

*A Glossary of*  
**Contemporary  
Literary  
Theory**

**JEREMY HAWTHORN**

*Fourth Edition*



# *A Glossary of* **Contemporary Literary Theory**

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藏书章

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# Introduction to the Fourth Edition

In preparing this fourth edition I have had access to a range of very useful suggestions for amendments and additions that have been made by various readers. Many of these suggestions have allowed me to fill in gaps and to correct inadequacies in the third edition, and I thank those who have given me their advice.

Readers will doubtless be relieved to know that I have resisted the temptation to call this new edition *Literary Theory: The Millennial Edition*, although as I used the search-and-replace function in my computer to substitute 'the twentieth century' for 'the present century', I was, against my will, drawn to feel that this is perhaps a more than usually propitious time to survey the field of Literary Studies and literary theory. At any rate, working on my revisions I found myself meditating on the nature of the 'field' covered by the glossary. It is undeniable that the theory with which students of literature are expected to be conversant today comes from a far wider range of sources and disciplines than would have been the case twenty or thirty years ago. Not only is it associated with a range of different cultures and national literatures, but in many cases it is theory that is by no means primarily or exclusively concerned with literature or with literary criticism. As I point out in my section on using the glossary, there is an element of overlap between this work and companion volumes published by Arnold which have to do with feminist theory and cultural theory – and the same can be said for other reference works concerned with postcolonialist theory, linguistic theory, media theory, and so on. Some of the terms that I decided, rightly or wrongly, *not* to include in the present volume are: chaos theory; end of history; uncertainty/complementarity (as in Heisenberg and Bohr); the prisoner's dilemma game; and synergy. In each case I felt either that their bearing on Literary Studies was too indirect to justify inclusion, or that they fell outside my criteria for inclusion (see page viii below). Maybe I was wrong to exclude them – in which case they may be in the fifth edition if there is one. My point, however, is that deciding what *is* appropriate for inclusion in a glossary of contemporary literary theory is by no means as straightforward as it once was.

Academic disciplines have their periods of infancy, adolescence, maturity – and perhaps also senility and death. New or young disciplines are characteristically very conscious of the need to establish and preserve a distinct identity; like newly independent nations they patrol their own borders vigilantly, eager to ensure that powerful neighbours do not violate their territorial integrity. I can remember being told by lecturers in Film Studies twenty-five years ago that as they were working hard to gain acceptance for the



view that Film Studies was not a sub-division of Literary Studies, they were not sure that the time was ripe for collaborative work with colleagues in this field.

Work on this glossary has convinced me that Literary Studies today is in a very different situation: perhaps it is entering old age – it certainly suffers from none of the fears manifested by my erstwhile colleagues in Film Studies. The shift from syllabuses which included courses on criticism (literary, of course, and Anglo-American, if the department was a department of English), to syllabuses offering courses on theory, is indicative of an opening up of Literary Studies to a far wider range of intellectual influences. Teaching a new course on literary theory in my own (English) department earlier this year I was struck by the realization that a hefty majority of the essays and extracts on the syllabus I had chosen were originally written in languages other than English, while many had no direct connection with literature. And yet it had seemed to me impossible to offer a course in literary theory that did not include coverage of such topics as structuralism and post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, and so on. Even topics such as narratology which have a very direct and immediate connection with the study of prose fiction are by no means exclusively concerned with literature.

Although the change that I am reporting brings with it problems – more theory leaves less time for the reading of literary works; a student who moves between different disciplines may find him- or herself being introduced to, say, structuralism three or four times in different departments – I feel that the opening up of Literary Studies has made the discipline more intellectually exciting and more academically challenging. I have therefore absolutely no wish to turn the clock back.

At the same time, this is perhaps an appropriate moment to stress that the reading and studying of literature is – among other things – a *craft*. By this, I mean that something has gone wrong when bright research students feel that their biggest problem is to ‘choose a theory’ for their project, a belief that seems to carry with it the assumption that once this choice has been made, the encounter between a corpus of literary works and a theory will itself generate the required thesis. Literary study is a craft to the extent that there is no theory that can replace or compensate for that set of skills and sensitivities that the careful reading, analysis, and interpretation of literary works brings with it.

