EXPANDED THIRD EDITION

The Thinker's Thesaurus

Sophisticated Alternatives to Common Words

PETER E. MELTZER

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SOPHISTICATED ALTERNATIVES *to* COMMON WORDS

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FOREWORD

Orin Hargraves, former president of the Dictionary Society of North America

English occupies an estate so vast that few of us ever have the opportunity to explore all of it definitively. We are born into a small corner of it. Reading, conversation, and education provide opportunities for us to acquaint ourselves with some of its less frequented byways, majestic ruins, or fervid sweatshops. However, the exigencies of modern life require most of us, at some point, to desist from active exploration of the lexicon, simply in order to accomplish the things we have to do.

But there is still that wanderlust, the desire to reopen an occluded passageway or to declare ourselves *au fait* with a remote but strategic corner of the territory of English. This new, expanded third edition of Peter Meltzer's excellent *Thinker's Thesaurus* is at once a testament to the desire in all of us to bring a broader spectrum of the dominion of English under our command, and a guide that will help us in accomplishing the same. With *The Thinker's Thesaurus* on your shelf, you need never again experience that feeling that you have not found exactly the right word.

Only a rare mind possesses all of the qualities required to compile and write a work of such scope as the one that lies before you: it requires a deep and broad understanding of English literature, a deft and acute analytical perspective, and a penchant for close and unblinking attention to detail in a task that would drive most writers to distraction. As the eighteenth century opened to the nineteenth, we had Peter Mark Roget, whose monumental work is consulted to this day. Now as the twentieth century has given way to the twenty-first, we have Peter E. Meltzer to expand and augment the ongoing expedition into English. Enjoy and benefit from the variegated fruits of his labor. You, and English generally, will be better for it!

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION

Say you are asked to write reviews of novels by two authors. You believe that one author writes beautifully and uses exactly the right words for the right occasions but the other writes in a pompous and pretentious style. You want to express these sentiments elegantly, but without using boring and mundane language.

So you turn to conventional thesauruses. These will invariably take a word (the base word) and then simply list a bunch of synonyms for it. But which word is synonymous with beautiful writing or, conversely, writing in a pretentious style? What one word or phrase is synonymous with the *perfect* word? There is none, of course, and thus regular thesauruses are of no help. The word "word" is obviously not synonymous with *the perfect word*, and the word "pretentious," by itself, is not synonymous with the use of pretentious words specifically. The word "writing" doesn't do the trick either. So check out any regular thesaurus and you will not see any entries for any word or phrase meaning "elegant writing" or "the perfect word" or "the use of pretentious words."[1]

Here's another question: Aside from being non-run-of-the-mill, what do the following words have in common and why are conventional thesauruses unable to accurately include any of them? "Gynecic," "nulliparous," "Junoesque," "anile," "puerperal," "misandrist," "sylph," "virago," "slattern," and "bluestocking"?

Answer: They all relate to women. But they cannot accurately be included in conventional thesauruses for two reasons. First, none of them is synonymous with "woman," standing alone, in the same way that, say, "female" might be. Second, in the case of the first five words, they are all adjectives, and "woman" is obviously a noun. That's problem two.

So how does one deal with these problems? By building a better

mousetrap. By adding a Clarifier feature. By giving actual examples of the synonym being used. By adding a usage analysis where appropriate. So say we wanted to find a synonym for a woman who is unconventionally attractive. That would be impossible with a regular thesaurus but not here. One can look under “woman” or “attractive”:

> **woman** (who is unconventionally attractive) *n.*: **jolie laide** [French, for “pretty-ugly”]. [This term refers to a woman who is attractive in an unconventional or unusual way, or more literally, pretty and ugly at the same time, and can be used as a noun or an adjective. An example as a noun follows. See *pretty* for a different example, using it an adjective.] ❖ [Opera singer Maria Callas,] a **jolie laide** with hard, bony features and a startlingly long nose, . . . contrived through sheer force of will to persuade audiences that she was a great beauty with an even greater voice. (Terry Teachout, “The Voice,” *New York Times*, 8/26/2001.)

> **attractive** (woman, but in an unconventional way) *adj*. **jolie laide** ❖ With her little snub nose and deep-set, dark-fringed hazel eyes, Jodie [Whittaker] has just the kind of **jolie-laide** looks needed to play this most unlikely leading lady opposite the patrician-looking Peter O’Toole. But it works. . . . “I’m lucky that I’m not too beautiful. If you’re stunning, which must be a wonderful thing to be, that can be limiting as an actor.” (Maureen Paton, “Venus Rises,” *Daily Mail* [London], 1/21/2007.)

Say you want to use a synonym for a simple word like “big.” A conventional thesaurus will offer synonyms such as “huge,” “large,” “giant,” “enormous,” etc. But are those really helpful? Was the thesaurus even necessary for that? There are much more interesting synonyms for “big” but most thesauruses won’t contain them.

When I first conceived of this thesaurus almost twenty years ago, the idea came to me fully formed. I realized that there did not exist a thesaurus—whether in print or online—that addressed the above problem, or indeed contained *any* of the following four features:

1. a focus solely on harder words that are not found in other thesauruses despite being legitimate, nonarchaic words;
2. a “Clarifier” feature, which frees the creator of the straitjacket imposed by the single base word structure found in every other thesaurus (in the above examples, the Clarifiers are the

parentheticals immediately following *woman* and *attractive*);

3. actual examples of every entry;
4. where appropriate, an analysis of word derivation, usage, nuance, and how a word can be used figuratively as well as literally (this is the bracketed material in the first example above).

Each of these four distinguishing features continues to be unique to this book today.

Hard words are often excellent words because most of them have no one-word equivalent. Therefore, they tend to be a powerful and eye-catching yet also an economical means of expression. However, hard words can become obsolete if they fall out of use, and the reason they can fall out of use is because there exist no reference tools to educate would-be users by "guiding them" to these words. Of course, these words are contained in dictionaries and hard-word compendiums, but if users don't know what the words mean in the first place, they cannot find the words to learn about them.

I firmly believe that the predominant reason most writers and speakers don't use a harder word—especially in situations where the word is perfect for the occasion—is not because they are concerned about whether the audience knows the word but simply because they don't know the word themselves and that they would use it in a second if they did. Here is a small example: In July 2014, a tree planted in Los Angeles to honor the memory of Beatles guitarist George Harrison has been killed by actual beetles. The story gained a lot of national press, with almost all of the writers commenting predictably simply on the "irony" of the beetles/Beatles aspect of the story.

What if, however, the writers of these stories were aware, in advance of writing their pieces, that there was a word, "heterographic," which specifically means use of a nonstandard spelling of a word (such as "Beatles" being a nonstandard spelling of "beetles")? One writer, Howard Gensler of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, did know the word and elegantly and concisely wrote as follows: "In a bit of heterographic irony, a tree planted in L.A. to honor the late George Harrison has been killed by an infestation of beetles" I suspect that the vast majority of writers would have loved to have used that word in this situation, as Gensler did, and that the only reason they didn't was that they didn't know it (as opposed to undue concern about the limited vocabulary of their audience). Moreover, I

think that the same may be said for virtually every passage in this book, namely that if another writer was writing about the same topic and knew of the word in question, he would have used it as well.

This book—now in an expanded third edition—is my effort to remedy that problem, to help us all broaden our vocabularies and preserve the English language in the process. Its focus is solely on legitimate, dictionary-recognized, words that are in current usage but which nevertheless are less familiar or unfamiliar to even the more literate readers and writers among us. My hope is that by providing a device to make these excellent words readily accessible, more people will learn them and use them and thus prevent them from ever becoming obsolete.

There are of course words that fall into disuse and are legitimately considered archaic. Thousands of such words in fact. However, this thesaurus excludes all such words, as proven in part by the fact that every one of them is accompanied by a very recent example of usage. Therefore, no matter how unfamiliar they may seem, they are only unfamiliar to *you*, the reader. As William Buckley aptly stated, "We tend to believe that a word is unfamiliar because it is unfamiliar to us."

When first assembling the thesaurus, I had the notion that I should be virtually invisible. That is, I would present the base word, the Clarifier (if there was one), and the example. Nothing more. What was missing from many of the entries was any analysis of usage or derivation of the word or phrase in question. This was a significant omission since so many of these wonderful words in fact have interesting histories and often require an explanation of their nuances. To provide this analysis, I had to step out from behind the curtain and explain to the reader about many of the entries, since they are not necessarily self-explanatory and because the absence of the analysis could be a recipe for trouble if the user does not understand either the history of the word or the nuances in usage.

Of course, regular thesauruses do not contain this derivation/usage analysis either. Indeed, there is no sense of human involvement in these thesauruses, or indeed any "writing" at all. This third edition contains far more entries that include further information about the words than in the previous two editions, not only with respect to the thousands of new entries but also with respect to many of the existing ones.

While the reason for creating the thesaurus has not changed, what has changed—significantly—since I first started creating this

thesaurus is my ability to create the actual entries. As with most skills, the more one practices, the more adept one become at the craft. By analogy, in discussing the creation of the immense *Oxford English Dictionary*, Simon Winchester discusses how Dr. James Murray and his team improved on their craft with each successive letter, a fact about which the editors of the third edition were aware when they starting working on the updated dictionary more than a hundred years later:

> A detailed textual analysis throws up in these very early parts of the Dictionary certain slight idiosyncrasies of style, a certain lack of consistency, a vague impression of (dare one say it?) *raggedness* that, while invisible to all but the most critical readers, suggest a degree of editorial hesitancy, an unease, a lack of complete confidence, a quite understandable sense of the editor perhaps not yet being fully into his stride. With the publication of each successive part . . . Murray's confidence and that of his colleague editors became, as one might anticipate, ever greater. . . . The early letters of the alphabet might fairly be said to be the dictionary equivalent of a "Friday car"—fashioned not quite as perfectly as were some of the later letters, in much the same way that a car made moments before everyone leaves for the weekend might not be quite as fine as that produced when the assembly line was working at its best.
>
> All of which serves to explain why the editors of the third edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, working to Murray's template, decided at the end of the twentieth century to begin their work with the letter M, not A. That way two things would happen: their own unadmitted inconsistencies at the start of their labours would be balanced by the perfection of Murray's middle-alphabet work; and by the time they reached a point of what they considered "stability"—most probably the end of the letter R—and then they turned to Murray's ever so slightly ragged A, their own system would be so firmly in place as to negate any shortcomings from the nineteenth century. (pp. 40–141)

While I'm no James Murray by any stretch, I certainly can relate to this because I feel as if I have experienced a similar metamorphosis with each subsequent edition of this book in terms of the crafting of each entry. The six primary questions/issues I had to be concerned

about with respect to each entry are as follows:

1. *Is the proposed new word hard enough so that it will not be found in conventional thesauruses (often because the absence of a Clarifier in other thesauruses is so limiting) yet legitimate enough so that it is a dictionary-recognized word that I can prove is in current usage*? In other words, not too common, yet not so rare or archaic or obsolete that it cannot be found in current use. If I had been more lenient in expanding the boundaries of these limitations in either direction, the thesaurus could easily have been twice as long.
2. *Whether a Clarifier is necessary and, if so, how to write it*. The vast majority of the entries in this book have a Clarifier, necessary to show nuance and for the other purposes discussed in section III of the prior introduction.
3. *Whether to add additional analysis regarding the word*. This refers to the bracketed material that follows many of the entries (especially in the third edition) which discuss derivation and origin, usage, nuance, and the literal/figurative distinction.
4. *Does the example fairly and accurately show the word in context*? As discussed in sections III and IV of the prior introduction, there are numerous limitations I established in terms of picking the best possible example. There were numerous instances where no entry was included because I could not find a really good example of the word.[2]
5. *Does the hard word logically relate back to a single base word*? This is discussed in section VI of the prior introduction. If the readers are unlikely to consider the simple base word itself, then there is little purpose to including the entry at all, because the readers will have no way of discovering the hard word without the gateway of the base word.
6. *How best to edit the example*. Every example in the book is of course taken from a longer passage. Naturally, the greater the chunk of the passage that is quoted, the easier it is to get the full sense of the hard word. However, one rule I established with the first edition, and have stuck with in the next two editions, is to try to keep all passages to sixty-five words or less (about four lines of text). Therefore, the trick becomes how to edit the article to cull the sixty-five words from the

passage that best demonstrate the proper use of the word in question, while not changing what the author was trying to say.

Even though these are the same questions I had to wrestle with in the first edition, I feel as if I have improved substantially in dealing with them in each new edition. In that respect, I feel a bond with the process that Dr. Murray went through as he created each new letter of his magnificent dictionary. In addition, just as each subsequent edition of the *OED* contained new words, so too does this third edition contain thousands of brand-new entries.

I have tried to make this book as comprehensive as possible in terms of inclusion of hard words. Nevertheless, with certain easing of restrictions, it could easily have been much longer. For example, there are thousands of legitimate, dictionary-recognized words for which I could find no good examples in my research. There are thousands of others that did not readily lend themselves to a logical base word that the reader might be likely to search for. Other words are known only to people in certain professions (doctors, scientists, etc.) and would be unlikely to be useful to the general public.

In short, even all these years after the first edition, every other print or online thesaurus (1) still focuses on relatively common synonyms, (2) does not contain the clarifer feature, and (3) does not contain any word histories or explanations as to proper usage, and (4) does not contain actual examples of the words. Thus, for anyone who writes for a living or simply enjoys writing and who wants to use as much of the English language as possible, I hope that this thesaurus will prove to be an invaluable reference tool.

IN FURTHER DEFENSE OF THE HARD WORD[3]

The impulse to avoid the words contained in this book—or to criticize those who do—remains strong. Strunk & White, the authors of the classic book *The Elements of Style,* warn us to “avoid fancy words.” As a bumper sticker succinctly puts it: ESCHEW OBFUSCATION! However, the appropriate use of an unfamiliar word is probably not obfuscation but rather economy of words through excellent word choices: over 90 percent of the synonyms in this thesaurus do not have an exact one-

word equivalent (hence the need for the Clarifier). Therefore, in most instances, it is more concise (and often elegant) to use one of these great words in lieu of the multiple simpler words that would otherwise be required.

Who among us decides what is too "fancy"? When people ask me about the issue of the propriety of the words in this book for use in speech or writing—and it happens frequently—the colloquy that follows almost always follows the same script. I typically will seize on one of the words they use (virtually any word) as a starting point. Say, for example, they use the word "irreverent." The dialogue will go something like this.

Me: You used the word "irreverent." Should we get rid of that word on the basis that some people don't know what it means?
Answer: That's absurd. Any reasonable person should know what that words means.
Me: Who are you setting as the "reasonable person"?
Answer (after awkward pause): Me.
Me: And what about the words in my thesaurus that you are not familiar with?
Answer: No one knows those words.
Me: So if I understand you, any word that you personally understand should be kept as part of our lexicon because every reasonable person (using you as the standard) should be familiar with this word. On the other hand, if you are not familiar with the word, then it must be arcane or somehow illegitimate and we should get rid of it?
Sheepish answer (after another awkward pause): I guess so.
Me: What about the fact that virtually every one of the words in this book was used by a professional newspaper, magazine, or book writer within the context and flow of a given passage? Are you saying that they must be bad writers because they have used words you don't know?

When a writer uses a hard word, someone will often complain that "only one person in a hundred" would know what the word means. However, we know that the original writer knew what it meant. What the complainer really means is "I don't know what that word means." But let's assume for argument's sake that the complainer is correct and that exactly 1 percent of the readership knows the meaning of the word

in question. Obviously that percentage is too low to suit the complainer. But what percentage is "satisfactory"? Is it 10 percent? 25 percent? 50 percent? 100 percent? If the complainer was to pick any percentage less than 100 percent, what about the poor souls who still don't know the meaning of the word? Then we go back to the original trope, which is that all words known to a "reasonable person" are acceptable, and those not reasonably known are not acceptable. And of course the complainer subconsciously set himself or herself up as that proverbial reasonable person.

Interestingly, James J. Kilpatrick, who made a career of writing about—and usually complaining about—hard words, *did* think about his magic percentage and actually came up with one: "My hope is that 90% of my readers will understand 90% of the unfamiliar words I throw at them." Apparently he is not too concerned about either the other 10 percent of his readers or the 10 percent of the words he uses that none of his readers will presumably understand. Given his mantra, one must wonder, why not? Why isn't it his hope that 100 percent of his readers understand 100 percent of his words? My hope is that 100 percent of Kilpatrick's readers will take the time to look up—*and thus learn*—any word they come across that they don't know.

It is not too difficult to hoist Kilpatrick on his own petard. Consider, for example, an article he wrote called "Why Say 'Queso' When It's 'Cheese' In the Box for Dinner?" in which he complained about a writer's use of the word "queso" instead of "cheese." At the end of his rant, he inadvertently destroys his own argument:

> Columnist Joseph Sobran, writing in February about the Supreme Court, said that most recent justices "have been avatars of the 'living document' philosophy." In an article two weeks ago on new drugs for impotence, *Newsweek* reported on two men who are "avatars of the same future." In the sense employed here, an avatar is an embodiment, a word that everyone can guess at. Maureen Dowd, who writes beautiful stuff as a columnist for the *New York Times*, stopped some of her readers dead in their tracks last March. She was writing about the two faces of Vice President Al Gore—one of them earnest and compassionate, the other pragmatic and political. Press accounts, she said, provide a "pentimento" of his contrasting nature. I happened to know "pentimento" (my wife was an artist), but how many readers, even of the *Times*, know that pentimento is "the re-emergence in

> a painting of an image that has been painted over"? Ms. Dowd employed the term perfectly, so I'm not fussing. No other word would have sufficed.[4]

Can he seriously be suggesting with a straight face that he's "not fussing"? Of course he's fussing! Every article he ever wrote about this topic (and there are many) is to "fuss" about the meaning of hard words. What is telling about this one however is how he inadvertently reveals the flaw in his argument, and thus has succeeded in effectively destroying the raison d'être of all of the dozens of articles he wrote over the years on this. On one hand he acknowledges that "pentimento" is not widely known. Based on all the other pieces he wrote over the years on this topic, that should be the end of the analysis, because his theme may accurately be summarized as follows: "not widely known = don't use it!" Yet, with respect to this word, (1) it is obviously not widely known, (2) it could have been removed and substituted with a lot more words (for example, Ms. Dowd could have referred to "the reemergence of a painting that has been painted over"), and yet (3) Kilpatrick admits not only that it is the perfect word for the occasion but indeed that "no other word would have sufficed." Why can't this same argument be applied to every hard word? I could not have rebutted his original argument any better than he has rebutted it himself.

Examples of hard-word critics falling into the same "trap" as Kilpatrick abound. (Indeed, I suggest that it is impossible to criticize hard words *without* falling into this trap.) In his review of *Blue Highways* by William Least Heat Moon, Robert Eisner of the *Boston Globe* writes that Heat Moon's "penchant for inkhorn terms—[such as] 'nubilous'—is often merely arch and distracting." How ironic that he would use a word like "inkhorn" without a second thought—little-known and yet the perfect word for the occasion (perhaps the same could be said of "arch")—to criticize words that he is not familiar with, such as "nubilous." As with all people who criticize hard words, he is subconsciously setting himself up as the arbiter for which words are acceptable and which are not.[5]

When people complain about hard words, they tend do so in one of two ways. One is to not acknowledge any exception at all to the "no hard words" rule, thereby implicitly criticizing the writers themselves who use hard words, as if to place the complainers above the writers, despite the fact that almost every passage in this book was written by

people who write for a living. (Even Kilpatrick—a harsh critic of hard words if ever there was one—is not this presumptuous.) The other is to acknowledge that certain "exceptions" may exist to the "no hard word" rule if they are used in the "right way." The problem however is that all of the supposed "exceptions" collapse under analysis. One of the supposed exceptions is that the word is acceptable if known by the would-be critic: people rarely tend to complain about words—no matter how difficult—that they personally know. Kilpatrick, in his praise for "pentimento," seems to like it in part because he knows the word. Another flawed exception is that hard words are acceptable only if used in such a way that the reader can figure it out because of the "context." Kilpatrick relies on this one as well. However, there is no reason such a limitation should exist.

Another argument frequently heard is that writers should write in a way that is suitable for their readers. As Kilpatrick puts it, "writers must envision their audience." However, while this may have merit if the audience is children, what if the audience is simply adults, generically? At that point, the argument falls apart unless the assumption is that adults are divided into the erudite class and the moron class, which is a condescending and arrogant assumption.

Speaking of the appropriate audience, consider the book *Double Down*, written by Mark Halperin and John Heilemann in 2013. It was about the 2012 election and was the sequel to their megabestseller, *Game Change*, about the 2008 election. It was not written for academicians, pointy-heads, or any other kind of specialized audience. It was written for mass consumption (and achieved it—*Double Down* was a bestseller as well). *Double Down* contains numerous words and phrases that would never be considered widely known. Here is just a small sample: remit, plaint, chalk and camembert, gobsmacked, root and branch, neddy, conjoin, rabbit on, Sinophile, pyretic, coriaceous, éminence grise, orthogonal, jot and tittle, mau-mau, murder board, macher, ourobourosian, grandee, throw a spanner in the works, minima, suasive, and leitmotif. So what is the argument to be made by the hard-word critics here? That the book was written for a tiny, specialized, especially scholarly audience? That Halperin and Heilemann are poor writers and should use simpler words and phrases in all of the above instances? The absurdity of such arguments is evident even before the proverbial ink is dry.

There may be instances where writers use hard words for the sole purpose of showing off their vocabulary and for no other purpose.[6]

However, I would submit that may be the case for a minuscule percentage of those thousands of people who wrote the examples in this book. Rather, I submit that they were all attempting to—and succeeding at—using the perfect word for the occasion. Le mot juste, as it were. To choose the words in this book is not only to choose an elegant word but one which is concise as well. When these words fit, to avoid using them is necessarily to be more verbose (and more boring) in the process.

Finally, let's circle back to the beginning. We are looking for words or phrases to describe (1) the use of elegant writing, (2) the perfect word, and (3) the use of pretentious writing as they would appear in a thesaurus like this one. Here they are:

> **writing** (of . . . that is elegant or refined, as if engraved in a precious stone) *adj.*: **lapidary** (often as in "lapidary prose"). ❖ Cultivating his ever more refined tastes and deepening his profound self-education, [John] Updike assessed, in his **lapidary** prose and with workhorse thoroughness and grace (no one could summarize more elegantly or quote more aptly), pretty much every subject in the humanities. (Benjamin Schwarz, "The Greatest Gossip," *Atlantic*, 12/1/2011.)

> **word** (just the right . . . or phrase) *n.* **mot juste** [French]. ❖ That words matter has few dissenters, especially among those who try to make sense with them. The right word is the writer's Holy Grail. Often elusive, the **mot juste** is the lullaby that sends one into rapturous sleep, while its evil twin—the ill-chosen word—can have the opposite effect. (Kathleen Parker, "Putting Words to Rest," *Oakland Tribune*, 7/8/2006.)

> **writing** (pretentious . . . or speech characterized by the affected use of hard words) *adj.* **lexiphanic**. ❖ If she says you're boring her to death with all this pretentious and bombastic talk about obscure . . . words, you can say, "Sorry, darling, but it seems I was born **lexiphanic**." (Jonathan Yardley, "Book Word: Words to Live By," *Washington Post*, 4/20/1994.)

Enjoy the third edition!

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1. For the entries that solve this problem, keep reading.

2. Because all of the synonyms in this thesaurus are hard words, there were many instances where the writer would use the word and then immediately "pause" to explain the meaning of the word. I largely stayed away from all of these usages because I felt that if the author had to stop and explain the meaning of the word, then it was not being used within the natural flow of the passage. Without this self-imposed limitation, the thesaurus would have been much longer.
3. The introduction to the second edition contains an essay entitled "In Defense of the Hard Word" (p. xlv in this edition).
4. In fact, Ms. Dowd is indeed a beautiful writer, just as Mr. Kilpatrick acknowledges, and yet she uses really hard words all the time, usually at least one in every column she writes.
5. "A Northwest Passage by Those Other Blue Highways" (11/21/1999).
6. If there is any instance where there may be a shred of legitimacy to the arguments of the hard-word critics, it is with respect to those words that may have been a simpler synonym meaning the exact same thing. In other words, no nuance, no multiple concepts, no usage tricks, no nothing. The example I used in the prior introduction was "ecdysiast," which simply means "stripper"; nothing more, nothing less. My response to this argument is twofold: First, these types of words comprise only a small minority of the entries in this book. Second, the logical extension of this argument is that we should abandon all words that are completely synonymous with one another. Take the word "huge" for example. Easy words such as "enormous" and "gigantic," and hard words such as "leviathan," "brobdingnagian," "elephantine," and "pythonic" are all synonymous with "huge." Should we therefore abandon all those words? That is truly reductio ad absurdum. Even with respect to words that are exactly synonymous, what's the matter with a little variety in our language?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

word (just the right . . . or phrase) *n.*: **mot juste** [French]. ❖ That words matter has few dissenters, especially among those who try to make sense with them. The right word is the writer's Holy Grail. Often elusive, the **mot juste** is the lullaby that sends one into rapturous sleep, while its evil twin—the ill-chosen word—can have the opposite effect. (Kathleen Parker, "Putting Words to Rest," *Oakland Tribune*, 7/8/2006.)

ABOUT THIS THESAURUS

I The Limitations Inherent in Existing Thesauruses and How This Thesaurus Came into Being

We seek in vain the words we need, and strive ineffectually to devise forms of expression which shall faithfully portray our thoughts and sentiments. The appropriate terms, notwithstanding our utmost efforts, cannot be conjured up at will. Like "spirits from the vasty deep," they come not when we call; and we are driven to the employment of a set of words and phrases either too general or too limited, too strong or too feeble, which suit not the occasion, which hit not the mark we aim at.

DR. PETER MARK ROGET—introduction to his original 1852 thesaurus

This book had its genesis in a 1994 discussion with a group of friends

and colleagues, all of whom were involved directly or indirectly in the writing profession. The issue of thesauruses arose. To a person, our reactions were virtually identical: While in theory a thesaurus is a marvelous reference aid, the reality tends to be quite different. That "eureka" moment we all hope for when consulting a thesaurus ("That's just the word I need!") occurs far too rarely. Conventional thesauruses present "le mot juste" far less frequently than they should (and never present the term "le mot juste" itself). Moreover, as a vocabulary enhancement tool, a regular thesaurus is almost useless, since the synonyms tend to be just as common as the base words.

Thus, in fulfilling Dr. Roget's original goals, other thesauruses today exist primarily only to remind us of words we already know but which we have temporarily forgotten, those "tip-of-the- tongue" words that "cannot be conjured up at will." I therefore had an ambitious (some might say foolhardy) goal: to create a new kind of thesaurus that is intended to be a genuine improvement over existing versions for the benefit of casual and serious writers alike who want to be able to use just the right word for a given occasion. One may ask: "Isn't that precisely what conventional thesauruses are for?" The answer is yes, but only in theory. The reality is that existing thesauruses suffer from two primary flaws.

The first problem is that one usually finds that no matter how many synonyms an ordinary thesaurus contains, it rarely seems to offer interesting choices. Typically the synonyms offered have already been considered and rejected before the user even consulted the thesaurus. This is because those synonyms, while numerous, are mostly uninteresting. The mere fact that people own thesauruses means not only that they care enough about words to want to be able to find precisely the right one for the right occasion, but also that their basic vocabulary is probably such that any synonyms that are of equal or lesser complexity than the base word given are generally not going to be of much use, because they will have thought of those synonyms anyway. To address this problem, a thesaurus was needed that would contain interesting, rather than mundane, synonyms.

The second problem is that all thesauruses (other than this one) start with one word—the base word—and then list a number of synonyms for that one word. In addition, they inevitably compare like word forms—adjective to adjective, noun to noun, and so forth. What if, however, the would-be synonym does not easily lend itself to a single base word? This can occur in numerous different ways. For example,

some words involve two distinct concepts. “Nephew” requires reference both to “son” and to “sister” or “brother”; “claustrophobia” requires reference to both “fear” and “confined spaces.” In other words, there is no one-word synonym for “nephew” or “claustrophobia.” Similarly, the most common definition of “elopement” is flight with a lover with the intention of getting married. However, it is obviously not a synonym for “flight” or “marriage” standing alone. Nevertheless, *Roget’s International Thesaurus* (6th ed., HarperCollins, 2001), lists “flight” and “wedding” as synonyms for “elopement.” “Embezzlement” is stealing something that has been entrusted to one’s care.

Another example of the “one base word” limitation is where the most logical base word–synonym comparison involves different word forms. Consider the adjective “maternal,” in the sense of “maternal grandfather.” If this were the synonym, what would be the most logical connecting base word? The answer is obviously “mother,” but that word is a noun. Because traditional thesauruses will only list other nouns as synonyms for “mother,” there is no way they can lead the user to the synonym “maternal,” as simple as that word may be.

The most serious problem, however, with the single base word system is its inability to deal with nuance. Take, for example, the word “smile.” Most thesauruses will include “grin,” “smirk,” “snicker,” and “grimace” as potential synonyms for this word. Each of these words means something totally different from the others, yet they are invariably all listed as synonyms for “smile.” “Embezzlement” is a type of theft. But one does not break into a stranger’s house and “embezzle” her belongings. Nevertheless, *Roget’s International* lists “embezzle” as a synonym for “steal” and “misuse.”

How can the writers of these thesauruses get away with these types of comparisons? Easy, because (precisely in accordance with Dr. Roget’s original vision) they start with the premise that the user already knows the synonyms. For example, the foreword to *Webster’s New World Thesaurus* states that “the editors asked themselves which bodies of synonymic expressions are sufficiently common so that they belong in a general reference work.” Similarly, in recommending one common thesaurus, Will Weng, a former *New York Times* crossword puzzle editor, stated: “Every so often one finds oneself trying to think of a certain exact word, buried frustratingly in the back of the mind.”[7] In other words, the user is familiar with the synonym but has simply forgotten it temporarily, and thus uses the thesaurus to jog his or her

memory.

After consulting numerous thesauruses, I realized that no thesaurus like this one exists. On one side are all the traditional thesauruses that tend to avoid inclusion of hard words and which are limited to a single base word. On the other side are the numerous word books and Web sites that delight in presenting unusual or complex words, but which do not give the user any logical system or means by which to find these gems, since they are inevitably alphabetized by the hard synonym rather than by base word.[8] Thus they are useless as reference tools since the reader doesn't know what the synonyms mean in the first place. Presumably one reads them for amusement only, not as thesauruses or reference guides, since that would not be possible.

It was therefore my intent to create a thesaurus that would bridge the large gap between these two kinds of books and give the user a logical and organized means by which to find (and then use) synonyms that are less mundane rather than more; that is, synonyms that users would be unlikely to consider on their own, but which nevertheless are legitimate words that are not archaic, obsolete, rare, dialectical, regional, outdated, or relegated to and findable in only the most obscure reference sources. In other words, this thesaurus is not designed primarily to help users recall words that they already know, but which are temporarily "buried frustratingly in the back of the mind." That is the purpose of traditional thesauruses. Rather, it is designed to present words that users may never have heard of in the first place, but which, one hopes, will meet their exact needs.

To fill the void between conventional thesauruses and rare-book words, this thesaurus offers three features, each of which makes it unique, and each of which is demonstrated in the example above.

1. Nearly all of the synonyms, while completely legitimate, are harder or more sophisticated words than one would find in a regular thesaurus.
2. Because the synonyms are more interesting and generally more unusual than those found in conventional thesauruses, the entries have examples from current books or periodicals. There are numerous reasons for providing these examples:
   a. They demonstrate how the words are properly used.
   b. They show that these are real words currently used by real writers in the real world, not obsolete words that are never used anymore. Besides showing proper usage, the

examples serve as an anticipatory rebuttal to those who tend to scoff at harder words and ask rhetorically: “Who ever uses these words anyway? Aren’t they obsolete?” (These questions are addressed in more detail below—see “In Defense of the Hard Word.”) Moreover, from reading the examples, one can tell that in each instance, the word in question is being used within the natural flow of the passage; that is, the author is not straining to use the word or artificially forcing it on the reader.

c. They bring the particular synonym to life and allow the user to focus on and consider its use more strongly than if the word was one among dozens buried in a conventional thesaurus (even putting aside the fact that most of the synonyms herein won’t be found in other thesauruses anyway).

In sum, it is hoped that giving actual examples of the synonyms makes for a more interesting presentation and will help the reader remember the words next time.

3. Finally, I use what I call a Clarifier in about 75 percent of the entries. This allows for the use of thousands of words as synonyms that either cannot be found at all in other thesauruses or are used imprecisely. The technique is designed to address a problem with ordinary thesauruses: They are limited to single-word base words. How the Clarifier works is described in section III below.

Because of selectivity in the use of synonyms, the average base word in this thesaurus is, by design, not followed by the ten or twenty (boring) synonyms that accompany base words in most thesauruses. Instead, there is typically only one synonym for each base word. Let’s use a few examples to show how this thesaurus works. There are two kinds of entries, the single base word entry and the Clarifier entry.

II The Single Base Word Entry

The first type of entry is the use of a single base word to define the synonym. There is no accompanying Clarifier. These entries have the same format as conventional thesaurus entries, but the synonyms are more interesting than those found in other thesauruses. Take the word

"lethargy." Conventional thesauruses suggest synonyms such as "apathy," "idleness," "inactivity," "passivity," and "listlessness." It is likely that if readers were looking for a synonym for "lethargy," they would have already considered those synonyms on their own. Thus, this thesaurus offers the more interesting alternative "hebetude," together with an example.

