AN A–Z OF RHETORICAL TERMS

Katie Wales

INTRODUCTION

Many of the chapters in this book have emphasized the importance of rhetoric for the education and literary craft of Renaissance writers like Shakespeare, and have also shown how creative and powerful rhetorical devices are for specific structural and stylistic effects. The word *rhetoric* today tends to have negative connotations, associated with 'hot air' and deceitful or artificial language, especially if linked to politicians, lawyers and advertisers. It has to be said that even the ancient Greeks, who invented the skills of public speaking to which the term basically referred, worried about rhetoric's possible manipulation to conceal rather than reveal the truth, in the forum and law courts where it originated. But once rhetoric became one of the major courses of study in the European education curriculum, and once its many devices and so-called 'figures of speech' were classified in handbooks, it became a valuable intellectual training for poets and playwrights, helping them to structure and elaborate arguments, to probe into nuances of meaning, to provide a vehicle for the emotions of their characters, and to move and manipulate the emotions of readers. Rhetorical devices continue to be employed in present-day literary and non-literary texts; and indeed, as modern linguists are now strongly affirming, rhetorical figures, far from being 'unnatural' or 'artificial', are really ingrained in our minds, helping us to structure our very thoughts, not just our language.

It cannot be stressed enough how important these figures were, especially for playwrights, in oral delivery to a listening audience. The patterns and plays of language for the ear were reinforced on the stage by an equally elaborate set of body gestures, for the eye. This might appear too 'stagey' or 'melodramatic' for modern tastes, but the two semiotics together, combined with the verse form, were a powerful combination, heightening the theatrical experience by an abundance of signification. Not surprisingly, devices of repetition figure prominently in rhetoric.

One problem for us today is that we no longer study classical rhetoric in schools, although many of the terms have passed into the terminology of literary criticism and stylistics, and many are widely known (e.g. **metaphor**, **simile**, **alliteration**, **rhetorical question**). Since classical rhetoric derives from Latin and Greek models, and these languages are unfamiliar, again, to the majority of present-day students, most of the terms, it has to be said, look very exotic and unpronounceable! (If any reader wants to pronounce them, a rough pronunciation guide is given for many of them.) Of course, it is possible to recognize that some word or phrase is being used in an unusual way in literature, or (very likely) that it is being repeated in an obviously stylized manner; and clearly it is the *effect* of techniques which are 'foregrounded' in this way that is the main concern for literary interpretation. Nonetheless, to call a figure by its traditional name, to call a spade a spade, as it were, is preferable to floundering. However, using a paraphrase with words like 'repetition', 'balance', 'pun', 'parallelism', 'ambiguity', 'image', 'figurative meaning', may help you if you can't remember the correct term, since these refer to features which many of the rhetorical figures have in common with each other.

The A–Z below, therefore, attempts to introduce as plainly as possible some of the main rhetorical devices that were well used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, with illustrations

from his plays, and comments on their stylistic significance. Many of these have been defined and illustrated in the chapters in Part I; but the general aim is to encourage and stimulate your own independent study of Shakespeare's stylistic art. Some of the terms, it has to be said, were used with more than one meaning; or the same device could be called by more than one term, or a Latin or Greek synonym: hopefully the A–Z will not add to the confusion, but clarify it.

In Renaissance handbooks there were many attempts to classify rhetorical figures, to group them into different kinds, on the basis of the sort of shared features referred to above. One common division was into *schemes* and *tropes*. Schemes are easily identifiable, and can be recognized in this A–Z, since they are marked by regularity or repetition of form, whether in syntax or sound. Tropes aren't so frequent, but they usually involve some kind of 'turning' (Greek *trope*) from the usual or 'literal' meaning of a word or phrase: *metaphor* is one of the clearest examples of these. **Hyperbole**, **litotes**, **irony** are tropes which depend, essentially, on some kind of literal untruth. There is another group of figures which have a pragmatic or functional role at sentence level in the presentation or dramatization of an argument, often involving a shift of tone: **apostrophe**, **rhetorical question**, for example: traditionally labelled in some handbooks as 'figures of thought'. But it is possible to see yet other ways of classifying the figures: for example those that involve the variation of an expression or idea, and those that amplify it. The main point is to study the A–Z, to see *how* a word, phrase or sentence is being highlighted or foregrounded in some way, and *why*. Then you can find your own examples from the plays you are studying, and even later literature and present-day discourses around you. Enjoy your search!

Notes

1 Terms in SMALL CAPITALS within an entry have an entry in their own right.

2 All italics in quotations from the plays are added, unless otherwise stated.

3 References to Puttenham are to George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* (1589).

TERMS

adnominatio—(1) also known in rhetoric as *polyptoton* (polyp-*toe*-ton) and *traductio*. This figure was popular in Latin and Greek as a device for repeating words in different case forms (e.g. nominative (subject) and accusative (object)). The Elizabethans used it in word-play for words derived from the same 'root'. As a means of emphasis, it seems very consciously artful to modern readers, as in Richard II's self-pitying 'A *king, woe's* slave, shall *kingly woe* obey' (*R2* 3.2.210).

(2) sometimes refers to the same word used in different senses: what we would now call a 'pun' (*see* AMBIGUITY).

(3) also refers to the same word used in different syntactic constructions or roles: what is called ANTHIMERIA.

alliteration—a very well-known rhetorical term, commonly used in practical criticism today, to refer to the repetition of the initial consonant in two or more words. It can be used for emphasis: so at the beginning of *2 Henry IV* Lord Bardolph underlines his joyful message to the Earl of Northumberland of their success in battle against the King (ill informed though he turns out to be):

> O, such a day
> So *f*ought, so *f*ollow'd, and so *f*airly won
>
> (1.1.20–1)

(Note, too, the repetition of *so* (*see* ANAPHORA) in a three-part structure, a common rhetorical device.) Alliteration in poetry is frequently used for onomatopoeic effects, i.e. to suggest by the association of sounds what is being described. So the witches' incantations in *Macbeth* (4.1) are foregrounded against the rest of the verse, and therefore appear to be

extra-ordinary, alien and ritualistic, by the combination of alliteration, internal rhyme and end rhyme:

> ALL
> *D*ouble, *d*ouble, *t*oil and *t*rouble:
> Fire, *b*urn; and, cauldron, *b*ubble
> 2 WITCH
> *F*illet of a *f*enny snake,
> In the cauldron *b*oil and *b*ake
>
> (10–13)

ambiguity—double meaning. Not a rhetorical term as such, but a useful critical and linguistic term to know, and certainly relevant for many rhetorical effects. Think of it also as an umbrella term, with other terms describing different kinds of ambiguity. For example, we can distinguish the grammatical ambiguity of phrases or sentences: in rhetoric termed *amphibologia*. In *Twelfth Night* this leads to comic misunderstanding. In 1.3 Sir Andrew Aguecheek enters, just as Sir Toby Belch and Olivia's maid Maria have been discussing his designs to be Olivia's wooer; Toby's imperative is misconstrued as a proper name:

> SIR ANDREW Bless you, fair shrew.
> MARIA And you too, sir.
> SIR TOBY Accost, Sir Andrew, accost.
> SIR ANDREW What's that?
> SIR TOBY My niece's chambermaid.
> SIR ANDREW Good Mistress Accost, I desire better acquaintance.
> MARIA My name is Mary, sir.
> SIR ANDREW Good Mistress Mary Accost –
> SIR TOBY You mistake, knight. 'Accost' is front her, board her, woo her, assail her.
>
> (46–56)

Lexical or word ambiguity arises because of what linguists term *polysemy* (words having more than one meaning), or *homonymy* (words having the same form, but different origins), and this gives rise to *punning* or different kinds of word-play (*see* PARONOMASIA; *also* ANTANACLESIS; SYLLEPSIS). There is also discourse ambiguity, where an utterance may have more than one function. So, in *Richard II* Exton interprets Bolingbroke's 'Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?' as a command to kill Richard (5.4); Bolingbroke, however, is able publicly to claim it as merely a wish (5.6.39–40)

amplificatio—amplification; the use of devices and figures of speech such as APOSTROPHE, HYPERBOLE, SIMILE, and synonyms (SYNONYMIA) to expand or 'decorate' an argument or narrative; to suggest 'copiousness' or *copia* (see Chapters 2 and 3); and also to intensify the emotional impact. Thomas Wilson in his *Art of Rhetoric* (1553) felt it could 'win favour or move affections'. In *1 Henry IV* Sir Richard Vernon describes to the jealous Hotspur how Prince Hal and his comrades appear in battle in a series of extended, hyperbolic similes, which make him cry 'No more, no more!':

> All furnish'd, all in arms;
> All plum'd *like* estridges that with the wind
> Bated, *like* eagles having lately bath'd,
> Glittering in golden coats *like* images,
> *As* full of spirit *as* the month of May,
> And gorgeous *as* the sun at midsummer;
> Wanton *as* youthful goats, wild *as* young bulls ...
>
> (4.1.97–103)

anadiplosis—from the Greek 'to double back': the repetition of the last part of one sentence or verse line at the beginning of the next. Puttenham called it the 'redouble', after the Latin term *reduplicatio*, which gives English 'reduplication'. This both linked lines or sentences and reinforced the progression

of ideas, sometimes leading to a climax. So, in Richard III's soliloquy after the ghosts of his victims appear to him in his sleep, the repetition intensifies his agony:

> My conscience hath a thousand several *tongues*,
> And every *tongue* brings in a several *tale*,
> And every *tale* condemns me for a villain
>
> (*R3* 5.3.194–6)

Across speakers, it suggests a characteristic feature of conversational discourse, of one picking up the words of the other. There is an extended example in *Othello* 3.3, as Iago plants the seeds of suspicion about Cassio in Othello's mind. Othello has just said that Cassio regularly interceded on his behalf when he was courting Desdemona:

> IAGO
> Indeed?
> OTHELLO?
> *Indeed*? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?
> Is he not honest?
> IAGO
> *Honest*, my lord?
> OTHELLO
> *Honest*? Ay, honest.
> IAGO
> My lord, for aught I know.
> OTHELLO
> What dost thou think?
> IAGO
> *Think*, my lord?
> OTHELLO
> *Think, my lord*! By heaven, thou echo'st me
> As if there were some monster in thy thought
> Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something ...
>
> (101–11)

anaphora (an-*a*-fe-ra)—from the Greek 'carrying back': the repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences or verses (also known as *epanaphora*). It can effectively underline descriptive and emotional effects. So Othello's deep sorrow for what he believes to be Desdemona's affair with Cassio is intensified by the repetition of *farewell*, in an extended rhetorical 'lament':