This is an argument that sets off warning bells for many, and for two separate reasons. First, because it may suggest that such things as careful reading, analysis, and interpretation are theory-independent, and second because it is an argument that has been used as part of a case against the study of theory *in toto*. I would associate myself with neither of these views. So far as the first is concerned, I believe that the study of theory and criticism makes us better readers of literature, and that it should complement and inform the reading, analysis, and interpretation of literary works. Having been educated during the period of the (fading) hegemony of the New Critics, one of the things that I was acutely conscious of during my time as an undergraduate was that a study of literature based upon close reading, analysis and interpretation naturally threw up theoretical issues and problems that were then ruled out of court by those who believed that the nature of literary criticism was such that its philosophical premises could not be stated. (See for example F. R. Leavis’s ‘Criticism and Philosophy’, in his *The Common Pursuit* [1952], an essay much cited by those intent on keeping theory out of Literary Studies.)

But if it is wrong to assume that skills of close reading, analysis and interpretation are theory-independent, there are many today who are guilty of a comparable error in assuming that literary theory does not need to be informed and enriched by these same skills. Too many research students today are skilled theorists but indifferent close readers.

If the reading and studying of literature is a craft that is informed by theory, it is also one possessed of a certain autonomy or specificity. Some issues of critical method or philosophical underpinning may be shared with other disciplines, but some are not, and the student of literature needs to remember that an exclusive diet of theory that is not literature-specific will leave a gap. In making my revisions for the present new edition I have included more references to film, and there is no doubt that literary works and films throw up a number of common problems for the reader or viewer, problems that are susceptible to analysis by means of conceptual tools drawn from overarching bodies of theory. But there is a tendency for students of literature – and especially at higher levels – to believe that it is enough to read literary texts and literary theory. It is not. The study of literature must also include extensive acquaintance with literary criticism. Theory alone will show no one how to be a critic, nor will theory alone bring with it an understanding of scholarship. To make a division between theory and criticism is of course arbitrary and potentially misleading: the best literary criticism is overtly informed by theory, just as the best theory feeds upon traditions of critical debate.

As I have said, there have been times when such arguments have been presented in the form of either/or. Either theory or criticism. Either theory or scholarship. Either theory or skills of reading, analysis and interpretation. But the truth is that all are needed. The trick – the very difficult trick – is to achieve a creative tension between these different elements and activities, so that an engagement with literary works is informed by scholarship, critical acuity, and theoretical understanding. And also, of course, so that one's critical practice and one's involvement in theoretical issues are informed and enriched by the challenge that literary works have always presented to our ideas and to our lives. 'Lives' is a term that has become less fashionable since the 'death of the author'. But the historical perspective that even such an arbitrary and artificial watershed as a new millennium imposes upon us can force us to recognize that of all the different elements that encourage us to bring new perspectives to literary works, the changes in the ways we live constitute the most powerful.

The occasion of this new edition is an appropriate time to thank my publisher, Arnold, for their continued support, and for their willingness to allow me regularly to update the work. I must also thank my employer, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and in particular the English Department and the Faculty of Humanities, for providing me with regular research leave, travel support, and up-to-date computer equipment. And thanks to many friends – among them Maroula Joannou, Paul Goring, Ruth Sherry, Mike Pickering and Domhnall Mitchell – who have helped with suggestions.

Jeremy Hawthorn  
Trondheim, December 1999

# Using the Glossary

## 1 Conventions of presentation

I have attempted to group related terms in common entries so as to avoid repetition and so as to permit entries that have a certain completeness. Thus rather than having separate entries for *plot*, *story*, *fabula* and *sjuzet*, I have a single entry for STORY AND PLOT. The negative result of such a policy, inevitably, is that those searching for the meaning of terms must frequently tolerate having to find their way to the substantive entry via cross-entries. In this fourth edition I have attempted to make cross-referencing more comprehensive.

The use of small capitals (e.g. DECONSTRUCTION) indicates the existence of an entry on the term so presented. Sometimes the actual entry may be under a cognate term; thus DECONSTRUCT refers the reader to the entry for the term DECONSTRUCTION. I have normally limited this use of small capitals to the *first* mention only of the term in question within each entry. To avoid confusion the use of small capitals generally directs the reader to substantive (rather than cross-reference) entries, although I have made exceptions to this rule in the case of particularly important terms or connections.

Parenthetical references with page numbers refer the reader to the bibliography at the end of the book, which provides full publication details of all works from which quotations have been taken.