> **lethargy** *n.*: **hebetude**. ❖ [Bend, Oregon is] a city with a bike rack on every car, a canoe in every garage and a restless heart in every chest. While too many Americans slouch toward a terminal funk of **hebetude** and sloth, Bendians race ahead with toned muscles, wide eyes and brains perpetually wired on adrenaline. (*Washington Times*, "Wild Rides in the Heart of Central Oregon—Bent Out of Shape in Bend," 8/11/2001.)

Another word for "cheerful"? Traditional thesauruses offer "gay," "merry," "joyful," and "happy." But how about "eupeptic" as a more interesting alternative?

> **cheerful** *adj.*: **eupeptic**. ❖ [Artist Keith] Haring has little to express beyond a vague pleasantness, a whiff of happiness. Any attempt at true feeling is immediately deflected and thwarted by a blithely **eupeptic** tone that was intrinsic to his art: his AIDS image seems as innocuous as his radiant babies and his barking dogs. (James Gardner, "Radiant Baby," *National Review*, 10/27/1997, p. 58.)

Other typical examples follow. Every one has an example—to show that these are not archaic words but rather words in current usage.

In a traditional thesaurus:

> **basic** *adj.*: **elementary, introductory**

In *The Thinker's Thesaurus*:

> **basic** *adj.*: **abecedarian**. ❖ [Muhammad Ali] expressed himself in energetic, if **abecedarian**, rhymes. Listen to this excerpt from "Song of Myself": "Yes, the crowd did not dream—When they laid down their money—That they would see—A total eclipse of the Sonny. I am the greatest!" (Keith Mano, "Still the Greatest," *National Review*, 11/9/1998, p. 59.)

In a traditional thesaurus:

> **tattle** (on) *v.i.*: **inform, squeal**

In *The Thinker's Thesaurus*:

tattle (on) *v.i.*: **peach** ❖ A few days ago a rumor spread like fire through a straw rick that "Deep Throat," the world's most famous news source, was [Alexander Haig]. What made this story far-fetched was not that Haig had been a big shot in the Nixon White House in Watergate days, so wouldn't have **peached** on his boss. . . . [Rather, it was implausible] on literacy grounds [since] he is utterly incapable of making anything perfectly clear once he starts to talk. (Russell Baker, Tiresome News Dept., *New York Times*, 10/7/1989.)

In a traditional thesaurus:

harmful *adj.*: **damaging, detrimental**

In *The Thinker's Thesaurus*:

harmful *adj.*: **nocent**. ❖ [W]ith respect to the disastrous imbalance in trade between the U.S. and the rest of the world, I would urge the administration and Congress to consider alternatives to import limitations. Besides the **nocent** effects on world trade that such limitations would cause, there is the very real threat of imposing exports of capital back to Europe[,] thus completely upsetting the American capital markets. (John Murphy, "Fighting the Trade Imbalance," *Chicago Tribune*, 10/31/1985.)

In a traditional thesaurus:

laughable *adj.*: **funny, amusing**

In *The Thinker's Thesaurus*:

laughable *adj.*: **risible**. [As with the word "laughable" itself, this word is sometimes used in the straightforward sense, but it is more frequently used pejoratively, as in "his argument was so ridiculous, it was laughable."] ❖ By endorsing Howard Dean before a single vote has been cast [in the primaries], Al Gore has done Democrats hoping for a victory next November a true disservice. . . . [I]t's hard to say what was more **risible** about Gore's remarks: His claim that he respected the prerogative of caucus and primary voters or his suggestion to the other candidates that they should "keep their eyes on the prize" and eschew attacks on the front-runner. (Scott Lehigh, "Gore Hurts Democrats with Premature Nod," *Boston Globe*, 12/12/2003.)

In a traditional thesaurus:

redundancy *n.*: **repetition, duplication**

In *The Thinker's Thesaurus*:

> **redundancy** *n.*: **pleonasm**. ❖ It was, after all, public officials who gave us "safe haven" during the Persian Gulf War. Someone apparently grafted the "safe" from "safe harbor" (not all harbors are safe) onto "haven" (by definition, a safe place). The creation of this obnoxious **pleonasm** . . . illustrates the bureaucrat's familiar combination of self-importance, pretension, and ignorance. (John E. McIntyre, "Words That Survive the Test of Time," *Christian Science Monitor*, 12/30/1999.)

In a traditional thesaurus:

> **chat** *v.i.*: **talk, converse, discuss**

In *The Thinker's Thesaurus*:

> **chat** *v.i.*: **confabulate**. ❖ The hotel, on a highway outside Richmond, the state capital of Virginia, braced itself for [boxing promoter Don King's] arrival, as for that of a hurricane. In the lobby his minions **confabulated** in blobs: roly-poly men like waddling molecules, their bangles jangling, their pinky rings glinting, walkie-talkies jutting from their polyester rumps. (Peter Conrad, "The Joy of Slavery," *Independent on Sunday*, 3/10/1996.)

In short, with regard to the single base word entries, this thesaurus is unique not because other thesauruses won't have the same base words but because they typically won't have the same synonyms.

III The Clarifier Entry

The second type of entry, which is not found in any traditional thesaurus, involves the use of a base word accompanied by a Clarifier. In this case, the base word may not be, by itself, a synonym for the entry, but rather the most likely word the user might be expected to consult to find the synonym. The intent is that the base word, when combined with the Clarifier, will accurately yield the synonym. About 75 percent of the entries herein contain a Clarifier.

The use of the Clarifier is essential to this thesaurus, since there are so many wonderful words in the English language that simply do not easily lend themselves to a one-word synonym, and which are not accessible without the Clarifier. In fact, this is one of the primary limitations of even the most compendious standard thesauruses. There

are essentially three different occasions on which a Clarifier is necessary, and each of them demonstrates the shortcoming of ordinary thesauruses. These are as follows:

1 The Use of a Clarifier to Provide More Exact Definitions or to Show Nuance

As virtually all thesaurus introductions point out, in a technical sense, there is rarely such a thing as an "exact" synonym. Thus, when using a single word to compare both the base word and the synonym, the base word and the synonym will often not mean the exact same thing. With the Clarifier, however, it is far easier to arrive at a more precise definition for the synonym, since we are no longer limited to a single base word. Let's consider just a few of the entries in this thesaurus to see how this problem is resolved. The word "malversation" means wrongdoing, but not just any wrongdoing. It means wrongdoing in public office. Let's put aside the fact that "malversation" would rarely appear in a regular thesaurus in the first place, despite being a perfectly legitimate word. Even if it did, that thesaurus could only offer the following: **wrongdoing** *n.*: **malversation**. That comparison would be faulty, however, because unless one is in public office, one cannot commit malversation. The example in this thesaurus is as follows:

> **wrongdoing** (in public office) *n.*: **malversation**. ❖ A third charge is that [President Clinton's first-term national security adviser Anthony] Lake is guilty of **malversation**, the evidence being a token $5,000 fine he was assessed by the Justice Department for failing to sell several stock holdings promptly. (Jacob Heilbrunn, "Dr. Maybe Heads for the CIA," *New Republic*, 3/24/1997.)

The word "neologism" means a word, phrase, or expression, but not just any kind. Thus, a regular thesaurus, even if it contained the word in the first place, which it would not, could not properly list it as a synonym for "word," "phrase," or "expression."

> **word** (new . . . , phrase, or expression) *n.*: **neologism**. ❖ Back during Watergate, the President's men were always having to announce that he had "misspoke himself," an odd **neologism** that made it sound as though Nixon had just wet his pants. Just once it

would be nice to hear a White House press secretary say, "The President made a faux pas." (Christopher Buckley, "Hoof in Mouth," *Forbes FYI*, 5/4/1998, p. 31.)

"Aestivate" (or "estivate") is a synonym for "laze," but one would not "aestivate" by lying in the snow:

> **laze** (around during the summer) *v.i.*: **aestivate** (or **estivate**). ❖ Above all, my children **aestivate**. From May to September their life is a languorous stroll from pool to hammock to beach to barbecue. Their biggest challenges are ice creams that melt before the first lick, and fireflies that resist capture in jam jars. (Gerald Baker, "The Long Hot Summer," *Financial Times* [London], 7/12/2003.)

One of the definitions of "virago" is a strong and courageous woman. But clearly it is not a synonym for "woman" or "courageous" standing alone. With the Clarifier, this is not a problem:

> **woman** (who is strong and courageous) *n.*: **virago**. ❖ Feminists don't like strong women because too many **viragos** would put them out of business. To prosper they need a steady supply of women who exemplify the other V-word, "victim." (Florence King, "The Misanthrope's Corner," *National Review*, 3/10/1997, p. 64.)[9]

Next, consider the word "nocturne," which means (among other things) a painting of a night scene. A standard thesaurus would obviously not list the word as a synonym for "painting." However, with the help of the Clarifier, we have the following:

> **painting** (dealing with evening or night) *n.*: **nocturne**. ❖ Making art outdoors on misty autumn evenings and brisk winter nights has its ups and downs for painter Mike Lynch and photographer Chris Faust, whose serene show of poetic nightscapes opens today at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. [Faust] had admired Lynch's nocturnes for nearly 30 years, having first seen them when he was still in high school. (Mary Abbe, "Night Moves/Photographer Chris Faust and Painter Mike Lynch Do Their Best Work on the Third Shift," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 12/15/2000.)

Finally, the Clarifier is also useful for arriving at a closer match for the synonyms, especially when the synonym involves a nuance. This can be a particular failing in conventional thesauruses, which may well

contain the synonyms but which can lead the user astray because the nuance is not provided. Indeed, nuance is a foreign concept to conventional thesauruses because, in order to convey nuance, one must necessarily use more than one base word to explain the synonym accurately.[10] The issue here is not whether the synonyms in question can be found in a regular thesaurus, but whether incorrect usage will result due to the lack of a Clarifier. For example, most thesauruses use the word "fecund" as a synonym for "prolific." While this is not necessarily inaccurate, it does not reflect that the closest synonym for "fecund" is "fertile." Thus, while a person who has given birth to many offspring may be fecund, it would certainly raise an eyebrow to say that Babe Ruth was a "fecund" home run hitter.

> **prolific** (esp. as in fertile) *adj.*: **fecund** (*v.t.*: **fecundate**). ❖ The manatee population continues to grow despite the few that are killed in boating accidents, just as our deer populations continue to thrive despite the deer that are struck on the highways. Manatees are not particularly **fecund** animals, but they have no natural predators. (Frank Sargeant, "Manatees Are Not [an] Endangered Species," *Tampa Tribune*, 9/13/2000.)

Consider next the relatively common verb "keen." Virtually every thesaurus will include it as a synonym for "cry," without elaboration. If one is not familiar with the word, one may reasonably conclude that a baby who is crying is "keening," but such use of the word would be inaccurate:

> **cry** (in lament for the dead) *v.i.*: **keen**. ❖ When word spread through the convent, recalls one nun, "Everybody rushed to [the Mother Teresa's] room. They were all around her, wailing and hugging the Mother's body." The sisters' **keening** was heard by the communists, whose party headquarters are next door, and they tipped off journalists that Teresa had died. (Tim McGirk, Religion: "'Our Mother Is Gone!'" *Time* International, 9/22/1997, p. 54.)

To have a "sinecure," one must be employed or hold office, but attempting to make that word a synonym for "occupation" or "officeholder" will quickly lead to trouble in most cases. Thus, it is impossible to list "sinecure" as a correct synonym for any single word in a conventional thesaurus.

occupation (requiring little work but paying an income) *n.*: **sinecure**. ❖ [After] nearly ten years in government service, where everything is geared to the lowest common denominator, I find it refreshing to have work that rewards initiative and effort. Certainly I would be happy to have a **sinecure** again, but I am no longer brokenhearted that I left one. (Lars Eighner, *Travels with Lizbeth*, St. Martin's Press [1993], p. 124.)

The verb "peculate" is sometimes listed as a synonym for "steal," yet one would not accuse a child of "peculating" from the cookie jar.

steal (as in embezzle) *v.t.*, *v.i.*: **peculate**. ❖ [The Mazda] Miata gets passers-by smiling and talking. . . . Other conspicuous cars are costly and imposing and draw hate waves, as they are intended to. Decent householders glare, knowing you couldn't own the thing unless you were a drug dealer or a **peculating** [bureaucrat]. (John Skow, Living: "Miatific Bliss in Five Gears, This Is Definitely Not Your Father's Hupmobile," *Time*, 10/2/1989, p. 91.)

The adjective "fatuous" is often listed as a synonym for "foolish," yet forgetting one's wallet at home would not properly be termed a "fatuous" mistake.

foolish (in a smug or complacent manner) *adj.*: **fatuous**. ❖ "Jerry Garcia destroyed his life on drugs," Rush Limbaugh fearlessly proclaimed. You don't have to advocate heroin addiction or alcoholism to feel that all this moralistic fury is inanely misdirected. Nothing is more **fatuous** than to indict some performer for his failure to conform to the prescribed virtues of the "role model." Smug, self-satisfied, sanctimonious, this line of thinking fails first of all to acknowledge the true complexities of human existence. (John Taylor, "Live and Let Die: In Praise of Mickey [Mantle], Jerry, and the Reckless Life," *Esquire*, 12/1/1995, p. 120.)

Sometimes a conventional thesaurus will provide a synonym that, due to its lack of a Clarifier, is nearly the opposite of the base word. For example, a "philosophaster" is one who pretends to be a philosopher but is not truly (or is a bad one). It is a derogatory term that may be used when, for example, an actor or athlete gives his views on the world which, in the view of the writer profiling him, are frivolous. And yet, "philosophaster"—if included in a regular thesaurus at all—is generally given as a synonym for "philosopher," as

if to suggest that Aristotle was a philosophaster.

> **philosopher** (bad . . . , or one who pretends to be a . . .) *n.*: **philosophaster**. ❖ Reagan won the 1980 and 1984 debates and elections because he spoke plain sense to the American people. Simple phrases. Common words. Plainstuff. Broken sentences. So what? That's how normal people speak. . . . In contrast, Carter and Mondale spoke more in the highfalutin' lingo our professors and other **philosophasters** love. (*Orange County Register*, "Silliness about Senility," 12/27/1987.)

With words such as "fecund," "keen," "sinecure," and "peculate," the issue is not whether they would be contained in an ordinary thesaurus, but whether the ordinary thesaurus could easily lead the reader astray with regard to correct usage.

Finally, just the treatment of the word "woman" demonstrates the contrast between this thesaurus and others. For synonyms, most thesauruses give us "lady," "dame," "matron," "gentlewoman," "maid," "spinster," "debutante," "nymph," "virgin," "girl," and "old woman." While it is unlikely that a user would misuse any of these synonyms, since they are all simple, the lack of a Clarifier again points out one of the flaws of the conventional thesaurus, namely that virtually all of these synonyms have very different meanings, and yet they are all equated to "woman." In contrast, this thesaurus gives thirty-two synonyms using "woman" as a base word. Ten of those are as follows:

five good women to be:
woman (who is beautiful and alluring) *n.*: **houri** [French]
woman (who is slender and graceful) *n.*: **sylph**
woman (who is strong and courageous) *n.*: **virago**
woman (of a . . . who is stately and regal, esp. tending toward voluptuous) *adj.*: **Junoesque**
woman (who is charming and seductive) *n.*: **Circe**

five bad women to be:
woman (who is coarse and abusive) *n.*: **fishwife**
woman (regarded as ugly, repulsive, or terrifying) *n.*: **gorgon**
woman (regarded as vicious and scolding) *n.*: **harridan**
woman (who is scheming and evil) *n.*: **jezebel**
woman (frenzied or raging . . .) *n.*: **maenad**

These examples—and there are thousands of others—show how the Clarifier is used to provide more precise synonyms for base words and to show nuance in a way that conventional thesauruses do not.

2 When the Base Word and Synonym Are Different Word Forms

Ordinarily, thesauruses compare identical word forms: verb to verb, adjective to adjective, and so on. But what happens when the best base word for a given synonym is a different word form, as is often the case? Clarifiers are extremely useful in such instances. For example, suppose one wants to use an adjective meaning "like a lion." Because "lion" is a noun, the synonyms in regular thesauruses—though numerous—will also be nouns, since they have no means to allow the switching of word forms. However, in this thesaurus, one will find the following entry:

> **lions** (of, relating to, or characteristic of) *adj.*: **leonine**. ❖ [The TV show *Lions* is] nowhere near the scope of the Disney classic *The African Lion* but includes some intriguing familial disputes—like an episode of a **leonine** soap opera. (Susan Reed, Picks & Pans: Video, *People*, 5/29/1989, p. 20.)

Here the Clarifier allows an adjectival synonym to be listed next to a base word that is a noun, and it also gives the user an easy and logical reference to a word that would not be found in most thesauruses.

The same is true for virtually any occasion on which the user is looking for an adjective that is "of, relating to, characteristic of, or resembling" a particular noun. A conventional thesaurus cannot help users make these connections because it does not change word forms, even if the synonyms, such as "leonine," are not necessarily unusual. Thus, the following types of entries will not and cannot be found in other thesauruses, and for each of them there is an example given:

clay (relating to, resembling, or containing) *adj.*: **argillaceous**
death (of, relating to, or resembling . . .) *adj.*: **thanatoid**
dreams (of, relating to, or suggestive of) *adj.*: **oneiric**
evening (of, relating to, or occurring in) *adj.*: **vespertine**
old age (of or relating to . . .) *adj.*: **gerontic**

wealth (of or relating to the gaining of . . .) *adj.*: **chrematistic**

The Clarifier works equally well in converting from adjective to noun form. Consider the word "milquetoast," not a particularly unusual word. Although it is a noun, because it refers to a kind of person, the essence of the word is adjectival, namely "timid" (or "meek," "shy," or "unassertive"). Once again, the conventional thesaurus is unable to lead the user to the noun "milquetoast," because in order to do so, it must pass through an adjective. The Clarifier solves the problem:

> **timid** (and unassertive person) *n.*: **milquetoast**. ❖ [Warren Buffet]: "Mergers will be motivated by very good considerations. There truly are synergies in a great many mergers. But whether there are synergies or not, they are going to keep happening. You don't get to be the CEO of a big company by being a **milquetoast**. You are not devoid of animal spirits." (Brent Schlender, "The Bill & Warren Show—What Do You Get When You Put a Billionaire Buddy Act in Front of 350 Students? $84 Billion of Inspiration," *Fortune*, 7/20/1998, p. 48.)

Have you heard of a "bashi-bazouk"? I'm guessing not, legitimate though it is. It's a person (read: noun), but its essence is someone who is undisciplined and uncontrollable (adjective). Obviously, a regular thesaurus could not put it as a synonym for "undisciplined" (and in fact won't have it as a synonym for any other word, either). But you'll find it in this thesaurus:

> **undisciplined** (and uncontrollable person) *n.*: **bashi-bazouk** [Turkish; derives from the irregular, undisciplined, mounted mercenary soldiers of the Ottoman army]. ❖ I admit it: I cut through. To get . . . to my daughter's school, I drive through residential streets in Homeland. . . . This commuter traffic does not please residents of Homeland, to whom, apparently, we motorists on our way to school and work are a crowd of **bashi-bazouks** galloping over the hill to plunder their houses and slaughter their cattle. (John McIntyre, "Cruising through Homeland," *Baltimore Sun*, 1/18/1999.)

Finally, the Clarifier can also be useful if one wants to switch a verb to an adjective:

> **persuading** (as in urging someone to take a course of action) *adj.*:

hortatory. ❖ [Writer Meg Greenfield] loved argument and continued a tradition under which [*Washington*] *Post* editorials avoided **hortatory** calls to action in favor of making points by marshaling facts. (J. Y. Smith, obituary of Meg Greenfield, *Washington Post*, 5/14/1999.)

In short, almost any time the most likely base word a user would look up to find the right synonym is a word form other than that of the synonym, the Clarifier makes it possible.

3 The Use of Clarifiers When a Synonym Involves Two Distinct Concepts

Many words in the English language cannot be included in thesauruses that only compare single base words to single synonyms, because the synonyms involve two distinct concepts that cannot possibly be conveyed with a single base word. Say a person has an abnormal fear of dirt or contamination—a condition called mysophobia. The single base word thesauruses cannot list it under "fear" (because it relates to a specific kind of fear) or under "dirt" or "contamination" (because it obviously is not a synonym for those words). The Clarifier solves this problem:

dirt (abnormal fear of) *n.*: **mysophobia**. See *fear*

fear (of dirt or contamination) *n.*: **mysophobia**. ❖ Dear Ann: My wife has developed an obsession for clean hands and wears cotton gloves constantly, even at mealtimes. She is also afraid to shake hands with anyone or even hold my hand. . . . Dear Concerned: Your wife has **mysophobia**, which is an obsessive-compulsive disorder. This condition is not all that rare. (Ann Landers, *Newsday*, 11/16/1993.)

Consider next the word "malinger," again a relatively common verb meaning to fake a sickness or illness in order to avoid work. But what one base word could be used to come up with this synonym? Certainly not "sick" or "ill." The use of the verbs "pretend" or "shirk" get closer, but, without the Clarifier, no one could really suggest that those verbs, by themselves, could be considered synonyms for "malinger." The fact is that there is no one word that will do the trick, since one needs both

the concepts of pretending and being sick to arrive at "malinger." In this thesaurus, the user can be led to "malinger" through both roads:

> **sickness** (pretend to have a . . . or other incapacity to avoid work) *v.i.*: **malinger**. See *shirk*

> **shirk** (work by pretending to be sick or incapacitated) *v.i.*: **malinger**. ❖ Players are regarded [by team owners] as overpaid louts who greedily want more than they deserve. . . . When a player is injured, he is suspected of **malingering** if he doesn't return to action immediately—unless the bone is sticking through the meat. (Ron Mix, "So Little Gain for the Pain: Striking NFL Players Deserve Much, Much More," *Sports Illustrated*, 10/19/1987, p. 54.)

How about hatred of women (misogyny) or men (misandry)? By now, the reader gets the point that although words such as "misogyny" are not unusual, there is no way they could be found in a typical thesaurus. For the less common word "misandry," the entries are as follows:

> **men** (hatred of . . .) *n.*: **misandry**. See *hatred*

> **hatred** (of men) *n.*: **misandry**. ❖ I was shocked and horrified by your cover story, not only because of the recent rash of wife and child murders, but also by the strong suggestion that it is in the biological nature of males to be violent and abusive. . . . I suppose we can now expect another wave of **misandry** in this country such as the one that followed the Montreal Massacre by Marc Lépine. (Unsigned letter to the editor, *Maclean's*, 8/28/2000, p. 4.)

4 Summary of Ten Types of Entries in This Thesaurus

The following is a summary of the ten different kinds of entries in this book, together with an example of each, taken from the second edition. Only the first one is comparable in form to traditional thesauruses, but even then, the options offered are unlikely to be found in most such thesauruses. The last nine are unique to this thesaurus.

1. Entries with No Clarifier

> **subservient** *adj.*: **sequacious**. ❖ In 1945 . . . , Janet Kalven . . .

called for "an education that will give young women a vision of the family . . . that will inspire them with the great ambitions of being queens in the home." By which she did not mean a **sequacious** helpmeet to the Man of the House, picking up his dirty underwear and serving him Budweisers during commercials, but rather a partner in the management of a "small, diversified family firm." (Bill Kauffman, "The Way of Love: Dorothy Day and the American Right," *Whole Earth*, 6/22/2000.)

2. Entries with Clarifier to Provide Nuance

impose (oneself or one's ideas in an unwelcome way, such as with undue insistence or without request) *v.t.*: **obtrude**. [This word is subtly distinct from the more common verb "intrude." To intrude is to thrust oneself into a place without permission or welcome, and often suggests violation of privacy. To obtrude is to unjustifiably force oneself or one's remarks, opinions, etc., into consideration. The example given here illustrates the distinction well because "intrude" could not be used interchangeably with "obtrude."] ❖ In these dark times, when war threatens to engulf a considerable portion of the globe, I hesitate to **obtrude** upon the public a merely personal problem; but the fact is that we in France—I mean my wife and I—have a border problem. Our neighbors' goats stray onto our land continually and cause us a great deal of irritation. (Anthony Daniels, "The Menace in France: In Which Our Correspondent Talks Goats," *National Review*, 8/28/2006.)

3. Entries That Provide Explanation as to Usage or Derivation

unfeeling (person, as in one who is interested only in cold, hard facts, with little concern for emotion or human needs) *n.*: **Gradgrind**. [This word is based on Thomas Gradgrind, from *Hard Times*, by Charles Dickens, who had such a personality and who valued practicality and materialism over all else]. ❖ In [her book on Julius Caesar, Colleen] McCullough is very much a Gradgrind when it comes to facts: They are all that is needful, presented, it must be said, without color or animation to detract from their merit. Even descriptions of battles—which are cursory for a work devoted to the life of one of the world's greatest generals—have all the movement and drive of origami instructions. . . . McCullough's [writing is] leaden [in the] way it sits on the page. (Katherine A. Powers, review of *The October Horse*, by Colleen McCullough, *Washington Post*, 12/15/2002.)

4. Entries Based on Foreign Words

essence (the . . . of a matter, as in the bottom line, the main point, the substance, etc.) *n.*: **tachlis** (esp. as in "talk tachlis") [Yiddish]. ❖ My current cookbook bible is *How to Cook Everything* by Mark Bittman. The author writes for the *New York Times* . . . and he's written several other good-read cookbooks. Yes he's opinionated, very. But this guy talks **tachlis**, he gets right to the point and tells you what you need to know in a clear, down to earth manner. (Ann Kleinberg, "Books for Cooks," *Jerusalem Post*, 6/18/2004.)

5. Entries in Which the Figurative Usage Is Distinguished from the Literal Usage

pale (and often sickly) *adj.*: **etiolated**. [This term specifically refers to plants becoming whitened due to lack of exposure to sunlight, but is also used more generally to describe a pale and sickly appearance or condition.] ❖ [After the concentration camp in Berga, Germany, was discovered in May 1945,] the **etiolated** bodies were exhumed—eloquent of malnutrition, sickness, abuse and suffering—and later many more bodies of GIs were found scattered on the route of the death march southward as the investigators retraced it. (Roger Cohen, *Soldiers and Slaves*, Knopf [2005], p. 221.)

6. Entries with Clarifier That Changes Word Form from Base Word to Synonym (for Example, from Noun to Adjective)

glass (of, resembling, or relating to) *adj.*: **vitreous**. ❖ Women have made tremendous progress in the labor market except for the area of management, where the glass ceiling still exists. . . . American research has also found that some of the few women who do crack the **vitreous** barrier feel so unsatisfied and undervalued that they leave early—and in proportionately greater numbers than their male rivals. (*Economist*, "Breaking the Glass Ceiling," 8/10/1996.)

7. Entries That Present Different Definitions of a Word

bigwig *n.*: **satrap**. [This word has various definitions, including (1) a leader or ruler generally, (2) a prominent or notable person generally, (3) a henchman, (4) a bureaucrat, and (5) the head of a state acting either as a representative or under the dominion and control of a

foreign power. This is an example of the second definition. Often—but not always—it has a negative connotation.] ❖ Long protected by the senators and journalistic **satraps** who paid him court, [after uttering a racial slur against the Rutgers women's basketball team, radio personality Don] Imus found himself consumed by perhaps the only forces more powerful than those that elevated him to his place of privilege: the politics of race and gender. (*Newsweek*, "The Power That Was," 3/23/2007.)

8. Entries That Present Different Connotations of a Word

lordly *adj.*: **seigneurial**. [In the feudal system of landholding in Canada, seigneurs were lords granted lands by the king in return for their oath of loyalty and promise to support him in time of war. Like "lordly" itself, the word can have connotations that are either positive (such as dignified, noble, or exalted) or negative (such as arrogant, overbearing, or imperious). Examples of both are presented here, first the positive and then the negative.] ❖ *Vanity Fair*'s front cover is one of the prime slots in American show business, making [editor Graydon] Carter a Very Powerful Person. Everyone wants to stay sweet with him. He accepts his grandeur with **seigneurial** benevolence and drops the name of Robert De Niro as casually as a boy playing a yo-yo. (Quenton I Deirdre Letts, "Tinseltown," *Evening Standard* [London], 11/13/2002.)

❖ The guy was driving his cream-colored Rolls-Royce Corniche along West Broadway in SoHo. Actually, to call it driving is giving him too much credit. Bobbing and weaving is more like it. Several times, he nearly hit parked cars. Once, he almost veered into oncoming traffic. Naturally, he was gabbing on a cell phone the whole time, with a **seigneurial** indifference to anything in his path. (Clyde Haberman, NYC: "We Need More Tickets, Not Fewer," *New York Times*, 6/13/2003.)

9. Entries That Combine More Than One of the Above Features

right-thinking *adj.*: **bien pensant**. [This French term, sometimes hyphenated, and literally meaning well-thinking, has two very different usages. In the complimentary sense, it simply means right-minded or correct. In the derogatory sense (which is more common), it is used in an ironic, facetious, or sarcastic sense to mean conformist or doctrinaire or politically correct, often self-righteously. Thus,

though closer in actual definition to conservatism, when used in this latter sense, it is typically used by conservatives to criticize liberals. An example of each usage is presented here.]

❖ [In the French elections for president, the ability of seventy-three-year-old Jean-Marie Le Pen] to edge into the two-man run-off against incumbent Jacques Chirac . . . rightly made headlines. . . . Le Pen's good fortune provoked continental outrage. **Bien-pensant** Europeans vowed to turn back this candidate of the far-right fringe who—as almost every story on him points out—once called the Holocaust a "detail of history." (*National Review*, "Le Pen: Not So Mighty," 2/20/2002.)

❖ [With regard to the false accusation of rape against three white Duke University lacrosse players by an African American woman, a *New York*] *Times* alumnus recently e-mailed me, "You couldn't invent a story so precisely tuned to the outrage frequency of the modern, metropolitan, **bien-pensant** journalist." . . . But real facts are stubborn things. And today, the preponderance of facts indicate that [the woman's accusation was false]. Yet at the epicenter of bien-pensant journalism, the *New York Times*, reporters and editors . . . are declining to expose it. (Kurt Anderson, "Rape, Justice, and the *Times*," *New York*, 10/16/2006.)

10. Whimsical Entries

unfaithful (spouse) *n.*: **bedswerver**.
❖ When a **bedswerver**'s hungry for spice,
It's unlikely she'll heed the advice
When her conscience yells, "Don't!"
And I'm guessing she won't
Give a thought to adultery's price.
(Mike Scholtes, *The Omnificent English Dictionary in Limerick Form* [*oedilf.com*],4/6/2006.)

IV Criteria for Entry and Rules Regarding the Examples

The following is a list of the general rules I attempted to abide by for each entry. There may be certain instances in which not every rule was followed, particularly when I felt that a given word was, on balance, a

worthy and legitimate inclusion, even if it may not have satisfied every criterion to the letter.

1 All Words Used Are "Legitimate"

What is meant by legitimate? A legitimate word is any word that appears in one or more recognized major dictionaries and which is not generally described as archaic, rare, obsolete, informal, slang, or anything similar. In other words, while less common than what is in one's typical word-hoard, the words are all in current use in the English language. The word should appear in one or more standard dictionaries of the entire English language, including the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the 4th Edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, the 2nd Edition of *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, and *Webster's Third International Dictionary*. Foreign words are acceptable if they are included in English dictionaries or are relatively easily found in English-language periodicals or books. When a foreign word is used, the language is given as well.

Language evolves over time, such that not only are new words constantly entering the vocabulary, but old words are constantly leaving. When use of the older words has become sufficiently infrequent (but not perhaps extinct altogether), those words are designated in dictionaries as "archaic" or "obsolete."[11] None of those words is used here. Application of this rule arises frequently with respect to words used by Shakespeare. If the only instance of usage is found in Shakespeare or other old sources, the word is not included, on the assumption that it has become archaic.

> **argument** (esp. about a trifling matter) *n.*: **brabble**. ❖ Aaron: Why, how now, lords! / So near the emperor's palace dare you draw, / And maintain such a quarrel openly? . . . / Now, by the gods that warlike Goths adore, / This petty **brabble** will undo us all. (William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, act 2, scene 1.)

The American Heritage Dictionary (4th Edition) and other dictionaries do not list "brabble" as archaic though *Webster's Third* does. Nevertheless, every usage of the word located is from Shakespeare. As for the examples used, almost every one is less than twenty years old, and most are less than ten years old.

In short, the synonyms in the word base will not ordinarily fall into any of the following categories:

a. Words that appear only in specialized dictionaries such as medical dictionaries or (with a very few exceptions) slang dictionaries (such as *The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, by Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, by Jonathan Green, *The Dictionary of Contemporary Slang* and *Thesaurus of American Slang*, by Robert Chapman) or dictionaries of regional usage; dialectical words; or nonce words (words coined for a particular occasion).

b. Words that appear only in rare or unusual word books, such as *The Superior Person's Book of Words* or *Weird and Wonderful Words*, but are not found in standard dictionaries.

c. Words that appear only in the *Official Scrabble Players Dictionary* or the British equivalent, *Official Scrabble Words*.

d. Words that are specific to the fields of biology, chemistry, physics, botany, zoology, specialized or complex anatomy, or most other medical or scientific specialties.

e. Words that merely constitute specific varieties of a larger category of items. These words would not be considered synonyms for the items themselves. For example, "boudin" is a type of sausage, but it is not a synonym for sausage itself.

f. Words that are new or recently coined (neologisms), especially computer-related terminology such as "blogger" (from "Web blogger"), "google," and "dot-com," and also terms such as "metrosexual," "spin doctor," "infomercial," and the like. The purpose of this thesaurus is to focus on established (albeit not common) words, as opposed to words that have only recently come into vogue.

