
Contents

Acknowledgements	xi
Preface to the second edition	xiii
Preface to the third edition	xiv
Introduction	1
About this book	1
Approaching theory	6
My own 'stock-taking'	8
1 Theory before 'theory' – liberal humanism	11
The history of English studies	11
Ten tenets of liberal humanism	16
Literary theorising from Aristotle to Leavis – some key moments	20
Liberal humanism in practice	30
The transition to 'theory'	31
Some recurrent ideas in critical theory	33
Selected reading	35
2 Structuralism	38
Structuralist chickens and liberal humanist eggs	38
Signs of the fathers – Saussure	40
The scope of structuralism	44
What structuralist critics do	48

	Structuralist criticism: examples	48
	Selected reading	58
3	Post-structuralism and deconstruction	59
	Some theoretical differences between structuralism and post-structuralism	59
	Post-structuralism – life on a decentred planet	63
	Structuralism and post-structuralism – some practical differences	68
	What post-structuralist critics do	70
	Deconstruction: an example	71
	Selected reading	76
4	Postmodernism	78
	What is postmodernism? What was modernism?	78
	‘Landmarks’ in postmodernism – Habermas, Lyotard and Baudrillard	82
	What postmodernist critics do	87
	Postmodernist criticism: an example	88
	Selected reading	90
5	Psychoanalytic criticism	92
	Introduction	92
	How Freudian interpretation works	94
	Freud and evidence	98
	What Freudian psychoanalytic critics do	100
	Freudian psychoanalytic criticism: examples	101
	Lacan	104
	What Lacanian critics do	110
	Lacanian criticism: an example	110
	Selected reading	113
6	Feminist criticism	116
	Feminism and feminist criticism	116
	Feminist criticism and the role of theory	118
	Feminist criticism and language	121

Feminist criticism and psychoanalysis	125
What feminist critics do	128
Feminist criticism: an example	129
Selected reading	131
7 Lesbian/gay criticism	134
Lesbian and gay theory	134
Lesbian feminism	135
Queer theory	137
What lesbian/gay critics do	143
Lesbian/gay criticism: an example	144
Selected reading	148
8 Marxist criticism	150
Beginnings and basics of Marxism	150
Marxist literary criticism: general	152
'Leninist' Marxist criticism	153
'Engelsian' Marxist criticism	155
The present: the influence of Althusser	156
What Marxist critics do	161
Marxist criticism: an example	162
Selected reading	164
9 New historicism and cultural materialism	166
New historicism	166
New and old historicisms – some differences	168
New historicism and Foucault	169
Advantages and disadvantages of new historicism	171
What new historicists do	172
New historicism: an example	173
Cultural materialism	175
How is cultural materialism different from new historicism?	178
What cultural materialist critics do	180
Cultural materialism: an example	181
Selected reading	183

10	Postcolonial criticism	185
	Background	185
	Postcolonial reading	187
	What postcolonial critics do	192
	Postcolonial criticism: an example	192
	Selected reading	194
11	Stylistics	196
	Stylistics: a theory or a practice?	196
	A brief historical account: from rhetoric, to philology, to linguistics, to stylistics, to new stylistics	198
	How does stylistics differ from standard close reading?	201
	The ambitions of stylistics	203
	What stylistic critics do	207
	Stylistics: examples	207
	Note	211
	Selected reading	212
12	Narratology	214
	Telling stories	214
	Aristotle	215
	Vladimir Propp	218
	G�rard Genette	222
	'Joined-up' narratology	231
	What narratologists do	233
	Narratology: an example	233
	Selected reading	237
13	Ecocriticism	239
	Ecocriticism or green studies?	239
	Culture and nature	242
	Turning criticism inside out	248
	What ecocritics do	254

	Ecocriticism: an example	255
	Selected reading	260
14	Literary theory – a history in ten events	262
	The Indiana University ‘Conference on Style’, 1958	262
	The Johns Hopkins University international symposium, 1966	265
	The publication of <i>Deconstruction and Criticism</i> , 1979	267
	The MacCabe Affair, 1981	268
	The publication of Eagleton’s <i>Literary Theory: An Introduction</i> , 1983	271
	J. Hillis Miller’s MLA presidential address, 1986	273
	The Strathclyde University ‘Linguistics of Writing’ conference, 1986	276
	The scandal over Paul de Man’s wartime writings, 1987–88	279
	Jean Baudrillard and ‘The Gulf War never happened’, 1991	281
	The Sokal Affair, 1996	284
15	Theory after ‘Theory’	287
	Legacies of theory	287
	Presentism	291
	Presentism in practice	295
	New aestheticism	299
	New aestheticism in practice	302
	What to read on new aestheticism	307
	Cognitive poetics	309
	Cognitive poetics in practice	312
	What to read on cognitive poetics	317
	Appendices	318
	Appendix 1 Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Oval Portrait’	318
	Appendix 2 Dylan Thomas, ‘A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London’	321

Appendix 3 William Cowper, 'The Castaway'	322
Where do we go from here? Further reading	325
General guides	325
Reference books	326
General readers	326
Applying critical theory: twelve early examples	327
Against theory	329
Index	331