> O, now for ever
> *Farewell* the tranquil mind, *farewell* content!
> *Farewell* the plumed troops and the big wars
> That makes ambition virtue! O *farewell*,
> *Farewell* the neighing steed and the shrill trump ...
> *Farewell*: Othello's occupation's gone!
>
> (3.3.350–4, 360)

Anaphora is commonly used in oratory to give structure to an argument, or to 'hammer home' a point. So Cassius, at the opening of *Julius Caesar*, impresses upon Casca the seriousness of the unnatural weather, and other portents:

> But if you would consider the true cause
> *Why* all these fires, *why* all these gliding ghosts,
> *Why* birds and beasts, from quality and kind,
> *Why* old men, fools, and children calculate,
> *Why* all these things change from their ordinance
> Their natures and preformed faculties
> To monstrous quality, *why*, you shall find
> That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
> To make them instruments of fear and warning
> Unto some monstrous state.
>
> (1.3.62–71)

antanaclesis—a kind of pun, where a word is repeated with a shift in meaning: as in Othello's chilling words as he contemplates the murder of Desdemona: 'Put out the *light* [candle], and then put out the *light* [her life]!' (5.2.7)

anthimeria—the transfer, 'conversion' or shift of one part of speech or word class to another, with no change in its form. This is a very common lexical process in modern English, for example nouns being used as verbs (*to elbow, to thumb (a lift)*, etc.), or verbs as nouns, and came into popularity from the Elizabethan period onwards. Shakespeare loved the device, and many of his 'conversions' are from nouns to verbs, reflecting an active or dynamic world view (e.g. *window, monster, climate*). In the best examples there is not only a compression of meaning but also a shift from a literal to a metaphorical meaning, as in Macbeth's 'Come, seeling Night, / *Scarf* up the tender eye of pitiful Day' (3.2.46–7). (See further Chapter 15.)

antimetabole (anti-met-*a*-bol-ee)—the repetition of words in an inverted or reverse order. This figure of speech confusingly is also known by other names: *chiasmus* (key-*as*-mus) (Greek: 'cross-wide'); *antistrophe* (Greek: 'turning about'); and *epanodos*. Antimetabole and chiasmus are the more frequently used terms. The figure is often used for witty effect: as in Falstaff's 'A *pox* of this *gout*! or a *gout* of this *pox*!' (*2H4* 1.2.244); or to make pithy sayings or 'aphorisms'. Polonius, in *Hamlet*, is prone to what he considers to be worthy generalizations and rhetorical elaborations. Rebuked in 2.2. by the impatient Queen eager for news of Hamlet's condition ('More matter with less art'), he still cannot restrain himself:

> Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
> That he is mad 'tis true, *'tis true 'tis pity*,
> And *pity 'tis 'tis true*. A foolish figure –
> But farewell it, for I will use no art.
>
> (96–9)

antithesis—the contrast of ideas through the contrast of lexical items (i.e. content words) in a formal structure of parallelism. This structuring distinguishes it from the figures of OXYMORON and PARADOX. Antithesis is often used for witty or satirical effect. Queen Margaret uses it in *Richard III* to list Queen Elizabeth's reversal of fortune:

> For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
> For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
> For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
> For Queen, a very caitiff, crown'd with care;
> For she that scorn'd at me, now scorn'd of me ...
>
> (4.4.98–102)

aphesis—Used in rhetoric for a kind of word-clipping process, in which the initial syllable of the word is omitted. It can be contrasted with *apocope* (ap-*o*-co-pee), where the last syllable is dropped; and *syncope*, where the middle consonant or syllable is omitted. These are very common licences in poetic language, for the sake of the metrical rhythm, for example *(a)gainst*; *o'er*; *oft(en)*; but they are also common phenomena in colloquial speech (e.g. *'phone*; *temp(ora)ry*; *telly(vision)*). So Emilia's words in *Othello* 3.3. appear quite 'natural', despite the blank verse frame; speaking of the handkerchief:

> I'*ll* have the work *ta'en* out
> And give'*t* Iago
>
> (300–1)

aposiopesis (a-posio-*pe*-sis)—a term for what appears to be a sudden breaking off of an utterance before it is completed, usually in moments of emotion. It seems quite a colloquial and 'natural' feature in speech, but in earlier literature and drama it would be rare, and therefore marked. Hamlet seems too overcome by emotion, finding his mother's hasty second marriage too hard to contemplate, in the following lines from his soliloquy in 1.2:

> Heaven and earth,
> Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
> As if increase of appetite had grown
> By what it fed on; *and yet within a month* –
> Let me not think on't – Frailty, thy name is woman –
>
> (142–6)

apostrophe—an emotive address to an absent person, or to an inanimate object or abstraction, as if personified. From the Greek meaning 'turning away' (Puttenham's 'turn tale'), it originated in the orator's turning aside (in Latin, 'aversion') from his immediate audience to address some other person, whether physically present or not. Apostrophe is typically exclamatory (*exclamatio*) (and marked by the presence of *O*); and it is particularly striking in Shakespeare's soliloquies. The full horror of Hamlet's emotions after the revelations of the ghost of his father are emphasized by the series of apostrophes in his self-address in 1.5. Note the addresses to the cosmos, and to his own body:

> O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
> And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart,
> And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
> But bear me stiffly up.
>
> (92–5)

Shakespeare himself exploits the melodramatic potential for comic effect in the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with Bottom-as-Pyramus'

> *O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!*
> *O night, which ever art when day is not!*
> *O night, O night, alack, alack, alack ...*
>
> (5.1.168–70; original italics)

articulus—simply a list of words. Lists occur commonly in descriptions of qualities, but also in insults, as in the (affectionate) interchange between Hal and Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*:

PRINCE This sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this horse-back-breaker, this huge hill of flesh, –

FALSTAFF 'Sblood, you starveling, you eel-skin, you dried neat's-tongue, you bull's-pizzle, you stock-fish – … you tailor's-yard, you sheath, you bow-case, you vile standing tuck!