How is it determined which words go into dictionaries in the first place? Conversely, how is it determined which words already in the dictionary have fallen into sufficient disuse to be considered archaic or obsolete? This is clearly a subjective process on both ends. What constitutes a legitimate word is ultimately nothing more than a matter of opinion, based on popular vote. When a writer or speaker uses a given word, he is in essence casting a vote for its legitimacy, and no one vote counts more or less than any other. As stated by Stefan Fatsis in his book *Word Freak* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001), "dictionaries are as

subjective as any other piece of writing. Which words are included in them and which words are removed or ignored are decisions made by lexicographers based on shifting criteria, varying standards and divergent publishing goals."

How are the new words found? Joseph Pickett, executive editor of the 4th Edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000), states that "we have a systematic program for reading publications like *Time*, looking for examples of new words and new uses of old words." Based on this review, the people who compile the *American Heritage Dictionary* decided that words like "multitasking," "day trader," "erectile dysfunction," and "shock jocks" were worthy of inclusion in the 4th Edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*, published in 2000, but they were not included in the 3rd Edition, published in 1992. These words have been "voted for" enough to be considered part of the language. Other words have received some votes through usage, but apparently not enough, such as "stalkerazzi," which did not make the 4th Edition.

Of course, the reverse process is true as well, which explains how thousands of words become archaic or obsolete: Not enough people voted for them by using them over the years, so they dropped out of the public vocabulary and hence out of the dictionaries. This, too, is a subjective process. What happens if a dictionary lists a word as archaic, but it suddenly appears in a current issue of a mainstream publication such as the *New York Times* or *Newsweek* or *USA Today*? Is it no longer archaic? Or was the one vote not enough? To take but one example: The word "venery" has two different definitions—sexual intercourse and the sport of hunting. Most dictionaries describe the word as being archaic for both definitions. Yet, the word has popped up in both senses in several different publications over the past ten years. For example:

> **intercourse** (sexual . . .) *n.*: **venery**. ❖ Among the Major government's other recent disasters in the **venery** department have been headlines about (a) the environment minister who was forced to resign for impregnating a local government legislatress established to be not his wife . . . (Daniel Seligman, "Keeping Up: Depravity Among Conservatives," *Fortune*, 5/2/1994, p. 129.)

The rule of thumb used here is that if a word appears to be in current usage, it is considered a legitimate word if at least one

dictionary does not categorize it as archaic.

2 The Synonym Should Generally Not Be Found in Conventional Thesauruses

As discussed above, one of the reasons for the creation of this thesaurus was the premise that conventional thesauruses rarely assist the literate writer. The synonyms provided are so bland and simple that they were likely considered and rejected before the writer even opened the thesauruses. On a scale of 1 to 10, the complexity of the synonyms in a conventional thesaurus may range from about 1 to 6. In this thesaurus, the range is from about 6 to 10. Thus, while it would not be accurate to say that there is no overlap between the synonyms in this thesaurus and in a regular thesaurus, there is very little. Even if overlap does occur, the regular thesaurus, which lacks Clarifiers, can easily lead the user astray. The overlap word is thus included in this thesaurus to protect the writer from misusing the synonyms. In addition, a typical thesaurus may list twenty synonyms for a word, and the word in question may be buried down at number seventeen.

Consider the following two examples: The word “eudemonia” is listed as a synonym for “happiness” in both this thesaurus and *The Synonym Finder* [Rodale], which is considered comprehensive. The latter book has two paragraphs for the word “happiness” (although there is no explanation of how it and “eudemonia” differ). Under the second sense, the following sixteen synonyms for “happiness” are listed:

> paradise, heaven, seventh heaven, Eden, utopia, Elysium, Arcadia, sunshine, halcyon
> days, beatitude, serenity, peace, eudemonia, gratification, fulfillment, contentment

Thus, while “eudemonia” is there, it’s so buried among other choices that it is difficult for the user to focus on the word and consider its use. The fact that the user probably won’t know what the word means anyway merely heightens this probability—not to mention the fact that the absence of a Clarifier will get the user into immediate trouble if he or she thinks that “eudemonia” can be used synonymously with, say, “gratification” or “sunshine.” While *The*

Thinker's Thesaurus also lists "eudemonia" as a synonym for "happiness," the presentation is hardly similar:

> **happiness** *n.*: **eudemonia** (or **eudaemonia**) [based on the Aristotelean concept that the goal of life is happiness, to be achieved through reaching one's full potential as opposed to through the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure]. ❖ [The] objective is a good life, an Aristotelean **eudemonia**, which embraces a substantial dose of self-interest, but also incorporates concern for others, fulfilment at work, and the respect earned from others by participating in activities, including economic activities, which they value. (John Kay, "Staking a Moral Claim," *New Statesman*, 10/11/1996.)

Similarly, both this thesaurus and *The Synonym Finder* list "excrescence" as a synonym for "outgrowth." So does it need to be included in this thesaurus? The presentation in *The Synonym Finder* is as follows:

> **outgrowth** *n.*: 1. product, consequence, result, outcome, payoff, effect, aftereffect, aftermath, conclusion, upshot, final issue, eventuation, yield.
> 2. addition, supplement, postscript, sequel.
> 3. excrescence, offshoot, shoot, sprout, bud, burgeon, blossom, flower, fruit, projection, protuberance, bulge, knob, node, nodule, process, caruncle.[12]

Compare that presentation of "excrescence" with the one in this thesaurus:

> **outgrowth** *n.*: **excrescence**. [This word is often used literally, such as to describe an abnormal growth on the body or of a bodily part, such as a wart, but just as often is used in the sense of being an offshoot or consequence of a prior event or circumstance.] ❖ [In *Ceasefire!* author Cathy Young's intention] is to unmask the false claims of these "thought police," especially as they concern the supposed continued inequality of women in the United States. [C]ourt cases involving gender violence and sex crimes, child abuse and domestic violence, child custody and school curricula [are] **excrescences** of a cultural agenda that has been put in place to support spurious feminist claims and provide employment for enforcers. (Elizabeth Powers, "What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman," *Commentary*, 3/1/1999.)

Even in those rare instances where the same synonym is included in this thesaurus and others and where the use of the word straight out of a conventional thesaurus is not likely to get the user in trouble (such as it could, in the above two examples), the use in this thesaurus of an example and just one synonym will likely cause the user to focus more seriously on that synonym, since it is not hidden among many others. Consider the following from *The Synonym Finder*:

> **enchant** *v.*: 1. cast a spell upon, spellbind, bewitch, charm, mesmerize, hypnotize, ensorcell, bind by incantations, hoodoo, hex
> 2. captivate, allure, delight, enrapture, fascinate, enamor, transport, entice, enthrall, infatuate, catch, win, lead captive, enchain

Thus we are given twenty-four possible synonyms for "enchant." However, most of these are uninteresting and will already be familiar to the user anyway, with the exception of "hoodoo," which is an unusual word but which is in fact presented incorrectly in *The Synonym Finder*. ("Hoodoo" is not a synonym for "enchant" but rather for "bad luck" which is how it is presented in this thesaurus.) "Ensorcell," on the other hand, is an interesting word and is correctly listed as a synonym for "enchant." But would the reader really think about using it when it is buried among twenty-three other synonyms? Possibly not. This thesaurus presents the word as follows:

> **enchant** *v.t.*: **ensorcell** (or **ensorcel**). ❖ Trying to soften his military image and lure more female voters in New Hampshire, Gen. Wesley Clark switched from navy suits to argyle sweaters. It's an odd strategy. It's also a little alarming that he thinks the way to **ensorcell** women is to swaddle himself in woolly geometric shapes that conjure up images of Bing Crosby on the links or Fred MacMurray at the kitchen table. (Maureen Dowd, "The General Is Sweating His Image," *New York Times*, 1/13/2004.)

In short, for every synonym herein that may be found in a conventional thesaurus, there are dozens of others that are not. Moreover, for those relatively few that are found in conventional thesauruses, (1) the user runs the risk of misuse due to the lack of a Clarifier, and (2) the user may not notice the words at all because they are buried among all the mundane choices.

3 The Meaning of the Word Generally Must Be Understood from the Given Example Alone

Mere correct usage of the word is generally insufficient if the context does not make the definition clear. (There are some exceptions to this rule, which are discussed in the next section.) Consider the following example:

> L.L. Cool J. Here's a guy who has fallen in love with the sound of his own voice. All right, that's an occupational hazard for rappers, but rarely has this sort of verbal vanity exerted such a baleful stylistic influence as it does on this young urban **poetaster**. (David Hiltbrand, Picks & Pans: Song, *People*, 9/4/1989, p. 19.)

If the reader did not know the meaning of "poetaster," this particular example would not be very helpful. Consider instead the example used in this thesaurus, in which the meaning of the word is made clear from the entire passage:

> **poet** (bad . . .) *n.*: **poetaster** ❖ And now her first book of poems, *Yesterday I Saw the Sun*, has become a cause for further hiding. Just before the book's publication last month, a *New York Post* gossip item ridiculed her as a **poetaster**, contributing to her latest headache. "Ally Sheedy from bad to verse," chortled the headline on the item. (*Entertainment Weekly*, "Heartbreak—Ally Sheedy Says She Wrote Her Poems to Heal Her Wounds, but Their Publication Has Only Made Them Another Source of Pain," 3/29/1991, p. 28.)

This rule has particular applicability when an author, discussing a specific famous person, television show, movie, or book, assumes familiarity with the subject. If that assumption is wrong, the meaning of the word may not be apparent. This does not of course mean that there is anything wrong with the writing or the usage, but simply that the given passage is not appropriate for this thesaurus.

> **midget** *n.*: **homunculus**. ❖ Conceived as a spoof of TV's old amateur hours, [*The Gong Show*] had all its oddball ingredients in place by episode 1. There was creator and host Chuck Barris, a hyper **homunculus** in a bad tux. (A. J. Jacobs, "Encore: Cool and the 'Gong,'" *Entertainment Weekly*, 6/11/1999, p. 80.)

Unless one is familiar with Chuck Barris, this example will not help the reader understand the meaning of "homunculus"; hence the above example was not used. However, on other occasions, a word might be used with reference to a particular person, but familiarity with that person may not be necessary if the rest of the example supplies context.

> **voluptuous** (woman, often with stately or regal bearing) *adj.*: **Junoesque** [after ancient Roman goddess Juno, wife of Jupiter]. ❖ After rejections from countless modeling agencies, [Anna Nicole Smith was selected to be in *Playboy* magazine]. Her **Junoesque** appeal led straight to a three-year contract with Guess? "I always wanted to get back to be smaller than I was," she says. "But I just couldn't. Now I feel very good about it, and I wouldn't change my figure for anything." (*People*, "Anna Nicole Smith Is Livin' Large and Loving It," 9/20/1993, p. 76.)

4 The Word Cannot Be Defined within the Example Given

Anytime a writer uses a word but then feels compelled to define it for the reader, that usage is not included. The purpose of giving the examples in the first place is not only to show that a word is legitimate, nonarchaic, and in current use, but also to give the reader a sense of how a word may be used in a sentence or passage. If the writer must define the word, then in a sense both purposes are defeated. The fact that it is necessary to provide the definition indicates that the word is not being used naturally within the passage. Instead, undue attention is being drawn to the word, which defeats the second purpose of using the examples. Consider the following:

> **postcards** (collection and study of) *n.*: **deltiology**. ❖ With National Postcard Week on May 6–12, now's a good time to consider expanding your collection, say fans of **deltiology** (a fancy word for postcard collecting). (Penny Walker, "A Passion for Postcards," *Arizona Republic*, 5/5/2001.)

Indeed, in theory, any word can be given a "usage," simply if one states, for example, "Deltiology means postcard collecting," but this obviously does not further the goal of putting a given word in a context. Consider the contrast between the next two examples

involving the use of the word “kakistocracy.”

> **government** (by the least qualified or least principled people) *n.*: **kakistocracy**
>
> ❖ No, Matthew. Don Fletcher is right. “**Kakistocracy**. Are you familiar with that word?” Fletcher asked while nursing his coffee at the Bill O’ Fare. “It means government by the worst elements. . . . It doesn’t matter whether you vote Republican or Democratic.” (Steve Lopez, Nation/Campaign 2000: “Campaign Diary: Is It Over Yet? Gore. No, Wait. Bush,” *Time*, 11/6/2000, p. 69.)
>
> ❖ Cannon: Well, we couldn’t convict [Bill Clinton]. But I think the American people understand what [the Clinton] administration is all about. . . . And we have the greatest system on earth, a system strong enough to withstand the assaults over the last six years of this **kakistocracy**. (Sean Hannity and Alan Colmes, Ken Starr Investigation, Hannity & Colmes, Fox News Network, 6/24/1999.)

The first example merely defines the word, while the second uses it within the flow of the statement. For that reason, it is the second usage that is found in this thesaurus, and the same concept holds true for every usage found herein.

5 A Literal Usage of the Word Is Generally Preferred over a Figurative Usage

In many instances, a writer will use a word correctly, but in a figurative sense. With some exceptions, discussed below, those usages are avoided here. This is because presenting readers with figurative examples only may be misleading.

> **murder** (of parent or close relative) *n.*: **parricide**. ❖ Sharpton says [Jesse] Jackson, 60, has been his mentor, friend and “surrogate father” but now is an exhausted volcano, viewed by young blacks as “an establishment figure.” . . . Sharpton compares Jackson to Muhammad Ali: Great once; can’t fight anymore. . . . **Parricide** isn’t pretty. (George F. Will, “Sharpton Eyes the Prize,” *Washington Post*, 1/10/2002.)

When one is trying to understand appropriate usage, it is easier to

expand from the literal to the figurative. Conversely, when one is familiar with the figurative use of a word only, it can be a recipe for trouble. In the above example, George Will's use of the word "parricide" is perfectly appropriate for his purposes. Nevertheless, given his figurative use of the word, it is not the best example for purposes of this thesaurus, because it does not convey the fact that parricide is the literal killing of a parent or relative. Indeed, it could leave a reader who is unfamiliar with the word with the impression that the mere act of showing disrespect to or criticizing one's parents could be an act of parricide.

One exception to this general rule is those words that are almost always used in their figurative sense and only occasionally in their literal sense. The word "thralldom," meaning "slavery" or "bondage," is used in a figurative sense far more than in a literal sense, and thus this thesaurus gives the figurative usage:

> **bondage** *n.*: **thralldom**. ❖ We Western women, it appears, still have not shucked off male ideas of female beauty; the voluntary mutilation of plastic surgery bears witness to our **thralldom**. (Elizabeth Ward, "The Trouble with Women," *Washington Post*, 5/23/1999.)

Similarly, the verb "flagellate" means to "whip" or "flog," but it is almost always used in the figurative sense of self-criticism, often as in "self-flagellate." Therefore, a figurative example was again used.

> **criticize** (oneself) *v.t.*: **flagellate** (*n.*: **flagellation**). [This word means to whip or flog another, and is properly used in that sense, but is generally used figuratively, esp. as in criticism of oneself, sometimes as in self-flagellation.] ❖ Journalists belong to the only profession whose members regularly get together to **flagellate** themselves in public. (Sheryl McCarthy, "Here's How We Cover the Blob," *Newsday*, 4/12/1995.)

A second exception is where it was felt that the literal meaning of the word was clear, even where the example did not present a literal usage. For example, the word "theanthropic" means having both human and divine or godlike qualities. The tongue-in-cheek example presented here is as follows:

> **godlike** (having both human and . . . attributes) *adj.*: **theanthropic**.

> ❖ [After September 11, 2001,] our government should order the CIA to air drop to the Mullahs and their angry young men millions of pages from the *Victoria's Secret* catalogues. Anyone familiar with the September 11 atrocities knows that these fellows are sexually repressed. . . . Pursuing the **theanthropic** [Victoria's Secret model Laetitia Casta] through Google-space, they will be lured toward the pages of *The American Spectator*, where they will enjoy the health benefits of cultural diversity. (R. Emmett Tyrell Jr., "The Continuing Crisis," *American Spectator*, 1/1/2002.)

While Laetitia Casta may indeed be a lovely woman, one presumes that the user will understand that she is not literally a goddess. Just as important, however, so long as the writer understands the literal meaning of the word, there is nothing wrong with using it in a figurative sense, as Tyrell did here and Will did above.

6 The Base Word Must Logically Lead to the Synonym

The mere fact that a word may be too unusual for inclusion in a regular thesaurus does not automatically render it appropriate for inclusion in this one. This is because certain words refer to concepts, theories, or principles rather than single words. Thus if there is no single word that one might logically connect with a given synonym, that synonym was excluded, no matter how useful the concepts, theories, or principles were. For example, the word "meliorism," although a fine word, does not readily lend itself to a one-word base. The same is true for words such as "diglossia," "duopsony," "eponym," "featherbedding," "festschrift," "fideism," and "obscurantism," It does no good to include an interesting word if the user is not likely to ever find that word due to an inability to connect it to an appropriate base word.

On the opposite end, some synonyms, although unusual, are very close to a common base word but don't add anything to that word. For example, most people have probably never heard the word "botheration." However, it is no surprise that it means the act of bothering or state of being bothered. It is essentially just the noun form of the verb "to bother." Similarly, "perfectibilism" is a rare (though legitimate) synonym for . . . guess what? Perfectionism. Words such as "botheration" and "perfectibilism" (of which there are a surprising number) are not included in this thesaurus.

7 A Note on the Use of "As In"

In many instances, the base word is followed by a Clarifier that includes the words "as in." This is done either because the base word may have several different definitions or because the synonym given may not have precisely the same meaning as the base word but the user may nevertheless be inclined to look up the base word in hopes of finding a similar or related synonym. When the connection between the base word and the synonym may be unclear or even appear questionable, what follows "as in" is intended to explain or fine-tune the connection and hit closer to the mark.

For example, one of the definitions of "fatuous" is "delusional." "Delusional" in turn is related to, but not a direct synonym for, "imaginary" or "illusory." One might call the tooth fairy imaginary, but not delusional. Nevertheless, there are times when one might look to the word "imaginary" or "illusory" when searching for a good word that is in fact closer to "delusional." This situation, which arises frequently, is addressed in this thesaurus as follows:

> **unreal** (as in delusional) *adj.*: **fatuous**. See *delusional*
>
> **illusory** (as in delusional) *adj.*: **fatuous**. See *delusional*
>
> **imaginary** (as in delusional) *adj.*: **fatuous**. See *delusional*
>
> **delusional** *adj.*: **fatuous**. ❖ After the 1992 election, I wrote [an article] on Bill Clinton. . . . I did express high, and in retrospect rather **fatuous**, hopes for the coming Clinton Administration. . . . I cherished, for a time, a kind of fresh-start, non-partisan, post-ideological, post–Cold War faith that a new-paradigm Clinton might lead the nation brilliantly toward . . . toward, well, the bridge to the twenty-first century! (Lance Morrow, "U.S. v. Clinton," *National Review*, 9/28/1998, p. 39.)

In this example, "as in" is used not only to show that "delusional" is the closest synonym to "fatuous" but also to demonstrate that using "illusory" or "imaginary" as synonyms for "fatuous," while sometimes workable, can also be problematic. The "as in" Clarifier helps the user avoid this pitfall. Consider also the following example: The essence of "perspicuous" is something that is understandable. In the right context, "clear" and "simple" might be perfectly adequate synonyms for

"perspicuous," which is why these words are included among the base words for perspicuous. However, in the wrong context, these words may have no connection whatsoever. One might call the Caribbean Sea "clear," but not "perspicuous." Once again, "as in" solves this problem.

> **clear** (as in understandable) *adj.*: **perspicuous**. See *understandable*
>
> **simple** (as in understandable) *adj.*: **perspicuous**. See *understandable*
>
> **understandable** *adj.*: **perspicuous**. ❖ One [of the "Principles of Mathematics"] was the "theory of descriptions" which purported to solve a problem that Plato had wrestled with, namely how one can think and speak of non-existent things. The theory showed how various tricky propositions could be translated into something more **perspicuous** and less puzzling; it soon came to be seen as a model of how to philosophise. (*Economist*, "The Philosophers That Sophie Skipped," 12/7/1996, p. 79.)

In short, any word or phrase that follows "as in" as part of a Clarifer is considered the word or phrase that comes closest in meaning to the synonym used. If a given base word does not appear at first to connect logically to the synonym, then what follows "as in" should provide the logical connection.

8 A Note on the Use of "See"

As we saw above with the word "perspicuous," many synonyms are arrived at through multiple base words. However, so as to avoid repetition of examples, there is only one example presented for each synonym. The synonym that contains the example will follow the word "See," and is generally considered the synonym that is closest to the base word in question. Thus "See *understandable*" means that the example given will be found at "understandable."

9 Notes on the Presentation of the Examples

a. When the author of an example was known, he or she is listed.

b. When there were multiple authors of one passage, only the first author's name is listed.
c. When the author of the piece quoted another person who used the word in question, this is noted.
d. The titles were occasionally shortened or modified, particularly where there was verbiage that was not relevant to the passage.
e. Reference to the volume numbers of periodicals is not made.
f. The page on which the passage appeared is provided if known.
g. The source provided may not have been the initial source in which the passage appeared, particularly when the author is a syndicated columnist.
h. Any words in brackets (but not parentheses) are my own words and may represent (1) an addition to the text without any deletion, often for purposes of clarification or (2) a substitution of fewer words for longer deleted material, which could be of any length. Ellipses (. . .) represent deletion of material from the text, which also could be of any length. In general, the intent was to present as much of the passage as was deemed necessary to give the user a good sense of the word without changing the author's meaning. Small portions of the text were sometimes included as part of the example when I felt that inclusion of the sentence gave a sense of completeness to the passage. The premise is that if a passage is thought-provoking or if it serves to amuse, intrigue, entertain, or inspire, then the synonym itself might be better remembered than if the example was a mere sentence fragment.

V In Defense of the Hard Word

A. Our Shrinking National Vocabulary

Exposure to progressively more rare words expands the verbal reservoir. Exposure to media with entirely common words keeps the reservoir at existing levels. Years of consumption of low rare-word media have a dire intellectual effect. A low-

> *reading, high-viewing childhood and adolescence prevent a person from handling . . . civic and cultural media such as the New York Review of Books and the National Review. The vocabulary is too exotic.*
>
> MARK BAUERLEIN, *The Dumbest Generation*

These days, in matters of vocabulary, to use a word that is not understood by the lowest common denominator of our society is almost to be seen as politically incorrect or offensive. We are so bombarded by the mantra of "write clearly and simply" that to use any word that is not readily known by all is to be labeled "elitist" or "pretentious" or "bombastic," no matter that the word in question may be legitimate and perfectly suited for the occasion; indeed, that it may be the best word for the occasion.[13]

It often seems that when a writer uses a word that is not instantly recognized by everyone, it must be an example of poor writing, because (so the argument goes) the only good writing is that which is "clear"—using a limited vocabulary understood by all. Virtually anytime a writer's lexicon goes over the reader's head, you can be sure that the old gripe about "having to reach for a dictionary" is coming. The following is a typical criticism of the use of harder words:

> Studies show that even the most educated Americans prefer to read at or below the 10th-grade reading level. . . . The way to credibility is to speak and write plainly without language that bewilders or misleads. And the way to lose credibility is to veil the message in showy blather.[14]

Given that very few of the words in this thesaurus—though all perfectly legitimate, dictionary recognized words—would be recognized by those at or below the tenth-grade reading level, it stands to reason that the authors of every passage herein lose credibility because of their "showy blather." But what would our world be like if we were all discouraged from using any words too sophisticated for a tenth grader?

Susan Jacoby, a leading observer of the increase of ignorance in America, in addressing the issue of our collective comfort with our lack of knowledge has written:

> [Another] factor behind the new American dumbness [is] not lack of knowledge per se but arrogance about that lack of knowledge. The problem is not just the things we do not know . . . it's the alarming number of Americans who have smugly concluded that they do not need to know such things in the first place. ("The Dumbing of America," *Washington Post*, 2/17/2008.)

This same smugness applies to our vocabularies. When a fifty-cent word is thrown out in public, you can be sure that it is the user of that word who will be put on the defensive, rather than readers or listeners feeling any sense of discomfort that they don't know what the word means in the first place. In her book *The Age of American Unreason* (Pantheon, 2008), Jacoby notes "the precipitous decline [since the 1960s and prior] of reading and writing skills, now attested to by every objective measure, from tests of both children and adults to the shrinking of the number of Americans who read for pleasure."

In addressing the consequences of the fact that we don't read as much as we used to, Harvard University professor Peter Gibbon has written: "Students spend more time with media than with teachers"; they are "raised in a visual culture," which results in "shrinking vocabularies, shorter attention spans, and less efficient reading skills."[15]

The dumbing down of our collective vocabularies is no accident and did not come about just by circumstance. In the age of e-mails and text messaging (and now Twitter), letter writing is becoming a lost art. We are also constantly exhorted to avoid using hard words by those who would teach us how to write. "Keep it simple. Forget the idea that long, complicated words make you sound smarter. Use clear, plain language. It gets your point across more efficiently without confusing your readers."[16]

One writer urges the use of the simplest possible words in direct mail ad copy: "Does the reader comprehend what you're saying or must [he] reach for the dictionary? . . . I recently read an advertisement for a new book in which the writer tells of the excitement of reading 'the bildungsroman of the main character.' [The dictionary defines that as] '[a] novel about the moral and psychological growth of the main character.' Why didn't they write those words?" Of course: Why use one interesting (and economical) word, when eleven dull words will do just as nicely? "Bildungsroman" is obviously not an everyday word. But does that mean we should never use it? Or perhaps we

should just assume that all those who receive direct mail are especially unintelligent or too lazy to look up the word.

Is our vocabulary shrinking? Some studies demonstrate that we know and use fewer words today than we used to; others refute the claim. Studies cited in *Harper's* Index show that the average number of words in the written vocabulary of a six- to fourteen-year-old American child has gone from 25,000 in 1945 to 10,000 in 2000, though some question whether the decline is that substantial. In *Doing Our Own Thing—The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care*, John McWhorter contrasts the eloquence with which we used to write and speak with how we do so now. What is particularly striking about his disquisition is the evidence of how this deterioration cuts across every socioeconomic and educational level, from those at the pinnacle of academia, politics, entertainment, and society to the most uneducated among us. As but one example, McWhorter quotes from one of many letters from Richard Robinson to Helen Jewett, an upscale prostitute, whom Robinson was later accused of murdering in the 1830s. He was a nineteen-year-old clerk with an eighth-grade education. He wrote:

> At best we live but one little hour, strut at our own conceit and die. How unhappy must those persons be who cannot enjoy life as it is, seize pleasure as it comes floating on like a noble ship, bound for yonder distant port with all sails set. Come will ye embark?—then on we go, gayly, hand in hand, scorning all petty and trivial troubles, eagerly gazing on our rising sun, till the warmth of its beams [i.e., love] causes our sparkling blood to o'erflow and mingle in holy delight, as mind and soul perchance some storms arise . . . [17]

McWhorter's emphasis is not on the abnormality of Robinson's writing skills in comparison to his level of education (except in comparison to how today's eighth graders would write) but rather on its very typicality, as he demonstrates with one example after another.

B. "My Vocabulary Is Perfect; Yours Is Deficient or Pompous"

We tend to believe that a word is unfamiliar because it is

unfamiliar to us.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY

What is a hard word? It is not necessarily a long word. Rather, it is simply a word whose usage is sufficiently infrequent that many English speakers and writers, even the more literate ones, may not be familiar with the word or its definition.[18]

There are many who decry the use of hard words in writing or in speech and who feel we would all be better off if they simply didn't exist. One such person is James Kilpatrick, who has been waging a one-way war against William F. Buckley—or more precisely William F. Buckley's vocabulary—for many years. In article after article, Kilpatrick has railed against what he considers to be Buckley's unnecessary use of "recondite words." These articles include "Each Writer Must Choose to Be Erudite or Be Clear," in a syndicated column that appeared on February 16, 1997, and a critical review of Buckley's book *The Right Word*, which appeared in the December 23, 1996, issue of *National Review*. In addition, while not directly mentioning Buckley, Kilpatrick touched on the same themes in another syndicated column that appeared on November 30, 1997: "Essence of Writing: Have Something to Say and Say It Clearly."

In each of these pieces and many others, Kilpatrick's theme is the same: write so as to be understood by the widest possible audience and refrain from using words that may not be generally familiar to your readers. To help make his point, Kilpatrick often uses the technique frequently resorted to by him and others who would stand with him on this issue: mockery. Indeed, if one is so inclined, it is easy to try to make fun of those with larger vocabularies by forcing difficult words on the reader in an unnatural fashion, especially by stacking them on top of one another. Kilpatrick opens his December 1996 review of *The Right Word* as follows:

> If I were to say of Mr. Buckley's latest compendium that it is not at all an anodyne work, I could fairly be indicted for gross meiosis. Even a necessarily truncated review, such as this brief epitome, cannot offer more than a meager adumbration of this kaleidoscopic omnium gatherum. What an epiphany it is, to share his eudaemonia! What a nimiety of logomachical riches have we here! I am quite undone.

The primary problem with Kilpatrick's reasoning is that it requires veering away from the dictionary as the standard reference source for what does and does not constitute a "legitimate" English word and instead requires us to draw a completely arbitrary line in the sand as to what words are or are not appropriate. But who sets the standard? Clearly it can't be Buckley, since his standard is evidently too high. Is it then Kilpatrick himself? Should he be the official word arbiter? But why him? Or, to borrow from the standard set forth by Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart when deciding what constituted obscene material, should our standard for inappropriately hard words be: "We know them when we see them"?

In attempting to answer these questions, it becomes immediately apparent that any attempt to reach the goal of a universally agreeable standard is a fool's errand. No two people have the same lexicon and thus no one of us can set a standard. Just as certain words in Buckley's vocabulary are unacceptable to Kilpatrick, there are undoubtedly words in Kilpatrick's vocabulary that are unfamiliar to others who may be less literate than he is.

Consider a traffic analogy: On a highway with no speed limit where all traffic is moving in the same direction, the left-hand lane is for passing. Those who are in the left-hand lane should move over to the right-hand lane when someone is trying to pass. That is true regardless of the speed of either the front car or the car trying to pass. If the front car is going 80 mph and the car trying to pass is going 90, then the front car should get out of the way. It is not for the driver of the front car to say: "I'm going fast enough; I'll set the standard speed here."

If we were to carry Kilpatrick's argument to its logical conclusion, where would that leave us? It would seem to require that all words that are on the wrong side of an imaginary standard would need to be jettisoned from the language, since there would no longer be any need for them—a reductio ad absurdum that few would endorse. Thus, just based on his paragraph above, we would likely have to say good-bye to "anodyne," "meiosis," "adumbration," "omnium gatherum," "epiphany," "nimiety," and "logomachical" as words in the English language, even though other writers have chosen to use all of them at one time or another. Presumably there are thousands of others that would also become extinct.[19]

Even within Kilpatrick's own mocking of Buckley's word choices, the unsolvable problem of the folly of trying to choose the appropriate standard immediately becomes clear. One knows right away that

"meiosis," "omnium gatherum," "eudaemonia," and "nimiety" (all of which are in this thesaurus, incidentally) are unfamiliar words. But what about the other words he includes in the same passage, such as "compendium," "truncated," "epitome," "meager," and even "epiphany"? Though none of these words is unusual, it is probably safe to say that they are not necessarily familiar to everyone. But surely Kilpatrick is not suggesting that these words should be included with his list of words that have no place in the English language? Or should the reader know what those words mean, and thus they should be separated from words that would be placed on death row?

What Kilpatrick has done (likely subconsciously) is to set himself up as the proverbial "reasonable man" when it comes to vocabulary. This is something we all do (again, likely subconsciously). In other words, if I'm the reasonable man, and you're using words I don't know, the problem must necessarily be with your unnecessarily fancy writing or speech, not my limited vocabulary. However, if you don't understand a word I use, I may consider you a pretty dim bulb, since "everyone" should know the words I do. Since I'm the reasonable man, I'm always in the right and you're always in the wrong. Heads I win, tails you lose.

What are the possible reasons one might have for opposing the use of unfamiliar words? Consider the book *Witness*, the biography of Whittaker Chambers by Sam Tanenhaus, which was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 1998. That book contains the following passages:

> A **refulgent** star of the [Communist] movement, as indeed "the purest Bolshevik writer ever to function in the United States," Chambers involved himself in various projects. [Chambers] was an adept linguist, with idiomatic German still Communism's **lingua franca**, and so could easily communicate with agents sent from overseas.
>
> They became a "tightly knit unit," bound together by the effort to maintain the household on the **exiguous** sum Jay sent them, eight dollars a week by Vivian's recollection.
>
> Passports were essential for traveling Communist agents and American passports were preferred above all others because anyone, even non-English speakers, could travel on them without arousing suspicion, thanks to the country's vast **polyglot**

population, with its many immigrants.

Let us concede, first, that the words in bold are not common words known by everyone, and, second, that the author could have used, but chose not to use, “bright” in place of “refulgent,” “common language” in place of “lingua franca,” “meager” in place of “exiguous,” and “multilingual” in place of “polyglot.” So why didn’t he? (Indeed, Kilpatrick might pose this very question, because, in his review of *The Right Word*, he asks: “[W]hat is gained in communication by speaking of the politician who tergiversates? The fellow waffles, or flip-flops, or reneges. Why not say so?”)[20] One who deplores the use of hard words may offer the following arguments, the first of which is critical of Tanenhaus and the rest of which appear to be qualified defenses of his writing *but*, as discussed below, qualified in an erroneous way:

1. Tanenhaus made poor word choices, Pulitzer Prize credentials or not, and it would have been better writing for him to use the simpler synonyms.
2. I personally happen to be familiar with all of his word choices, and, because the words are within my own lexicon, I have no problem with them, even if others might not know their meaning.
3. These words are appropriate because Tanenhaus is writing for a sophisticated and particularly literate audience.
4. This writing is acceptable because the hard words are sporadic and interspersed with easy words; in other words, they are not crammed together.
5. Hard words are acceptable if and only if their meanings can be deduced from the context of the passage.

