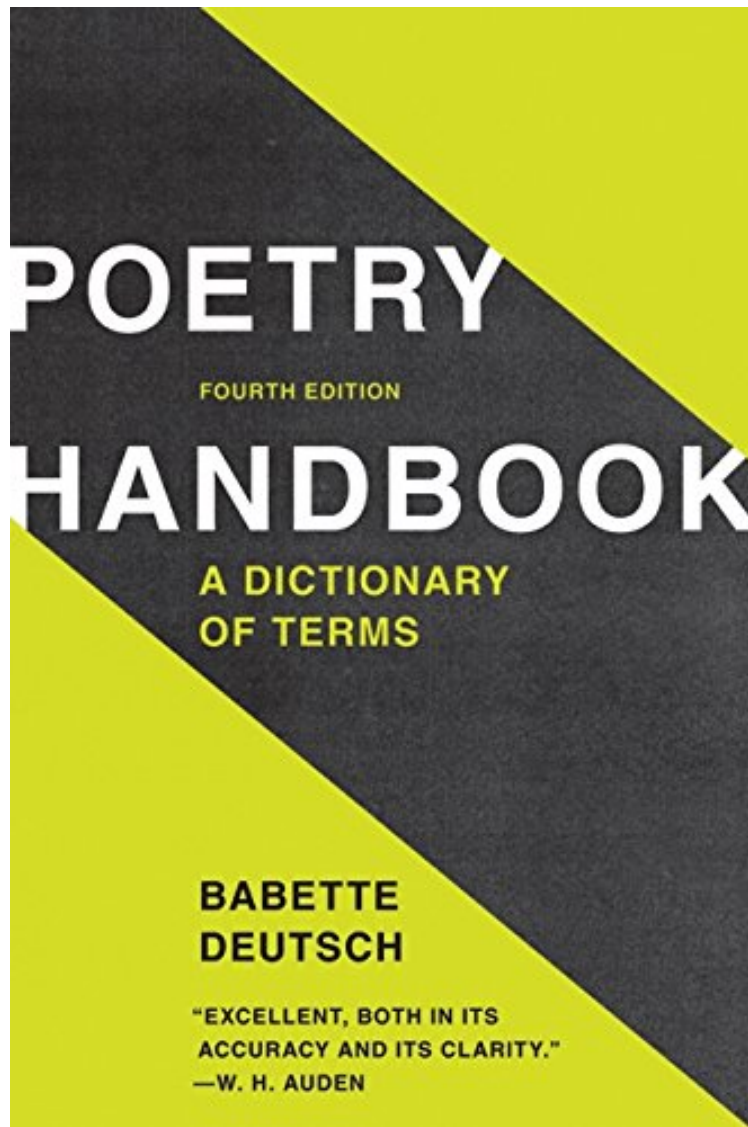


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Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms

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[A] abstract poem A term used by Dame Edith Sitwell for verse that depends chiefly upon its auditory values for its meaning. Such poetry is analogous to abstract painting in which the arrangement of colors and shapes is significant though no physical objects are represented. Words are employed with little regard for their usual connotations, but rather for their aural effectiveness in a pattern of full and approximate rhymes and in the manipulation of rhythm. Her own poems in the collection called *Facade* exemplify the type, which may be illustrated by three lines from her lively "Hornpipe" where, we hear, the dumb
Sky rhinoceros-glum
Watched the courses of the breakers' rocking-horses and with Glaucis
Lady Venus on the settee of the horsehair sea!
acatalectic See catalectic. acatalexis The use of an acatalectic line.
accent Emphasis on a syllable. Some prosodists distinguish between the terms "stress" and "accent" in order to clarify the different kinds of emphasis. These writers use "stress" when referring to metrical stress and reserve "accent" for the emphasis demanded by the language. Such emphasis is called etymological, grammatical, or more simply word accent. The emphasis that in normal speech falls on a heavily stressed syllable is the primary accent ('). The emphasis that in normal speech falls on a lightly stressed syllable is the secondary accent (`). Shelley's line "Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:" exhibits both primary and secondary accents in the word "de's o la tion." Usually, as here, a primary accent coincides with the metrical stress. An even accent or level stress is one which falls with equal emphasis on two syllables in a dissyllabic or polysyllabic word, as in man'kind' and wa'ter-worn' and sometimes occurs when two monosyllabic words are closely associated, such as old' man'. In verse it has the effect of DISTRIBUTED STRESS. See also recessive accent.
accentual verse See metre, pages 91-92.
accentual-syllabic verse See metre, page 94.
acephalous line A headless line. See catalectic.
acrostic A poem in which the initial letters of the lines spell a name or a title. Thus, Ben Jonson prefaces *The Alchemist* with
THE ARGUMENT
T he sickness hot, a master quit, for fear,
H is house in town, and left one servant there.
E ase him corrupted, and gave means to know
A cheater and his punk; who, now brought low,
L eaving their narrow practice, were become
C oz'ners at large; and, only wanting some
H ouse to set up, with him they here contract,
E ach for a share, and all begin to act.
M uch company they draw, and much abuse,
I n casting figures, telling fortunes, news,
S elling of flies, flat bawdry, with the Stone
T ill it, and they, and all in fume are gone.
See also alphabet poem.
aesthetic distance The effect produced when an experience, removed from other irrelevant, haphazard experiences, is organized and framed by the formal limits of a poem, so that it can be contemplated and more fully understood.
alba See troubadour, page 186.
alcaics A stanza in the metre invented by the Greek poet Alcaeus, and later used in a slightly altered form by the Roman poet Horace. The original metre was imitated by Tennyson thus: