and semantic relations to it</p> <p>✘ Harriet had broken all her old ties and half the commandments [...]  (Dorothy Sayers, <i>Gaudy Night</i>)</p> <p>✘ Or <b>stain</b> her <b>honour</b> or her new <b>brocade</b>,  Forget her prayers or miss a masquerade,  Or <b>lose</b> her <b>heart</b>, or <b>necklace</b>, at a ball  (Pope, <i>Rape of the Lock</i>)</p>

#### 4. Tropes

antithesis	<p>opposition, or contrast of ideas or words in a parallel construction</p> <p>✘ Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed.  (Samuel Johnson)</p> <p>✘ Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. (Shakespeare, <i>Julius Caesar</i>)</p>
apostrophe	<p>addressing an absent person, a god or a personified abstraction</p> <p>✘ Judge, <b>O you gods</b>, how dearly Caesar loved him. (Shakespeare, <i>Julius Caesar</i>)</p>
euphemism	<p>substitution of an agreeable or at least non-offensive expression for one whose plainer meaning might be harsh or unpleasant</p> <p>✘ [...] one particular lady, whose lord is more than suspected of <b>laying his umbrella on her as an instrument of correction</b>, [...] (Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i>)</p>
hyperbole	<p>obvious exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect</p> <p>✘ [...] he couldn't, however sanguine his disposition, hope to offer a remark that would be a <b>greater outrage on human nature in general</b> [...] (Mrs Chick's response to her husband's suggestion that the starving baby should be fed with the teapot since there was no nurse. Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i>)</p>
irony	<p>expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning; the words say one thing but mean another</p> <p>✘ ‘Well!’ said Mrs Chick, with a sweet smile, ‘after this, I forgive Fanny everything!’ <b>It was a declaration in a Christian spirit</b>, and Mrs Chick felt that it did her good. Not that she had anything particular to forgive in her sister-in-law, not indeed anything at all, except her having married her brother – in itself a species of audacity – and her having, in the course of events, given birth to a girl instead of a boy [...]. (Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i>)</p> <p>✘ In addition [...] you are liable to get tide-trapped away in the swamps, [...] Of course if you really want a truly safe investment in Fame, and really care about Posterity, and Posterity's Science, you will jump over into the black batter-like, stinking slime cheered by the thought of the terrific sensation you will produce in 20,000 years hence, and the care you will be taken of then by your fellow-creatures, in a museum. (Mary Kingsley, <i>Travels in West Africa</i>)</p>
metaphor	<p>a figure of similarity, a word or phrase is replaced by an expression denoting an analogous circumstance in a different semantic field. The comparison adds a new dimension of meaning to the original expression. Unlike in simile, the comparison is not made explicit (‘like’ or ‘as’ are not used, see the longer discussion in Analysing a Metaphor ch. 1.6.3.2)</p> <p>✘ The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.  (Shakespeare, <i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>)</p> <p>✘ That fence about my soul (MacNeice, <i>London Rain</i>)</p>
metonymy	<p>a figure of contiguity, one word is substituted for another on the basis of some material, causal, or conceptual relation</p> <p>✘ My Head and Heart thus flowing thro' my Quill (Pope, <i>Imitations of Horace</i>)  (i.e. the thoughts produced in my head and the feelings of my heart are expressed in the</p>