Many of the terms with which I deal are of foreign origin, and often it has had to be a matter of personal judgement as to whether they are sufficiently assimilated to be written without the use of the italics that indicate a loan word. I have based my decision here upon the extent to which the words in question can be said to be in frequent use amongst theorists: thus I give *épistémè* and *méconnaissance* italics, but not *écriture* or *flâneur*. In transliterating Russian names and terms I have adopted the more traditional versions (e.g. Eichenbaum rather than Èjxenbaum), unless I am referring to a published source. Thus both of these variants appear in the bibliography and in textual references.

American readers should note that British spelling is used throughout except where I quote from a source in American English. Thus there is no entry for center, but there is one for CENTRE.

## 2 Criteria for selection of terms

My aim in the pages that follow has been to provide the reader with sufficient information to enable him or her to make sense of those of the more common specialist terms used by recent literary critics or theorists that cannot be found in more general dictionaries or glossaries of literary terms. By 'recent' I mean, generally, from about 1970, although I have allowed myself to be inconsistent on this point and I have included



some entries on older terms such as the New Criticism where I have judged that this will be helpful to the readers I have in mind. Terms that have entered Anglo-American theoretical discussion via recent English translations of older works (by Bakhtin and Ingarden, for example) are also included.

It is not, however, enough for my purposes for a well-established term to have become very fashionable of late: to merit inclusion it needs to have been granted a significantly changed or extended meaning. Thus, for example, *AUTHOR* is included but *trope* is not.

### 3 Schools and approaches

As an additional aid to those using this glossary I append here a list of most of the terms included in it grouped according to their intellectual associations or origins. It will be seen that the groups belong to very different categories: academic disciplines such as Linguistics, critical schools such as the 'Bakhtin group' and the Prague Linguistic Circle, ideological and political groupings such as Marxism and feminism, groups categorized according to a methodology or a focus of concern such as reader-response criticism, and so on.

My groupings are crude, and should be treated only as a convenient indication of which glossed terms have something of interest for, for example, those interested in deconstruction, or feminism. Some terms do not fit in to any of these groupings, and some find a home in more than one. Where terms are asterisked this is to suggest either that they represent concepts central to the grouping in question, or that the entry thus indicated contains information about the school or approach. Those wanting a fuller account of such groupings should consult Ann Jefferson and David Robey (eds), *Modern Literary Theory* (2nd edn, Batsford, 1986), or Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (rev. 4th edn, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997).

#### *Anthropology and Cultural Studies*

\*binary/binarism; \*bricoleur; \*culture; \*Cultural Studies; fiction; formulaic literature; \*myth; New Historicism and cultural materialism; Sapir-Whorf hypothesis; script; \*structures of feeling; \*thick description/thin description

#### *Bakhtin group*

assimilation; \*carnival; \*centrifugal/centripetal; character zone; \*chronotope; contiguity; \*crowning/decrowning; \*dialogic; discourse; dominant; enthymeme; exotopy; heterobiography; \*heteroglossia; horizon; hybrid/hybridization; orchestration; \*polyphonic; refraction; register; reification; semantic position; *skaz*; transgredient; utterance

#### *Deconstruction*

agon; aporia; \*arche-writing; author; \*centre; coherence; Copernican revolution; \*deconstruction; desire; \*différance; \*dissemination; echolalia; \*écriture; ephebe; erasure; \*grammatology; heterobiography; hinge; hymen; \*logocentrism; \*logos; \*ludism; *mise-en-abyme*; *Nachträglichkeit*; New Readers; phallogocentrism; \*post-structuralism; \*presence;



## *Using the Glossary*

\*radical alterity; reference; revisionism; \**s'entendre parler*; site; subject and subjectivity; \*supplement; \*tain; textualist; \*transcendental pretence/signified/subject

## *Discourse analysis*

\*archaeology of knowledge; closure; *différend*; \*discourse; *dispositif*; \**épistémè*; exteriority; genotext and phenotext; multivalent; New Historicism and cultural materialism; \*signifying practice; slippage; speech; suture; text and work; topic; \*utterance

## *Electronic media/Science fiction*

browsing; \*cyber/netics/punk/space; \*cyborg; \*fantastic; hyperspace; hypertext; IF; morphing; mundanes; precession; \*Shannon and Weaver model of communication; virtual reality