The first response makes no sense unless one is prepared to argue that the authors of virtually every passage in this thesaurus are poor writers because they didn’t use the very simplest words at all times. This is obviously a ludicrous argument. The second response again raises the issue of whether we must adopt a hypothetical “reasonable person” standard. But as we have seen, that is impossible. Whose vocabulary do we make the exact dividing line? This too is a silly result.

As to the third response, it is quite true that we often hear it said that authors should “write suitably for their audience.” Indeed, Kilpatrick

makes this very point himself.[21] If we are talking about differentiating between readers by age, there is certainly merit to this advice. For example, these words would obviously not be appropriate for children. However, once we confine the "audience" to adults, the advice makes far less sense. Indeed, it's only possible to carry out the advice if we differentiate between "smart adults" and "dumb adults" (or, more precisely, "literate adults" and "not so literate adults"). A further consequence is that a word that might be appropriate in, say, the *National Review* or the *Nation* would not be appropriate in *People* magazine. But isn't that patronizing, and doesn't it discourage readers (and, just as important, writers) from ever learning new words?[22] Indeed, based on the fact that so many of the examples herein do in fact come from widely read (shall we say non-snooty?) periodicals, such as *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, it would appear that the authors of those articles are implicitly expressing their disagreement with the foes of hard words through their frequent use of excellent but uncommon words, which undoubtedly would fall outside of any mythical and mystical "approved word list."

The fourth response—that the kinds of words used in this thesaurus are perfectly acceptable so long as they are not jammed together, two or three to a sentence, in sentence after sentence—presumes that this is in fact a prevalent problem among writers today. But in fact, who writes like that anyway? Certainly not the authors of any of the examples in this thesaurus. Indeed, virtually the only time one sees the types of sentences written by Kilpatrick above is, ironically, when other writers do exactly what Kilpatrick does, which is to make the multiple hard words the very raison d'être of the sentence for one reason or another, and string them together for humorous effect (often to make fun of writers who use hard words or to salute those who write all of the weird word books). Examples abound.[23] Are these tongue-in-cheek examples truly the kind of writing Kilpatrick is fulminating against? Doubtful. The authors cited in this thesaurus use hard words as useful conduits through which to make their points and not as the points themselves. Thus, if the argument is simply against using too many hard words in a row, then those making the argument are merely setting up a straw man so they can blow him down.

As to the final response, if one would approve of the use of all hard words if and only if their meanings can be determined from the context (even if the reader would otherwise have no clue as to their meaning out of context), this only means that those who take this

position and I are on the same page, at least in those instances. The use of those specific hard words would need no defense. Even here, however, there are problems with this position. First, if the only goal is truly to be clear, then why (one might ask facetiously) even take a chance on an unfamiliar word that forces the reader to guess its meaning, a guess that may or may not be accurate? Why not just resort to the simplest possible words? Consider the following example, which is a perfectly appropriate use of the excellent word "sockdolager." In reading it, consider the following two questions: (1) Can you say for certain what it means? (2) Even if the answer is yes, might a simpler word have sufficed?

> The American Council for the Arts [wanted to] show how much the American people love the arts. . . . [T]hey retained pollster Lou Harris [who knows that] 99% of a public opinion poll lies in framing the questions to be asked. . . . Lou asked them, "How important do you think it is to the quality of life in the community to have such things as museums, theater and concert halls in the community?" That was a sockdolager [because 84% said very important or somewhat important.]

A "sockdolager" is a decisive or telling factor, remark, or blow, kind of like a knockout punch. It was the perfect word to use in the above passage, in that Harris knew what question to ask that would yield the telling response it did. And yet, might not the author have used a simpler (but less interesting) word or phrase, such as "knockout punch" or "telling factor," just to make sure that everyone understood the message? The author could have, but thankfully didn't. And guess who the author was? None other than Kilpatrick himself.[24]

Second, we are often on a slippery slope in terms of whether or not the context does the trick. For example, in the passages cited above, wouldn't it have been safer for Tanenhaus to have used simpler terms than "lingua franca" and "polyglot"? Was "refulgent" really necessary? Similarly, at several points in Kilpatrick's article, he is guilty of the very same crime of which he accuses Buckley (as he was in the use of "sockdolager"). At one point, he states that Buckley's editor "undertook this labor con amore, and all language lovers are in his debt." For those who don't know Italian, why not just say that he did it lovingly? Wouldn't that be simpler? Later, Kilpatrick states that "my objection, I suppose, is mostly a complaint pro bono publico."

For those who don't know Latin, why not just say that his complaint is for the public good?

There are clearly many instances where the meaning of a hard word is not easily ascertainable from the context and yet the word is perfect for the situation. For example, if I were to advise readers that part of this essay is a "prolepsis," I highly doubt that most would know what I meant. And yet, it is the right word. It is a rebuttal made by responding to an anticipated objection to an argument before that objection has been made (namely the objection that we should not use hard words because they may prevent readers from understanding our writing).

The word "Luddite" is just the right word in the following passage, but even in context, its meaning is not necessarily clear, not to mention its derivation:

> [Al Gore's] role as an enemy of medical progress should come as no surprise. When biotech Luddite Jeremy Rifkin wrote *Algeny*—a diatribe against gene-based drug development in which he implied that the human life span should revert to that enjoyed before the Bronze Age so that mankind could be closer to nature—it was Al Gore who wrote the glowing blurb that Rifkin has given us "an insightful critique of the changing way in which mankind views nature." (Robert Goldberg, "The Luddite: [Al Gore] Invented the Internet?" *National Review*, 8/14/2000.)[25]

In the following example, the writer uses "aptronym," again a perfect word for the situation, and again one that most readers couldn't define in most contexts. Can you figure it out?

> Viewers apparently haven't minded that they already knew the ending [to the World Series of Poker]. The well-publicized competition, held in May, was won by Tennessee amateur Chris Moneymaker (talk about **aptronyms**!), whose only previous poker tournaments were on the Internet. (Jack Broom, "A Sure Bet: Poker Is Hot; Televised Games Spur Local Players to Up the Ante," *Seattle Times*, 9/14/2003.)[26]

This same point is especially true with respect to many of the entries that involve phrases rather than single words. Even though the context does not make the phrase clear, it is still le mot juste.

> An electioneering budget is an **argumentum ad crumenam**, and most elections in democracies have a strong element of this old argument. It may not be idealistic, but it is the way people vote. (Philip Howard, "Rhetoric and All That Rot," *Times* [London], 4/12/1991.)[27]

An article entitled "The Importance of Being Simple," though being one of many that support Kilpatrick's point of view, unwittingly demonstrates its very dilemma. The writer states:

> We must befuddle our readers with at least one rare word in each paragraph, with style and form and with quality of expression—so we tell ourselves. . . . Befuddle? Isn't this a rare mouthful? Goodness gracious me, I'm not practicing what I'm trying to preach! You're right. There must be simpler words than befuddle. How about baffle or confound then? You think that they're still not simple enough? Well, let's settle for confuse. Okay?[28]

It seems as if the writer is being facetious, but he is not. His viewpoint is apparently that writers should never use the words "befuddle," "baffle," or "confound," because they could just as easily resort to the most common synonym, namely "confuse." But isn't this an absurd argument? Can one imagine even Kilpatrick going to this extreme? Where do we ever draw the line? Clearly, if this writer is going to object to "befuddle," "baffle," or "confound," then what would he say about Kilpatrick's choices of "con amore" and "pro bono publico"?

Even if we assume, for argument's sake, that certain words have an exact simpler synonym, does that mean that the harder word should never be used? For example, an "ecdysiast" is simply a strip tease artist. Even though it is safe to assume that not everyone knows that, the word "ecdysiast" is still used all the time, often with the context providing no assistance as to the word's meaning.[29] Does that mean that we should simply do away with the word because we can insert "stripper" in its place? Or is the use of "ecdysiast" always poor writing unless presented in context?

As Buckley puts it: "It is a curious thing, this universal assumption . . . that the American people are either unaware of the unusual word or undisposed to hear it and find out what it means, thus broadening not merely their vocabulary—that isn't the important thing—but their

conceptual and descriptive powers." In short, even if there is an exact simpler synonym, this thesaurus is useful if a writer does not want to keep using the same words again and again and wants to use more interesting words.[30]

The problem is not only where to draw the line, but the fact that the hard-word critics are encouraging us to work toward a lowest common denominator; to shrink our vocabulary as much as possible. Is it not a worthy goal to expand our vocabularies as much as possible rather than to prod writers in the opposite direction? The only imaginable response to this is to advocate (once again) a "standard of reason," in deciding which words pass muster and which do not. But that brings us right back to the original flaw in the argument: There is no single standard of reason. To many people, portions of Kilpatrick's own writing ("con amore"? "pro bono publico"?) must come off as abstruse (or would that word be rejected as well?)—just as Buckley's do to him. So there can never be a reasonable, let's-all-agree-what-words-are-acceptable-and-what-words-aren't standard. Nor should we even try to set such a standard, for the mere attempt is necessarily an exercise in slicing and dicing perfectly good and legitimate words out of the dictionary, all in the name of no one's feeling inadequate.

What if, however, one were to disagree with my argument entirely and wholly support Kilpatrick's worldview as to the use of unfamiliar words? Wouldn't it be nice to have a good word to describe the kind of writing that the hard-word critics bemoan? This thesaurus has several. One of them, although technically relating to the use of archaic words rather than merely hard words, is still close, especially if one argues that hard words ought to be treated as if they were archaic anyway, and that using too many of them is a sign of poor writing:

> **writing** (poor . . . , esp. characterized by the affected choice of archaic words) *n.*: **tushery**. ❖ This novel, set in the last days of Rome in the Eastern Empire, . . . tells the story of [a woman] who discovers that she is a born doctor . . . , but soon realises that there is no room for her in a society where medicine is the province of men. As a piece of historical romance it is saved from **tushery** by down-to-earth writing and a quite remarkable amount of information about early medicine which proves fascinating in itself. (Robert Nye, review of *The Beacon at Alexandria*, by Gillian Bradshaw," *Guardian* [London], 2/6/1987.)

Another word that describes the use of hard words in a derogatory fashion is “lexiphanicism”:

> **writing** (or speech characterized by the affected choice of obscure words) *n.*: **lexiphanicism** (*adj.*: **lexiphanic**). ❖ Can a book be both funny and tiresome? It is not the logorrhoea [wordiness] of the narrator, Harry Driscoll, that bothers me, nor his **lexiphanic** prose . . . (I love reading with a dictionary to hand). (Debra Adelaide, “In Short,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3/29/2003.)

Can the defense of using unfamiliar words be reconciled with the risk of being lexiphanic? Absolutely. Note that the operative adjective in the definition of both “tushery” and “lexiphanicism” is “affected.” That is, pretentious and/or unnatural. Thus, when in the course of just a few sentences Kilpatrick uses “anodyne,” “meiosis,” “adumbration,” “omnium gatherum,” “eudaemonia,” “nimiety,” and “logomachical,” he is writing in an “affected” (albeit intentionally affected) fashion. But that kind of writing, in which the hard words are crammed together one right after the other, is a far cry from the examples found in this thesaurus, in which, almost without exception, the hard words are not being used in an affected way, but rather within the natural flow of the text. Indeed, any other conclusion (for example, that the use of any hard words is automatically lexiphanic) would necessarily lead to the corollary conclusion that virtually every writer quoted in this thesaurus must be a bad writer, which is, of course, absurd.

Turning back to John McWhorter’s *Doing Our Own Thing* as evidence of the current mindset in this country regarding higher vocabulary, he quotes an educator who visited a classroom of twelve-year-olds and observed them studying verbal analogies in anticipation of the SAT. “I learned that they spend hours each month . . . studying long lists of verbal analogies such as ‘untruthful is to mendaciousness’ as ‘circumspect is to caution.’ The time involved was not aimed at developing the students’ reading and writing abilities but rather their test-taking skills.”

McWhorter stated that “the passage got around in the media” and was “intended to make people shake their heads at such a sad sight”:

> [I]t is telling that it spontaneously struck [the educator] as being so sad, so beside the point of education, that twelve-year-olds were being taught the meaning of written words. . . . [He]

> assumes that this learning of words is unrelated to developing students' reading abilities. . . . [H]is discomfort at seeing twelve-year-olds drilled on words like this marks him as a man of our times, for whom learned levels of English are less a main course than a garnish in an education [and for whom] learning high vocabulary [is] an imposition.

One suspects that those who would object to the use of the words contained in this thesaurus also concur with the notion that the teaching of analogies such as "'untruthful is to mendaciousness' as 'circumspect is to caution'" is a waste of time. However, McWhorter notes that this is "hardly self-evident" and quotes an English professor from Rutgers who conducted a study that found "an extraordinarily high correlation" between SAT verbal scores and final grades and a much lower correlation between grades and socioeconomic status. In other words, mastering the types of verbal skills tested by the SAT is not an exercise in trivia or one that is not predictive of future performance in broader academic areas. The same may be said of the synonyms in this thesaurus: Learning their use is not an exercise in trivia or becoming lexiphanic.

In a Utopian lexicographical world, the synonyms that appear in this thesaurus would be as familiar and accessible to everyone as the mundane synonyms in ordinary thesauruses. Perhaps this book is a small step in that direction. However, even though none of us can be expected to know every word in the English language, or even half of the words, that does not mean that one should be insouciant about ignorance of any particular word or that the person who uses the word should be subjected to rebuke or mockery.[31] If a writer uses a word I don't know, it is my job to learn the word, to look it up, and I should not be frustrated or critical because someone has stepped past my own "reasonable person" standard.

The bottom line is this: If a word appears in the dictionaries and is not qualified as being archaic or obsolete, it is a legitimate word, entitled to the same respect and holding the same qualifications for use as any other word. We cannot engage in a "hierarchy of legitimacy" with respect to words, since they are equally legitimate—especially the words in this thesaurus, whose validity is proven by examples showing their current usage. The fact that one word may be more familiar to the average person than another does not disqualify the less common word from use, nor should its user be subject to scorn. If a

word is not described in the dictionaries as being archaic or obsolete (and at the risk of stating the obvious, that means it is not archaic or obsolete), that means it is considered current and thus legitimate—as legitimate as every other word.

C. On the Goal of Preserving the Beauty of the English Language

The majesty and grandeur of the English language—it's the greatest possession we have. The noblest thoughts that ever flowed through the hearts of men are contained in its extraordinary, imaginative and musical mixtures of sounds.

PROFESSOR HENRY HIGGINS to Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*

Like muscles, our lexicon atrophies when not used. However, most of the words in this book are not unusual because of being in disfavor, but rather because most people don't know they exist in the first place. I believe people would use these words if they knew about them, because they are such wonderful words. The problem is that there is no other tool available to introduce these words in any kind of logical fashion. Those who own traditional thesauruses clearly care about their writing and specifically their choice of words. They are unlikely to be people who would scoff at words they don't know. By the same token, it is unlikely that this audience needs to be "taught" that "big," "large," and "huge" are synonymous, as a regular thesaurus will tell them.

This thesaurus is my attempt to reverse the trend of the dumbing down of our collective vocabularies by (one hopes) building a better mousetrap and, in the process, preserving "the majesty and grandeur of the English language," as Professor Higgins eloquently put it to Eliza Doolittle. The second edition, which has taken four years to create (on top of the ten years it took to create the first edition), is a continuation of that effort. It is nearly 50 percent longer than the first edition.

When people first heard about this thesaurus, their typical reaction (aside from concluding that I must be a little daffy) was: Don't we have plenty of thesauruses out there already? Well, based on the fact that the first edition of this book, despite being published by a very

small company, was the top-selling thesaurus in the United States over twenty times on Amazon.com, apparently there was room for one more.

Having defended the hard word, let's go to the synonyms and the examples . . .

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7. There is actually a word for not being able to remember the word you want, namely "lethologica."

8. Take, for example, *The Superior Person's Book of Words* (Godine, 2002), which is just one of dozens of such books available. Under the letter "n," the first five entries are "napiform," "natterjack," "naumachia," "naupathia," and "nefandous." If one ever wanted to use any of these words in lieu of some other word (which is unlikely in the first place, given their definitions), the book has no means of guiding the user to them. A few other examples of many unusual word dictionaries that are alphabetized according to the unusual words include *Weird and Wonderful Words* (Oxford University Press, 2003), *Foyle's Philaver* (Chambers, 2007), *Wordsmanship* (Verbatim, 1991), *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure and Preposterous Words* (Citadel Press, 1990), and *The Logodaedalian's Dictionary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1989). In addition, many of the words in these books are obsolete and thus it would be impossible to find an example of their use, at least when relying on sources more recent than the nineteenth century.

9. At the risk of stating the obvious, all examples used in this thesaurus were chosen solely for their effectiveness in conveying the meaning of the given word and never for editorial content. Absolutely no opinion of my own is expressed on any of the editorial opinions contained in the examples in this thesaurus, of which there are many.

10. The creators of most thesauruses are well aware of this inherent flaw in their "one word to one word" structure, particularly where the words are not familiar. In their introductions, they always warn the readers to use the thesauruses with caution and to use them in conjunction with a dictionary. As stated in one: "The nature of language and the behavior of words defy precision." And so they do—particularly when one is trying to compare one base word with one synonym. The Clarifier helps to supply that precision.

11. In general, the difference between an obsolete word and an archaic word is that, although both have fallen into disuse, an obsolete word has done so more recently.

12. No dictionary seems to support the notion that "excrescence" is synonymous with all the floral-based words in this section, such as sprout, bud, burgeon, blossom, flower, and fruit, but that's another issue.

13. ❖ Of course, at times, the directive to "write clearly" simply means to not be unnecessarily verbose, which is always good advice. For example, saying "If there are any points on which you require explanation or further particulars, we shall be glad to furnish such additional details as may be required by telephone" could be written simply as: "If you have any questions, please call." (Tamra Orr, "Getting Rid of Goobledygook: Don't Let Your Writing Become More Complicated Than It Has to Be," *Writing!* 9/1/2003.)
14. Paula LaRoque, "Dumb—or Dumber?" *Quill*, 5/1/2003.
15. Quoted in "Don't Know Much About History," *American Enterprise*, 1/1/2003.
16. "Write Right," *Career World*, 11/1/2003.
17. John McWhorter, *Doing Our Own Thing* (Gotham Books, 2003), pp. 123–24.
18. People often wonder whether there are any one-word synonyms for a hard word or the word "synonym" itself. It is ironic that out of the more than 600,000 words in the English language, the answer appears to be, not really. About the closest we come to a hard word is "sesquepedalian," a noun meaning "long word" or, as an adjective, "given to the use of long words." Also, an "inkhorn" word or term means one that is pedantic or affectedly learned. In addition "recondite" means not easily understood, but this can apply to many concepts and not simply words. Finally, the rare word "polyonymy" (*adj.*: polyonymous) means the use of various names for one thing. It comes from a Greek word meaning "having many names." As for "thesaurus," a "synonymicon" is a lexicon of synonyms.
19. Kilpatrick is hardly alone in his views. Indeed, he likely speaks for a majority of people. Virtually any time a book contains more than a handful of less commonly used words, the author is sure to be taken to task by reviewers for the use of words the reviewers did not know. It would seem that Kilpatrick, and many similarly minded people, can be advocating only one possible conclusion, namely that the kinds of words that appear in this thesaurus should never be used and thus should be removed from the dictionary altogether. But isn't that a rather sad result, with the upshot simply the dumbing down of our collective vocabulary?
20. The words chosen from Tanenhaus's book actually represent easier targets of criticism than the vast majority of entries in this thesaurus because they at least have simpler one-word equivalents, and thus can be presented without a Clarifier. As for every entry in the book that *does* have a Clarifier, however, the whole point is that they have no one-word simpler equivalent in the first place. Thus, they exist not to be duplicative of existing words, but to economically fill a void. In other words, if one can successfully defend these particular choices of Tanenhaus's, it is even easier to defend all of the entries in this thesaurus that have Clarifiers.
21. In his review of *The Right Word*, he states: "Every person who writes or

speaks for a living must begin his task with certain assumptions. The preacher assumes a certain level of biblical literacy. The reporter who covers Congress assumes that his readers know what is meant by a partisan vote. . . . Fair enough. But in [Buckley's] quotidian columns, he assumes too much." (One wonders why he didn't follow his own practice and use a more mundane word than "quotidian.")

22. Kilpatrick appears to engage in this patronization himself. Returning again to his review of *The Right Word*, he states, as we saw, that in Buckley's "quotidian columns, he assumes too much" and states that "the problem is that Bill writes solely for the discriminating ear and the fastidious eye." He then contrasts this with his own reluctance to use hard words because "my column is aimed at the general readership of the 220 papers that carry it." But what is he really saying here when one reads between the lines? He seems to be saying that his "general readers" may be incurious—unwilling to deal with hard words that appear in the "quotidian columns" they read. In fact, however, virtually every example in this thesaurus comes from a "quotidian column" (or book) that is in fact "aimed at the general readership." The examples are not from specialized sources and certainly are not written "solely for the discriminating ear and the fastidious eye."

23. ❖ In his first formal interview since being dumped as Treasurer, the erudite Mr. Ralph Willis seemingly could find no more eloquent way of expressing his emotion than "I'm very pissed off." [He should have said]: "Well, actually my untimely labefaction has left me feeling somewhat lactiferous and, although I do not intend to indulge in any longanimity, I do admit to a vague sense of lypophrenia. . . . And furthermore, I'm not diversivolent, but I feel there was absolutely no nonfeasance or murcidity on my part and I think the whole thing is a real proctalgia." (Megan Turner, "Five-Star Words," *Courier-Mail* [Brisbane, Australia], 3/14/1992.) ❖ Finding the Christmas shopping moliminous? Do you think the whole event is badot, over-promoted by kakistocracy and the gilly-gaupus? Do you drumble down the local High Street feeling nocent about all you haven't done, or are you quite pococurantish in the face of pressure to spend your hard-earned money on finnimbruns? (*Financial Times* [London] "Present Perfect," 12/13/2003.)

24. James J. Kilpatrick, "An Artfully Assembled Poll," *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, 4/29/1992.

25. **traditionalist** (spec. a person who is opposed to advancements in technology) *n.*: **Luddite**. [The word is based on a group of British workers who destroyed laborsaving textile machinery between 1811 and 1816 for fear that the machinery would reduce employment. It is generally, but not always, used disparagingly.]

26. **name** (of a person well-suited to its owner) *n.*: **aptronym.**

27. **appeal** (making an . . . to one's monetary self-interest) *n*: **argumentum ad**

crumenam.

28. Ang Seng Chai, “The Importance of Being Simple,” *New Straits Times* [Malaysia], 1/17/2004.

29. ❖ Through the years, disco has lived in the rear Rio Room, which is reliably crammed on weekends with off-duty ecdysiasts and microfiber-clad lunkheads. (Mr. Dallas, *Dallas Morning News*, “Orpheus Descending at the Sellar,” 4/19/2002.)

30. While clearly in the minority, Buckley was not completely alone in his opposition to the dumbing down of our collective vocabulary. Michael Spear, an associate professor of journalism at the University of Richmond, has written: “What reporter, after using a word a bit above the level of a high-school dropout, hasn’t heard an editor exclaim with a scowl: ‘What is this word?’ Or, ‘Who do you think you are writing for, anyway? We’re trying to communicate here.’ I’d wonder: ‘With whom? . . . ’ Unfortunately, the use of multisyllable words still often invites attack, or, at least, eye-rolling. But if we are influenced by this, aren’t we relegating ourselves to a rather barren landscape of expression?” See Spear’s article, “Lingually Challenged,” in *Editor & Publisher*, 7/10/2000.

31. The word “insouciant” once again points out the flaw in Kilpatrick’s argument. About that word, we may safely assume, first, that Kilpatrick knows what it means (and has likely used it from time to time); second, that he would never equate it with any of Buckley’s word choices that Kilpatrick mocks; and, third, that he would find ludicrous the notion that it should be jettisoned from the language. And yet, despite these assumptions, two things are true: First, that the simpler words “nonchalant” or “carefree” could be substituted for “insouciant” just about every time. Second, and more important, there are many people who do not know the meaning of “insouciant.” But, given the assumptions above, what can Kilpatrick say to those people? The only thing he could say is that literate people should know the word. Of course, that brings us right back to the problem of setting him up as the standard we would have to consult on every word. One wonders where, for example, would he stand on a less common synonym for “insouciant,” such as “dégagé,” which is used in this thesaurus? In any event, the point is clear.

A

abandonment (of one's religion, principles, or causes) *n.*: **apostasy**. ❖ It was during the 1980s and 1990s that [Barry] Goldwater developed a reputation for **apostasy**. He defended legal abortion and homosexual rights and criticized the religious right, famously arguing that Jerry Falwell deserved "a swift kick in the ass." Some conservatives felt betrayed, while liberals applauded. (Michael Gerson, "Mr. Right," *U.S. News & World Report*, 6/8/1998.)

(2) abandonment (esp. regarding one's belief, cause, or policy) *n.*: **bouleversement** [French]. See *change of mind*

(3) abandonment (of one's belief, cause, or policy) *n.*: **tergiversation** (*v.i.*: **tergiversate**). See *change of mind*

abate (attempt to . . . seriousness of an offense) *v.t.*: **palliate**. ❖ Every civilization needs its self-justifying myths. . . . America's great national myth of the settlement and taming of the frontier grew out of the slaughter of indigenous peoples, which it was meant to explain and **palliate**. (James Bowman, "Alien Menace: Lt. Ripley Is Hollywood's Mythical Woman—Butch and Ready to Kill," *National Review*, 1/26/1998, p. 35.)

abbreviated (as in shortened or curtailed) *adj.*: **decurtate**. See *shortened*

(2) abbreviated (something . . .) *n.*: **bobtail**. See *abridged*

abduct (a person, often to perform compulsory service abroad) *v.t.*: **shanghai**. See *kidnap*

aberration (as in someone or something that deviates from the norm) *n.*: **lusus** [Latin; almost always used as part of the term "lusus naturae," or freak of nature]. See *freak*

abhor (as in despise; hold in contempt; disdain) *v.t.*: **disprize**. See *despise*

(2) abhor (as in despise; hold in contempt; disdain) *v.t.*: **misprize**. See *despise*

(3) abhor *v.t.*: **execrate**. See *hate*

abhorrence (develop an . . . for, as in dislike) *n.*: **scunner** (esp. as in "take a scunner") [British]. See *dislike*

abhorrent (or treacherous) *adj.*: **reptilian**. See *despicable*

(2) abhorrent (too . . . , as in odious, to be mentioned or spoken) *adj.*: **infandous**. See *odious*

(3) abhorrent *adj.*: **ugsome**. See *loathsome*

ability (area of . . .) *n.*: **métier** [French]. See *forte*

ablaze (with intense heat and light) *n.*: **deflagration**. See *explosion*

able (as in skillful) *adj.*: **habile**. See *skillful*

(2) able (or adept) *adj.*: **au fait** [French]. See *skillful*

(3) able (to handle all matters) *adj.*: **omnicompetent**. See *competent*

abnormal (as in departing from the standard or norm) *adj.*: **heteroclite**. ❖ Their mother was severely authoritarian. It is often from such repressive origins that rebels arise. "You have to assassinate your parents" was Philippe's advice to the young. He did it by running away to join the Foreign Legion. He attended, off and on, a suspiciously **heteroclite** array of schools before graduating with a degree in foreign languages from the Sorbonne. (James Kirkup, obituary of Philippe Leotard, *Independent* [London], 8/28/2001.)

(2) abnormal (as in unusual) *adj.*: **selcouth**. See *unusual*

abnormality (as in someone or something that deviates from the norm) *n.*: **lusus** [Latin; almost always used as part of the term "lusus naturae," or freak of nature]. See *freak*

abolish *v.t.*: **extirpate**. ❖ The argument: that if you are sufficiently fanatical in attempting to **extirpate** all sex discrimination, you will end up abolishing institutions you'd probably prefer to keep, like Wellesley, Hollins and other single-sex women's colleges. (Daniel Seligman, "Keeping Up: A Splash for the Secretary of Energy," *Fortune*, 2/05/1996, p. 138.)

(2) abolish (as in put an end to) *n.*: **quietus** (*v.t.*: "put the quietus to"). See *termination*

abolition *n.*: **quietus**. See *termination*

abominable *adj.*: **execrable**. ❖ My generation has lots of excuses for our **execrable** parenting. [For example,] the economy has forced most women into the workplace. (Katherine Dowling, "Parents Can't Duck Blame for Morally Abandoned Kids," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 3/11/1996.)

abortion (antiabortion term for an . . . clinic) *n.*: **abortuary**. ❖ Referring to a business where someone is killed as a "health-care facility" or "clinic" assaults the dignity of the one who is killed there. When the primary goal of an establishment is to violently kill human beings (in an embryonic or fetal stage of life), they are abortion sites, child killing centers, abortion chambers, abortion mills and **abortuaries.** They, again, are not "health-care facilities." (Susan Pine, "City Should Not Help Killing Center," *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*, 9/27/2005.)

(2) abortion *n.*: **feticide**. ❖ [T]he equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment would seem to require states to extend legal protection to the unborn. [In *Roe v. Wade*, Justice Harry] Blackmun, however, relying on grossly inaccurate legal history . . . concluded that the due-process clause of [the] amendment forbids states from providing any meaningful protection against deliberate **feticide**. (*National Review*, "Harry Blackmun, R.I.P.," 4/5/1999.)

abound *v.i.*: **pullulate**. See *teem*

about (as in concerning or regarding) *prep.*: **anent**. See *regarding*

about-face (as in reversal of policy or position) *n.*: **volte-face** [French]. ❖ More than 350 years have passed since Galileo was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church for the correct, if impolitic, declaration that the earth revolved around the sun. Now the church has solemnized its belated **volte-face** on the celestial dispute by mailing an apology [that is, issuing new stamps commemorating Galileo]. (*Time* International, Chronicles: "More than 350 Years Have Passed Since Galileo Was Condemned," 6/13/1994, p. 13.)

(2) about-face (as in sudden and complete change in one's beliefs or change of mind) *n.*: **Damascene conversion** (idiom). [This term derives from the conversion of St. Paul to Christianity on the road to Damascus. This is also sometimes referred to as a "Damascene moment," as in the second example below.] ❖ Sanford I. Weill's call to break up big banks certainly took many on Wall Street by surprise. But it was such a major turnabout that [Alan Greenberg] . . . thinks it's unbelievable. [Greenberg said] that while it's possible that the man who created Citigroup had undergone a **Damascene conversion**, it's something of a moot point. "That egg has been scrambled, so we can quit talking about it," he said. (Michael J. De La Merced, "Greenberg Asks: Was That Sandy Weill, or Sacha Baron Cohen," *New York Times*, 8/7/2102.) ❖ Hank Grotowski (Billy Bob Thornton) is a racist prison guard. . . . [The son of] Leticia (Halle Berry) is [then] killed in a hit-and-run accident. Inexplicably—since there is no obvious **Damascene moment** that turns Hank from a racist paedophobe into all-round nice guy—it is Hank who plays the good Samaritan and drives the boy to hospital; and it is Hank who is there to support Leticia as she faces eviction from her home. (Philip Kerr, "A Shocking Cheek," *New Statesman*, 6/17/2002.)

(3) about-face (as in abandonment of one's religion, principles, or causes) *n.*: **apostasy**. See *abandonment*

(4) about-face (esp. regarding one's beliefs, causes, or policies) *n.*: **bouleversement** [French]. See *change of mind*

(5) about-face (regarding one's belief, cause, or policy) *n.*: **tergiversation** (*v.i.*: **tergiversate**). See *change of mind*

above (lying . . .) *adj.*: **superjacent**. See *overlying*

abreast (being . . . of or familiar with something) *adj.*: **au fait** [French]. See *familiar*

abridged (something . . .) *n.*: **bobtail**. ❖ Senator Trent Lott, the majority leader, said that it would be "a big mistake" for the Senate to vote to dismiss the [impeachment] charges Monday. The Mississippi Republican said it would be a "**bobtail** action of a constitutional process.'' (Brian Knowlton, "Trial of Clinton Turns Bitter: Democrats 'Appalled' at Sudden

Summons of Lewinsky," *International Herald Tribune*, 1/25/1999.)

(2) abridged (as in shortened or curtailed) *adj.*: **decurtate**. See *shortened*

abrupt (as in hasty or sudden) *adj.*: **subitaneous**. See *hasty*

(2) abrupt (as in sudden, or unexpected) *adj.*: **subitaneous**. See *sudden*

abscond (as in leave hurriedly or secretly) *v.t.*: **absquatulate**. See *leave*

absent (anything better) *adv.*: **faute de mieux** [French]. See *lacking*

absentminded (as in distracted, esp. because of worries or fears) *adj.*: **distrait**. See *distracted*

(2) absentminded (person, as in an impractical, contemplative person with no clear occupation or income) *n.*: **luftmensch** [lit. man of air; German, Yiddish]. See *dreamer*

absentmindedness (or engaging in . . . , spec., daydreaming) *n.*, *v.i.*: **woolgathering**. See *daydreaming*

absolute (as in complete or unlimited, esp. as in . . . power) *adj.*: **plenary**. See *complete*

(2) absolute (as in inviolable) *adj.*: **infrangible**. See *inviolable*

(3) absolute (usually used with "nonsense") *adj.*: **arrant**. See *total*

absolution (as in place or occasion of humiliation and seeking . . .) *n.*: **Canossa**. See *penance*

absorb (as in incorporate, the ideas or attitudes of others, esp. parents, into one's own personality) *v.t.*: **introject**. See *incorporate*

abstract (as in intangible; lacking material form or substance) *adj.*: **incorporeal**. See *intangible*

(2) abstract (as in theoretical or speculative) *adj.*: **notional**. See *theoretical*

absurd (as in acting foolishly, esp. in a smug or complacent manner) *adj.*: **fatuous**. See *foolish*

(2) absurd (as in laughable) *adj.*: **gelastic**. See *laughable*

(3) absurd (as in laughable) *adj.*: **risible**. See *laughable*

absurdity (spec. showing the . . . or fallacy of a proposition or point of view by showing the absurd result which would ensue if it was taken to its logical extreme) *n.*: **reductio ad absurdum**. ❖ The Buffalo News printed a correction involving a woman who had been identified as a spokesman . . . changing the designation to spokeswoman. . . . Taken to an extreme, we should refer to personhole covers in the street. . . . In a **reductio ad absurdum**, we should call a female a woperson. This is the sort of political correctness that has run amok in modern usage. (Patrick Donlon, "Everybody's Column," *Buffalo News*, 1/10/2008.)