	things I write with my quill)
<b>oxymoron</b>	(Greek for “sharp-dull”) a self-contradictory combination of words or smaller verbal units; usually noun-noun, adjective-adjective, adjective-noun, adverb-adverb, or adverb-verb – a paradoxical utterance that conjoins two terms that in ordinary usage are contraries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ bittersweet, pleasing pains, loving hate</li> <li>✘ I will complain, yet praise; I will bewail, approve; And all my sour-sweet days I will lament and love. (George Herbert, <i>Bitter-Sweet</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>paradox</b>	a daring statement which unites seemingly contradictory words but which on closer examination proves to have unexpected meaning and truth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ Snail-paced in a hurry (Christina Rossetti, <i>Goblin Market</i>)</li> <li>✘ Dark with excessive bright (Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>paronomasia / pun</b>	wordplay, using words that are written or pronounced similarly or identically, but have different meanings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ [...] he Who <b>lied</b> in the chapel Now <b>lies</b> in the Abbey. (Byron, <i>Epitaph for William Pitt</i>)</li> <li>✘ Holland [...] lies so low they're only saved by being <b>dammed</b>. (Thomas Hood, <i>Up the Rhine</i>)</li> <li>✘ Some folk are <b>wise</b>, and some are <b>otherwise</b>. (Smollett, <i>Roderick Random</i>)</li> <li>✘ I always say beauty is only <b>sin deep</b>. (Saki, <i>Reginald's Choir Treat</i>)</li> <li>✘ His death, which happen'd in his berth At forty-odd befell: They went and <b>told</b> the sexton, and The sexton <b>toll'd</b> the bell. (Thomas Hood, <i>Faithless Sally Brown</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>pejorative</b>	the use of words with disparaging connotations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ [...] the nurse, a simpering piece of faded gentility (Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>periphrasis</b>	a descriptive word or phrase is used instead of a proper name <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ finny race (for fish), fleecy people (for sheep)</li> <li>✘ On one occasion [...] a <b>mighty Silurian</b> [...] chose to get his front paws over the stern of my canoe, and endeavoured to improve our acquaintance. I had to retire to the bows, to keep the balance right, and fetch him a clip on the snout with a paddle, when he withdrew [...] I should think that crocodile was eight feet long. (Mary Kingsley, <i>Travels to West Africa</i>)</li> <li>✘ [...] the Fans round Talagouga wouldn't go at any price above Njole, because they were certain they would be killed and eaten by the up-river Fans. Internally consigning the entire tribe <b>to regions where they will get a rise in temperature</b>, even in this climate, I went with Mme Forget to M. Gacon [...](Mary Kingsley, <i>Travels to West Africa</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>personification / prosopoeia</b>	animals, ideas, abstractions or inanimate objects are endowed with human characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ And <b>moody Madness laughing</b> wild Amid severest woe (Gray, <i>Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College</i>)</li> <li>✘ On the brow of Dombey, <b>Time</b> and <b>his brother Care</b> had set some mark. (Dickens, <i>Dombey and Son</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>simile</b>	two things are openly compared with each other, introduced by ‘like’ or ‘as’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ My heart is <b>like</b> a singing bird. (Christina Rossetti, <i>A Birthday</i>)</li> <li>✘ Youth <b>like</b> summer morn, age like winter weather. (Shakespeare, <i>The Passionate Pilgrim</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>synaesthesia</b>	the description of one kind of sensation in terms of another (description of sound in terms of colour: blue note; description of colour in terms of sound: loud shirt; etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✘ The <b>eye</b> of man hath not <b>heard</b>, the <b>ear</b> of man hath Not <b>seen</b>, man's <b>hand</b> is not able to <b>taste</b>, his <b>tongue</b> To <b>conceive</b>, nor his <b>heart</b> to <b>report</b>, what my dream was.</li> </ul>

	(Shakespeare, <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ) ✘ If <b>music</b> be the <b>food</b> of love, play on [...] (Shakespeare, <i>Twelfth Night</i> )
<b>synecdoche</b>	A figure of contiguity (form of metonymy), the use of a part for the whole, or the whole for the part: 'pars pro toto' or 'totum pro parte' ✘ I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o'beer The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no <b>red-coats</b> here." (Kipling, <i>Tommy</i> ) (instead of 'a soldier', who wears a red coat)
<b>understatement (meiosis)</b>	an idea is deliberately expressed as less important than it actually is; a special case of understatement is <b>litotes</b> , which denies the opposite of the thing that is being affirmed (sometimes used synonymously with meiosis) ✘ Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her appearance for the worse. (Swift, <i>Tale of a Tub</i> ) ✘ This is not unexciting. (litotes)

## SO WHAT?

Stylistic devices can obviously serve a great number of purposes: draw one's attention to or even create connections between certain text elements, make a text easier to comprehend, characterise the speaker and so on. Possibly the most interesting effect of style is that it can elicit certain emotional responses in readers or listeners. This becomes important especially in texts (spoken or written) that aim to convince other people of something they may not have been convinced of before: political speeches, speeches in court and sermons.