## *Feminism*

androcentric; \*androgyny; biocriticism; biologism/biological determinism; \*body; \*consciousness-raising; cross-dressing; cyborg; \*desire; \*difference; dubbing; \*écriture féminine; erotics; \*female affiliation complex; femaling; \*feminism; \*gaze; \*gender; genre; gothic; \*gynocratic; \*gynocritics; \*imasculation; logic of the same; magic realism; \*male-as-norm; \*marginality; \*masquerade; \*matriarchy; minoritizing/universalizing; muted; nominalism; \*object-relations theory/criticism; other; \*patriarchy; pejoration; \*phallocentrism; pleasure; pornoglossia; \*queer theory; quest narrative; reading position; realism; \*recruitist; romance; script; second-wave feminism; \*sexism; \*standpoint theory; \*stereotype; subject and subjectivity; wild zone

## *Linguistics*

actualization; \*arbitrary; aspect; \*competence and performance; cratylism; \*diachronic and synchronic; diacritical; difference; \*discourse; \*displacement; \*functions of language; idiolect; \*langue and parole; \*linguistic paradigm; markedness; metalanguage; punctuation; \*register; \*Sapir-Whorf hypothesis; shifter; \*sign; sociolect; speech; \*speech act theory; \*syntagmatic and paradigmatic; text and work

## *Marxism*

absence; against the grain; \*alienation; \*alienation effect; always-already; \*aura; \*base and superstructure; \*class; coherence; co-optation; Copernican revolution; \*critical theory; \*dialectics; economism; English; \*epistemological break; \*fetishism; flâneur; formation; \*Frankfurt School; gest; \*hegemony; homology; ideologeme; \*ideology; \*incorporation; instance; \*intellectuals; \*interpellation; legitimation; \*literary mode of production; \*Marxist literary theory and criticism; \*materialism; moment; montage; myth; popular; praxis; problematic; \*realism; \*reification; slippage; structure in dominance; \*structure of feeling; subject and subjectivity

## *Media Studies*

\*agenda-setting; digital and analogic communication; \*gatekeeping; hot and cool media; mediascape; \*Media Studies; \*technological determinism; \*uses and gratifications

*Modernism and Postmodernism*

\*object; \*alienation; archetypal criticism; aura; \**bricoleur*; cancelled character; character; \*closure; \*erasure; \*flâneur; frame; \*heterobiography; \*hyperspace; hypertext; \*ludism; marginality; metafiction; \*modernism and postmodernism; montage; nomad; polyphonic; popular; \*precession; realism; repetition; \*short-circuit; syntagmatic and paradigmatic; \*True-Real

*Narratology*

achronicity/achrony; act/actor; actualization; anachrony; analepsis; architext; aspect; attribute/function; author function; cancelled character; \*connotation and denotation; crisis; \*defamiliarization; deferred/postponed significance; deixis; deviation; \*diegesis and mimesis; digital and analogic communication; \*discourse; disnarrated; \*distance; \*double focalization; \*double-voiced; \*duration; ellipsis; energetics/geometrics; \*enunciation; euphoric text; event; fiction; figuralization/reflectorization; figure; figure and ground; flicker; flip-flop; force; \*frame; \*Free Indirect Discourse; \*frequency; \*function; geometrics/energetics; grammar; heteroplasty; hinge; homology; homonymy; hypotaxis; inside/outside view; \*interior dialogue; interpolation; \*intertextuality; intertitle; intrusive narrator; isochrony; \*linguistic paradigm; magic realism; master narrative; metalanguage; metalepsis; *mise-en-abyeme*; mode; montage; mood; move; *Nachträglichkeit*; \*narratee; narration; \*narrative; \*narrative situation; \*narratology; obstination; order; palimpsest text; Pamissa; paralepsis; paralipsis; parataxis; paratext; pentad; \*perspective and voice; positioning; power; prehistory; privilege; prolepsis; quest narrative; reflector (character); repetition; script; semantic axis; *skaz*; short-circuit; slow-down; \*story and plot; suspense; suture; syllepsis; synonymous characters; \*text and work; theme and thematics; topos; Uncle Charles Principle; *Verschriftung/Verschriftlichung*

*New Criticism*

\*ambiguity; autotelic; coherence; essentialism; \*functionalist criticism; icon; \*image; \*intrinsic criticism; \*New Criticism; \*organicism

*New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*

circulation; \*emplotment; energy; exchange; \*New Historicism and cultural materialism; resonance; structure

*Phenomenology and Geneva School*

eidetic; *epoché*; \*phenomenology; polyphonic

*Postcolonialism*

affiliation; Africanist/nationalist; alterity; authenticity; boleka critics; comprador; contamination; \*creolization; diaspora literature; disidentification; double colonization; double consciousness; double-voiced; dubbing; ethnoscope; \*Eurocentric; fictograph; \*hybrid/hybridization; imagined community; \*liminal; marvellous realism; master narrative; mediascape; \*mimicry; nation/nationalism; nativism; \**négritude*; neo-Tarzanism; \*nomad; orature; \*orientalism; other; passing; \*postcolonialism; relativism; relexification; subaltern; syncretism; transculturation; \*west

## Using the Glossary

### Pragmatics

\*discourse; double-bind; \*politeness; \*pragmatics; \*speech act theory

### Prague School/Prague Linguistic Circle

actualization; aesthetic; \*concretization; \*defamiliarization; \*deformation; \*dominant; \*literariness; norm; \*Prague School

### Psychology and Psychoanalysis

abject; alterity; archetypal criticism; arche-writing; body; \*censorship; chora; \*condensation and displacement; contiguity; crosstalk; desire; disavowal; double-bind; \*fetishism; figure and ground; \*fort/da; \*gaze; Gestalt; hommelette; imaginary/symbolic/real; intersubjectivity; \*jouissance; \*linguistic paradigm; *méconnaissance*; \*mirror stage; *Nachträglichkeit*; name-of-the-Father; \*object-relations theory/criticism; \**objet a/objet A*; other; overdetermination; \*panoptism/panopticism; phallogentrism; pleasure; *point de capiton*; primary process; projection characters; \*psychoanalytic criticism; repression; revisionism; schizoanalysis; scopophilia/scopophobia; scotomization; sinthom; slippage; solution from above/below; subject and subjectivity; symptom; syntagmatic and paradigmatic; \*topographical model of the mind; \*transference; True-Real; \*unconscious

### Reader-response criticism

appreciation; code; coduction; crosstalk; ecological validity; exegesis; genre; \*hermeneutics; ideation; \*interpretation; \*interpret[at]ive communities; interrogate; intersubjectivity; jouissance; \*meaning and significance; ontological status; \*open and closed texts; oppositional reading; parabolic text; performance; \*politeness; prepublication/postpublication reading; punctuation; readerly and writerly texts; \*readers and reading; \*reading community; \*reading position; \*reception theory; \*self-consuming artifact; \*sense and reference; sub-text; suspense; theme and thematics; topic; \*transactional theory of the literary work

### Russian Formalism

\*defamiliarization; \*deformation; deviation; \*dominant; fantastic; figure and ground; \*function; \*functions of language; \*literariness; \*Russian Formalism

### Semiotics and Information Theory

*autopoiesis*; \*binary/binarism; \*code; \*digital and analogic communication; echolalia; *epoché*; icon; index; myth; \*redundancy; sememe; \*semiology/semiotics; \*Shannon and Weaver model of communication; \*sign; signifying practice

### Sexual politics/Queer theory

\*camp; \*closet criticism; code-switching; cross-dressing; cruising-zone; decipherment/deciphering; drag; fag hag/fag stag character; ghettoization/deghettoization; lavender culture/language/sex; \*masquerade; minoritizing/universalizing; outing; passing; punk; queen/butch; \*queer theory; *ravissement*; stonewall; straight; \*transgender; vanilla sex



*Sociology of literature*

affiliation; \*apparatus; capital; field; \*habitus; script; symbolic power

*Structuralism and Post-structuralism*

allography; \*arbitrariness; \*author; \**bricoleur*; convention; deviation; \*diachronic and synchronic; diacritical; \*difference; digital and analogic communication; \*écriture; \*formulaic literature; \*function; \*functions of language; \*heterobiography; homology; hymen; \*langue and parole; \*linguistic paradigm; nominalism; \*post-structuralism; reference; \*sign; speech; structure in dominance; \*syntagmatic and paradigmatic; \*structuralism; textualist; transgressive strategy

*Style and Stylistics*

affective; chiasmus; closure; commutation test; \*connotation and denotation; deviation; kernel word or sentence; punctuation; \*style and stylistics; terrorism; text and work

**4 Other useful glossaries and dictionaries**

I have generally restricted my recommendations in this section to dedicated glossaries or dictionaries, although many other books and articles now include brief glossaries of specialist terms. I have included one web site, and reference material is increasingly being made available via the Internet. Internet searches can often throw up valuable results.