(2) absurdity (as in foolishness or stupidity) *n.*: **bêtise** [French]. See *stupidity*

(3) absurdity (as in nonsense) *n.*: **codswallop** [British]. See *nonsense*

(4) absurdity (as in nonsense) *n.*: **piffle**. See *nonsense*

(5) absurdity (statement that contains a logical . . . , usually not recognized by the speaker) *n.*: **Irish bull**. See *incongruity*

(6) absurdity *n.*: **folderol** (or **falderal**). See *nonsense*
(7) absurdity *n.*: **trumpery**. See *nonsense*

abundance (illusion of . . . when in fact there is little) *adj.*: **Barmecidal** (esp. as in "Barmecidal feast"). See *illusion*

abuse (being subject to . . . , esp. public) *n.*: **obloquy**. ❖ Despite being the target of so much public **obloquy**, [John D.] Rockefeller seemed fearless. (Ron Chernow, *Titan*, Random House [1998], p. 262.)

abuse of power (often sexual) *n.*: **droit de seigneur** [French]. See *entitlement*

abusers (spec. a group of commercial, political, or financial interests that exploits the public) *n.*: **plunderbund**. See *exploiters*

abusive (language) *n.*: **billingsgate**. See *language*
(2) abusive (language) *n.*: **vituperation** (*adj.*: **vituperative**). See *invective*
(3) abusive (woman who is also vulgar) *n.*: **fishwife**. See *woman*

abutting (as in surrounding) *adj.*: **circumjacent**. See *surrounding*

academic (as in pedantic) *adj.*: **donnish**. See *pedantic*
(2) academic (as in scholarly or bookish) *adj.*: **donnish**. See *bookish*
(3) academic (as in theoretical or speculative) *adj.*: **notional**. See *theoretical*

accept (as in approve, esp. to confirm officially) *v.t.*: **homologate**. See *approve*

acceptable (an . . . , as in proper or appropriate, thing to do) *n.*: **bon ton** [French]. See *appropriate*
(2) acceptable (in accord with . . . standards) *adj.*: **comme il faut** [French]. See *proper*
(3) acceptable *adj.*: **cromulent**. See *legitimate*

acceptance (joyful . . . of one's fate in life) *n.*: **amor fati**. [This Latin phrase, meaning "love of fate," comes from Friedrich Nietzsche, who stated, in *Ecce Homo*, "My formula for greatness in a human being is ***amor fati***: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but *love* it." The term is sometimes considered synonymous with stoicism or fatalism, but this matching is not technically accurate since those philosophies do not require a joyful acceptance of one's fate in life, merely an acceptance.] ❖ One of his greatest fears was the possibility of eternal recurrence, that everything he'd been through would keep repeating itself, that nothing would change. He knew that, as Nietzsche had said, he needed to embrace ***amor fati***, his love of fate. He needed to trust that all the suffering and loss he'd endured was ultimately good, that everything that'd happened had a predestined purpose. (Don Lee, *Wrack and Ruin*, Norton [2008], p. 132.)
(2) acceptance (as in giving one's stamp of approval) *n.*: **nihil obstat** [Latin]. See *approval*

accepting (as in desire to please) *adj.*: **complaisant**. See *obliging*

(2) accepting (for the sake of argument) *adv.*: **concesso non dato** [Italian; sometimes **dato non concesso**]. See *stipulating*

(3) accepting (of other views and opinions) *adj.*: **latitudinarian**. See *open-minded*

accessible (to the general public in terms of comprehension or suitability) *adj.*: **exoteric**. ❖ [Robert Penn Warren] saw nothing contradictory in his esoteric and **exoteric** activities, and wrote with equal facility for magazines such as *Life* and for those of small circulation. (Daniel Aaron, "A Minor Master," *New Republic*, 10/20/1997.)

access key (something such as an . . . or master key that permits one to gain access or pass at will) *n.*: **passe-partout**. See *passkey*

accessories (as in finery) *n.*: **caparison**. See *finery*

(2) accessories (showy . . . , as in finery) *n.*: **frippery**. See *finery*

accidental (as in by chance) *adj.*: **adventitious**. See *chance*

acclaim *n.*: **éclat**. ❖ The City of Atlanta held a contest for a slogan that would best illustrate why the City was chosen for the international **éclat** that goes with hosting the 1996 Olympic Games. The winner: "Atlanta—Come celebrate our dream." (Nat Hentoff, "Amnesty Focuses Light on Atlanta," *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 7/22/1996.)

(2) acclaim (or to bestow . . . upon) *n.*, *v.t.*: **garland**. See *accolade*

accolade (or to confer an . . . upon) *n.*, *v.t.*: **garland**. ❖ The first American movie to be shot in Vietnam since the war, *Three Seasons* arrives **garlanded** with prizes from the Sundance Film Festival. (David Ansen, "Return to Vietnam; *Three Seasons* May Not Journey Far Enough," *Newsweek*, 5/3/1999.)

accomodating (as in desire to please) *adj.*: **complaisant**. See *obliging*

accompaniment *n.*: **appanage**. See *adjunct*

accompanying (as in incident to) *adj.*: **appurtenant**. See *pertaining*

accomplishment (celebrating . . . , as in victory) *adj.*: **epinician**. See *victory*

(2) accomplishment (crowning . . .) *n.*: **copestone**. See *achievement*

accomplishments *n.pl.*: **res gestae**. See *deeds*

accord (in . . .) *adj.*: **consonant**. See *harmony*

(2) accord (in . . . , as in harmonious or compatible) *adj.*: **simpatico**. See *compatible*

(3) accord (of the human race throughout history on an issue) *n.*: **consensus genitum** [Latin]. See *consensus*

accouterments (as in trappings) *n.*: **habiliment(s)**. See *trappings*

accumulation (confused or jumbled . . .) *n.*: **agglomeration**. See *jumble*

(2) accumulation (of objects, people, or ideas) *n.*: **congeries**. See *collection*

accurate (appearing to be . . .) *adj.*: **verisimilar**. See *realistic*

(2) accurate (as in reflecting reality or truth) *adj.*: **veridical**. See *realistic* and *truthful*

(3) accurate (spec. as in executed in precise detail) *adj.*: **pointillist**. See *precise*

accusation (spec. accusing an accuser of having committed a similar offense) *n.*: **tu quoque** [Latin]. ❖ The Democrats, who still resent Mr. Barbour for raising the money that snatched Congress away from them in 1994, are trying to imply that Mr. Barbour's Republicans are just as sleazy as the Clinton people. . . . This **tu quoque** attack on Mr. Barbour begins to look like simple partisanship. (*Economist*, "Inside the Belly of the Beast," 7/26/1997.)

(2)accusation (which is false, defamatory, and published for political gain right before an election) *n.*: **roorback**. See *falsehood*

accuse *v.t.*: **inculpate**. See *blame*

accuser (esp. by being an informer) *n.*: **delator**. ❖ The right to file charges against a fellow citizen was not in itself new, but took on a new character when the state began awarding the **delator** a share of the property of the accused; a successful accusation of treason, for example, carried as a prize a quarter of the victim's estate. (Walter Olson, "Tripp Wire: How Informers Ended Up Behind Every Office Potted Plant," *Reason*, 4/1/1998, p. 60.)

accustomed *adj.*: **wonted**. See *customary*

acerbic (as in . . . remarks) *adj.*: **astringent**. See *harsh*

achievement (crowning . . .) *n.*: **copestone**. [Copestone has a literal meaning and a figurative one. The literal meaning is the uppermost stone of a wall, building, or structure. The figurative one is a crowning achievement or final (or finishing) touch. This is an example of the former use (see also *final touch*)]. ❖ Sigrid Undset was a dominant figure in the Norwegian literary milieu throughout the period between the World Wars. Her novels topped the best-seller lists of the day, and in 1935 she was appointed chair of the Norwegian Society of Authors. The **copestone** on her illustrious career was set with her biography of *Caterina av Siena* (1951), a woman of quite extraordinary accomplishment. Sigrid Undset considered this work to be her spiritual testament. (http://nordicwomensliterature.net/article/light-suffering.)

(2) achievement (celebrating . . . , as in victory) *adj.*: **epinician**. See *victory*

achievements *n.pl.*: **res gestae**. See *deeds*

aching (as in longing, esp. for something one once had but has no more) *n.*: **desiderium**. See *longing*

acknowledgment (of sin) *n.*: **confiteor** (sometimes cap.). See *confession*

acme (as in highest point that can be attained or the ultimate degree, as of a condition or quality) *n.*: **ne plus ultra**. See *ultimate*

acne (tending to produce or aggravate . . .) *adj.*: **comedogenic**. ❖ The best skin care in the world isn't going to cure your acne so don't spend a fortune. Always look on labels for **non-comedogenic** products as these

won't block follicles. (*Mirror*, "Health Zone: Tips from the Top Spot of Bother," 3/21/2002.)

acquainted (being . . . or familiar with something) *adj.*: **au fait** [French]. See *familiar*

acquire (by mooching or sponging off of) *v.t.*: **cadge**. See *mooch*

(2) acquire (for oneself without permission) *v.t.*: **expropriate**. See *seize*

(3) acquire (money unfairly and in excessive amounts) *v.t.*: **mulct**. See *extract*

(4) acquire (or claim for oneself without right) *v.t.*: **arrogate**. See *claim*

acquittal (finding . . . through testimony of others) *n.*: **compurgation**. ❖ [In medieval times], the ordeal, a form of proof which relied on [torture] to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused [, was used] in cases where normal juridical procedures, most notably **compurgation**, the sworn endorsement of friends and neighbors of the accused, were not deemed applicable. (Kathleen Biddick, "Aesthetics, Ethnicity, and the History of Art," *Art Bulletin*, 12/1/1996, p. 594.)

acrimony *n.*: **asperity**. ❖ Mr. Karsh's will assuredly not be the last word. In an exchange last year in *Middle East Quarterly*, Mr. Shlaim mounted a spirited (and, given the **asperity** of Mr. Karsh's attack, good-natured) defense of his collusion thesis. (*Economist*, "The Unchosen People," 7/19/1997.)

(2) acrimony (as in bitterness of spirit or resentment) *n.*: **gall and wormwood** (idiom) (or **wormwood and gall**). See *bitterness*

across *prep.*, *adv.*: **athwart**. ❖ Dagestan is far more strategically vital than Chechnya: the Russians can build a bypass around Chechnya for Caspian Sea oil; Dagestan, however, lies **athwart** the only Russian route from Baku. (Owen Matthews, "Digging In for Worse to Come," *Newsweek* International, 9/20/1999, p. 26.)

act (which is official, as in with the authority of one's office) *adv.*, *adj.*: **ex cathedra**. See *official*

acting (as in posturing or putting on an act, esp. in political matters) *n.*: **kabuki dance** (idiom) (or **kabuki theater**). See *posturing*

action (as in course of . . .) *n.*: **démarche** [French]. See *course of action*

(2) action (gracious . . .) *n.*: **beau geste**. See *gesture*

actions (as in deeds) *n.pl.*: **res gestae**. See *deeds*

(2) actions (study of human . . .) *n.*: **praxeology**. See *behavior*

active (as in robust, strong, healthy, vigorous, etc.) *adj.*: **sthenic**. See *robust*

actors (in a play or story) *n.*: **dramatis personae**. See *characters*

actress (comic . . . , sometimes in musicals or opera, who plays a nonleading character who is saucy, flirtatious, and/or frivolous) *n.*: **soubrette**. ❖ If [Violet Carlson] is not an enduring household name, it is only because, unlike . . . other luminaries of the era, Miss Carlson was not a leading lady, or even a demure ingenue. She was a **soubrette**, that deliciously wicked

and flirtatious featured player who never gets the leading man but who can steal a scene with a song and snare an audience's heart with a saucy shake of her curly head. (Robert Thomas, obituary of Violet Carlson, *New York Times*, 12/8/1997.)

acts (as in deeds) *n.pl.*: **res gestae**. See *deeds*

actual (as in genuine) *adj.*: **echt** [German]. See *genuine*

(2) actual (as in legitimate; acceptable) *adj.*: **cromulent**. See *legitimate*

(3) actual (as in reflecting reality) *adj.*: **veridical**. See *realistic*

actuality (state of . . . as opposed to potentiality) *n.*: **entelechy**. ❖ Animals are not only being assimilated to humans; they are being made into the destiny of humans, the **entelechy** of humanity in which it realizes its highest possibility. [Fully social] animals are assumed to have achieved a degree of success as social animals that we ourselves, who invented the idea of society, have not attained, argue the sociobiologists. (Richard Klein, "The Power of Pets: America's Obsession with the Cute and Cuddly," *New Republic*, 7/10/1995, p. 18.)

(2) actuality (as in the reality of something as it really is, as opposed to how it is perceived by the senses) *n.*: **noumenon**. See *thing-in-itself*

(3) actuality (historical . . .) *n.*: **historicity**. See *authenticity*

(4) actuality (relating to a story in which . . . and fiction are mixed together) *adj.*: **Pirandellian**. See *reality*

actualize (as in making an abstract concept seem real) *v.t.*: **reify**. See *materialize*

actually (as in, in fact) *adj.*, *adv.*: **de facto** (as contrasted with de jure: legally or by law) [Latin]. See *in fact*

adage (pithy . . .) *n.*: **gnome** (*adj.*: **gnomic**). See *catchphrase*

(2) adage (witty or clever . . . or line) *n.*: **bon mot**. See *line*

(3) adage *n.*: **apothegm**. See *saying*

adages (given to stating . . . , esp. in a moralizing way) *adj.*: **sententious**. See *aphoristic*

Adam and Eve (belief that the human race is descended from two persons, such as . . .) *n.*: **monogenism**. ❖ The story of Adam and Eve, though mythical, is not understood [by Christians] merely as such. It is taken as a foundation of Christian anthropology and of subsequent theology. . . . [But] how can God's justice condemn the whole of humanity for the sin of the first parents? Is not the underlying hypothesis of **monogenism** itself questioned in the face of scientific evidence? (Tissa Balasuriya, "Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on 'God Is Love,'" *Cross Currents*, 6/22/2006.)

adamant (as in stubborn) *adj.*: **pervicacious**. See *stubborn*

adapt (or yield to current circumstances or necessities) *v.i.*: **temporize**. ❖ [President Bush] must submit a 1991 defense budget in the midst of change so enormous that no one can tell what the country's future defense needs

may be. There is pressure to cut. . . . The need is to **temporize**, but at $300 billion a year for defense—after nine years of pressure on domestic programs, and with the Soviet threat seeming to recede with the daily news—that is hard to do. (*Washington Post*, "More on Those Defense Cuts," 12/19/1989.)

addictive (or nearly so; said esp. of food or drink that is so good that one wants more) *adj.*: **moreish** [chiefly British]. ❖ Freedom [lager] doesn't let the tastebuds down. It is said to marry with food very well, particularly pizza to compliment the rich yeastiness and, rather dangerously, it is very **moreish**. It's the lager for those who eagerly did their groundwork in the '80s and have a greater appreciation of bottled beers in the '90s. (Carol Ann Rice, "When Small Beer Is So Satisfying," *Birmingham Post*, 8/19/1998.)

addition (as in insertion of something between existing things) *n.*: **intercalation**. See *insertion*

(2) addition (as in something that is an accessory to something else) *n.*: **appurtenance**. See *appendage*

additionally *adv.*: **withal**. See *moreover*

address (to . . . an absent person or thing) *v.t.*: **apostrophize**. [This is the verb form of apostrophe—the words themselves. In dramatic works and poetry, this rhetorical form is often introduced by the word "O." For example: "O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?" (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2). Or: "O eloquent, just, and mighty Death!" (Sir Walter Raleigh, *A Historie of the World*). A more recent example is when Ronald Reagan said: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"]. ❖ Benjamin Trotter [is a] writer-cum-rock-composer. . . . Cicely Boyd is "the willowy goddess who ran the junior wing of the Girls' School Dramatic Society"—at least in the awestruck estimation of Benjamin, her ardent worshiper-from-afar, who through most of the novel can **apostrophize** his love for her only in score upon score of labored progressive rock compositions. (Chris Lehman, "Dazed and Confused," *Washington Post*, 3/3/2002.)

(2) address (a subject at length in speech or writing) *v.i.*: **expatiate**. See *expound*

(3) address (a topic, esp. in a long-winded or pompous manner) *v.i.*: **bloviate**. See *speak*

(4) address (formal . . .) *n.*: **allocution**. See *speech*

(5) address (lengthy . . . , as in speech) *n.*: **peroration**. See *monologue*

(6) address (someone not present or an object, as if having a conversation) *v.t.*: **apostrophize**. See *converse*

adept (as in skillful) *adj.*: **au fait** [French]. See *skillful*

(2) adept (as in skillful) *adj.*: **habile**. See *skillful*

(3) adept (at handling all matters) *adj.*: **omnicompetent**. See *competent*

(4) adept (female who is . . . at something) *n.*: **past mistress**. See *expert*

adequate (be . . .) *v.t., v.i.*: **satisfice**. See *suffice*

adhere (together, as with glue) *v.t.*: **agglutinate**. ❖ The [rhinoceros] horn is nothing more than **agglutinated** hair with no medicinal value, but is highly coveted—said to contain legendary aphrodisiac properties—in Chinese pharmacopoeia. (Claire Scobie, "Nature Watch," *Sunday Telegraph* [London], 9/27/1998.)

(2) adhere (closely to a line, rule, or principle) *v.i.*: **hew**. See *conform*

(3) adhere (tightly and tenaciously, in the case of a person or thing) *n.*: **limpet**. See *clinger*

(4) adhere (tightly and tenaciously, in the case of a person or thing) *n.*: **remora**. See *clinger*

adherent (strong . . . of a cause, religion, or activity) *n.*: **votary**. See *supporter*

(2) adherent *adj.*: **acolyte**. See *follower*

adjacent (geographic regions) *adj.*: **limitrophe**. See *neighboring*

adjunct *n.*: **appanage**. ❖ Some still believe the dream, insisting that [the town of Primorye in eastern Russia]—no longer a pliant **appanage** of Moscow—will unite with the Pacific Rim and arise from its Soviet hangover in a hearty economic rebound. (Andrew Meier, "Europe: Letter from Vladivostok: Surviving on the Edge," *Time* International, 2/7/2000, p. 25.)

adjust (one's behavior or actions to adapt to current circumstances or necessities) *v.i.*: **temporize**. See *adapt*

ad-libbed *adj.*: **autoschediastic**. See *unrehearsed*

administrator (as in bureaucrat) *n.*: **satrap**. See *bureaucrat*

admiration (as in praise) *n.*: **approbation**. See *praise*

admirer (male . . .) *n.*: **swain**. See *suitor*

admirers (group of fawning . . .) *n.*: **claque**. ❖ On a visit to Time Inc.'s new-media facility, [Bill Gates] answered questions from a collection of magazine editors as if by rote, but on his way out he asked to see the Internet servers and spent 45 minutes grilling the **claque** of awed techies there. (Walter Isaacson, "Business: In Search of the Real Bill Gates," *Time*, 1/13/1997, p. 44.)

admission (of sin) *n.*: **confiteor** (sometimes cap.). See *confession*

(2) admission (of sin) *n.*: **peccavi**. See *confession*

admit (as in confide one's thoughts or feelings) *v.t.*, *v.i.*: **unbosom**. See *confide*

(2) admit (to one's sins, esp. in church) *v.t.*, *v.i.*: **shrive**. See *confess*

admitting (for the sake of argument) *adv.*: **concesso non dato** [Italian; sometimes **dato non concesso**]. See *stipulating*

admonish (sharply) *v.t.*: **keelhaul**. See *rebuke*

(2) admonish *v.t.*: **objurgate**. See *criticize*

admonisher (as in one who lectures or scolds another but typically with benevolent intent, such as to give advice, educate, or encourage) *n.*: **Dutch uncle**. See *criticizer*

admonishing (as in criticism) *n.*: **animadversion** (*v.t.*: **animadvert**). See *criticism*

admonition (relating to the giving of an . . .) *adj.*: **paraenetic** (*n.*: **paraenesis**). See *advice*

ado (as in commotion) *n.*: **bobbery**. See *commotion*

(2) ado (as in commotion) *n.*: **kerfuffle**. See *commotion*

(3) ado (over a trifling matter) *n.*: **foofaraw**. See *fuss*

adopt (as in incorporate, the ideas or attitudes of others, esp. parents, into one's own personality) *v.t.*: **introject**. See *incorporate*

adoration (as in worship of dead people) *n.*: **necrolatry**. See *worship*

(2) adoration (mad or crazy . . .) *n.*: **amour fou** [French]. See *love*

(3) adoration (of women) *n.*: **philogyny**. See *women*

(4) adoration (spec. the emotional thrill and excitement one feels when initially in love) *n.*: **limerence** (*adj.*: **limerent**). See *love*

adorn (in a showy or excessive manner) *v.t.*: **bedeck**. ❖ The best albums preserve not just a show's score but the meaning and joy of the theatrical moment. Sitting at home, you can't see the deliriously gaudy haberdashery that **bedecks** the Guys and Dolls touts. (Richard Corliss, "Broadway's Record Year," *Time*, 9/14/1992, p. 71.)

(2) adorn (or dress in a showy or excessive manner) *v.t.*: **bedizen**. ❖ Occasionally, I've shown houses out this way, though their owners, fat and **bedizened** as pharaohs, and who should be giddy with the world's gifts, always seem the least pleasant people in the world. (Richard Ford, *Independence Day*, Knopf [1995], p. 128.)

(3) adorn (attempt to . . . , embellish, or improve something unnecessarily) *v.t.*: **paint the lily** (idiom). See *embellish*

adornment (which is showy or superfluous or frilly) *n.*: **furbelow**. See *ornamentation*

adornments (showy . . .) *n.*: **frippery**. See *finery*

(2) adornments *n.*: **caparison**. See *finery*

adroit (or adept) *adj.*: **au fait** [French]. See *skillful*

(2) adroit *adj.*: **habile**. See *skillful*

adroitness (or subtlety, esp. in political or business dealings) *n.*: **Italian hands** [often used in the phrase "fine Italian hands"]. See *subtlety*

adulation (one who seeks favor through . . . , esp. of one in power) *n.*: **courtier**. See *flattery*

adult education *n.*: **andragogy**. ❖ As more and more schools have discovered, the trick is not getting adults into the classroom, but keeping them there. Whether they're in search of professional credentials or expanding a hobby, adults thrive in classes that value their life experience. . . . **Andragogy** also assumes that adults are highly motivated, self-directed, and have become used to learning by solving problems. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, "Adults Thrive in Classes That Value Their Life Experience,"

8/4/1998.)

adulterous (man married to . . . wife) *n.*: **cuckold** (*v.t.*: to make a . . . of). ❖ Married with two children, Don acquired a reputation as an incurable skirt chaser. . . . His conquests soon became the stuff of legend. One that is often told but has never been confirmed: A **cuckolded** husband got his revenge by dumping a load of wet cement into Don's convertible. (Kim Clark, "Tough Times for the Chicken King Don Tyson," *Fortune*, 10/28/1996, p. 88.)

advance (esp. a military . . .) *n.*: **anabasis**. ❖ Federer, carried forward by the momentum from his serve, picked [Andre Agassi's] return out of the air, effortlessly flicking a backhand volley from behind the service line, and continued his **anabasis** toward the net. (L. Jon Wertheim, "That Was as Good as It Gets: So Said a Certain Bald Superstar from Las Vegas About the Play of the Lavishly Talented Roger Federer, Who Elevated the Men's Game in 2003," *Sports Illustrated*, 12/29/2003.)

advantage (as in, "to whose . . . ?") *n.*: **cui bono**. [Latin. This phrase is generally posed as a question and usually one to which the writer knows the answer.] ❖ [W]hat if George Bush is a plant . . . put here by shadowy somebodies in order to undermine the United States? . . . You can ask, **cui bono**? Ah, there's a list: radical Islamicists, international oil cartels, China, the Russian mob, North Korea, Iran, the South American drug cartels, just about anyone who needs a diplomatically inept, chronically weak U.S. administration to consolidate its power. (Jon Carroll, Daily Datebook, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6/24/2004.)

advantageous (as in beneficial, useful, and/or profitable) *adj.*: **proficuous**. See *useful*

Advent (as in Second Coming) *n.*: **Parousia** [Greek]. See *Second Coming*

adverse (as in harmful) *adj.*: **nocent**. See *harmful*

(2) adverse *adj.*: **oppugnant**. See *antagonistic*

adversities (long series of . . . , woes, miseries, problems, or disasters) *n.*: **Iliad**. See *woes*

advice (relating to the giving of . . .) *adj.*: **paraenetic** (*n.*: **paraenesis**) ❖ "Remember those who are in prison," admonishes the Christian moralist. . . . Remembering the incarcerated is only one of what Harold W. Attridge calls a "series of discrete and staccato admonitions" in the final chapter of Hebrews. . . . The writer of Hebrews 13 groups this and other **paraenetic** points under a broader one: "Let mutual love continue," which echoes Jesus' "new command" to his disciples . . . (Bruce Wollenberg, "Guest List," *Christian Century*, 8/24/2004.)

(2) advice (as in word to the wise) *phr.*: **verbum sap** [Latin]. See *word to the wise*

(3) advice (or exhortation or persuasion) *n., adj.*: **paraneisis**. See *exhortation*

(4) advice (or exhortation or persuasion) *n., adj.*: **protrepic**. See *exhortation*

advisors (group of . . . , often scheming or plotting) *n.*: **camarilla**. ❖ An old-fashioned nationalist, Giesevius had been authorized by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the head of German intelligence, to make contact with the Allies on behalf of the German Resistance. He supplied Dulles with tantalizing information on the incessant infighting among Hitler's **camarilla**. (Jacob Heilbrun, "Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles," *New Republic*, 3/27/1995, p. 32.)

advocate (of a cause) *n.*: **paladin**. See *proponent*

(2) advocate (or leader, esp. for a political cause) *n.*: **fugleman**. See *leader*

(3) advocate (strong . . . of a cause, religion, or activity) *n.*: **votary**. See *supporter*

advocating (a particular point of view) *adj.*: **tendentious**. See *biased*

affability *n.*: **bonhomie**. ❖ But Peace with Dignity won't come easily [in the Clinton impeachment proceedings]. For all the bipartisan **bonhomie** that has marked the Senate proceedings, Democrats aren't inclined to do much to help Republicans save face with their party's Clinton-loathing right wing. (James Carney, "Nation: Waiting for the Bell," *Time*, 2/15/1999, p. 30.)

affable (and pleasant) *adj.*: **sympathique** [French]. See *genial*

affair (as in sex outside of marriage) *n.*: **hetaerism**. ❖ Of course, [historically] men still enjoyed conjugal infidelity referred to as **hetaerism**. . . . Monogamy was thus only meant for women. (Unsigned letter to the editor, *Edmonton Sun*, 5/7/2000.)

(2) affair (love . . .) *n.*: **amourette** [French]. See *love affair*

affected (and high-flown use of language) *adj.*: **euphuistic**. ❖ *Ryder*, [Djuna Barnes's] first novel, shows off her talent for baroque excess nearly as well, with spirited flights of invective, arias of verbal extravagance and mock-Elizabethan prose dotted with **euphuistic** exuberance. (*Washington Post*, New in Paperback, 6/10/1990.)

(2) affected (as in contrived) *adj.*: **voulu** [French]. See *contrived*

(3) affected (as in insincere) *adj.*: **crocodilian**. See *insincere*

(4) affected (as in pedantic) *adj.*: **donnish**. See *pedantic*

(5) affected (of an . . . , as in pedantic, word or term) *adj.*: **inkhorn**. See *pedantic*

(6) affected (speech or writing) *adj.*: **fustian**. See *pompous*

affection (as in love, for all people) *n.*: **caritas** [Latin]. See *charity*

affectionate (as in amorous) *adj.*: **amative**. See *amorous*

affiliated (with, as in incident to) *adj.*: **appurtenant**. See *pertaining*

affinity (as in family ties) *n.*: **propinquity**. See *kinship*

affluence (study of or focus on . . . , esp. in artistic works) *n.*: **plutography**. See *wealth*

affluent (and/or prominent person) *n.*: **nabob**. See *bigwig*

(2) affluent (government by the . . .) *n.*: **plutocracy**. See *government*

affront (an . . . to another's dignity) *n.*: **lese majesty**. See *insult*

(2) affront (as in insult, delivered while leaving the scene) *n.*: **Parthian shot**. See *parting shot*

affronted (person) *n.*: **affrontee**. [As with affronts, issues can arise as to whether the person merely perceives themself as affronted or has actually been.] ❖ Last week on these pages, Michael Bywater launched an attack on political correctness—and started an impassioned online debate. [One reader responded:] Readiness to be affronted is a means of implying how much higher than others is the moral plane upon which the **affrontee** exists. (*Independent* [London], "Offended? You Tell Us," 2/16/2009.)