This SO WHAT section wants to demonstrate how an analysis of stylistic devices can be constructed into a coherent argument, the sort of essay that is expected from students at the end of an introductory seminar on the analysis and interpretation of literature. The **introduction** presents a thesis (marked bold). The **argument** which follows the introduction, proceeds in several stages, each paragraph representing one step in the unfolding argument. Note that stylistic devices are used **to support an argument**. It is not an end in itself to simply identify them!

### Introduction

A famous example in English literature for the emotional impact achieved through stylistic and rhetorical means is Mark Antony's speech in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. Antony begins his speech to an audience that has just been convinced by Brutus of the justice of the murder of Caesar (*JC* III, 2: 13-47, see Plett 2000: 166-171, for an enlightening analysis of Brutus's speech). **Gradually, Antony's speech sways the audience's mood and finally incites them to rebellion against the murderers of Caesar without doing so explicitly.** He achieves this effect employing a number of specific stylistic devices: suggestive patterns of repetition, parallel structures, and an increasingly direct appeal to audience emotion. (For a copy of the speech both printed and spoken press the audio button. Please note that this is a fairly large file: 4MB)

### **Cautious Beginning of the Speech**

Antony's speech has a clear structure, moving from unemotional and factual argument to increasingly charged emotional appeals. In a calm and measured introduction Antony states the supposed purpose of his presence before the people of Rome ("I come to bury Caesar not to praise him", III, 2: 75) and he praises Brutus and his followers. ("For Brutus is an honourable man; / So are they all, all honourable men", III, 2: 82f). The praise of Brutus at this point operates as a *captatio benevolentiae*, it ingratiates Antony with an audience that is on Brutus' side. He then starts an argument, much as he would in a judiciary speech before a court, carefully laying evidence before his audience with the aim to question the accusation that Brutus has levelled against Caesar: that he was ambitious. Antony moves from small, private matter ("He was my friend[...]", III, 2: 86), to issues of wider interest (money for the state, Caesar's compassion for the poor), thus gradually involving the audience's concerns more directly.

### **The Implied Accusation through Patterns of Repetition**

Much of the effect of Antony's speech is derived from patterns of repetition. He uses a few alliterations in the first part of his speech ("faithful friend", "sterner stuff", "kingly crown", "brutish beasts") and anadiplosis ("it was a grievous fault, / And grievously hath Caesar answered it", III, 2: 80f), which make his remarks more memorable and easier to follow for the audience. But mainly he uses a parallel sentence structure ("the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept", 92, "what Brutus spoke [...] what I know", 101f) and a refrain-like repetition of "But Brutus is an honourable man" or variations thereof. With these repetitions – and without explicitly saying so – he gradually puts Brutus in the wrong. The examples from Caesar's past life all seem to belie Brutus' accusation and the refrain-like "But Brutus [...]" becomes increasingly ironic because so patently in opposition to the accumulating evidence. The remark, parallel in syntax but antithetical in implication "What Brutus spoke [...] what I know" almost, but not quite, states openly that Brutus is wrong. But it remains for the audience to draw this conclusion.

### **The Implied Accusation through Syntactical Figures**

A suggestive arrangement of sentence elements sways the audience's opinion without actually presenting any arguments. Having suggested that Brutus was in fact wrong to accuse Caesar of ambition, Antony shifts the meaning of the word "wrong" from 'being wrong' to 'doing wrong' and aligns the audience to his own, and Caesar's, side. "I will not do them wrong; I rather choose / To wrong the dead, to wrong myself, and you / Than I will wrong such honourable men" (III, 2: 126-128). With the climax "the dead [...] myself [...] you", still denying that he will say anything against Brutus, Antony implies that Brutus's act against Caesar was in fact an act against the audience. The sequence of this climax (the dead, myself, you) is extremely effective. "I will not do them wrong" restates Antony's own honourable intentions. He will not attack men who claim to have acted for noble reasons. This ingratiates him further with an audience that is only just beginning to question the justness of Brutus' action. Had Antony chosen a direct attack on Brutus, the audience would most likely have assumed a defensive stance and turned against Antony. "I rather choose to wrong the dead" Antony continues. This is likely to cause concern. It was – and is –

generally considered unethical to wrong the dead. In this case the evidence that Antony has presented suggests that Caesar has indeed been wronged already: he was not ambitious. As described by Antony, the situation seems to present a choice between two wrongs, either of Brutus or of Caesar, who has already paid a 'grievous' price for his alleged wrong, his ambition. But Antony continues: "to wrong myself". Antony has established himself as a man of honour who will not wrong others. Now he presents himself as a sort of martyr to his noble principles, a stance likely to evoke sympathy. Antony does not give an explicit reason why he should be wronged, he operates in fact in an imaginary scene ("if I were dispos'd [...]"), (122). Nonetheless, he gives the impression that wrong has been done.

### **Constructing a Link between Caesar and the Audience**

At this stage, Antony slips in "and you" (127) which gives the likely audience response a decisive turn. Suddenly it is no longer a moving spectacle observed by more or less unconcerned spectators, suddenly it concerns them personally: they have been wronged. As a result of the sequence in which Antony presents his view, the audience does not turn against him but against Brutus. In actual fact, Antony tells the audience that he would wrong them before he would say anything against Caesar's murderers. Put like this, it is a statement rather startling in its audacity. But of course, Antony was careful to make it very clear that he himself has been wronged also. And thus the audience's anger is directed against Brutus and his followers; the repetition of "honourable men" has by now assumed the sound of bitter mockery.

### **Direct Appeal to the Audience**

Antony's tactics are to place the responsibility of judgment and action entirely with his audience. His speech is full of assertions what he will **not** do, and in denying that he will do them, Antony says and does those very things, or rather, he allows his audience to make him do it. ("I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke" (101), "this testament, / Which [...] I do not mean to read" (131f), "I must not read it" (141), "You will compel me, then, to read the will?" (157), "Let me not stir you up" (103 and 204), "I come not to steal away your hearts" (209). In a series of conditional clauses he paints the scenario of the possible outcome of the actions he will **not** undertake to do, or, even more tantalising for his audience, he only hints at possible results ("O, what would come of it?", 147). In reaction to this, the audience feels the need to assert its independence. Antony constantly appeals to the audience's knowledge and he claims not to tell them anything new ("as you know me all" (211), "I tell you that which you yourselves do know", 217). In the illusion that they make Antony do what they want, the audience does what Antony wants them to do: They turn against Brutus in the belief that this decision is the result of their own knowledge and judgment.

As his speech continues, Antony increases the emotional appeal through his choice of diction. Describing the reaction of the poor to Caesar's murder, he aligns Caesar with holiness, especially for Shakespeare's Christian audience ("sacred blood", 134, beg a hair like a relic, 135, kiss Caesar's dead wounds, 133). In contrast, the beasts that have lost their judgment are "brutish" (105) beasts, the pun on Brutus' name obviously suggesting a similar fault in his judgment. As before, Antony approaches the

audience gradually. First he displays his own emotion, then he imagines the emotions of the poor and only then does he appeal to the audience directly: He asks them to judge for themselves as he shows them the cuts in Caesar's mantle. So far, he has used adjectives and images very sparingly. But now evaluative adjectives begin to accumulate ("envious", "well-beloved", "cursed", "unkindly", "unkindest", "noble", 172-182). A simile ("Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it, / As rushing out of doors, [...]"), 176f) increases the pathos of his description of the murder scene. The passage is dominated by imperatives ("Look", "Mark", "See", "Judge", 172-180), all in initial positions and stressed against the iambic metre, and repeated deixis (this, that), which heightens the directness of the appeal to the audience. Though the last imperative, "Judge", is an appeal to the gods to judge how much Caesar had loved Brutus, the delay that is achieved by the apostrophe "O you gods" (180), make it first appear – following on "Look", "See", "Mark" as it does – an appeal to the audience to judge the murderer. But again, Antony withdraws from explicit incitement to condemn Brutus.

### **The Effects of Rhythm**

Antony's speech is in blankverse and the overall regularity of the metrical pattern and the length of lines offer further opportunities for special effect when the pattern is broken. "The noble Brutus" (78), coming at the end of the line, though in fact a run-on-line, invites to a slight pause, it invites to linger, just for a moment, on this phrase. Thus the phrase assumes an emphasis, not justifiable from its informational value, which may be taken as a first hint of irony right at the beginning of Antony's speech. The marked caesura in line 184 gives full force to the second half of the line "then burst his mighty heart" and since in performance the "then" is likely to be stressed (compare the speaker in the audio file) even though it is metrically speaking an unstressed syllable, the parallel between Caesar's murder and the fate of Rome "**When** the noble Caesar saw him stab [...] **then** burst his mighty heart [...] **then** I, and you, and all of us fell down." (184-187) The link between Caesar and the Roman audience is further strengthened at this point.