(2.4.238–45)

asteismus (ast-e-*is*-mus)—the Greek word for a witty and sophisticated, often ironical, joke: particularly in a riposte, with a word or phrase picked up and turned back on the user; what the Romans called *urbanitas*, and Puttenham a 'merry scoff'. The speeches of Shakespeare's official fools and jesters are full of such witty ripostes, but Falstaff too is fond of them:

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE Well, the truth is, Sir John, you live in great infamy.

FALSTAFF He that buckles himself in my belt cannot live in less.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE Your means are very slender, and your waste is great.

FALSTAFF I would it were otherwise, I would my means were greater and my waist slenderer.

(*2H4* 1.2.136–43)

(Note also the pun and ANTIMETABOLE in Falstaff's final riposte.)

bathos—*see* GRADATIO

catachresis—a kind of figure, according to Puttenham and his contemporaries involving unusual or far-fetched metaphors, like the Elizabethan CONCEIT. From the Greek meaning 'misuse' or 'abuse'. Much of the dynamism of Shakespeare's language, for example, comes from the use of words outside their usual contexts or functions, and with compressed, metaphorical meanings. So Edgar in *King Lear* plans his disguise:

My face I'll grime with filth,
… *elf* all my hairs in knots

(2.2.180–1)

where *elf*, a noun, is used as a verb by the process known as 'conversion' or 'transfer', and means something like 'tie up in knots to look like an elf'. (*See also* ANTHIMERIA.)

circumlocution—literally 'about-speech', a direct translation (in Latin) of the Greek *periphrasis*, a term also used in rhetoric and modern literary criticism; and so it is a phrase which uses more words than would appear to be strictly necessary, replacing a shorter or commoner phrase. Circumlocutions have been a common feature of poetic diction over the centuries, out of the desire for elaboration or elevation. However, it is hard to see why Prospero just doesn't say 'Raise your eyelashes' or even 'eyes' in the following example:

[*to Miranda*] *The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,*
And say what thou seest yond.

(*Tem* 1.2.409–10)

A special kind of 'speaking round' a subject is found in *euphemism* (Greek 'nice-speak') to avoid unpleasant topics. 'He's passed away' we might say for 'he's died'; just as the Earl of Warwick attempts to tell the Lord Chief Justice of Henry IV's death:

his cares are now all ended.
… He's walked the way of nature,
And to our purposes he lives no more.

(*2H4* 5.2.3–5)

climax—*see* GRADATIO

collocatio—a special kind of lexical incongruity in rhetoric, which juxtaposes words with different levels of tone or style. A famous example is Macbeth's

> No, this my hand will rather
> The *multitudinous* seas *incarnadine*,
> Making the green one *red.*
>
> (2.2.60–2)

where, out of emotive emphasis, the polysyllabic words in one line are juxtaposed with the basic adjectives in the next, with 'Making ... red' a paraphrase of *incarnadine.*

conceit—a popular Elizabethan and metaphysical figure of speech which depended on wit or ingenuity of idea for an effect (originally meaning 'thought', as in *conceive*). SIMILE, METAPHOR, HYPERBOLE and OXYMORON could also be involved, since conceits often extended for long passages, and were very popular in sonnets, often conventionalized, but sometimes far-fetched or CATACHRETIC. A famous extended elaborate example, in dialogue rather than monologue, occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*, where in fourteen lines (like a sonnet), beginning with Romeo's 'If I profane with my unworthiest hand' (1.5.93), the two lovers play on words to do with lips, palms, palmers and pilgrims, and by their wit reveal their match.

diacope—*see* EPANALEPSIS

enallage—the technique of using one grammatical category, for example gender, person, case, number, tense, where another is expected. This is very difficult to distinguish from simple carelessness or ignorance on the part of the writer! But Chapter 8 has an interesting example of Isabella's shift of pronouns in *Measure for Measure* 2.2 (see p. 119).

enthymeme—in logical argumentation, an abridged or incomplete syllogism, where a syllogism is a form of reasoning usually involving two linked propositions and a deduction: for example 'I like animals – elephants are animals – therefore I like elephants'. Shakespeare's argumentative characters are fond of enthymemes, which work by inference, a piece of the argument 'missing'. This might sound like everyday reasoning or conversing, but an enthymeme is also effectively exploited as a tactic of persuasion. So Brutus addresses the plebeians after the murder of Caesar: 'Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? (*JC* 3.2.22–4). Here, in the *antithesis*, only one reality is presented: if Caesar had lived he would not have ever granted them their freedom.