(2) affronted (easily . . .) *adj.*: **umbrageous**. See *offended*

afraid (and cautious and indecisive) *adj.*: **Prufrockian**. See *timid*

(2) afraid (as in cowardly) *adj.*: **lily-livered**. See *cowardly*

(3) afraid (as in cowardly) *adj.*: **niddering.** See *cowardly*

(4) afraid (as in cowardly) *adj.*: **pusillanimous**. See *cowardly*

(5) afraid (as in cowardly) *adj.*: **retromingent**. See *cowardly*

(6) afraid (as in spineless or indecisive, or such a person) *adj.*, *n.*: **namby-pamby**. See *spineless*

(7) afraid (something that is dreaded, disliked, or to be . . . of) *n.*: **bête noire** [French]. See *dreaded*

aftereffect (or secondary result) *n.*: **sequela** (pl. **sequelae**). [This term is frequently used to refer to the aftereffect of a disease or condition, although it is sometimes used more broadly, as in the example here.] ❖ With my clothes, I enjoy breaking stereotypes of women scientists, but it's not a calculated image. . . . I feel comfortable in trousers and short skirts. I feel uncomfortable in tweed suits. If the clothes I happen to like give off a certain image, then that's a **sequela**, it's not the trigger for choosing those clothes. It's a happy consequence that people find my look interesting as a role model for women. (Susan Greenfield, "How Do I Look? Lab Fab," *Independent* [London], 8/12/2000.)

aftermath (as in aftereffect) *n.*: **sequela** (pl. **sequelae**). See *aftereffect*

after-the-fact (an . . . analysis; i.e., to project into the past) *v.t.*: **retroject**. See *analyze*

(2) after the fact (as in a statement, thought, knowledge, or action that comes to mind or occurs when it is too late to act on it, such as locking the barn door after the cows have left) *n.*: **afterwit**. See *belated*

again (as in anew) *adv.*: **afresh**. See *anew*

against *adj.*: **oppugnant**. See *antagonistic*

against the world *adv.*, *adj.*: **contra mundum** [Latin]. ❖ [Jack Straw said] that negotiations on a new European Constitution could end in failure, with Britain vetoing a deal. . . . Prime Minister [Tony Blair] feared the

Government would be compared to [John Major and the Tories, who] habitually threatened to block EU business unless Britain got its way. [One source said:] "Jack's comments came out as too Majoresque, as if we were saying veto, veto, veto like the Tories. Blair does not want it to be Britain **contra mundum**." (Toby Helm, "Straw in Trouble with Blair for Sounding 'Too Majoresque,'" European Constitution, *Daily Telegraph* [London], 11/26/2003.)

age (as in generation or era) *n.*: **saeculum**. See *generation*

aged (and sick person) *n.*: **Struldbrug**. See *decrepit*

(2) aged (as in broken down and/or worn-out) *adj.*: **raddled**. See *worn-out*

(3) aged (of or like an . . . woman) *adj.*: **anile**. See *old woman*

agent (as in middleman) *n.*: **comprador**. See *intermediary*

(2) agent (such as an ambassador or diplomat who is fully authorized to represent a government) *n.*: **plenipotentiary**. See *diplomat*

aggravation (as in trouble) *n.*: **tsuris** [Yiddish]. See *trouble*

aggregation (of objects, people, or ideas) *n.*: **congeries**. See *collection*

aggressive (as in pugnacious or ready to fight) *adj.*: **bellicose**. See *belligerent*

aggrieved (easily . . . , as in offended) *adj.*: **umbrageous**. See *offended*

agile *adj.*: **lightsome**. See *nimble*

agility (of mind or body) *n.*: **legerity**. See *nimbleness*

aging *adj.*: **senescent**. ❖ [The literature I received from the] American Association of Retired Persons . . . warranted that this organization fought unstintingly for the rights of **senescent** folks everywhere and hinted heavily that even though it already had 27 million members, it could make room for one more if only [I] would put up the highly affordable $5 dues. (Daniel Seligman, "Keeping Up, Staving Off the Old Folks," *Fortune*, 12/21/1987, p. 169.)

agitate *v.t.*: **commove**. ❖ Twelve years ago, Fuller founded [Habitat for Humanity to] provide the poor with "simple, decent, affordable housing.'' . . . Fuller, 53, is an Ichabod Crane look-alike who is incessantly joking, cajoling, **commoving**, pressing, pleading for Habitat. (Don Winbush, American Ideas: "Habitat for Humanity a Bootstrap Approach to Low-Cost Housing," *Time*, 1/16/1989, p. 12.)

agitated (as in feverish) *adj.*: **pyretic**. See *fever*

(2) agitated *adj.*: **in a dither**. See *flustered*

agitation (as in a state of tense and nervous . . .) *n.* **fantod**. See *tension*

(2) agitation (as in propaganda) *n.*: **agitprop**. See *propaganda*

(3) agitation (state of . . .) *n.*: **swivet** (as in "in a swivet") *informal.* See *distress*

agitator (a political . . . who often believes in violence to attain an end) *n.*: **sans-culotte**. See *extremist*

(2) agitator *n.*: **stormy petrel**. See *inciter*

agonize (or complain) *v.i.*: **repine**. See *complain*

agonizing (journey or experience) *n.*: **via dolorosa**. See *ordeal*
agony (as in occasion or place of great suffering) *n.*: **Gethsemane**. See *hell*
(2) agony (as in occasion or place of great suffering) *n.*: **Golgotha**. See *hell*
(3) agony (as in place or occasion of great suffering, or hell) *n.*: **Gehenna**. See *hell*
agreeable (as in desire to please) *adj.*: **complaisant**. See *obliging*
(2) agreeable (as in genial, and pleasant) *adj.*: **sympathique** [French]. See *genial*
(3) agreeable (as in pleasing) *adj.*: **prepossessing**. See *pleasing*
agreed (as in unanimous) *adj.*: **consentaneous**. See *unanimous*
(2) agreed (unanimously . . . upon) *adj.*: **consentient**. See *unanimous*
agreeing (for the sake of argument) *adv.*: **concesso non dato** [Italian; sometimes **dato non concesso**]. See *stipulating*
agreement (as in pact) *n.*: **amicabilis concordia**. See *pact*
(2) agreement (in . . .) *adj.*: **consonant**. See *harmony*
(3) agreement (in . . . , as in harmonious or compatible) *adj.*: **simpatico**. See *compatible*
(4) agreement (in . . . on the arrangement of parts as part of a whole) *n.*: **concinnity**. See *harmony*
(5) agreement (of the human race throughout history on an issue) *n.*: **consensus genitum** [Latin]. See *consensus*
(6) agreement (temporary . . . between opposing parties pending final deal) *n.*: **modus vivendi** [Latin]. See *truce*
agriculture (of or relating to . . . or farming or rural life) *adj.*: **georgic**. See *farming*
ahead (of, as in antecedent) *adj.*: **prevenient** (often as in “prevenient grace”). See *antecedent*
aid (as in, “to whose . . . ?”) *n.*: **cui bono** [Latin]. See *advantage*
aide (esp. to a scholar or magician) *n.*: **famulus**. See *assistant*
(2) aide (esp. to organized crime leader) *n.*: **consigliere** [Italian]. See *assistant*
(3) aide (who is loyal and unquestioning) *n.*: **myrmidon**. See *assistant*
(4) aide *n.*: **adjutant**. See *assistant*
(5) aide *n.*: **factotum**. See *assistant*
aides (group of . . . or advisors, often scheming or plotting) *n.*: **camarilla**. See *advisors*
ailing (person, esp. one morbidly concerned with his own health) *n.*, *adj.*: **valetudinarian**. See *sickly*
aim (as in the thing that is being looked for; also the answer to a problem) *n.*: **quaesitum**. See *objective*
(2) aim (directed toward an . . .) *adj.*: **telic**. See *purposeful*
(3) aim (esp. of life) *n.*: **telos** [Greek]. See *goal*
(4) aim (hidden or ulterior . . .) *n.*: **arriere-pensee** (or **arrière-pensée**)

[French]. See *motive*

(5) aim (the . . . to achieve a particular goal or desire) *n.*: **nisus**. See *goal*

(6) aim (which is elusive or not realistically obtainable) *n.*: **will-o'-the-wisp**. See *pipe dream*

aimless (talk or act in an . . . or incoherent fashion) *v.i.*: **maunder**. See *ramble*

air (as in aura) *n.*: **nimbus**. See *aura*

(2) air (as in aura or impalpable emanation) *n.*: **effluvium**. See *aura*

(3) air (as in demeanor) *n.*: **mien**. See *demeanor*

airborne (dancer's seeming ability to stay . . .) *n.*: **ballon** [French]. See *float*

airheaded (person) *n.*: **featherhead**. See *flighty*

(2) airheaded (person) *n.*: **flibbertigibbet**. See *flighty*

airplane (old, cheap . . . or car) *n.*: **flivver** (slang). [This word is more commonly applied to cars but can be applied to small planes as well.] ❖ The first of Waterman's contraptions was dubbed "Whatsit" because, he said, everybody kept asking him: "Hey Waldo, what's it you're building?" The project was launched in the quest for the "$700 airplane," a 1933 challenge to build the cheap air **flivver** for everyman put forth by Eugene Vidal, Franklin Roosevelt's director of aeronautics. (John White, "Waldo Waterman's Dream Came True," *Boston Globe*, 3/17/1990.)

airtight *adj.*: **hermetic**. See *sealed*

airy *adj.*: **diaphanous**. See *transparent*

(2) airy *adj.*: **gossamer**. See *transparent*

akin (to, as in related) *adj.*: **cognate**. See *related*

alarm (bell) *n.*: **tocsin**. ❖ We are now facing a second spate of [Carol] Gilligan-inspired books and articles, this time sounding the **tocsin** about the plight of our nation's isolated, repressed and silenced young males. (Christina Sommers, *The War Against Boys*, Simon & Schuster [2000], p. 137.)

(2) alarm (as in panic) *n.*: **Torschlusspanik** [German]. See *panic*

(3) alarm (as in warning sign) *n.*: **canary in the coal mine** (idiom). See *warning sign*

(4) alarm (audio . . .) *n.*: **klaxon**. See *signal*

(5) alarm (serving as a warning or . . .) *adj.*: **aposemetic**. See *warning*

alarming (as in menacing or threatening) *adj.*: **minacious**. See *menacing*

alas *interjection*: **lackaday**. [This word—short for alack the day—is generally considered archaic, but recent examples are not hard to come by.] ❖ I am now—oh, **lackaday**—getting on in years; I am almost 36 years of age and, well, what with the non-skinny cappuccinos and cheese burgers, I have put on a little extra weight, maybe a kilo or 15. Listen, I'm not embarrassed about this. (*Sunday Independent* [South Africa], "My Sanity, My Very Life, Is in the Palsied Hands of a Bozo in Germiston," 1/20/2008.)

alcohol (given to or marked by consumption of . . .) *adj.*: **bibulous**. See *imbibing*

(2) alcohol (of superior quality) *n.*: **supernaculum**. See *wine*

alcoholic *n.*: **rumpot** (slang). ❖ Aldrich Hazen Ames is the name, and double-agentry is the game. A gin-soaked **rumpot** of a ne'er-do-well, colleagues claim in hindsight, a boozy, bumbling son-of-a-CIAer who, once landed on the payroll, kept getting promoted and promoted till he was brought back to HQ. (David Nyhan, "Forget the Moles, Go After the Dopes," *Boston Globe*, 3/6/1994.)

(2) alcoholic *n.*: **dipsomaniac** (*adj.*: **dipsomaniacal**). ❖ A matched pair of **dipsomaniacs**, Caitlin and Dylan [Thomas] led a depraved existence, roaring from pub to pub and brawling over countless infidelities. (David Grogan, Pages: "From Dylan Thomas' Widow, Caitlin, Comes a Portrait of the Poet as a [Mad] Young Dog," *People*, 7/6/1987, p. 79.)

alert (as in alarm bell) *n.*: **tocsin**. See *alarm*

(2) alert (as in mindful or attentive) *adj.*: **advertent**. See *attentive*

(3) alert (as in on the . . .) *adj., adv.*.: **on the qui vive** (idiom). See *lookout*

(4) alert (audio . . .) *n.*: **klaxon**. See *signal*

(5) alert (esp. for changes in trends) *n.*: **weather eye** (esp. as in "keep a weather eye"). See *lookout*

(6) alert (person) *n.*: **Argus**. See *watchful*

(7) alert (serving as a warning or alarm) *adj.*: **aposematic**. See *warning*

alertness (lacking . . .) *adj.*: **bovine**. See *sluggish*

(2) alertness (lacking . . .) *adj.*: **logy**. See *sluggish*

(3) alertness *n.*: **acuity**. See *keenness*

alias (as in code name) *n.*: **cryptonym**. See *code name*

(2) alias (spec. woman's use of a man's name) *n.*: **pseudandry**. See *pseudonym*

(3) alias *n.*: **allonym**. See *pseudonym*

alien (as in foreigner) *n.*: **auslander**. See *foreigner*

(2) alien (as in foreigner, from another country or place) *n.*: **outlander**. See *foreigner*

(3) alien (as in originating elsewhere; non-native) *adj.*: **allochthonous**. See *foreign*

alienation (or social isolation) *n.*: **anomie**. [Anomie refers to a lack of social norms and the breakdown of social bonds between an individual and the community. It was popularized by French sociologist Émile Durkheim in his 1897 book *Suicide*. Today, it is often used to refer to loneliness and depression resulting from social isolation or alienation.] ❖ **Anomie** as a cause of suicide is rare when human beings share their lives in intimate connection with others, when there is a sense of mutual interdependence in the human community. The breakdown of personal relationships has been a major cause of depression and **anomie** among boomers. With the impermanence of friendships, unremitting mobility, job insecurities and the breakdown of the family structure, it should not be surprising that the

suicide rate in this age group has increased. (Jack D. Spriro [letter writer], "Trying to Understand Midlife Suicide," *New York Times*, 2/24/2008.)

(2) alienation (spec. a negative attitude toward society or authority arising from repressed hostility or feelings of inadequacy, combined with a sense of powerlessness to express or act on those feelings) *n.*: **ressentiment**. See *resentment*

alignment (of three objects) *n.*: **syzygy**. [This normally refers to the alignment of three celestial objects, such as the sun, moon, and earth, but is sometimes used to refer to the figurative alignment of any three objects, as in the example given.] ❖ A year ago this summer, the McCain campaign was a bankrupt political joke. . . . What followed was one of the most improbable comebacks of American political history. The electoral stars aligned into a powerful, unpredicted **syzygy**: The surge in Iraq worked, the immigration issue faded, the conservative movement did not coalesce around a single opponent. (Michael Gerson, "The McCain Miracle," *Washington Post*, 6/11/2008.)

all-around (often used of a performer or artist) *adj.*: **protean**. See *versatile*

(2) all-around *adj.*: **multifarious**. See *versatile*

all at once *adv.*: **holus-bolus**. See *simultaneously*

all-comprehensive (state of being . . .) *n.*: **omneity**. See *all-inclusive*

allegation (made without proof or support) *n.*: **ipse dixit** [Latin]. ❖ I have long been convinced that authors of pro-choice literature have no concept of the ideology and philosophy which drive pro-life activities. The January 16 editorial admits that abortion is a deeply divisive, controversial issue, then by **ipse dixit**, declares the pro-choice side to be the right one. (Mary Duhon, Viewpoints, *Houston Chronicle*, 1/23/1998.)

alleged (as in invented or substituted with fraudulent intent) *adj.*: **supposititious**. See *imaginary* and *supposed*

(2) alleged (as in supposed) *adj.*: **putative**. See *supposed*

allegiance *n.*: **vassalage** [This word derives from the allegiance that a vassal owed to a feudal lord.] ❖ I started a part-time teaching gig last week at the University of California at Berkeley, and part of the paperwork (which included a form on which you had to pledge allegiance to the state of California, an entity I had not thought needed my **vassalage**) was a form that asked what my ethnicity was. (Gary Kamiya, "Black vs. 'Black,'" *Salon.com*, 1/23/2007.)

(2) allegiance *n.*: **fealty**. See *loyalty*

alleviating (as in reducing stress or anxiety, often used with respect to medications) *adj.*: **anxiolytic** (*n.*: a product that has this effect). See *relaxing*

alliance (secret . . . , as in conspiracy) *n.*: **cabal**. See *plot*

all-inclusive (state of being . . .) *n.*: **omneity**. ❖ Little wonder that many tribes and cults have worshiped the god of thunder. The inexplicable power,

the enormity and the drama is enough to strike terror and awe into unsophisticated hearts. They could not have comprehended the totality of God any more than we can, but they were given a small glimpse of his **omneity**. (David Barlow, Theme for the Day, *Birmingham Post*, 6/4/1999.)

all-inclusiveness *n.*: **catholicity** (*adj.*: **catholic**). See *universality*

allocate (proportionately) *v.t.*: **admeasure**. See *apportion*

allot (proportionately) *v.t.*: **admeasure**. See *apportion*

all over (as in everywhere) *adv.*: **hither, thither, and yon** (idiom). See *everywhere*

allow (as in approve, esp. to confirm officially) *v.t.*: **homologate**. See *approve*

(2) allow (as in bestow, by one with higher power) *v.t.*: **vouchsafe**. See *bestow*

allowance (as in giving one's stamp of approval) *n.*: **nihil obstat** [Latin]. See *approval*

alluring *adj.*: **illecebrous.** [This word is usually considered rare or obsolete, but it is legitimate and has been used in the *New York Times* and thus is included here.] ❖ The first hour [of *Alien Empire*] has to do with insects' bodies, which confirm the rumor that God is a great engineer, and with the reproductive propensities of the randy little rascals, which humans can only envy. [The narrator is] an old-fashioned romantic waxing lyrical over the smells and sounds that lure males to females of many species. The background music [celebrates] the **illecebrous** [aspects of] of bugdom. (Walter Goodman, "Sex, Beauty, Home and Travel Tips on Bugs," *New York Times*, 2/9/1996.)

(2) alluring *adj.*: **sirenic**. [In Greek mythology, the sirens were three bird-women who, through their beautiful singing, lured mariners to destruction on the rocks and cliffs surrounding their island. Today, the word often suggests something that is alluring, but dangerous if heeded; just as frequently, it refers to something simply alluring. See also the nouns *siren call* and *Lorelei call* under *lure*.] ❖ The A12 to La Spezia, swirling into tunnels, soaring over bridges, resembles a white-knuckle funfair ride. A tour de force by some Leonardo of motorway design, it burrows along the Ligurian coast with tantalising glimpses of impossibly-perched villages and azure water inlets whose **sirenic** string of exit signs reads like a travel brochure: Camogli, Portofino, Rapallo, Sestri Levante. (Ray Kershaw, "You and Italy: The Road Movie," *Independent* [London], 5/31/2003.)

(3) alluring (and charming woman) *n.*: **Circe**. See *enchantress*

(4) alluring (but in a way that is solely based on deception or pretense or gaudiness) *adj.*: **meretricious**. See *attractive*

(5) alluring (person through magnetism or charm) *n.*: **duende**. See *charisma*

(6) alluring (young woman) *n.*: **houri** [French]. See *woman*

(7) alluring *adj.*: **piquant**. See *appealing*

alone (as in against the world) *adv., adj.*: **contra mundum** [Latin]. See *against the world*

aloof (as in haughty) *adj.*: **fastuous**. See *haughty*

(2) aloof (as in haughty or condescending) *adj.*: **toplofty**. See *haughty*

(3) aloof (as in socially withdrawn or inexperienced and/or shy and/or sullen) *adj.*: **farouche** [French]. See *shy*

aloofness (as in chilliness in relations between people) *n.*: **froideur** [French]. See *chilliness*

aloud (fear of speaking . . .) *n.*: **phonophobia**. See *fear*

alphabet (one who is learning the . . .) *n.*: **abecedarian**. ❖ Why not be **abecedarians** with your family as you discover the sensory delights of spring? You can document spring firsts from A to Z when you make a "Spring ABC Book" together. On each of 26 large index cards, write a letter of the alphabet. (Donna Erickson, "Prime Time with Kids," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 3/15/1995.)

(2) alphabet (sentence with every letter of) *n.*: **pangram**. ❖ [Will Shortz:] "It was inspired by a current novel, *Ella Minnow Pea* by Mark Dunn, which has a number of **pangrams** sprinkled through it . . . like 'Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.'" (Liane Hansen, "Analysis: Sunday Puzzle," Weekend Edition [Sunday], NPR, 9/29/2002.)

also (as in moreover) *adv.*: **withal**. See *moreover*

alter (esp. in a strange, grotesque, or humorous way) *v.t.*: **transmogrify**. See *transform*

(2) alter (one's behavior or actions to adapt to current circumstances or necessities) *v.i.*: **temporize**. See *adapt*

alteration (complete . . .) *n.*: **permutation**. See *transformation*

(2) alteration (spec. a fundamental transformation of mind or character, esp. a spiritual conversion) *n.*: **metanoia**. See *conversion*

altercation (esp. public) *n.*: **affray**. See *brawl*

although *adv.*: **howbeit** [This word is often considered archaic, but recent examples are not hard to come by. It also can be used in lieu of nevertheless (see nevertheless) and however (see however).] ❖ I would like to discuss with you a subject that . . . would perhaps seem intelligible only to that section of humanity familiar with the Internet. I hope, however, to define enough things as we go along to make the discussion comprehensible, **howbeit** annoying, to those among us who prefer chips, dip and "Matlock" to chips, dip and http://www.yahoo.com. (Al Sicherman, "Hypertext Who? Addressee Unknown," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 4/21/1997.)

altogether (as in, in the entirety) *adv.*: **holus-bolus**. See *entirety*

altruistic *adj.*: **eleemosynary**. See *charitable*

always (as in forever) *adv.*: **in aeternum** [Latin]. See *forever*

amateur (or dabbler) *n.*: **dilettante** (pl. **dilettanti**). ❖ But [in the world of scavengers or homeless people] eating from dumpsters is what separates the

dilettanti from the professionals. (Lars Eighner, *Travels with Lizbeth*, St. Martin's Press [1993], p. 112.)

amazed (as in very surprised) *adj.*: **gobsmacked**. See *shocked*

amazing (as in wonderful) *adj.*: **mirific**. See *wonderful*

ambassador (or diplomatic agent who is fully authorized to represent a government) *n.*: **plenipotentiary**. See *diplomat*

ambiguity (as in subject to two different interpretations) *n.*: **amphibiology**. ❖ Robbe-Grillet wrote some incredibly dull books, if you'll allow me the discourtesy, but also some texts whose undeniable interest resides in what we might call his technical dexterity. For example, *Jealousy*. The title isn't very objective—quite a paradox!—since in French it means both "window blind" and "jealousy," an **amphibiology** that disappears in Spanish (and English). (Mario Vargas Llosa, "Levels of Reality," *Literary Review*, 3/22/2002.)

ambiguous (as in having multiple interpretations or signifying different things) *adj.*: **multivocal**. ❖ It is my contention that all revelation is **multivocal** and full of multiple levels of meaning. Indeed, all human words can be described in the same way—**multivocal** with a variety of levels of meaning. Shallow words and concepts exhaust their meanings quickly. . . . Classics (and divine revelations) have such richness of content that people in a wide variety of settings—and even in different civilizations—find the meaning and messages that speak to them. (Irving Greenberg, "On the Divine Plan and the Human Role in Development of Religion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 6/22/2007.)

(2) ambiguous (as in subject to two different interpretations) *adj.*: **amphibolous**. ❖ For example, in an old radio sketch, Bing Crosby says to Phil Silvers: "Should I take my children to the zoo?" and Phil replies, "No, if the zoo wants them, let it come and fetch them." [Crosby's sentence] admits only a unique parsing, nevertheless gets two quite different interpretations. . . . How can the meaning of a sentence be composed of the meanings of its constituents when a single sentence, not **amphibolous** and with no ambiguous components, has multiple meanings? (Laurence Goldstein, Introduction, *Monist*, 1/1/2005.)

(3) ambiguous (or obscure) *adj.*: **Delphic** [derives from the oracle of Apollo at Delphi in Greek mythology]. ❖ The star attraction was Colin Powell, and the big issue was whether he would run for president in 1996. And when a member of the audience put the question to him directly, Powell answered with **Delphic** aplomb. "There is no real passion in me to run for office," Powell said. "But I don't want to rule it out." (Robert Shogan, "A Novice, but Maybe a Frontrunner, Powell Leaves Himself on the List as a '96 Presidential Possibility," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 2/2/1995.)

(4) ambiguous (use of . . . words) *n.*: **parisology**. [Some dictionaries

suggest that this word refers specifically to the deliberate use of ambiguous words, but this is a minority view.] ❖ [Throughout the film *Casablanca*, Claude Rains] delivers his lines with such inherent **parisology** that the viewer is never really sure as to where he actually stands. (Martin N. Kriegl, "Casablanca: A Comparison between the Classic Motion Picture and Its Stage Play Source," p-mi.com/wordpress/wp-contentuploads/2006/08/Essay_Casablanca.pdf.)

(5) ambiguous (or cryptic or equivocal) *adj.*: **sibylline** (or **sybilline**; often cap.). See *cryptic*

(6) ambiguous (or obscure speech or writing, esp. deliberately) *adj.*: **elliptical**. See *cryptic*

(7) ambiguous (word, phrase, or expression) *n.*: **equivoque**. See *equivocal*

ambition (as in energy coupled with a will to succeed) *n.*: **spizzerinctum**. See *energy*

(2) ambition (highest . . . to be attained, lit. the greatest or highest good) *n.*: **summum bonum** [Latin]. See *ideal*

(3) ambition (to achieve a particular goal or desire) *n.*: **nisus**. See *goal*

ambitious (esp. as in . . . to equal or surpass another) *adj.*: **emulous**. [This word is used in a number of related but distinct ways including, variously, (1) ambitious (as in ambitious to outdo or surpass another), (2) competitive (as in marked by a spirit of rivalry) (see "competitive"), (3) marked by a desire to imitate (see "imitate"), (4) jealous (see "jealous"), and (5) envious (see "envious"). The following, an example of the first definition, is a discussion of the Florida vote-counting issue in the aftermath of the 2000 presidential election.] ❖ Power and ambition continue to collide darkly in the Sunshine State. . . . But ambition is gender-neutral; it is not limited to those who seek the highest office in the land. . . . [I]t is on the face of Katherine Harris, Florida's ghoulishly made-up secretary of state. How fascinating and ironic that women like Harris . . . are playing pivotal roles in a national drama dominated by **emulous** men. (Joan Venochi, "Oh, What a Plot the Politicians Are Weaving in Florida," *Boston Globe*, 11/17/2000.)

ambivalence (as in the dilemma of being given a choice between two equally appealing alternatives and thus being able to choose neither one) *n.*: **Buridan's ass**. See *paralysis*

ambivalent (or undecided person, esp. regarding political issues) *n.*: **mugwump**. See *undecided*

ambushing (as in lying in wait for prey, often used of insects) *adj.*: **lochetic**. ❖ A spider ran beneath my couch. And I became **lochetic**. I perched and leaned into a crouch. That surely looked comedic. It showed; I jumped and missed; cried "ouch!" And now need orthopedic. (Dave Dickerson, "Vocabulary Poem," bourboncowboy.blogspot.com/2006/06, 6/7/2006.)

amend (text or language by removing errors or flaws) *v.t.*: **blue-pencil**. See *edit*

(2) amend (text or language by removing errors or flaws) *v.t.*: **emend**. See *edit*

amendment (as in correction, esp. in printed material) *n.*: **corrigendum**. See *correction*

(2) amendment (esp. a scholarly critical . . . , as in revision) *n.*: **recension**. See *revision*

amends (make . . . for) *v.t.*, *v.i.*: **expiate**. See *atone*

(2) amends (making . . . for) *adj.*: **piacular**. See *atoning*

amiability *n.*: **bonhomie**. See *affability*

amiable (and pleasant) *adj.*: **sympathique** [French]. See *genial*

amnesia (spec. inability to recall meaning of words) *n.*: **paramnesia**. ❖ If you suffer from **paramnesia**, just do what I did: subscribe to the A.Word.A.Day service on the Internet . . . and enrich your vocabulary with a plethora of words that will express exactly what you want in the most efficient manner. (Dorothea Helms, "Reining in Rampant Verbosity," *Toronto Sun*, 9/13/2000.)

amoral (person) *n.*: **reprobate**. See *unprincipled*

amorous *adj.*: **amative**. ❖ Of course, there's the argument that the baby-boom generation of which the Clintons are a part don't express their **amative** feelings openly, that Hillary Rodham Clinton is a new breed of professional woman with her own political ambitions, or that, quite frankly, the Clintons' personal relationship is their own private business—and not the public's. (Thomas DiBacco, "Will the Real Clinton Stand Up? A Year Later, We're Still Waiting," *Orlando Sentinel*, 12/5/1993.)

(2) amorous (esp. in the sexual sense) *adj.*: **amatory**. See *lovemaking*

amuse (oneself in a light, frolicsome manner) *v.t.*, *v.i.*: **disport**. See *frolic*

amused (having an ability or tendency to be . . .) *n.*: **risibility**. See *laugh*

amusing (as in witty) *adj.*: **waggish**. See *witty*

(2) amusing (in a sarcastic or biting way) *adj.*: **mordant**. See *sarcastic*

(3) amusing (line) *n.*: **bon mot** [French]. See *quip*

(4) amusing (line) *n.*: **epigram**. See *quip*

(5) amusing (person who tries to be . . . but is not) *n.*: **witling**. See *humorless*

(6) amusing *adj.*: **gelastic**. See *laughable*

(7) amusing *adj.*: **risible**. See *laughable*

anachronism (spec., placing an event, person, or thing before its actual historical date) *n.*: **prochronism**. [This word is a specific type of anachronism, such as assigning airplanes to the American Civil War.] ❖ [A book] describes a cast iron pillar in Delhi 24 ft. high . . . and of such a density it has never rusted. [It is] thought to have been fashioned [about 400 AD] . . . long before it was thought that iron smelting had been invented in India. . . . It was once thought to be a **prochronism**, . . . but a few of these discoveries can be put down to underestimating the

technological capabilities of the ancients. (Charles Legge, "How India Forged Ahead," *Daily Mail*, 2/10/2011.)

analogous (as in related) *adj.*: **cognate**. See *related*

analysis (detailed . . . of a literary work) *n.*: **explication de texte** [French]. ❖ In [movie director Bertrand] Blier's male-dominated universe, men routinely turn women into objects and toss them aside, then discuss it all as if doing some academic **explication de texte**. (John Morrone, "Too Beautiful for You," *New Leader*, 1/8/1990.)

(2) analysis (as in experiment, carried out in imagination only) *n.*: **gedankenexperiment** (sometimes cap.) [German]. See *experiment*

(3) analysis (as in formal . . . or discussion of a subject) *n.*: **disquisition**. See *discourse*

(4) analysis (as in relating to . . . that sounds plausible but is false or insincere) *adj.*: **meretricious**. See *specious*

(5) analysis (esp. of a text) *n.*: **exegesis**. See *interpretation*

(6) analysis (observation and . . . of matters outside oneself; that is, the outside world) *n.*: **extrospection** (*adj.*: **extrospective**). See *observation*

(7) analysis (of a subject, as in survey) *n.*: **conspectus**. See *survey*

(8) analysis (of a text by adding one's own ideas) *n.*: **eisegesis**. See *interpretation*

(9) analysis (one who is undergoing . . .) *n.*: **analysand**. See *psychoanalysis*

(10) analysis (specious . . . intended to mislead or rationalize) *n.*: **casuistry**. See *fallacious*

(11) analysis (which is complicated and often illogical) *n.*: **choplogic**. See *fallacy*

(12) analysis (which is fallacious or specious) *n.*: **syllogism**. See *specious*

analyst (as in interpreter, of sacred mysteries or esoteric principles) *n.*: **hierophant**. See *interpreter*

(2) analyst (as in investigator or examiner) *n.*: **scrutator**. See *examiner*

(3) analyst (or interpreter or annotator, esp. of ancient or classical literature) *n.*: **scholiast**. See *classicist*

analytical (as in logical) *adj.*: **ratiocinative**. See *logical*

analyze (in minute detail) *v.t.*: **anatomize**. ❖ Few movies attempt to **anatomize** a whole sick society, to dissect the mortal betrayals of country, friend, lover and family; fewer films achieve this goal with such energy and wit. (Richard Corliss, Cinema: "From Failure to Cult Classic," *Time*, 3/21/1988, p. 84.)

(2) analyze (logically) *v.i.*: **ratiocinate**. ❖ [Author Stephen] Fry talks of his father's "misanthropy and arrogance," his "infuriatingly, cold, precise **ratiocinating** engine of a brain fuelled by a wholly egocentric passion" and says that whenever Fry Senior was in the house, "instantly, fun, freedom and relaxation turned into terrified silence." (Lynn Barber, Books: "But

Who Cares About Tishes and Pollies?" *Daily Telegraph* [London], 10/18/1997.)

(3) analyze (that which has already occurred; i.e., to project into the past) *v.t.*: **retroject**. ❖ Nor is there any indication that [Joan of Arc] was repelled by the idea of sex. That would be a **retrojected** suspicion, based on the widespread later presumption that every sane woman marries, has romantic affairs, or is ready to tangle in easy sexual liaisons. But not all women act according to such (mostly) male expectations and preconceptions. (Donald Spoto, *Joan*, HarperCollins [2007], p. 31.)

(4) analyze (as in think about) *v.t.*: **cerebrate**. See *think*

(5) analyze (as in think about) *v.t.*: **cogitate**. See *think*

(6) analyze (closely, esp. for purposes of surveillance) *v.t.*: **perlustrate**. See *examine*

(7) analyze *v.t.*: **assay**. See *evaluate*

anarchist (spec. one who hates or mistrusts authority) *n.*: **misarchist**. See *rebel*

anarchy (as in government by the mob or the masses) *n.*: **mobocracy**. See *government*

(2) anarchy (as in government by the mob or the masses) *n.*: **ochlocracy**. See *government*

(3) anarchy (movement toward or degree of . . . in a system or society) *n.*: **entropy**. See *disorder*

ancestor (as in predecessor) *n.*: **progenitor**. See *predecessor*

(2) ancestor (of or derived from name of female . . .) *adj.*: **matronymic**. See *maternal*

(3) ancestor (of or derived from name of male . . .) *adj.*: **patronymic**. See *paternal*

ancestors (excessive reverence for . . . or tradition) *adj.*: **filiopietistic**. See *old-fashioned*

ancient (esp. as in outdated) *adj.*: **antediluvian**. See *outdated*

(2) ancient *adj.*: **hoary**. See *old*

anecdote (as in example, used to make a point) *n.*: **exemplum**. See *example*

anemic (as in pale, and often sickly) *adj.*: **etiolated**. See *pale*

(2) anemic (from loss or lack of body strength) *adj.*: **asthenic** (*n.*: **asthenia**). See *weak*

anesthetizing (as in sleep-inducing) *adj.*: **soporific**. See *sleep-inducing*

anew *adv.*: **afresh**. ❖ But now that the [Internet] mania is over, it's probably time to think **afresh** about the technological revolution, to toss out those wishful fantasies left over from the Romantic era, or the 1960s, and see how these gizmos are really going to change our lives. (David Brooks, "Finding the 'Next' Netheads," *Newsweek* International, 8/20/2001, p. 53.)

angelic *adj.*: **seraphic**. ❖ Songwriters Lynn Hollyfield and Nina Spruill . . . [favor a] soft-spun weave of musings and music, relying mostly on

Hollyfield's **seraphic** soprano voice and Spruill's alto flute to cast an introspective spell, but not to the exclusion of more earthy and engaging material. (Mike Joyce, "Hollyfield & Spruill: Graceful Musing," *Washington Post*, 3/19/1993.)

(2) angelic *adj.*: **beatific** (to make . . .) *v.t.*: **beatify**. See *joyful*

anger *n.*: **choler** (*adj.*: **choleric**). ❖ [As Richard Marcinko] rages over and over again in [his] book, "Why the hell didn't they let us do what we were trained to do? Even in Vietnam, the system kept me from hunting and killing as many of the enemy as I would have liked." Marcinko's **choler** stems partly from the fact that in 1990 he was convicted of conspiracy to defraud the government. (Elizabeth Gleick, Pages: "Master of Mayhem Richard Marcinko Was Too Loose a Cannon for the U.S. Navy," *People*, 5/04/1992, p. 155.)

(2) anger (as in bitterness of spirit or resentment) *n.*: **gall and wormwood** (idiom) (or **wormwood and gall**). See *bitterness*

(3) anger (marked by a sudden or violent . . .) *adj.*: **vesuvian** (esp. as in . . . temper). See *temper*

(4) anger *n.*: **bile**. See *bitterness*

(5) anger *v.t.*: **envenom**. See *embitter*

angered (easily . . . , as in offended) *adj.*: **umbrageous**. See *offended*

angry (extremely . . .) *adj.*: **apoplectic**. ❖ He's not a young man anymore, but John Mellencamp sure is angry. Guys with "suspenders and cigars" piss him off. No-smoking laws make him furious. And record-company execs, well, they make him absolutely **apoplectic**. (Rob Brunner, Music: "Ripe Mellencamp," *Entertainment Weekly*, 10/9/1998, p. 83.)

(2) angry *adj.*: **wroth**. ❖ [C]ondescending white liberals have been handing down to the supposedly grateful black man what they're patronizingly confident is good for him. And if an ungrateful black refuses this generous offering, white liberals, seemingly unaware of the racial vanity involved in their assumptions, are **wroth** indeed. But this is nothing compared to how **wroth** are this country's dominant black leaders presently attacking Justice [Clarence] Thomas with rare venom, now that he's assumed a position of real leadership on the Supreme Court. (Richard Grenier, "The Most Courageous Man in America," *Washington Times*, 7/10/1995, p. 29.)

(3) angry (as in bad-tempered) *adj.*: **Vesuvian**. See *bad-tempered*

(4) angry (as in grouchy person) *n.*: **crosspatch**. See *grouch*

(5) angry (as in indignant) *n.*: **dudgeon** (often expressed as "in high dudgeon"). See *indignant*

(6) angry (as in irritable) *adj.*: **liverish**. See *irritable*

(7) angry (as in irritable) *adj.*: **shirty**. See *irritable*

(8) angry (as in irritable) *adj.*: **splenetic**. See *irritable*

(9) angry (as in irritable, easily angered) *adj.*: **iracund**. See *irritable*

(10) angry (as in peevish) *adj.*: **pettish**. See *peevish*
(11) angry (as in surly) *adj.*: **atrabilious**. See *surly*
(12) angry (extremely . . .) *adj.*: **furibund**. See *furious*
(13) angry *adj.*: **bilious**. See *surly*

anguish (as in sadness) *n.*: **dolor** (*adj.*: **dolorous**). See *sadness*
(2) anguish (expressing . . . often regarding something gone) *adj.*: **elegiac**. See *sorrowful*
(3) anguish (out of the depths of . . . or despair) *n.*, *adv.*: **de profundis**. See *despair*
(4) anguish (over) *v.t.*: **bewail**. See *lament*

animal (lover) *n.*: **zoophilist**. ❖ Typical of the **zoophilist** who favors life's lower orders over humankind, Robinson Jeffers claimed he'd sooner kill a man than a hawk. (David Yezzi, review of *My Dog Tulip*, by J. R. Ackerley, *New Criterion*, 11/1/1999.)
(2) animal (which feeds mainly on plants) *n.*: **herbivore** (*adj.*: **herbivorous**). See *plants*

animals (sexual attraction to . . .) *n.*: **zoophilia** (person attracted: **zoophile**). See *bestiality*

animosity (intense . . . , such as toward an enemy) *n.*: **enmity**. See *hatred*

annexation (as in will to annex bordering lands based on common ethnicity or prior historical possession) *n.*: **irredentism**. [This concept is similar to but sometimes distinct from revanchism in that the latter is the will to reverse (and get revenge for) territorial losses incurred by a country, often following a war or social movement. *Revanche* is French for revenge.] ❖ World War II resulted from precisely such a lethal combination of revanchism and **irredentism**. Hitler strove to avenge Germany's World War I defeat and (so he claimed initially) take control of territories populated by German-speakers. . . . That border region's German inhabitants, Hitler persuaded a world all too eager to be duped, deserve self-determination. Germans cannot live as a minority anywhere. (Sarah Honig, "A Revanchist Cause Called Nabka," *Jerusalem Post*, 5/20/2011.)

annotator (or commentator, esp. of ancient or classical literature) *n.*: **scholiast**. See *classicist*

announce *v.t.*: **annunciate**. ❖ Prior to the summit, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan sought to deflect criticism by acknowledging that the agenda was "absurdly ambitious." Mr. Annan saw this as a virtue—that **annunciating** impossibly high-minded aims was nobler and better than pursuing more realistic goals. (Bret Schaefer, "United Nations Nonevent," *Washington Times*, 9/23/2000.)
(2) announce (as in assert) *v.t.*: **asseverate**. See *declare*
(3) announce (as in declare, publicly, solemnly, or formally) *v.t.*: **nuncupate**. See *declare*
(4) announce (formally or publicly) *v.t.*: **enounce**. See *declare*

announcement (as in decree) *n.*: **diktat**. See *decree*

(2) announcement (esp. official, or relating to a change in government, such as by rebellion or coup d'état) *n.*: **pronunciamento** [Spanish]. See *pronouncement*

(3) announcement (made without proof or support) *n.*: **ipse dixit** [Latin]. See *allegation*

(4) announcement (of forthcoming marriage, esp. in a church) *n.*: **banns**. See *marriage*

(5) announcement (which is official, as in with the authority of one's office) *adv.*, *adj.*: **ex cathedra**. See *official*

annoy (as in bother or inconvenience) *v.t.*: **discommode**. See *inconvenience*

(2) annoy (as in bother or inconvenience) *v.t.*: **incommode**. See *inconvenience*

(3) annoy (spec. to bother with persistent or unreasonable requests) *v.t.*: **importune**. See *pester*

(4) annoy *v.t.*: **chivvy**. See *pester*

annoyance (as in trouble) *n.*: **tsuris** [Yiddish]. See *trouble*

annoyed (as in irritable) *adj.*: **splenetic**. See *irritable*

(2) annoyed (easily . . . , as in offended) *adj.*: **umbrageous**. See *offended*

annoying (highly . . .) *adj.*: **pestilential** [A pestilent has various definitions, including something that is deadly or fatal (see *deadly*), something that causes disease (see *disease-causing*), something that is morally, socially, or politically harmful (see *harmful*), or something that is highly annoying or vexing (which is the sense used here).] ❖ Consumers may finally get more protection from annoying "robo calls." The Federal Communications Commission allows robo calls, those **pestilential** calls from a tape machine instead of a human, to people who have an "established business relationship" with the calling firm. . . . The kicker is, "established" means the prospect bought something in the last 18 months. (*Boston Herald*, "Halting Those Robo Calls," 12/5/2006.)

(2) annoying (as in repellent) *adj.*: **rebarbative**. See *repellent*

(3) annoying *adj.*: **pestiferous**. See *bothersome*

annual *adj.*: **etesian**. [This is said of certain Mediterranean winds that blow from the north for several weeks every summer.] ❖ British gold medal hope Paula Radcliffe suffers from asthma. She will be praying Greece's **etesian** wind will blow away much of the Athens smog. (*News of the World* [London], "Paula Radcliffe Suffers from Asthma," 8/8/2004.)

annulment (as in termination) *n.*: **quietus**. See *termination*

anomalous (as in departing from the standard or norm) *adj.*: **heteroclite**. See *abnormal*

anomaly (as in someone or something that deviates from the norm) *n.*: **lusus** [Latin; almost always used as part of the term "lusus naturae," or freak of nature]. See *freak*

anonymous *adj.*: **innominate**. ❖ Situated in an otherwise **innominate** strip mall on Olive Boulevard in the heart of University City, Kelly's Golf Repair and Club Makers Center is a working man's laboratory of golf club fitting and construction. (Dan O'Neill, "Clubs That Don't Fit May Cause Bad Habits," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 5/9/1998.)

answer (as in responding to an anticipated objection to an argument before that objection has been made) *n.*: **prolepsis**. See *rebuttal*

(2) answer (as in to create a makeshift . . . to a problem) *v.t.*: **jury-rig**. See *quick fix*

(3) answer (charging accuser with similar offense) *n.*: **tu quoque** [Latin]. See *accuse*

(4) answer (clever . . . that one thinks of after the moment has passed) *n.*: **esprit d'escalier** [French]. See *retort*

(5) answer (inefficient . . . to a problem) *n.*: **kludge**. See *quick fix*

(6) answer (relating to an . . . to an issue or problem, based on a mental shortcut approach) *n.*, *adj.*: **heuristic** (sometimes pl.). See *solution*

(7) answer (to a problem, or objective, as in the thing that is being looked for) *n.*: **quaesitum**. See *objective*

antagonism (as in event that causes or provokes war, literally or figuratively) *n.*: **casus belli** [Latin: occasion of war]. See *provocation*

antagonistic *adj.*: **oppugnant**. [Tennis players Serena Williams and Sloane Stephens] began the year professing to be best of friends but, after Stephens' victory, that friendship was quickly curtailed. . . . While friendship does not necessarily extinguish any hope of an on-court rivalry, a touch of animosity does no harm. It harks back to the days of Williams' **oppugnant** relationships with Justine Henin and Martina Hingis—and just adds a little spice. (*The Herald* [Scotland], "Being Too Good Is a Criticism That Should Not Be Leveled at Any Athlete,"10/18/2013.)

antecedent *adj.*: **prevenient** (often as in "prevenient grace"). ❖ The symbolism behind Catholic doctrines of Mary is lost on most Protestants. The doctrine of the immaculate conception, for example, symbolizes **prevenient** grace—the grace that "comes before" faith in Christ, the grace that moves us to place our faith in Christ. It has nothing to do with Mary's virginity or with the virgin birth of Jesus. (James Gaughan, "Protestants Embrace New Vision of Mary," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 11/13/1999.)

anthology (as in collection of writings by an author) *n.*: **chrestomathy**. ❖ Book World readers need no introduction to the author of this collection. . . . *Readings* is an assortment of perambulations and reflections on literary, cultural and autobiographical themes reprinted from the author's monthly columns bearing the same name. It is, in other words, a **chrestomathy** of all things Dirda. (*Washington Post*, In Brief, review of *Readings: Essays and Literary Entertainments*, by Michael Dirda, 11/05/2000.)

antic *n.*: **dido**. See *prank*

anti-change (as in hatred or fear of anything new or different) *n.*: **misoneism** (person holding this view: **misoneist**). See *conservatism*

anticipation (as in foresight) *n.*: **prospicience**. See *foresight*

(2) anticipation (nervously excited with . . .) *adj.*: **atwitter**. See *excited*

(3) anticipation (of an argument to be made and rebutting it beforehand) *n.*: **prolepsis**. See *rebuttal*

(4) anticipation (spec. acting as if or threatening that a future event [usually unwanted] has already occurred by reference to an event that precedes it, for example, "if you look at my diary, you're dead") *n.*: **prolepsis**. See *prediction*

(5) anticipation (that something is going to occur) *n.*: **presentiment**. See *premonition*

anticipatory *adj.*: **prevenient**. ❖ Organizations set up to tell us about how to educate or otherwise raise our children usually have some ax to grind. Often they are driven by some ideological demon. . . . [Thus], what aroused my hackles when I saw the news reports on the Academy [of Pediatrics] findings [that young people should not specialize in one sport] was the **prevenient** sense that here again was another propaganda statement. But no, it is common sense based on research. (R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., "Sporting Chance for the Young," *Washington Times*, 7/7/2000.)

anticlimax *n.*: **bathos**. ❖ [Watching a film about outer space on a giant IMAX screen] is a dizzy mixture of true grandeur and sudden **bathos**. . . . When an image is this large in scope as well as in area on the screen, it squeezes a silent gasp out of you. . . . On the other hand, when the IMAX is displaying things that aren't intrinsically giant, the size of the image registers as a grotesque inflation, and anticlimax swiftly follows. (Francis Spufford, Essay: "The Outerspace Documentary as Big as the Ritz," *Independent on Sunday*, 5/30/1999.)

antidote (to poison) *n., adj.*: **alexipharmic**. ❖ The unripe fruit is **alexipharmic**, astringent to the bowels; removes itching of the body. . . . The seeds cure heart diseases, headache; an antidote to poisons; the oil is acrid; astringent, . . . stops hiccough and vomiting; cures rat bite and all poisonings; destroys biliousness. The flowers are an antidote to poisons. (Jamayet Ali, "Herbal Remedy for Heart Ailment," *New Nation* [India], 10/17/2010.)

antiquated (as in outdated) *adj., n.*: **Model T**. See *outdated*

(2) antiquated *adj.*: **antediluvian**. See *outdated*

antisocial (as in socially withdrawn or inexperienced and/or shy and/or sullen) *adj.*: **farouche** [French]. See *shy*

ants (of or relating to) *adj.*: **formic**. ❖ Woody Allen voices worker ant Z-4195 ("the middle child in 5 million"), who becomes an accidental war hero in the **formic** army's battle against the termites. (Stuart Price, Preview: Film—Christmas Films, review of *Antz*, *Independent* [London],

December 1998.)

(2) ants (study of) *n.*: **myrmecology**. ❖ Most kids are **myrmecologists** at one time or another. That's the great thing about **myrmecology**: no matter where you are or who you are, and no matter what resources you arrive with, ants are there too, awaiting study. (Bill Roorbach, "King of the Anthill," *Newsday*, 11/13/1994, p. 38.)

anxiety *n.*: **inquietude**. ❖ [In a survey], people felt the world has become unsafe and expressed a belief that real change is not in sight. It is true that similar statements of dissatisfaction and **inquietude** might have been elicited during any decade in U.S. history. Now, however, one obtains responses of exasperation and desperation from all parts of the population about all types of events, communicating an urgency. (Ralph Hyatt, "American Hearts Have Hardened," *USA Today Magazine*, 3/1/1994.)

(2) anxiety (as part of depressed state) *n.*: **dysphoria**. See *depression*

(3) anxiety (in a state of . . .) *adj.*: [on] **tenterhooks** (idiom). See *suspense*

(4) anxiety (in a state of . . .) *n.*: **swivet** (as in "in a swivet") *informal*. See *distress*

(5) anxiety (positive form of . . . brought on, for example, by a job promotion or a new baby) *n.*: **eustress**. See *stress*

(6) anxiety *n.pl.* but sing. or pl. in construction: **collywobbles**. See *bellyache*

anyway (as in nevertheless) *adv.*: **withal**. See *nevertheless*

apart (from, as in separable) *adj.*: **dissociable**. See *separable*

apathetic *adj.*: **pococurante**. ❖ The only child of an interminably famous literary theorist, and now **pococurante** chair of the English Department, Hank published one critically acclaimed novel—*Off the Road*—20 years ago. . . . [His] fate [is that of] a middle-aged, middle-class guy trapped by his successes. . . . [T]he faculty meetings and search committees that footnote his daily existence [are not gratifying]. . . . Is this middle age, he thinks, the cruel punch line of prostate trouble visited on an irreverent man? (Gail Caldwell, "College Bound; Richard Russo's Comic/Sad Novel of Learning and Campus Politics," *Boston Globe*, 7/13/1997.)

(2) apathetic (as in sluggish or lethargic) *adj.*: **torpid**. See *lethargic*

apathy (sometimes in matters spiritual, and sometimes leading to depression) *n.*: **acedia**. ❖ What makes our situation today different from previous periods in American history—and fundamentally more serious—is the "demoralization" of much of middle- and upper-middle-class life. The causes are varied and complicated—my list would include . . . modernity itself, affluence, spiritual **acedia**, intellectual trends, movies and television, advertising, and flawed government programs. (William Bennett, "Moral Corruption in America," *Commentary*, 11/1/1995, p. 29.)

(2) apathy (a matter of . . . , esp. in matters of religion and theology; that is, neither right nor wrong, beneficial nor harmful) *n.*: **adiaphoron** (*adj.*:

adiaphorous). See *indifference*

(3) apathy (as in lethargy) *n.*: **hebetude**. See *lethargy*

(4) apathy (as in lethargy) *n.*: **torpor**. See *lethargy*

(5) apathy (esp. in matters of politics or religion) *n.*: **Laodiceanism**. See *indifference*

(6) apathy (or listlessness) *n.*: **lassitude**. See *indifference*

ape (of, relating to, or resembling) *adj.*: **anthropoid**. ❖ One limb [of the evolutionary tree] led to the prosimians, or lower primates, such as lemurs and bush babies, and the other to the **anthropoids**, or higher primates, such as monkeys, apes and humans. (Alice Park, "Linking Man to a Monkey: New Fossils Point to a Tiny, Tree-Dwelling Ancestor," *Time,* 3/27/2000.)

(2) ape (of, relating to, or resembling) *adj.*: **simian**. ❖ To the Flikshteins . . . Cookie Flikshtein is a beloved—albeit **simian**—member of the family. She may be a monkey, they say, but she has adjusted enough to the human condition to spend most evenings eating rocky road ice cream and watching the nightly news. (Alan Feuer, "Family Not Ready to Give Up Pet Monkey: State Wants to Put Rare Creature in Zoo," *Dallas Morning News*, 7/23/2000.)

apex (as in highest point that can be attained or the ultimate degree, as of a condition or quality) *n.*: **ne plus ultra**. See *ultimate*

(2) apex *n.*: **apogee**. See *height*

aphorism (pithy . . .) *n.*: **gnome** (*adj.*: **gnomic**). See *catchphrase*

(2) aphorism (witty or clever . . . or line) *n.*: **bon mot**. See *line*

(3) aphorism *n.*: **apothegm**. See *saying*

aphoristic (as in given to stating aphorisms, esp. in a moralizing way) *adj.*: **sententious**. ❖ [Rockefeller] delivered brief sermons along with the coins, exhorting children to work hard and be frugal if they wanted a fortune; the coins were for saving, not indulgence. . . . He informed children that the nickel represented a year's interest on a dollar. For someone of Rockefeller's **sententious** nature, this was a very comfortable persona to adopt. (Ron Chernow, *Titan*, Random House [1998], p. 614.)

aphrodisiac *n.*: **philter**. See *potion*

aplomb (esp. under pressure or trying circumstances) *n.*: **sang-froid** [French]. See *composure*

apology (which is formal, full, and genuine) *n.*: **amende honorable** [French]. ❖ [A]ppeasement fuels the appetite of the moral blackmailer. . . . Visiting the Yad Vashem memorial, [Pope John Paul II] expressed regret for historical antipathies "that led to the deaths of Jews by Christians at any time and in any place." That comprehensive **amende honorable** was immediately denounced as inadequate, because it did not condemn the Pope's predecessor, Pius XII, for alleged complicity in the Nazi murder of the Jews. (Gerald Warner, "Sorry Is the Most Dangerous Word for the Church in Crisis," *Scotland on Sunday*, 3/26/2000, p. 18.)

(2) apology (as in place or occasion to offer . . . and to seek forgiveness) *n.*: **Canossa**. See *penance*

apparel *n.*: **raiment**. See *clothing*

apparition *n.*: **phantasm**. ❖ In 1993 he brought out *The Ghosts of Virginia*, a much larger compilation of his stories. "I thought I was finished," he says, "but people from all over started writing me and calling me." That resulted in three more volumes on Old Dominion **phantasms**, each about 400 pages long. (Rick Britton, "Ghosts: Colonial Past Haunts Williamsburg," *Washington Times*, 10/28/1999.)

(2) apparition *n.*: **wraith**. ❖ We sat for hours in our crude tumbleweed blind. I can't remember if we heard the golden eagle or saw it first, but suddenly it was there, slipping through the fog like a **wraith**. (Larry Rice, "Nature's Wild Gifts: Abrupt and Fleeting Encounters with Animals Leave Impressions That Last Forever," *Backpacker*, 5/1/1998, p. 118.)

appeal (as in plea) *n.*: **cri de coeur** [French; lit. cry of the heart]. See *plea*

(2) appeal (making an . . . to one's monetary self-interest) *n.*: **argumentum ad crumenam** [Latin]. See *argument*

(3) appeal (of an . . . to one's sense of pity or compassion) *adv., adj.*: **ad misericordiam**. See *argument*

(4) appeal (to earnestly) *v.t.*: **adjure**. See *plead*

appealing *adj.*: **piquant**. ❖ Philip Malbone, his antihero, is a puzzling mix of bad and good, of mal and bon. "There was for him something **piquant** in being . . . neither innocent nor guilty," Higginson writes, "but always on some delicious middle ground." (Caleb Crain, "The Monarch of Dreams," *New Republic*, 5/28/2001.)

(2) appealing (as in alluring) *adj.*: **illecebrous**. See *alluring*

(3) appealing (as in alluring) *adj.*: **sirenic**. [See also the nouns *siren call* and *Lorelei call* under *lure*.] See *alluring*

(4) appealing (but in a way that is solely based on deception or pretense or gaudiness) *adj.*: **meretricious**. See *attractive*

(5) appealing (in appearance in an unconventional way) *adj.*: **jolie laide** (or **belle laide**) [French]. See *pretty* or *handsome* or *beautiful*

(6) appealing (person through magnetism or charm) *n.*: **duende**. See *charisma*

(7) appealing (physically . . .) *n.*: **pulchritude**. See *beauty*

(8) appealing (said esp. of food or drink that is so good that one wants more) *adj.*: **moreish** [chiefly British]. See *addictive*

(9) appealing *adj.*: **prepossessing**. See *pleasing*

appear (as in emerge or materialize) *v.i.*: **debouch**. See *emerge*

appearance (outward . . . as opposed to the substance that lies beneath) *n., n.pl.*: **superficies**. ❖ But a candidate cannot live by policy alone. Charisma counts at the presidential level. The president isn't just a bureaucrat with executive power. . . . Image counts. **Superficies** add up to

substance. Someone running for president could benefit from a little celebrity power, some magic. (Joel Achenbach, "Old Hats in the Ring," *Washington Post*, 4/5/1995.)

(2) appearance (as in aura) *n.*: **nimbus**. See *aura*

(3) appearance (as in demeanor) *n.*: **mien**. See *demeanor*

(4) appearance (as in physique) *n.*: **somatotype**. See *physique*

(5) appearance (facial . . .) *n.*: **physiognomy**. See *facial features*

(6) appearance (of knowledge that is actually superficial) *n.*: **sciolism**. See *superficial*

(7) appearance (of plenty when in fact there is little) *adj.*: **Barmecidal** (esp. as in "Barmecidal feast"). See *illusion*

appease *v.t.*: **dulcify**. ❖ One of Pakistan's most notorious homegrown terrorists was elected to parliament—from prison. . . . His pro-Taliban, pro-al Qaeda outlawed party, Sipah-e-Sahaba (Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet), was one of five extremist groups banned by President Pervez Musharraf last January as he tried to **dulcify** U.S. concerns. (Arnaud de Borchgrave, "A Triumph for Taliban's Tutors," *Washington Times*, 11/12/2002.)

(2) appease (as in satisfy or make content) *v.t.***: gruntle**. See *satisfy*

appeasements (or actions to divert people or gain approval, esp. in politics) *n.pl.*: **bread and circuses**. See *diversions*

(3) appease *v.t.*: **propitiate**. See *placate*

appeasing (as in peacemaking) *adj.*: **irenic**. See *peacemaking*

appendage *n.*: **appurtenance**. ❖ To Baron, a firearm is an unpleasant, even repulsive **appurtenance** of life in L.A.—he would gladly throw his away, he says, if he ever moved back to New York. (Justin Davidson, "Guns in America," *Newsday*, 12/18/2000.)

appetite (abnormally increased . . . for food) *n.*: **hyperphagia**. ❖ It also is the time of year when all bears are going into "**hyperphagia**," a phase in which they are almost crazed by hunger and must try to put on two or three times their body weight in fat before winter. They feel like they are starving—they are ravenous—and it just doesn't seem like there is enough food. (Michael Babcock, "Tough Time of Year for Black Bears," Gannett News Service, 9/6/2001.)

(2) appetite (excessive . . .) *n.*: **polyphagia**. ❖ Beginning in the 1950s, obesity shifted to being considered a condition best dealt with through medical intervention. . . . Even the language changed to reflect the new perspective. . . . Instead of engaging in gluttonous or gorging behavior, [fat people] were considered victims of . . . "**polyphagia**." (Mike Powers, "In the Eye of the Beholder," *Human Ecology Forum*, 9/1/1996, p. 16.)

(3) appetite (condition involving . . . for eating nonfood items) *n.*: **pica**. See *craving*

(4) appetite (excessive . . .) *n.*: **gulosity**. See *gluttony*

(5) appetite (having a strong . . . , esp. sexual) *adj.*: **concupiscent** (*n.*: **concupiscence**). See *lustful*

(6) appetite (loss resulting from chronic disease) *n.*: **cachexia**. See *wasting*

(7) appetite (physical . . . or desire) *n.*: **orexis**. See *desire*

appetizer (as in a small tidbit of food served before the meal) *n.*: **amuse-bouche** [French; lit. "amuse the mouth."] [This is not ordered from a menu by patrons, but, when served, is done free and according to the chef's selection alone. It is also known as an **amuse-gueule** (animal's mouth). Like the word appetizer, it can also be used figuratively, as in this example.] ❖ [On TV] we have The Unit and that other machismo-heavy knuckle-duster, 24, which is enjoying its highest ratings ever, up 33 percent from its average for the past four years. . . . And The Unit's lead-in show, the ultrapatriotic NCIS, provides a perfect **amuse-bouche** for the red-meat main course, turning Tuesday night on CBS into an all-you-can-eat buffet of military hoorah. (Adam Sternbergh, "If the Public Is Wary of the Real-Life War, Why Are Viewers Eating Up Shows About a Gung-Ho Military?" *New York*, 4/17/2006.)

appetizing (said esp. of food or drink that is so good that one wants more) *adj.*: **moreish** [chiefly British]. See *addictive*

(2) appetizing *adj.*: **ambrosial**. See *tasty*

(3) appetizing *adj.*: **esculent**. See *edible*

(4) appetizing *adj.*: **sapid**. See *tasty*

(5) appetizing *adj.*: **toothsome**. See *tasty*

applaud (persons hired to . . . at a performance) *n.*: **claque**. ❖ [New York mayor Rudy Giuliani] brought a **claque** of 40 to 50 supporters and City Hall employees to envelop him as he walked in the Lesbian and Gay Pride March. Their job: to cheer and applaud the mayor whenever any of the spectators along the route booed him. (Sydney H. Schanberg, "Giuliani on Parade—with a Human Heat Shield," *Newsday*, 6/27/1995.)

applause (as in praise) *n.*: **approbation**. See *praise*

apples (of, relating to, or derived) *adj.*: **pomaceous**. ❖ Many apples are biennial, which in practise means they alternate between good and bad crops. Some fruit will be scabby and others have bitterpit, and the earwigs and wasps and moths will have their day. But that is an important part of their **pomaceous** charm. (Monty Don, Life & Soul: Gardens: "Apple of His Eye," *Observer*, 10/29/2000, p. 82.)

appoint (as in delegate, authority or duties to another) *v.t.*: **depute**. See *delegate*

appointment (esp. for illicit sexual relations) *n.*: **assignation**. ❖ The next scene takes place two years earlier, in a flat that Jerry and Emma have been renting for years to accommodate their afternoon trysts. Only there's no trysting on this bleak winter's day. Neither has time for midday **assignations** any longer, nor are they willing to upend their lives by

dumping their respective spouses. (Steve Parks, "The Genesis of a 'Betrayal,'" *Newsday*, 3/20/1998.)

apportion *v.t.*: **admeasure**. ❖ The Admiral, David Robinson, the admirable Tim Duncan and the **admeasuring** [i.e., ball distributing] point guard Avery Johnson will make the Spurs the favorites [in the NBA finals], on and off the court, whether they host the Knicks or the Pacers. (John Walters, SI View: The Week in TV Sports, *Sports Illustrated*, 6/14/1999, p. 19.)

appraise (as in analyze, that which has already occurred, i.e., to project into the past) *v.t.*: **retroject**. See *analyze*

appreciate (as in understand, thoroughly and/or intuitively) *v.t.*: **grok**. See *understand*

appreciation (as in perception or awareness) *n.*: **ken**. See *perception*

apprehend (based on past experience) *v.t.*: **apperceive**. See *comprehend*

(2) apprehend (through the senses) *adj.*: **sensate**. See *feel*

apprehension (positive form of . . . brought on, for example, by a job promotion or a new baby) *n.*: **eustress**. See *stress*

(2) apprehension (that something is going to occur) *n.*: **presentiment**. See *premonition*

apprehensive (and cautious and indecisive) *adj.*: **Prufrockian**. See *timid*

apprentice (as in beginner) *n.*: **abecedarian**. See *beginner*

approach *v.t.*: **appropinquate**. ❖ Got spurned, so I don't have a date, / **Appropinquated** Kate far too late. / Before my approach, / She fell for her coach, / Note to self: it does not pay to wait! (Oxford Victor, *The Omnificent English Dictionary in Limerick Form* [*oedilf.com*], 10/14/2006.)

approaching (spec. getting closer and closer to a goal but never quite reaching it) *adv.*: **asymptotically**. See *closer*

appropriate *adj.*: **felicitous**. ❖ [B]aseball never had it so good as it did in the era immediately after World War II. . . . But pivotal is the more **felicitous** expression for this period. . . . These, after all, were the years of Jackie Robinson, of the gestation of a players' union that would eventually topple the despised reserve clause, [and] of middle-class flight to the suburbs (which drastically altered the game's demographics). (Ron Fimrite, Books: "Those Were the Days," *Sports Illustrated*, 4/19/1999, p. R26.)

(2) appropriate (an . . . thing to do) *n.*: **bon ton** [French]. ❖ But what remains very similar after all these years is the sense of elitism and the sentiment of "we are better than them" which still unabashedly pervades Labor ranks. . . . [Labor leader Tiki Dayan] thought it **bon ton** to haughtily intimate that Likud supporters are unthinking low-class trash—definitely not as good as us. (Sarah Honig, "Barak's Delayed Reaction: Will It Help Netanyahu?" *Jerusalem Post*, 5/3/1999.)

(3) appropriate (as in relevant) *adj.*: **apposite**. See *relevant*

(4) appropriate (as in usurp) *v.t.*: **accroach**. See *usurp*

(5) appropriate (esp. in reference to a punishment) *adj.*: **condign**. See *deserved*

(6) appropriate (for oneself without right) *v.t.*: **arrogate**. See *claim*

(7) appropriate *adj.*: **comme il faut** [French]. See *proper*

approval *n.*: **nihil obstat**. [Latin for "nothing hinders." This term refers to a certification given by an official censor in the Roman Catholic Church approving a book as not being doctrinally or morally objectionable, and which may therefore be published. It is often used generally or metaphorically to refer to any kind of seal of approval, sanction, or blessing, as in the following example.] ❖ The [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] has engaged the Walt Disney organization of Hollywood, U.S.A., to take control of marketing the [Mounties'] image. From now on every item, from Mountie swizzle sticks to those awful Mountie dolls that make a rude noise when you squeeze them, must have the **nihil obstat** of one of Walt's minions. (Christopher Dafoe, "Walt Disney Deserves to Get His Man," *Ottawa Citizen*, 9/17/1995.)

(2) approval (as in praise) *n.*: **approbation**. See *praise*

approve (esp. to confirm officially) *v.t.*: **homologate**. ❖ The new model, called the TX1, is **homologated** for all of Europe, said Hugh Lang, chairman of London Taxi's parent, Manganese Bronze Holdings PLC. The first left-hand-drive versions will be built next spring for export into Europe. (William Diem, "Two U.K. Firms Eye American Market," *Automotive News*, 10/20/1997.)

(2) approve (officially) *v.t.*: **approbate**. See *authorize*

approved (as in official act, declaration, or statement, as in with the authority of one's office) *adv.*, *adj.*: **ex cathedra**. See *official*

apt (as in relevant) *adj.*: **apposite**. See *relevant*

arbiter (on matters of taste, fashion, style, protocol, etc.) *n.*: **arbiter elegantiae** [Latin]. ❖ Suddenly, it seems, one's mother has become the latest, choicest fashion accessory. Forget Gucci—a mother on the arm is a better class of bag. Gwyneth Paltrow, Hollywood's new **arbiter elegantiae**, confirmed this at the Oscars. Her acceptance speech was a panegyric to her mother Blythe Danner: "I love her more than anyone in the world," she sobbed. . . . (Penelope Wyatt, "Mommy Dearest: Stars Stepping Out with Mothers at Their Sides," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 4/4/1999.)

arbitrarily (as in indiscriminately) *adv.*: **swoopstake**. See *indiscriminately*

arbitrary (as in haphazard) *adj.*, *adv.*: **higgledy-piggledy**. See *haphazard*

(2) arbitrary (as in random) *adj.*: **stochastic**. See *random*

arch (slightly) *v.t.*, *v.i.*: **camber**. See *curve*

archaic (as in obsolete) *adj.*: **superannuated**. See *obsolete*

archconservative (in beliefs and often stuffy, pompous, and/or elderly) *adj.*, *n.*: **Colonel Blimp**. See *conservative*

arched (like a bow) *adj.*: **arcuate**. See *curved*

archer *n.*: **toxophilite**. ❖ Sir—Your reporter rather disparagingly refers to Robin Hood as having used "a makeshift wooden bow." . . . As a former keen **toxophilite**, I would point out that the longbow demands a higher degree of skill in use than the modern bow with all its hi-tech gadgetry. (Marcus Wells, letter to the editor, *Western Mail* [Cardiff, Wales], 9/10/2001.)

Arctic (of or relating to the . . . region) *adj.*: **hyperborean**. [Note: This word also means very cold, and, in the following example, both meanings would be appropriate.] ❖ [If there were drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,] how many drilling rigs, it's fair to ask, would cause postpartum psychosis among caribou? . . . Would oil pipes and pumps in just 2,000 acres of the 9 million-acre refuge seriously harm animals and migrating birds? And if it does, is that the overriding consideration? Certainly no tourist jobs are at stake in that desolate, **hyperborean** plain. (Edwin A. Roberts Jr., "Ruminations on Oil and Its Origins," *Tampa Tribune*, 11/18/2001.)

ardent (as in feverish) *adj.*: **pyretic**. See *fever*

(2) ardent *adj.*: **perfervid**. See *impassioned*

ardor (excessive or unbridled . . . , as in enthusiasm) *n.*: **schwarmerei** (or **schwärmerei**) [German]. See *enthusiasm*

arduous (as in difficult or painful, journey or experience) *n.*: **via dolorosa**. See *ordeal*

(2) arduous (task, esp. of cleaning up or remedying bad situations) *n.*: **Augean task**. See *Herculean*

(3) arduous *adj.*: **operose**. See *laborious*

area (as in sphere or realm) *n.*: **ambit**. See *realm*

(2) area (densely populated . . .) *n.*: **megalopolis**. See *crowded*

(3) area (esp. small, between things or events) *n.*: **interstice**. See *gap*

(4) area (physical . . .) *n.*: **vicinage**. See *vicinity*

(5) area (populated by persons from many countries or backgrounds) *n.*: **cosmopolis**. See *diversity*

(6) area (surrounding . . . served by an institution, such as a school or hospital) *n.*: **catchment area**. See *district*

(7) area *n.*: **purlieu**. See *vicinity*

areas (as in vicinity or environs) *n.pl.*: **purlieus**. See *outskirts*

arguable (as in controversial opinion or person who holds one) *n.*: **polemic**. See *controversy*

argue (about petty matters) *v.i.*: **pettifog**. See *quibble*

(3) argue (against) *v.t.*: **expostulate**. See *object*

(2) argue (against a statement, opinion, or action) *v.t.*: **oppugn**. See *oppose*

argument (appealing to one's purse) *n.*: **argumentum ad crumenam** [Latin for "to the purse"]. ❖ An electioneering budget is an **argumentum ad crumenam**, and most elections in democracies have a strong element of

this old argument. It may not be idealistic, but it is the way people vote. (Philip Howard, "Rhetoric and All That Rot," *Times* [London], 4/12/1991.)