### **Precarious Morals**

Antony's speech is moving even though it rests on somewhat precarious morals. Divested of its emotional appeals, his argument runs thus: Brutus is honourable and I will not wrong him – But here is evidence that Brutus is wrong – Brutus (who does wrong things) would incite you to rebellion if he were me – I do not do this because I am not Brutus (i.e. I do not do things that would be wrong). All this time he does exactly, and intentionally (see *JC* III, 1: 292-294 "[...] there shall I try / In my oration, how the people take / The cruel issue of these bloody men") what he says he will not do and what he claims to be wrong: He incites his audience to rebellion.

### **Conclusion**

Brutus had defended the assassination of Caesar as an act of freedom against tyranny. Antony contrives to give his Roman audience the illusion that they are making a free and independent judgment. Without directly accusing Brutus, Antony gradually aligns the audience emotionally on the side of Caesar and places Brutus in the wrong. He achieves this effect through constant direct and emotionally charged appeals to the audience's

judgment and a pattern of repetition and parallel sentence structure which suggest connections without making them explicit.

### 1.6.3.2. Analysing a Metaphor

Similes and metaphors are rhetorical tropes, i.e. figurative language, which combine two semantic fields in order to enrich the meaning of one. Similes and metaphors are both figures of comparison, but there is a difference in execution and complexity. To start with the less complex one: A **simile** is an overt comparison, i.e. it makes the comparison explicit with the use of a particle of comparison ('like', 'as'). Take for instance your assessment of the culinary delights provided in mensa:

This Tofu-steak is like paper-maché.

In a simile one compares one thing to another in order to make a point about the first thing. So in the end there are three elements to a comparison: First, the item you are interested in at the moment (the steak). In rhetoric this is called the **primum comparandum**. Second, the item you are comparing the first item to (paper-maché). This is called the **secundum comparatum**. Then there is a third element which is the element of similarity, the **common ground**, between the first item (the steak) and the second item (paper-maché). This is called the **tertium comparationis** (or ground). In the example with the mensa dish this would be something like: tasteless, of gluelike consistency.

A **metaphor**, in very simplified terms, is a covert comparison; a word or phrase from one semantic field is substituted with a word or phrase from another. There has to be at least one common characteristic between the two parts for the metaphor to work (common ground or tertium comparationis). No particle of comparison is used. A terminology, introduced by the critic I.A. Richards, distinguishes between **tenor** – the purport or meaning of the image – and **vehicle** – the image which conveys the meaning. Other terminologies distinguish between idea and image or target and source. Note that these concepts make slightly different distinctions than the terms from classical rhetoric.

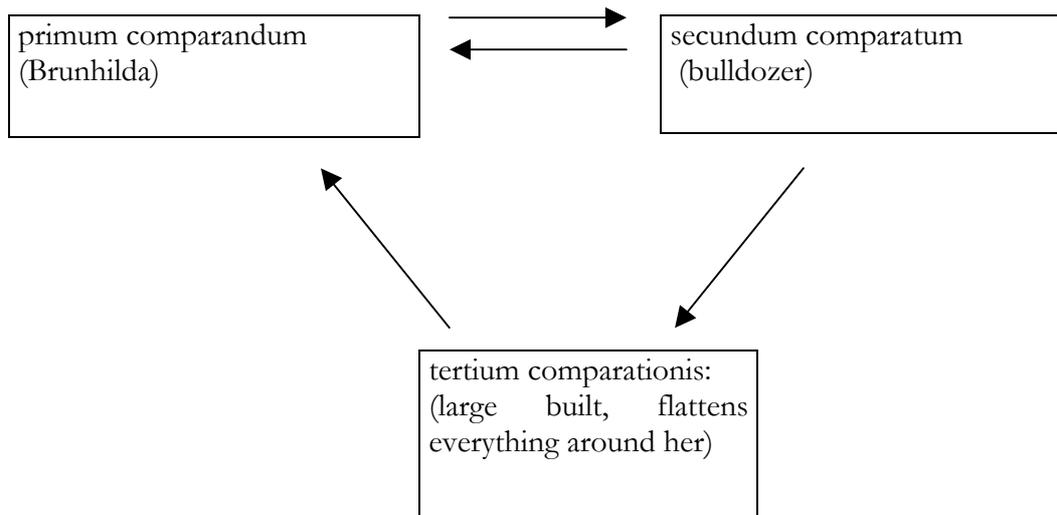
Consider an example: Here is how you introduce your brother's new girlfriend Brunhilda when she cannot hear you:

Here comes the bulldozer.

Even though only one element is explicitly mentioned (the bulldozer), there are also three elements to this metaphor. Graphically, the relation between the three elements could be expressed thus:

*Key terms:*

- primum comparandum
- secundum comparatum
- tertium comparationis
- common ground
- vehicle
- tenor
- catachresis



In I.A. Richard's terms, the vehicle of this metaphor is the bulldozer, the tenor, the purport of the image, in this case would be 'Brunhilda is ungraceful, merciless, tactless, has no sense or feeling', or something along those lines.

As becomes obvious from this very simple example, it is often impossible to determine the exact and only tenor of a metaphor. This is what makes metaphors complex and interesting as a tool in literary expression. Metaphors do not merely **replace** one meaning-generating expression with another one of the same meaning. Instead, the combination of the two semantic fields **generates** additional meaning which opens a range of possibilities for interpretation. It forces us to consider the world in new terms and it expands the meaning potential of language (for an accessible exploration of the complexities of metaphor see Bode 2001: ch. 4, for an example of interpretation see below and the SO WHAT section). It introduces ambiguity and thus a typically literary quality to a text (see ch. 1.2.3).

When one tries to interpret a metaphor or a simile, the focus of attention is at first the tertium comparationis, the common ground between the two items, because this provides additional information about the primum comparandum (Brunhilda). The secundum comparatum (the bulldozer) is not really important in itself, it only 'delivers' the message about the girlfriend (and that is why it is also called 'vehicle'). Obviously, the bulldozer has characteristics which are not likely to be relevant in this particular case: Maybe it has tracks instead of wheels, it runs on petrol and so on. Important for the immediate impact of the metaphor are those characteristics which Brunhilda and the bulldozer are likely to have in common (i.e. the common ground): forcefulness, unstoppable, size and mass. In addition, it may be significant to our impression of Brunhilda that the secundum comparatum is from the semantic field of technology.

In most cases one identifies the common ground without thinking about it. It is, however, useful to be aware of the exact steps of the decoding process, especially when one wishes to explore the effects of an image in some detail. Take the following statement made by Richard of Gloucester in his opening speech in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. In the late medieval war now referred to as the War of the Roses, Richard's noble

family, the House of York, have just defeated the House of Lancaster, and Richard's elder brother Edward is now king:

Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York  
(*Richard III* I, 1:1-2)

The tenor of this metaphor (three metaphors actually: winter, summer, sun) is something like this: Now the time of our unhappiness is past, it has been replaced by a time of well-being owing to the new king who is of the York family. As vehicles (i.e. as the actual images or *secunda comparata*) operate the words "winter", "summer" and "sun". A common association with 'winter' is darkness, dreariness, even death and these aspects offer themselves as likely common ground (or *tertium comparationis*) for 'time of discontent'. 'Summer' is easily associated with warmth, bloom, or ease. A comparison between 'sun' and 'king' is fairly common and the additional (homonymic) pun on sun/son makes this point quite clear, since the present King Edward is of the York family, i.e. a son of York.

Two things are worthy of remark at this point. First, the paraphrase is rather an impoverished rendering of the original expression and does not seem to exhaust the full potential of the image. It seems somehow more expressive to say "Made glorious summer" than to say "made a pleasant time". Critics are thus of the opinion that an image always expresses something beyond its paraphrase.

The second point to be made is that Shakespeare uses three metaphors here (winter, summer, sun) and all three are taken from the same semantic field: the seasons. It also happens, however, that semantic fields are mixed incongruously, as in the following image:

A burning sense of injury flooded through her and was not to be rooted out.