Sometimes a whole 'chain' of enthymemes can be uttered, what rhetoricians termed a *sorites*, leading up to a climax (GRADATIO). Notice the lexical repetition (ANADIPLOSIS) in the following example from *As You Like It*, as Rosalind graphically and pithily summarizes to Orlando events that have happened 'off-stage', between the acts:

> For your brother and my sister no sooner met, but they *looked*; no sooner *looked*, but they *loved*; no sooner *loved*, but they *sighed*; no sooner *sighed*, but they asked one another *the reason*; no sooner knew *the reason*, but they sought the remedy. And in these degrees have they made a pair of stairs to marriage ...
>
> (5.2.32–8)

epanalepsis—a rhetorical figure of repetition, from the Greek meaning 'a taking up again'; but critics and commentators differ in their use of it: (1) the repetition of words after intervening words, effective for emphasis or emotion: also known as *diacope*, *epanadiplosis* and *ploce* (*plo*-see). Puttenham calls it the 'echo sound'. In Edmund's soliloquy in *King Lear* 1.2 his 'bastard' origins clearly rankle with him:

Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the *legitimate*. Fine word, '*legitimate*'!
Well, my *legitimate*, if this letter speed
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the *legitimate*.

(15–21)

(2) the repetition of words at the beginning and end of a line, phrase, clause or sentence (see Chapter 2, p. 21). Buckingham's last, rueful, words before his execution have the force of aphorisms:

Come, lead me, officers, to the block of shame;
Wrong hath but *wrong*, and *blame* the due of *blame*.

(*R3* 5.1.28–9)

epistrophe (e-*pis*-tro-fe)—a rhetorical device of repetition, the opposite of ANAPHORA, by which the last words in successive clauses, lines, or sentences are repeated. Also known as *epiphora*. So Othello uses it for intended IRONY: 'A fine *woman*, a fair *woman*, a sweet *woman*!' (4.1.175–6).

For Henry Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), the repeated words would stay longer in the mind of the listener.

epithet (epitheton)—a qualifying or descriptive word or phrase, usually adjectival, used very commonly in poetic diction of all periods as a means of amplification (AMPLIFICATIO). Many of these are semantically redundant: for example Oberon's references to the '*nodding* violet' and '*sweet* musk-roses' (*MND* 2.1.250, 252); or formulaic: for example the '*pious* Aeneas' and '*rosy-fingered* dawn' of classical epic; but the term can also be used for striking and unusual adjectives in the 'grand style', as Sylvia Adamson reveals in Chapter 3 (pp. 40–1). (*See also* TRANSFERRED EPITHET.)

epizeuxis—a figure of repetition, where there are no words intervening; colourfully called 'cuckoo spell' by Puttenham. Giving the appearance of natural emotion, it is used by Shakespeare to suggest great intensity of feeling: as in Lear's '*Howl, howl, howl, howl!* O, you are men of stones!', on the death of his beloved daughter Cordelia (5.3.255); and his frantic 'O thou'lt come no more, / *Never, never, never, never, never*', the repetitions audaciously filling up the measure of the line, and trochaic (/ x) rather than the more usual iambic (x /) (x = unstressed syllable; / = stressed syllable). (See Chapter 4, p. 55.)

euphemism—*see* CIRCUMLOCUTION

exordium—a division of an oration which marks the opening, or introduction; also known as *proemium*. This was designed to catch the attention of the listeners, and to put them in a receptive mood, as in Mark Antony's famous 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears' (*JC* 3.2.74).

gradatio—commonly known as 'climax' ('ladder' in Greek), this figure of speech presents arguments in an ascending order of importance, reserving the best or the most dramatic point till the last. It is therefore the opposite of 'anti-climax' or *bathos*, where there is a deflation from a heightened level or tone.

An artful kind of gradatio involves the linking of words between clauses, the last word of one clause echoed in the next (*see also* ANADIPLOSIS), but leading up to a climax: as in Othello's

No, Iago,
I'll see before I *doubt*; when I *doubt*, *prove*,
And on the *proof*, there is no more but this:
Away at once with love or jealousy!

(3.3.192–5)

hendiadys (hen-*die*-ad-is)—a relatively uncommon rhetorical syntactic feature, where two nouns connected by *and* are used instead of the more usual adjective-plus-noun construction. The Greeks called it 'one thing by two', and Puttenham 'the figure of twinness'. The effect is to give added emphasis or 'weight', as in Jachimo's '*The heaviness and guilt* within my bosom / Takes off my manhood' (i.e. 'the heavy guilt') (*Cym* 5.2.1–2).

hypallage—a rhetorical figure like a kind of 'spoonerism', where words are misplaced from their proper places in an utterance. Puttenham calls it 'the changeling', following the Greek meaning of the term. Shakespeare exploits the device for comic effect, most notably in Bottom's attempts to recall his vision under the spell of the magic flower-juice. The confusion of words aptly suggests his confused mind:

> The *eye* of man hath not *heard*, the *ear* of man hath not *seen*, man's *hand* is not able to *taste*, his *tongue* to *conceive*, nor his *heart* to *report*, what my dream was.
>
> (*MND* 4.1.209–12)

(*See also* TRANSFERRED EPITHET.)

hyperbaton—the reversal, or inversion, in normal word order of the major elements of a sentence, particularly subject, verb and object. From the Greek meaning 'overstep'. This is often used for emphasis or focus, as in Claudius's soliloquy: '*Pray can I not*' ('I can not pray') (*Ham* 3.3.38); although it is an extremely common device in poetic language generally before the twentieth century, to aid rhythm and rhyme. Look out also for the term *anastrophe*, to describe marked word-order variation.

hyperbole (hype-*er*-bol-ee)—popularly known as 'exaggeration' or 'overstatement' (for 'understatement, *see* LITOTES), this is a common figure or trope in speech as well as literature: we say things like 'he made my blood boil'. Hyperbole means 'exceed' in Greek; and Puttenham called it the 'over-reacher' or the 'loud lyer'. The Romans called it *dementiens*, as if it were a form of madness! There is certainly an element of chilling hysteria in Clarence's vivid description of his dream in *Richard III*:

