

## CURRENT LITERARY TERMS

*By the same author*

\*

TOPICS AND OPINIONS, FIRST SERIES

TOPICS AND OPINIONS, SECOND SERIES

TOPICS AND OPINIONS, THIRD SERIES

VITAL THEMES TODAY

MEANING AND STYLE

POETRY AND APPRECIATION

THE CRAFT OF PROSE

MODERN ESSAYS, FIRST SERIES, 1939-1941

MODERN ESSAYS, SECOND SERIES, 1941-1943

MODERN ESSAYS, THIRD SERIES, 1943-1951

COUNTRY LIFE

THE SPOKEN WORD, FIRST SERIES

THE SPOKEN WORD, SECOND SERIES

SPEAKING OF THE FAMOUS

TALES FAR AND NEAR

DAYS OF ADVENTURE

THRILLS AND ACTION

(Macmillan)

A YEAR'S WORK IN PRÉCIS

FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY, BOOKS I-II

ENGLISH COMPOSITION, BOOKS I-IV

POEMS FOR PLEASURE, BOOKS I-III

PLAIN ENGLISH, BOOKS I-V

THE POET'S CRAFT

THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

(Cambridge University Press)

**CURRENT  
LITERARY TERMS**

**A Concise Dictionary of their Origin and Use**

**A. F. SCOTT, M.A.**

**M**  
MACMILLAN

© A. F. Scott 1965

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1965 978-0-333-03566-5

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1956 (as amended).

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 1965

Reprinted with revisions 1967, 1971, 1974, 1979, 1980, 1985

Published by

**THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD**

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS

and London

Companies and representatives

throughout the world

Printed in Great Britain by

Antony Rowe Ltd,

Chippenham

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Scott, Arthur Finley

Current literary terms

1. Literature – Dictionaries

I. Title

803 PN41

ISBN 978-1-349-15222-3

ISBN 978-1-349-15220-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-15220-9

## PREFACE

THIS is a complete reference-book, alphabetically arranged, carefully cross-referenced, giving the etymology and concise but comprehensive definition of the principal terms used in all branches of literature. Definitions are illustrated with extensive quotations, some in old forms, but mainly taken from recent texts. The book, which is international, includes descriptions of forms as various as Epic, Dadaism, and Kabuki, and provides scholarly information, with a clear critical line, on the techniques and complexities of expression in words.

Words are alive, and like all live things they grow, they change, they meet honour and disaster. Some remain puny, others stretch like giants. Perhaps few people know their story as far back as we can go.

The interested reader probably knows the origin of *carol* and *serenade* and *bucolic*, but what of *fustian* and *bombast* and *babery*, *doggerel* and *baroque* and *farce*? What was the original *caricature*, the original *maundy*, the original *leonine rhyme*? If 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy' what does 'ordinailed uncles' mean? How and when was the first *clerihew* written, and how did the *limerick* get its name? Did science fiction really begin with Lucian's *Vera Historia* in the second century? We may know how Walter Mapes became the *Jovial Topper*, but wonder how Thomas Moore became *Anacreon*.

Is Goliardic really a corruption of Goliath? Who was this Mrs. Grundy, whose name is uttered with distaste? And who (or what) are Dora and Aunt Edna and Andy Capp? Why did Tennyson kick the geese out of the boat, and what man adorned a sermon with kinquering congs? We may guess how the Grand Guignol was connected with Great Punch, but what was the Satanic School, and who boldly introduced Baby-Cake into a Christmas Masque?

We have heard the Buddhist proverb that the fallen flower never returns to the branch; but does the broken looking-glass never reflect again?

Many of us know Oscar Wilde said, 'I can resist everything except temptation', and that Robert Frost declared, 'Writing free verse is like playing tennis with the net down'; but we may not remember who said, speaking of Good Sense, that his son was Wit, who married Mirth, and Humour was their child.

Why did a Greek word linger in the mind of John Phillips when he wrote:

'Lewd did I live & evil I did dwell?'

Literary and critical terms can be treated in such a way as not only to help the student, but also to interest those readers who look upon literature as copious, vivid, and profound.

We know that many of these terms are unfamiliar and abstruse, many of them are Greek names, perhaps at first sight forbidding. To meet this problem in Elizabethan times, Richard Puttenham made a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt in his *Arte of English Poesie* to personify the terms themselves, or, as L. G. Salingar says, 'to anglicize them with the aid of homely illustrations'. *Zeugma* Puttenham names 'single supply'. We should not gain very much today by calling Irony 'the Dry mock' or Sarcasm 'the Bitter taunt' or *Micticismus* 'the Fleering frump'. But to know the true meaning of such words as *nemesis*, *plagiarism*, *catharsis*, and to realize more of their significance is of real value in literary elucidation.

'Poetry', Dr. Leavis once said, 'can communicate the actual quality of experience with a subtlety and precision unapproachable by any other means.' But we can only share this experience by an appreciation of the words, for it is the words which stand for all the poet has felt, for all that has passed through his imagination.

Coleridge had this in mind when, writing of poetry, he stated, 'Be it observed, however, that I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object but likewise all the associations which it recalls'.

So the writer, in prose or verse, strong in the use of such associations, presenting the width and the profundities of life, makes demands upon the reader beyond the plain meaning of the words themselves — for a word, full of purpose, surpasses its mere definition.

This book, therefore, grew out of the need for something to meet these demands. It is a dictionary consisting of literary and critical terms used in explaining the unfamiliar forms, the varied techniques and larger aspects of the complex art of writing.

In the preparation of this glossary I am greatly indebted to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, H. C. Wyld's *Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, Ernest Weekley's *Concise Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, Chambers's *Etymological English Dictionary*, H. W. Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, Sir Paul Harvey's *Oxford Companion to English Literature* and *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*.

I owe more personal thanks to Dr. Frederick T. Wood, who read the first draft and made many valuable suggestions, to Mr. Kevin McGarry for his kindly assistance, and to my wife for constant interest and encouragement.

Finally I wish to express my indebtedness to Mr. T. M. Farmiloe for his most valued guidance and practical advice. A. F. SCOTT

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
CURRENT LITERARY TERMS	i
BIBLIOGRAPHY	315
INDEX OF AUTHORS QUOTED	318