In this example three semantic fields are mixed: fire ("burning"), water ("flooded") and gardening ("rooted out"). In effect mixed metaphors are rather confusing because they become difficult to visualise. This happens when Lady Macbeth says to her husband:

[...] Was the hope drunk,  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? (*Macbeth* I, 7:35)

First, she personifies hope and describes him or her as drunk, i.e. not based on sober facts, but then she moves to the semantic field of clothes and the personified hope is turned into an item of clothing. This is confusing because in one's imagination one ends up with a drunken piece of clothing. Of course one can still work out the tenor of the metaphor which would be something like: 'Was the hope you expressed just a delusion?' In such cases one talks of **mixed metaphor** or **catagresis**. It has long been considered bad style to use mixed metaphors. The above example from *Macbeth* for instance, so shocked editors of Shakespeare that some editions changed it to "Was the hope drunk, / Wherein you bless'd yourself" or "Was the hope drunk, / Wherein you 'dressed [=addressed] yourself" (see Muir in Shakespeare, *Macbeth* ad loc.).

### 1.6.3.3. Symbol

A **symbol** is an object or an event which represents an abstract idea. In this sense all letters of an alphabet for instance are symbolic, they are arranged into words which represent certain concepts that we link with objects in reality. In text analysis one looks for symbols in a more restricted sense of the word: for those objects and events that are symbolic for a concept immediately relevant to the development of plot or character.

Some symbols are known to everyone within a certain cultural community, they are **public symbols**. The cross for instance, which represents the Christian religion, is such a public symbol. The colour white, representing purity and innocence, can also be considered a public symbol. In literature one often finds **private symbols**, symbols that are not generally known and that can only be decoded from their usage in a specific text. In Charles Dickens' novel *Bleak House* for instance, Mr John Jarndyce uses the expression 'There is an east wind' to indicate that he is distressed about tensions or unhappiness among people around him. The expression, which is normally merely about the weather, is thus used as a private symbol. In the following poem by Carl Sandburg, 'grass' functions as a private symbol for the world's forgetfulness of the horrors of war and destruction:

#### Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.  
Shovel them under and let me work –  
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg  
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.  
Shovel them under and let me work.  
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:  
What place is this?  
Where are we now?

I am the grass.  
Let me work.

#### SO WHAT?

In the analysis of figurative speech, especially simile and metaphor which link two separate semantic fields, it is often useful to examine the sort of semantic fields that are put into relation. For instance, are inanimate objects compared to animate ("the dirty room gave a sigh of relief when Imelda started her cleaning operations"), are people compared to animals or plants ("Her cheeks red roses such as seld have been", Bartholomew Griffin), are concrete objects compared to abstract notions ("Streets that follow like a tedious argument", T.S. Eliot)? and so on. (For a comprehensive list of the types of transfer and a sample analysis see Plett 2000: 183-203.) The

question that is worth asking is what effect does the link between these particular semantic fields achieve. More specifically, what additional connotations does the semantic field of the vehicle introduce, perhaps beyond the **common ground (tertium comparationis)**.

Here is Charles Dickens' description of the industrial town Coketown in his novel *Hard Times*:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. (Dickens, *Hard Times*, ch. 5)

This description evokes a fairly definite visual idea of Coketown, dominated by the symbolic colours red ("red brick", "unnatural red", "river that ran purple" – purple can be a mixture of blue and red but it can also denote the colours crimson or scarlet) and black ("unnatural [...] black", "brick that would have been red if the smoke had allowed it" "black canal"). The connotation of the colours red and black, especially in association with the noun smoke, which implies fire, can easily evoke the association of hell. Though hell is not explicitly mentioned, the passage clearly indicates that Coketown is a hellish place.

There are three images in this passage: two similes ("like the painted face of a savage", "like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness") and one metaphor ("interminable serpents of smoke"). All three of these images derive from the semantic field 'jungle'. The effect is twofold: it creates a link between dead material (buildings, smoke, machinery) and living creatures. These creatures are part of an uncivilised – and taking some common nineteenth-century assumptions into account – rather negative ("unnatural") world. The accoutrements of progress and industrialisation seem to take on a life of their own which dominates and even crushes the lives of the people in the town. At the same time, Dickens' choice of imagery suggests that all this industrial progress is in fact a retrograde step for civilisation, a decline into savagery. Thus the description of Coketown encapsulates the theme of the novel, and Dickens calls this chapter "The Key-note": the inhumane and soul-destroying aspects of progress.

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