> Methoughts I saw *a thousand* fearful wrecks;
> *Ten thousand* men that fishes gnaw'd upon ...
>
> (1.4.24–5)

Hyperbole often signifies great emotion or passion: as when Hamlet tries to 'outdo' Laertes with his description of his own love for Ophelia:

> Forty thousand brothers
> Could not with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum.
>
> (5.2.269–71)

Hyperbole distorts the truth by saying too much, of course, but in Hamlet's case the strength of his emotions is such that he himself at that moment must surely believe he is telling the truth.

irony—a commonly known figure of speech or trope derived from the Greek for 'dissimulation' (*eironeia*), alternatively known as *antiphrasis* by the Elizabethans. Like HYPERBOLE irony misrepresents the truth: the words actually used appear to differ from, contradict, or mean the exact opposite of the sense actually required in the context. Sometimes it is sarcastic, serving as an oblique form of criticism, as in 'That's very clever of you'. No wonder Puttenham called it 'dry mock'. Some examples are actually 'echoes' of previous utterances. So Gratiano echoes Shylock's frequent words of praise ('O wise young judge', 'O noble judge', etc.), once Portia has delivered her verdict:

O upright judge! –
Mark Jew, – O learned judge!

(*MV* 4.1.310–1)

But irony can be unintentional too, and the critical term *dramatic irony* covers those situations where the readers or audience know more than the characters in the play. So Duncan compliments Macbeth's castle at the beginning of 1.6, not knowing his murder has been plotted:

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

(1–3)

Irony need not only be verbal therefore, but also situational, with a discrepancy between what appears, or is believed, to be the case and the real state of affairs. Phrases like *tragic irony* when applied to Shakespeare's plays account for our realization, for example, that *King Lear* is about a father who rejects the daughter who actually loves him the most.

isocolon—clauses or sentences of equal length (Greek 'equal-member'), and therefore parallel in syntax and rhythm. (*See also* PARISON.) It was a very fashionable feature of a certain style of Elizabethan prose, influenced by Latin rhetoric, but Shakespeare uses it in his plays for very marked effects. So Richard Duke of Gloucester can hardly contain his glee at overcoming the scruples of Lady Anne, recently widowed after the murder of Edward Prince of Wales by Richard himself:

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?

(*R3* 1.2.232–3)

(also showing an extended example of ANAPHORA)

litotes (lie-*toe*-tees)—understatement (from the Greek meaning 'meagre'). This is a rhetorical figure or trope also common in ordinary speech ('it's not bad'; 'oh, it was nothing'), and quite the opposite of HYPERBOLE or overstatement. It typically takes the form of a negative statement or phrase used to express the opposite, and often signifies the speaker's modesty or politeness, or even intensity of feeling. So in *King Lear* Cordelia finds it quite impossible to utter the hyperbolic words of love to Lear that her sisters are capable of, impossible to 'heave / My heart into my mouth'(1.1.91–2); yet she is 'sure my love's / More ponderous than my tongue' (77–8). All she can say is that she loves him 'According to my bond, no more nor less' (93). Lear takes her words too literally, and hence the seeds of the tragedy are sown in 1.1.

metaphor—a very common term in literary criticism today, for a very common figure of speech or trope, in everyday speech as well as literature, and one of the most highly regarded by the rhetoricians of the past. Modern linguists argue that metaphor is fundamental even to our thought processes. Meaning 'carry over' in Greek, a metaphor 'carries over' one field of reference (what modern critics call the *tenor*) to another (the *vehicle*) on the basis of some perceived similarity between the two fields (the *ground*). So when Hamlet says the world 'is an unweeded garden / That grows to seed' (1.2.135–6), the features of gardens are transferred or 'translated' (Latin *translatio* means 'metaphor') to the world; and when Romeo says 'jocund day / *Stands tiptoe* on the misty mountain tops' (*RJ* 3.5.9–10), features of human beings are applied to the early morning (in a particular kind of metaphor involving PERSONIFICATION).

Metaphors are sometimes discussed in relation to SIMILES, as being more compressed: so 'the world is [like] an unweeded garden' could have been Hamlet's phrasing. Metaphors are sometimes therefore more complex for us to understand than

similes, but the most interesting ones, usually literary or poetic, enable us to see the world in a different way. What a poet like Shakespeare also does, however, is to give even common, conventional or 'dead' metaphors a new twist or elaboration. So the image of death as 'sleep', for example, familiar on gravestones, is mused upon by Hamlet, who contemplates the possibility of dreaming:

> To sleep, perchance to dream – ay, there's the rub:
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come ...
> Must give us pause
>
> (3.1.65–6, 68)

metonymy—from the Greek meaning 'name change', a well-known figure of speech or trope by which the name of an entity is replaced by the name of one of its associated attributes or features. It is a common figure in everyday language, reflecting our knowledge of our particular society and culture: for example, phrases like *the press* ('newspapers'), *the Crown* ('monarchy'), *the White House* ('US Presidency') show how an object associated with an occupation has come to stand for the office itself.

Metonymy is easily confused with *synecdoche* (sin-*eck*-duck-ee), which is really a particular kind of metonymy, where the name of something is replaced by the name of an actual part of it: e.g. *set of wheels* ('car'); *strings* ('stringed instruments'). In the Elizabethan theatre, visual metonymy was common: a tree could stand for a whole forest, for example.