(2) argument (fallacious . . . , usually, but not necessarily, related to philosophy) *n.*: **philosophism**. [To understand what this writer is saying would likely require, at a minimum, a degree in ontology, which is a branch of metaphysics relating to the nature of being. However, even without understanding the writer's point, the meaning of philosophism is nevertheless clear from the example given.] ❖ Like Nancy, however, de Beistegui falls into the trap of **philosophism** when he assumes that a differential ontology should be an ontology of differential being *as such* and, hence, should be untainted by any particular "beings" or ontic regions. (Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, books.google.com/books?isbn=0748624988, 2007.)

(3) argument (in which one of the propositions, usually the premise—which may or may not be accurate—is omitted, leading listeners to fill in the premise themselves) *n.*: **enthymeme** (*adj.*: **enthymematic**). ❖ On May 1, [2003,] President Bush said, "The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001, and still goes on." . . . This is classic **enthymematic** argumentation: We were attacked on Sept. 11, so we went to war against Iraq. The missing piece of the argument —"Saddam was involved in 9/11"—didn't have to be said aloud for those listening to assimilate its message. (Paul Waldman, "Why the Media Don't Call It as They See It," *Washington Post*, 9/28/2003.)

(4) argument (of an . . . appealing to one's emotions or designed for crowd-pleasing) *adj., adv.*: **ad captandum** (or **ad captandum vulgus**) [Latin]. ❖ [Prime Minister Blair] spent much of Monday trying to corner the market in opinions on the row [after a soccer coach made controversial comments about disabled people]. First, **ad captandum vulgus**, he took the role of prosecutor . . . , announcing that it would be "very difficult" for Mr. Hoddle to stay. Then, having failed to secure plaudits from the tabloids, he telephoned the England coach to make his peace. (*Daily Telegraph* [London], "The Correct Way Forward," 2/3/1999.)

(5) argument (of an . . . appealing to one's prejudices or sentiments rather than facts or logical reasoning) *adj., adv.*: **ad populum** (*n.*: **argumentum ad populum**) [Latin]. ❖ "When contemplating college liberals, you really regret once again that John Walker is not getting the death penalty. We need to execute people like John Walker in order to physically intimidate liberals, by making them realize that they can be killed, too. . . . " Rife with its **ad populum** and slippery slope fallacies, the above statement came from former *National Review* columnist Ann Coulter during a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference. (Blaine Sullivan, "Fanatical Officials Endanger Liberties," University Wire, 3/19/2002.)

(6) argument (of an . . . appealing to pity or compassion) *adv., adj.*:

argumentum ad misericordiam [Latin]. ❖ I empathize absolutely with Kit Marx, who has "qualms about 'taking' private lands." . . . Every one of us [has seen] heart-wringing stories about elderly couples, standing on their land and dolefully declaring, "This swamp was our retirement." There surely are injustices, and Kit Marx is not the only "radical preservationist" who is swayed by the endless resorts to **argumentum ad misericordiam**. (Harvey Manning, letter to the editor, *Seattle Times*, 8/13/1992.)

(7) argument (of an . . . based on the authority or say-so of another, but in an area that is outside his or her field of expertise; that is, improperly trading on the reverence and respect of another) *adj.*, *adv.*: **ad verecundiam** (*n.*: **argumentum ad verecundiam**) [Latin]. ❖ [In maintaining that Martin Luther King is now on a par with George Washington,] an op-ed writer in my local paper argues: "[A question about] Dr. King has already replaced [one about] George Washington on the most widely used individual intelligence test for adults, the Wechsler Revised. [This is] an example of **ad verecundiam**, . . . an appeal to an unsuitable authority, in this case the authors of the IQ test. (Florence King, QED, *National Review*, 10/7/1991.)

(8) argument (that if something cannot be proven false, then it must be true) *n.*: **argumentum ad ignorantiam.** [Latin. This is generally, though not always, considered to be a fallacious argument.] ❖ Conservatives occasionally [suggest] that even if we do not know that fetuses are fully human from conception, they never-the-less may be; and they should be given the benefit of the doubt. . . . What is wrong with the "benefit of the doubt" argument? . . . [T]he argument is a classic case of **argumentum ad ignorantiam**. From the "we do not know" admission, no positive conclusions logically follow, especially not that we should treat [fetuses] as if they were fully human. (Rem Edwards, "Why Conservatives Are Wrong," *National Forum*, 9/22/1989.)

(9) argument (that silence from an opposing side or absence of evidence is itself indicative of the fact that the person making the argument must be correct) *n.*: **argumentum ex silentio.** [Latin. This is generally, though not always, considered to be a fallacious argument.] ❖ Sir—Your report . . . quoted Prof Sean Freyne as claiming that "Ireland has one of Europe's oldest Jewish communities." This is plainly fallacious. . . . The earliest indication of a resident Jewish community in Ireland does not occur before the 1230s . . . although [I recognize that] this is an **argument[um] ex silentio**. (Anthony Gandon, "Jewish History in Ireland," *Irish Times*, 11/19/1997.)

(10) argument (about a philosophical or theological issue) *n.*: **quodlibet**. See *debate*

(11) argument (about words) *n.*: **logomachy**. See *words*

(12) argument (as in difference of opinion) *n.*: **divarication**. See

disagreement

(13) argument (as in heated disagreement or friction between groups) *n.*: **ruction**. See *dissension*

(14) argument (characterized by internal . . .) *adj.*: **factious**. See *dispute*

(15) argument (fallacious . . . in logic in which a false conclusion is drawn from two premises, neither of which conveys information about all members of the designated class) *n.*: **undistributed middle**. See *fallacy*

(16) argument (fallacious . . . , spec. where one argues that because event B followed event A, then event A must have caused event B) *n.*: **post hoc ergo propter hoc** [Latin for "after this, therefore, because of this"]. See *fallacy*

(17) argument (given to . . . which may be specious or one who is so given) *adj., n.*: **eristic**. See *specious* and *debate*

(18) argument (minor . . .) *n.*: **velitation**. See *skirmish*

(19) argument (person who hates rational . . . or enlightenment) *n.*: **misologist**. See *closed-minded*

(20) argument (showing the absurdity of a proposition or point of view by showing the absurd result which would ensue if it was taken to its logical extreme) *n.*: **reductio ad absurdum**. See *absurdity*

(21) argument (specious . . . intended to mislead or rationalize) *n.*: **casuistry**. See *fallacious*

(22) argument (suggesting the use of force to settle an issue) *n.*: **argumentum ad baculum** [Latin]. See *threat*

(23) argument (which is complicated and often illogical) *n.*: **choplogic**. See *fallacy*

(24) argument (which is fallacious) *n.*: **syllogism**. See *specious*

argumentative (as in antagonistic) *adj.*: **oppugnant**. See *antagonistic*

(2) argumentative (as in combative) *adj.*: **agonistic**. See *combative*

(3) argumentative *adj., n.*: **eristic**. See *debate*

(4) argumentative *adj.*: **querulous**. See *peevish*

arid (of or adapted to an . . . habitat) *adj.*: **xeric**. See *dry*

arise (as in result) *v.i.*: **eventuate**. See *result*

aristocracy (as in fashionable society) *n.*: **beau monde** [French]. See *high society*

(2) aristocracy (as in fashionable society) *n.*: **bon ton** [French]. See *high society*

aristocratic (esp. those aspiring or pretending to be . . .) *adj.*: **lace-curtain**. See *well-bred*

arithmetic (difficulty with or inability to do . . .) *n.*: **acalculia**; **dyscalculia**. See *math*

(2) arithmetic (having ability with . . . and math generally) *adj.*: **numerate**. See *mathematical*

armhole (on a garment) *n.*: **armscye**. ❖ Q. I am having problems easing in

"superb," this word actually has a distinct definition.] ❖ The exemplary genius [James Joyce was] utterly free of any obligation to please a reading public (in place of government grants or protective universities, Joyce had patronage). Unreined, unbound, he soared off to fulfill the destiny of his genius; or, if you prefer, he wrote to please himself. All writers do this, or want to do this, or would do this if they dared. Only Joyce did it with such crazed **superbity**. (Martin Amis, "Teacher's Pet," *Atlantic*, 9/1/1996.)

(2) arrogance *adj.*: **hubris**. ❖ Like any Greek tragic hero, Clinton is also guilty of **hubris**: He indulged himself most of all when things were going well and he thought that his office, good polls and the election results made him invulnerable to his enemies and free to defy Congress. (Morton Kondracke, Roll Call, "Impeachment Fight a Tragedy for All," *Arizona Republic*, 12/20/1998.)

(3) arrogance (as in boastful behavior) *n.*: **rodomontade**. See *bluster*

(4) arrogance (in behavior or speech) *n.*: **contumely**. See *contempt*

arrogant (and shameless person) *n.*: **jackanapes**. See *conceited*

(2) arrogant (as in being presumptuous; venturing beyond one's province) *adj.*: **ultracrepidarian**. See *presumptuous*

(3) arrogant (as in condescending) *adj.*, *adv.*: **de haut en bas** [French]. See *condescending*

(4) arrogant (as in haughty or condescending) *adj.*: **toplofty**. See *haughty*

(5) arrogant (as in lordly) *adj.*: **seigneurial**. See *lordly*

(6) arrogant (as in pompous) *adj.*: **flatulent**. See *pompous*

(7) arrogant (as in pompous or haughty) *adj.*: **hoity-toity**. See *pompous*

(8) arrogant (as in pushy and assertive) *adj.*: **bumptious**. See *pushy*

(9) arrogant (or dictatorial person, esp. person in a position of authority, such as an employer, military officer, critic, or teacher) *n.*: **tin god**. See *self-important*

(10) arrogant *adj.*: **fastuous**. See *haughty*

arrows (one who makes . . .) *n.*: **fletcher**. ❖ Kingmaker is a similar set-up at the castle, where children can watch the **fletcher** construct traditional bows and arrows. (Katie Bowman, "Ye Complete Guide to Ye Olde England," *Independent* [London], 12/15/2001.)

art (objects of . . . , esp. curios or crafts) *n.*: **virtu**. [French. This word is generally used as part of the expression "objets virtu," or occasionally the English form, "objects of virtue."] ❖ In sharp contrast, the technically innovative [crafts] in the second group are functional in form but are rarely used; they never would have been called crafts 100 years ago. These are the **objets virtu** of our time, labor-intensive works that are exuberant expressions of clay, glass, metal, wood or feathers. (Rita Reif, "Keeping Up with the Expanding Meaning of Craft," *New York Times*, 2/13/2000.)

(2) art (or writings created in the artist's or author's youth) *n.*: **juvenilia**. See *compositions*

assess (as in analyze, that which has already occurred; i.e., to project into the past) *v.t.*: **retroject**. See *analyze*

(2) assess (under a new standard, esp. one that differs from conventional norms) *v.t.*: **transvaluate**. See *evaluate*

(3) assess *v.t.*: **assay**. See *evaluate*

assets (personal . . . , as in belongings) *n.pl.*: **personalia**. See *belongings*

assiduous (in effort or application) *adj.*: **sedulous**. See *diligent*

assign (authority or duties to another) *v.t.*: **depute**. See *delegate*

assignment (as in task given to a person) *n.*: **remit**. See *task*

assimilate (as in incorporate, the ideas or attitudes of others, esp. parents, into one's own personality) *v.t.*: **introject**. See *incorporate*

assistant (esp. to a scholar or magician) *n.*: **famulus**. ❖ [T]elevision is trying to coolify magic by ridding it of its associations with slimeballs in sequined suits, assisted by a mute **famulus** bedecked in feathers, mascara, and an inane grin, together partaking in a mindless ritual of sawing, stabbing, and vanishing. (Victor Lewis-Smith, "Don't Shoot, This Is Live . . . ," *Evening Standard* [London], 10/6/2003.)

(2) assistant (esp. to organized crime leader) *n.*: **consigliere** [Italian]. ❖ Forbes.com rustled through [Mafia boss John] Gotti's wit and wisdom, as captured by FBI wiretaps, and put together these useful tips: . . . On caring for subordinates: "Chrissake, I love you (speaking to Gambino family **consigliere** Frank Locascio) more than I love myself. . . . I'm worried about you going to jail. I don't give two (bleeps) about my going to jail." (Michael Precker, "Working World," *Dallas Morning News*, 6/18/2002.)

(3) assistant (who is loyal and unquestioning) *n.*: **myrmidon**. ❖ Judge Wright concluded, "the record demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that [President Clinton] responded to plaintiff [Paula Jones's] questions by giving false, misleading, and evasive answers that were designed to obstruct the judicial process." (How many times did the president's **myrmidons** tell us he equivocated to spare his family embarrassment?) (Bruce Fein, "A Protracted List of Discredits," *Washington Times*, 4/20/1999.)

(4) assistant *n.*: **adjutant**. ❖ For 17 seasons as an assistant coach, Craig Esherick sat quietly and nondescriptly next to John Thompson on Georgetown's bench. [Thus, when Thompson resigned, it] was natural for the rest of the world to wonder whether this faceless, voiceless **adjutant** was up to the job he had unexpectedly inherited. (Seth Davis, Inside College Basketball, *Sports Illustrated*, 1/22/2001, p. 80.)

(5) assistant *n.*: **factotum**. ❖ At the time of Annie [Sullivan's] death in 1936, Polly Thompson, who was five years younger than Helen, had been with the household for twenty-two years as a secretary and general **factotum**. (Dorothy Herrmann, *Helen Keller*, Knopf [1998], p. 266.)

assistants (group of . . . or advisors, often scheming or plotting) *n.*: **camarilla**.

See *advisors*

associate (tendency of people to . . . with, or be attracted to, those they perceive are similar to them) *n.*: **homophily**. ❖ In fact, research . . . shows that if you know whether a person's friends are Republicans, Democrats or independents, you can predict with near certainty that person's political views. **Homophily** may help explain some of the bitter partisanship of our times—when your friends are drawn exclusively from one half of the electorate, it is not surprising that you will find the views of the other half inexplicable. (Shankar Vedantam, "Why Everyone You Know Thinks the Same as You," *Washington Post*, 10/16/2006.)

(2) associate (as in comrade) *n.*: **tovarich** [Russian]. See *comrade*

(3) associate (close . . . or partner, often but not always, one in marriage) *n.*: **yokefellow**. See *partner*

(4) associate *n.*: **confrere**. See *colleague*

associated (with, as in incident to) *adj.*: **appurtenant**. See *pertaining*

association (whose members act primarily in their own self-interest) *n.*: **gesellschaft** (sometimes cap.). [German. This is a sociological category introduced by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887. It refers to an association whose members act primarily in their own self-interest. It is associated with modern industrial life, mobility, heterogeneity, and impersonality. Its contrasting association is "gemeinschaft," a community united by common ideals, beliefs about the appropriate behavior and responsibility of members of the association, and strong personal ties. Self-interest is deemphasized in favor of the greater good. See *community*.] ❖ Fifty years after the Normandy invasion, what is it that binds North America and Europe together in an "Atlantic community"? A North Atlantic **gesellschaft** clearly exists, in the form of the NATO treaty and all the buildings and bureaucrats that embody it. . . . In the post-Cold War era, only . . . strategic self-interest will endure as a glue to hold the community together while ideological and cultural bonds will decay. This will not be a healthy situation. (Francis Fukuyama, "For the Atlantic Allies Today, a Fraying of the Sense of Moral Community," *International Herald Tribune*, 6/6/1994.) [The following example uses both terms to illustrate the distinction.] ❖ [The] **gemeinschaft** society [of the antebellum South], with its emphasis on tradition, rural life, close kinship ties . . . persisted in the South long after the North began moving toward a **gesellschaft** society with its impersonal, bureaucratic, meritocratic, urbanizing, commercial, industrializing, mobile, and rootless characteristics. Above all, the South's folk culture valued tradition and stability. (James M. McPherson, "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question," *Civil War History*, 12/1/2004.)

(2) association (united by close personal bonds) *n.*: **gemeinschaft** [German]. See *community*

heterodox (*n.*: **heterodoxy**). See *unconventional*

auction (act of bidding or selling at) *n.*: **licitation**. ❖ Brazil: Small players can be benefitted in auction. . . . The **licitation** to explore oil and natural gas areas . . . can benefit small players of the sector. Specialists believe the major companies already acquired their areas in 1999 and 2000. (*South American Business Information*, "Brazil: Small Players Can Be Benefitted in Auction," 6/12/2001.)

(2) auction (or sale by a museum of items in order to purchase more) *v.t.*: **deaccession**. See *sell*

(3) auction (public . . .) *n.*: **vendue**. ❖ At last year's **vendue**, a Maryland-bred colt topped the sale at $280,000. (Cindy Deubler, "Daily Horse Racing Form: Maryland Breeding: Timonium Sale Offers 590 Juveniles," Sports Network, 5/16/2003.)

audacious (as in being presumptuous; venturing beyond one's province) *adj.*: **ultracrepidarian**. See *presumptuous*

audacity (as in courage to express one's opinions, often in the face of bullying or tyranny) *n.*: **zivilcourage** [German]. See *courage*

(2) audacity *n.*: **hardihood**. See *gall*

augur *v.t.*: **adumbrate**. See *foreshadow*

aunt (of, like, or relating to an . . .) *adj.*: **materteral**. [One would think that the feminine equivalent of "avuncular" would be equally common, but not so. However, there is a legitimate word that fills the bill.] ❖ [Janet Trinkaus, the founder of Rise n' Shine, an organization devoted to helping children who have AIDS or whose lives have been touched by AIDS, stated]: "I had a lot of aunts and uncles, a wide net of support growing up, and I really wanted to create that for the Rise n' Shine kids." At Rise n' Shine, these avuncular and **materteral** roles are filled by the group's small army of volunteers, each of whom spends four hours a week with his or her Rise n' Shine charge. (David Schmader, "Rise n' Shine," *Stranger*, 1/25/2007.)

aura *n.*: **effluvium**. ❖ To record his return to [surfing] greatness, Harmon recruits down-and-out surf-mag photographer Jack Fletcher, who also needs another chance. Along with a couple of younger guys dripping with Southern California **effluvium**, they head for a place that may or may not exist, Heart Attacks, where the waves are said to be 30 feet or higher. (Ken Wisneski, "Adventure/Northern California Setting Rounds Out an Eerie Thriller," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 4/27/1997.)

(2) aura *n.*: **nimbus**. [This word also means rain-cloud (see *cloud* and *halo*.)] ❖ In countless ways, of course, Giuliani has morphed into the antithesis of the regular guy. Exalted as "America's mayor," his name a household word, he emerged from Sept. 11 with the **nimbus** of an international icon—a rarefied aura that has yet to fade. (Mary Voboril, "Awaiting Rudy Giuliani's Next Chapter," *Record* [Bergen County, NJ],


image
not
available

photos as the one of a **dorsal** homage to the rockers KISS or of a smiling, rotund Buddha image on an equally rotund tummy? (*Toronto Star*, "Tattoo Mags Get to the Needle-Sharp Point," 8/26/2000.)

back away *v.i.*: **resile**. See *recoil*

backbreaking (task, esp. of cleaning up or remedying bad situations) *n.*: **Augean task**. See *Herculean*

backer (esp. who supports or protects a political leader) *n.*: **Janissary**. See *supporter*

backward (as in intellectually or morally unenlightened) *adj.*: **benighted**. See *unenlightened*

(2) backward (or stagnant place or situation) *n.*: **backwater**. See *stagnant*

bacon *n.*: **flitch**. ❖ Uncle Charles, my mother's favourite brother, had a gift for curing bacon, using a secret recipe that he never even told her about. It produced **flitches** as stiff as boards, which, when the brine had done its work, hung from huge hooks set in the dairy ceiling. The bacon smelled sweet and dry. (Anna Pavord, "Border Crossings: How to Save Your Own Bacon," *Independent* [London], 10/27/2001.)

bad (as in evil or wicked) *adj.*: **iniquitous**. See *wicked*

(2) bad (as in evil or wicked) *adj.*: **malefic**. See *evil*

(3) bad (as in evil or wicked) *adj.*: **malevolent**. See *evil*

(4) bad (as in mischievous) *adj.*: **elfin**. See *mischievous*

(5) bad (as in second-rate) *adj.*: **second-drawer**. See *second-rate*

(6) bad (very . . . , as in abominable) *adj.*: **execrable**. See *abominable*

bad dream (or episode having the quality of a . . .) *n.*: **Walpurgis Night**. See *nightmare*

bad faith (with or in . . .) *adv.*, *adj.*: **mala fide** [Latin]. ❖ The inescapable conclusion, from the Indian point of view, is that either U.S. intentions in India are **mala fide**, or, even worse, India is so low on Clinton's list of priorities that it does not merit a serious policy. (K. V. Bapa Rao, "Clinton's India Policy," *India Currents*, 4/30/1994.)

badger (spec. to bother with persistent or unreasonable requests) *v.t.*: **importune**. See *pester*

(2) badger *v.t.*: **chivvy**. See *pester*

(3) badger *v.t.*: **hector**. See *bully*

bad luck (person that brings . . .) *n.*: **Jonah** [After Jonah, a prophet in the Old Testament, whose presence on a ship was believed to bring a storm. Typically the word is applied to a person, though not in this example.] ❖ Anglo Irish Bank became the **Jonah** of banking and politics, bringing bad luck and ill fortune to all associated with both when the government took over Anglo on January 15. (*Belfast Telegraph*, "How the Celtic Tiger's Roar Became a Pathetic Whimper," 12/29/2009.)

(2) bad luck *n.*, *adj.*: **hoodoo** [sometimes as in "a hoodoo" when used in the sense of a curse or jinx; also used as an adjective, as in "hoodoo team"].

The people in front of you in line inevitably have a roller bag with a shoulder bag resting on it. Watch them as they take out their laptop, heave their bags onto the conveyor belt and then fill bin after bin with other **impedimenta**. And this is their carry-on luggage. Who knows what they checked. (Julia McCue, "Working the Web," *Portland [ME] Press Herald*, 6/5/2006.)

bagpipes (high, shrill sound of . . .) *n.*: **skirl**. [This can also be a verb, as in "the bagpipes began to skirl."] ❖ With eyes dried and hearts lifted—thanks to the **skirl** of bagpipes played by kilt-wearing pipers coming up the hill—Grant, Gill and the wedding guests arrived at Grant's rented home. (Karen S. Schneider, Weddings: "Perfect Harmony," *People*, 3/27/2000, p. 57.)

balance (as in equilibrium) *n.*: **equipoise**. See *equilibrium*

(2) balance (spec. to be or to make equal in weight) *v.t., v.i.*: **equiponderate**. See *equal*

balanced (as in just right) *adj., adv.*: **lagom** [Swedish]. See *just right*

(2) balanced (as in orderly, controlled, disciplined, etc.) *adj.*: **Apollonian**. See *orderly*

balancer (as in one who balances things or balancing on things) *n.*: **equilibrist**. [This word is broader than *funambulist* (see *tightrope walker*) in that it includes one who performs feats of balance, whether balancing on something, as in the example given, or doing the balancing. It is also sometimes used figuratively.] ❖ Among the more bizarre stunts is the "Roller Boller Balancer" number by Pavel and Natasha Lavrik. Pavel is an **equilibrist** who balances himself atop a stack of rolling cylinders. While pivoting from this precarious perch, he and his wife Natasha play catch with a dozen juggling pins. (Steve Parks, "Russia's National Treasure: Moscow Circus," *Newsday*, 12/20/1994.)

bald (-headed man) *n.*: **pilgarlic**. ❖ Moving from pogonotrophy to **pilgarlics**, many politicians perceive that the voters won't go for a bald-headed candidate, according to John T. Capps III of (where else?) Moorehead City, North Carolina, President and Founder of Bald-Headed Men of America. (*Newsday*, Eye on Long Island, 3/12/1995.)

(2) bald (or hairless) *adj.*: **glabrous**. ❖ In the Brazilian rainforests Dutch scientists have located the world's tiniest species of monkey. . . . Too small to eat or even to perform with an organ grinder, the diminutive monkey might be used as a hairpiece, and if these Dutch scientists are as bald as most middle-aged Dutchmen, they may return to Holland as saviors of their **glabrous** race. (*American Spectator*, "The Continuing Crisis: Scrabbled Brains," 10/1/1997.)

(3) bald *adj.*: **calvous**. ❖ "Hubert was really hooked on false documentation. And, of course, the best false documentation isn't false. That was why Hubert had been so pleased with his latest acquisition [a

passport], fresh from the pocket. Because Herr Kruger's specifics were right on mine and he had correctly considered him a good match for me. Admittedly most old, bloated, **calvous** Germans could double for me." (Tibor Fischer, *The Thought Gang*, Scribner [1997].)

(4) bald (become . . . by shaving one's head) *v.t.*, *n.*: **tonsure**. See *shave*

baldness *n.*: **alopecia**. ❖ Coming on the eve of the muckraking era, Rockefeller's **alopecia** had a devastating effect on his image: It made him look like a hairless ogre, stripped of all youth, warmth, and attractiveness, and this played powerfully on people's imaginations. (Ron Chernow, *Titan*, Random House [1998], p. 408.)

ball (formal . . . esp. for debutantes) *n.*: **cotillion**. ❖ [He is] one of six blacks in a Catholic school of 1,200 males wearing blazers to class each day. . . . He's at a **cotillion**. He's very quiet. Perfectly mannerly. But he's making one debutante's mother nervous. She asks what his family name is. "Wilkens," he replies. She asks what his father's profession is. "My father's dead." (Gary Smith, Bonus Piece, *Sports Illustrated*, 12/5/1994, p. 68.)

ballet (admirer or fan of . . .) *n.*: **balletomane**. ❖ Although he would go on to dance with more than 40 companies, [Rudolf] Nureyev's most successful relationship was with England's Royal Ballet, partnering Margot Fonteyn. In the body-conscious 1960s, his athletic, pantherlike approach enraptured audiences and created a whole new generation of **balletomanes**. (Eileen Clarke, "The Final Curtain—Eight Years Ago, Groundbreaking Dancer Rudolf Nureyev Succumbed to AIDS," *Entertainment Weekly*, 1/11/2002, p. 76.)

ballet dancer (who ranks above a member of the corps de ballet and below a soloist and who performs in small ensembles) *n.*: **coryphée**. ❖ While young Alina Somova's technical prowess earns her the lead in "Swan Lake," her dancing appears academic, lacking any particular fluidity or panache. The marvelous expressiveness of **coryphee** Evgenia Obraztsova, on the other hand, is immediately apparent. . . . (Ronnie Scheib, *Ballerina* (Movie Review), *Daily Variety*, 1/6/2009.)

ballooned (as in swollen) *adj.*: **dropsical**. See *swollen*

balls (as in testicles; surgical removal of one or both . . .) *n.*: **orchiectomy**. See *testicles*

balm (or lotion that is soothing) *n.*: **demulcent**. See *soothing*

bamboozle (or deceive, cheat, con, hoodwink, etc., sometimes by flattery) *v.t.*: **honeyfuggle**. See *deceive*

(2) bamboozle *v.t.*: **hornswoggle**. See *deceive*

banal (as in insipid intellectual nourishment, like baby food) *n.*: **pabulum** (also **pablum**). See *insipid*

(2) banal (one who utters . . . remarks, as in platitudes) *n.*: **platitudinarian**. See *platitudes*

(3) banal (remark or statement) *n.*: **platitude**. See *cliché*

(2) basic (or reduced version or interpretation of an issue, thing, or prior version, esp. in a way which is crude or . . .) *adj.*: **reductive**. See *simplistic*

(3) basic (stage of development) *adj.*: **Model T**. See *rudimentary*

(4) basic *adj.*: **abecedarian**. ❖ [Muhammad Ali] expressed himself in energetic, if **abecedarian**, rhymes. Listen to this excerpt from "Song of Myself": "Yes, the crowd did not dream—When they laid down their money—That they would see—A total eclipse of the Sonny. I am the greatest!" (Keith Mano, "Still the Greatest," *National Review*, 11/9/1998, p. 59.)

basically *adv.*: **au fond** [French: at bottom]. ❖ Unlike most radicals, however, [British politician Tony] Benn has not mellowed with age and modified his views. [He believes that] the monarchy should be abolished. . . . **Au fond**, Mr Benn is a Robespierre. That is to say, he has no grasp of the need for continuity and authority as well as that for radical change. He is strong on the dangers of authoritarianism. He does not seem to grasp the equal dangers of anarchy. (*Economist*, "Common Sense," 9/18/1993.)

basis (as in assumption or set of assumptions) *n.*: **donnée** [French]. See *assumption*

(2) basis (as in root) *n.*: **taproot**. See *root*

(3) basis (as in source and origin) *n.*: **fons et origo** [Latin]. See *source* and *origin*

(4) basis (as in that which set the standard or established the model from which others followed or on which others are based) *n.*: **locus classicus** [Latin]. See *model*

(5) basis (initial . . . as in prime mover) *n.*: **primum mobile** [Latin]. See *prime mover*

(6) basis (on which something is built) *n.*: **warp and woof**. See *foundation*

(7) basis (principal . . . or source) *n.*: **wellhead**. See *source*

basket (often one of a pair, on either side of a bike or animal) *n.*: **pannier**. ❖ In Vietnam the unemployed not only get on their bikes, they load them up with saleable goods. The contents of whole supermarkets are available from the **panniers** of trusty Flying Pigeon bicycles. (Stanley Stewart, Travel: "Oh What a Lovely Peace; The Vietnam War Helped Save Old Hanoi," *Daily Telegraph* [London], 11/15/1997.)

bastard (as in of or relating to illegitimate children) *adj.*: **misbegotten**. See *illegitimate*

bat (one's eyes) *v.i.*: **nictitate**. See *blink*

batch (confused or jumbled . . .) *n.*: **agglomeration**. See *jumble*

baths (of or relating to . . . or bathing) *adj.*: **balneal**. ❖ When . . . boats are bobbing and becking on the blue water, Jayne Ikard likes nothing better than to draw a bath in her forest green bathroom and soak herself as she surveys the scene spread before her. . . . "You might call Jayne a sort of assistant harbormaster," said one friend of Ikard's **balneal** supervision of

(3) beat (as in whip) *n.*, *v.t.*: **knout**. See *whip*
(4) beat (as in whip, generally used figuratively) *v.t.*: **larrup**. See *whip*
(5) beat (repeatedly, often used figuratively) *v.t.*: **buffet**. See *hit*
(6) beat (with a club) *v.t.*: **cudgel**. See *club*

beaten (capable of being . . .) *n.*: **vincible**. ❖ Probably the worst thing the Yankees did in playing barely .500 ball for the last month is give heart to the players they'll meet later this month and in October. The invincible team has been distinctly **vincible**. (Steve Jacobson, "The Playoffs—Just Win, Baby," *Newsday*, 9/29/1998.)

beating (the soles of the feet with a stick as a form of punishment or torture) *n.*, *v.t.*: **bastinado**. [This word is used both literally and figuratively, to refer to any kind of punishment or torture, as in the following example.] ❖ [O]ur story began last October, when candidate [George H. W.] Bush was winning the White House by cheerfully bashing Michael Dukakis about the head and shoulders with the ever-popular "Harvard-boutique-liberal, soft-on-crime, weak-on-defense" **bastinado**. (Jeff Greenfield, "A Haunted Honeymoon," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 2/28/1989.)

beat-up (as in broken-down and/or worn-out) *adj.*: **raddled**. See *worn-out*
(2) beat-up (as in decrepit) *adj.*: **spavined**. See *decrepit*
(3) beat up (sometimes in jest) *v.t.*: **spiflicate** [British slang]. ❖ My wife and daughter-in-law will **spiflicate** me for saying so, but I find the invitation to Annika Sorenstam to play in a men's pro golf tournament laughable. There would be a huge hue and cry if Tiger Woods played in a girls' rich tournament and won by 20 strokes, playing left-handed. (Terry Tuckey, letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5/22/2003.)

beau (as in boyfriend) *n.*: **inamorato**. See *boyfriend*
(2) beau *n.*: **swain**. See *suitor*

beautiful (in an unconventional way) *adj.*: **belle laide** (or **belle-laide**). [French, for "beautiful-ugly." This term refers to being attractive in an unconventional or unusual way or, more literally, beautiful and ugly at the same time. It can also be applied to inanimate objects, and can be used as a noun to refer to the person or thing being described, which is in fact the way it is used here. A similar term is "jolie laide," which is "pretty-ugly." See *pretty*. Finally, a related (but rare) word meaning unattractive but sexy at the same time is "cacocallia."] ❖ [Fred Astaire is] the masculine equivalent of what the French call a **belle laide**: a feature-by-feature homely woman who is somehow nevertheless stunning. [In Joseph Epstein's book about Astaire, he] lovingly describes each peculiarity: Head and ears too large, face too long, hair too thin (he invariably wore a hairpiece in movies)—in sum, he had a sweet goofy look. (John Taylor, "Canadian Explorer, Dancer Sublime," *Washington Times*, 10/19/2008.)
(2) beautiful *adj.*: **orchidaceous**. [Orchids are often considered to have two qualities: they can be showy or beautiful (or both). This word, in

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