Like metaphor, metonymy works by substitution, of an expected word by the unexpected; yet there is no figurative extension of meaning involved. Nonetheless, metonymy in its apparent economy of reference clearly has the evocative power of suggestion and also symbolic power, if you think of the force of the crown standing for the monarchy as an example. This is emphasized by Isabella in *Measure for Measure*:

> Well, believe this:
> No ceremony that to great ones longs,
> Not *the king's crown*, nor *the deputed sword*,
> *The marshall's truncheon*, nor *the judge's robe*,
> Become them with one half so good a grace
> As mercy does.
>
> (2.2.58–63)

oxymoron—the juxtaposition of apparently contradictory expressions for witty or striking effects: a kind of condensed PARADOX. *Oxymoron* means 'sharp-dull' in Greek, illustrating its very meaning; in Shakespeare's time it was more commonly called *contrapositum*.

It is commonly associated in poetic convention with the contradictions of being in love. The lament of the 'love-sick' Romeo in 1.1 is a parody of the sonnets at the time, and would clearly signal to the audience that his love for Rosaline is just a passing whim:

> Why, then, O *brawling love*, O *loving hate*,
> O *anything* of *nothing* first create!
> O *heavy lightness, serious vanity*,
> *Misshapen chaos* of *well-seeming forms!*
> *Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health*,
> *Still-waking sleep* that is not what it is!
>
> (176–81)

(See also Chapter 8.)

paradox—an apparently self-contradictory statement (from the Greek 'against-opinion'), a kind of expanded OXYMORON. There is usually some philosophical point to a paradox, or an evaluation being made of a character or situation, or some attempt to describe conflicting emotions. Prince Hal, fatally wounding Hotspur, contemplates

When that this body did contain a spirit,
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough.

(*1H4* 5.4.88–91)

parenthesis (par-*enth*-e-sis)—a term still used in grammar to describe interspersed qualifications in a sentence or utterance, in modern English writing usually marked by brackets or dashes. It can give the impression of lack of premeditation, so orators exploited it to suggest artlessness, and dramatists to suggest 'natural' speech and thoughts. So, in Hamlet's soliloquy,

Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'event –
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom,
And ever three parts coward – I do not know
Why yet I live to say this thing's to do

(4.4.39–44)

parison—what Puttenham called 'the figure of even', since it involves parallelism of clauses or sentences side by side (*see also* ISOCOLON), and words in one corresponding to words in the other. So the Friar tries to console Juliet's family on her apparent death, with the generalizations

She's not well married that lives married long,
But she's best married that dies married young.

(4.5.77–8)

paronomasia (paro-no-*maiz*-ia)—a general rhetorical term for word-play, especially puns, involving words that sound similar, or have more than one meaning. Although the word *pun* itself did not appear in English until 1662 with the poet and playwright John Dryden, Shakespeare's plays are full of puns. Since we associate puns with joking today, we are not surprised to find many examples in his comedies; but punning or 'quibbling' was in earlier periods a sign of cleverness. So they turn up in the battles of wit between young lovers (as in *Love's Labour's Lost*, for instance). Word-play in Shakespeare's plays is therefore *not* to be dismissed merely as a means of 'comic relief' (an overworked phrase as it is), for it can appear in unexpected places. Prince Hal, believing his drinking comrade Falstaff to be dead, says

Death hath not struck so fat a *deer* today,
Though many *dearer*, in this bloody fray

(*1H4* 5.4.106–7)

playing affectionately on the sameness of sound (*homonymy*) between the words. A cynical character like Hamlet uses word-play as a barbed outlet for his bitterness: his aside 'A little more than kin, and less than kind' (1.2.65) in response to his uncle's attempts at familiarity is a particularly clever example, playing not only on two meanings of *kind* as noun and adjective, and on similarities in sound between *kin* and *kind*, but on a metalinguistic level also playing with the length of the words *kin* and *kind*. For particular kinds of word-play and puns, *see also* ANTANACLESIS, ASTEISMUS and SYLLEPSIS. See also Chapter 5.

periphrasis—*see* CIRCUMLOCUTION

perseverantia—literally our word 'perseverance' from Latin, this aptly signifies what is in essence a refrain, a phrase repeated regularly in a speech or monologue. One of the most famous examples in Shakespeare's plays must be the repetition of

But (yet) Brutus says, he was ambitious
And Brutus (sure he) is an honourable man

repeated three times in Mark Antony's oration after Caesar's murder in *Julius Caesar* (3.2), and echoing again in their coupling two separate propositions from the beginning of the speech. By the end of the oration the truth of these statements has been considerably undermined, the apparent praise (*laudatio*) is actually no compliment, so that IRONY holds sway.

personification—a figure of speech or trope like METAPHOR in which an inanimate object or abstract quality is given human attributes. This is very common even in everyday speech ('Time *flies*'; 'table *leg*'), but it has been a striking feature of poetic language through the centuries. A surreal example is found in Richard Duke of Gloucester's opening soliloquy, but quite appropriate for his own grotesque personality:

> Grim-visag'd *War* hath smoothed his wrinkled front:
> And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds
> To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
> He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
> To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
>
> (*R3* 1.1.9–13)

(See also Chapter 6.)

ploce—*see* EPANALEPSIS

polyptoton—*see* ADNOMINATIO

quaesitio—several questions uttered one after the other. Characteristically they suggest anxiety or some kind of heightened emotional state, as in Shylock's defence of his race and religion in *The Merchant of Venice*:

> Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food ... as a Christian is? – if you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?
>
> (3.1.54–5, 59–62)

Since these particular questions do not expect an answer, and are really equivalent to statements ('A Jew does have eyes', etc.) they can be identified individually as RHETORICAL QUESTIONS.

rhetorical question—a term still commonly used in grammar for a question that does not expect an answer. In rhetoric it is known as *erotema* (Greek) and *interrogatio* (Latin). Such a question really asserts something which is known to the speaker and listener, and cannot be denied: so it is the equivalent of a statement. In classical oratory, as in public speaking still, it is useful as a persuasive device to appeal to reason, or useful emotively to suggest an outburst of 'natural' feeling. Lady Macbeth uses a series of rhetorical questions to taunt her husband for his lack of courage, when he changes his mind about murdering Duncan:

> Was the hope drunk
> Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?
> And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
> At what it did so freely? ...
> Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour
> As thou art in desire?
>
> (1.7.35–41)

When a speaker, also emotively, asks a question and gives his or her own reply, this is known as *rogatio*. Hamlet resorts to rogatio frequently in his soliloquies; for example:

> What would he do,
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech ...

(2.2.560–3)

simile—from Latin *similis* 'like', a well-known term even today to describe a common figure of speech, whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared. *Like* and *as* (... *as*) are the characteristic connectives, and simile is therefore much more explicit than METAPHOR. Yet in descriptive poetry similes and metaphors often occur together; and in the following example from Helena's recollection of her childhood friendship with Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is impossible to tell whether the words italicized are a metaphor or an elliptical simile, since they amplify the first image and simile of a 'double cherry':

So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem

(3.2.208–11)

sorites—*see* ENTHYMEME

stichomythia—from Greek 'line-speech', a formalized dialogue in alternate lines. This was very popular in Elizabethan drama, as a result of Senecan influence. It suggests a rapid repartee, so it can be exploited for a variety of effects, from witty banter to sharp rebuttal. It is used very appropriately in *Love's Labour's Lost*, one of the themes of which is the 'battle between the sexes'; so here Berowne and Rosaline:

BEROWNE Lady, I will commend you to mine own heart.
ROSALINE Pray you, do my commendations; I would be glad to see it.

BEROWNE I would you heard it groan.
ROSALINE Is the fool sick?
BEROWNE Sick at the heart.
ROSALINE Alack, let it blood.
BEROWNE Would that do it good?
ROSALINE My physic says ay ...

(2.1.179–87)

syllepsis—from the Greek meaning 'taking together': (1) a grammatical figure of omission or 'ellipsis' where a verb has to be understood, and quite loosely; for example Brabantio's warning to Othello about Desdemona: 'She has deceived her father, and may [deceive] thee' (1.3.294). (2) a kind of PARONOMASIA or pun, where two meanings have to be understood; as in Falstaff's words to Pistol: 'At a word: *hang* no more about me, I am no gibbet for you' (*MW* 2.2.16–17).

symploce (sim-*plos*-ee)—from the Greek for 'interweaving', a figure of repetition where a set of words at the beginning and also the ending of a sentence are repeated: a combination of ANAPHORA and *epistrophe*! Where there are frequent examples of this in the same speech, it can appear quite forced to modern ears; but in *Richard III* there are many examples to catalogue forcefully the remembered woes of the royal dynasties in lamentations (*lamentatio*). So the old Queen Margaret addresses Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York with examples underscored by parallelism or *parison*:

I had an Edward, *till a Richard kill'd him*;
I had a husband, *till a Richard kill'd him*;
Thou hadst an Edward, *till a Richard kill'd him*;
Thou hadst a Richard, *till a Richard kill'd him.*

(4.3.40–3)

The Duchess rejoinds, in an 'echo':

> *I had* a Richard *too,* and *thou* didst *kill him;*
> *I had* a Rutland *too*: *thou* holp'st to *kill him.*
>
> (44–5)

But she is 'trumped' by Queen Margaret again:

> *Thou hadst* a Clarence *too,* and *Richard kill'd him.*
>
> (46)

synecdoche—*see* METONYMY

synonymia—our modern term is *synonymy*, the expression of the 'same' meaning by different words (where the connotations, however, might be different). Pairs or strings of synonyms were regularly used by Renaissance writers as a means of 'amplification' (AMPLIFICATIO); so Puttenham aptly called synonymy 'the figure of store'.

At the beginning of Hamlet's first soliloquy, however, the piling up of the adjectives signifies to the audience the extent of his depression:

> How *weary, stale, flat,* and *unprofitable*
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
>
> (1.2.133–4)

But with a different kind of character they can suggest garrulousness and tedious redundancy, as in the mouth of Holofernes the schoolmaster in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

> The posterior of the day, most generous sir, is *liable, congruent* and *measurable* for the afternoon. The word is *well culled, choice, sweet* and *apt*, I do assure you sir, I do assure.
>
> (5.1.84–7)

John Hoskyn's *Directions for Speech and Style* (1599) also associates synonymia with a schoolmaster: he advises his pupils to use synonyms with care, *not* like that kind of speaker, 'foaming out synonymies'. (See also Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 13.)

transferred epithet—also referred to as a kind of HYPALLAGE in rhetoric, a figure of speech in which an adjective properly modifying one word is shifted to another in the same sentence: for example when we say 'she passed a *sleepless night*'. In Desdemona's 'Alas, what *ignorant sin* have I committed?' (*Oth* 4.2.71) her confused emotional state is aptly conveyed.