This glossary now has two companion volumes both published by Arnold. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*, by Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell and Carol Wolkowitz (1997), and *Cultural Theory: A Glossary*, by Peter Brooker (1999). Each is available in a longer, hardback version and a concise, paperback edition, and both are highly recommended. Inevitably there is some overlap with my own glossary, and I have on occasions referred the reader to longer entries in both works where these deal with terms more marginal to Literary Studies.

Of the general glossaries of literary terms, the one I would recommend most remains M. H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). This appears regularly in revised editions and has intelligent entries that are both accessible and critically sophisticated. J. A. Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* has now appeared in a fourth edition (revised by C. E. Preston), published in hardback by Blackwell (1998) and in paperback by Penguin (1999). It contains a much larger number of entries than the Abrams glossary, but these are, inevitably, rather less detailed than those in Abrams. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Chris Baldick (Oxford University Press, 1990) places its emphasis on the succinct explanation of 'those thousand terms that are most likely to cause the student . . . some doubt or bafflement'. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, edited by Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray (Bedford Books, 1997, 469 pages), as its title suggests includes both literary and critical/theoretical terms. It is usefully comprehensive and accessibly written, and terms are related to specific examples. There are again more terms than in Abrams, but these are generally shorter.

Wendell V. Harris's *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory* (Greenwood Press, 1992) contains short, essay-length entries on 71 topics ranging from



'Allegory' to 'Unity', and taking in more recent terms such as 'discourse', 'postmodernism' and 'semiotics'. Each entry closes with a useful bibliography. Leonard Orr's *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Greenwood Press, 1991) has a mixture of longer and shorter entries, and is rather less Eurocentric than many similar works.

*The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) is a massive (775 double-column pages) work edited by Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth. Entries are individually authored and cover theorists and critics, terms, and movements. Bibliographical information is provided in each entry. Slightly less massive (656 pages) is the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms* edited by Irena R. Makaryk (University of Toronto Press, 1993). This work again contains individually authored entries, and is usefully divided up into the three sections indicated in its title, with over 200 pages for approaches, a little under 300 for scholars, and 150 for terms. *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn, 1995) contains essay-length entries on 22 central terms in use in Literary Studies, including 'interpretation', 'figurative language', 'author', 'canon' and 'discourse'. The standard of the essays (all by different contributors) is high.

*The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*, edited by Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi (Columbia University Press, 1995) is 374 pages long with a format not dissimilar to my own glossary, except that the focus is more 'modern' than 'contemporary'. My impression is also that the emphasis is rather more literary than cultural. Another work that spans literary critical and cultural theory is *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, edited by Michael Payne (Blackwell, 1996; paperback 1997). This is 656 pages long, and includes entries on individual theorists, movements, and terms. It appears to cover fewer terms than my own glossary, but more theorists and movements.

Two useful reference books that concentrate on theorists are *The A-Z Guide to Modern Literary and Cultural Theorists*, edited by Stuart Sim (Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), and *Dictionary of Cultural Theorists*, edited by Ellis Cashmore and Chris Rojek (Arnold, 1999).

Bernard Dupriez's *A Dictionary of Literary Devices* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) has been translated from the French and adapted by Albert W. Halsall. It offers perceptive and often amusing definitions of a range of terms taken from Linguistics, Prosody, Rhetoric, and Philology. Richard A. Lanham's *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* has now appeared in a second edition (University of California Press, 1991). The terms are very often quite technical, but the explanations are very clear and well illustrated.

Also to be recommended are *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms* by Jack Myers and Michael Simms (Longman, 1989), and *The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*, edited by T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton University Press, 1994).

Two reference works by Gordon Williams are both strongly recommended. *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespeare and Stuart Literature* (Athlone, 1994) is a massive (three-volume) work that is both extremely scholarly but also accessible and well presented. *A Glossary of Shakespeare's Sexual Language* (Athlone, 1997) is available in paperback. Given the renewed interest in sexual terminology attendant upon the rise of such movements as Queer Theory and Masculinity Studies, these works allow students of literature to explore such terminology historically.

It will be seen that with all of these works one chooses between breadth and depth: the more entries, the shorter and less detailed they tend to be; the more fields covered, the less concentration there will be upon – for example – literary theory, and so on.

Of the more specialist sources, the following are worth noting.

#### *Bakhtin group*

M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Michael Holquist (ed.) (University of Texas Press, 1981) contains a useful 11-page glossary of some of the many coinages for which Bakhtin is responsible. Tzvetan Todorov's *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984) contains many illuminating discussions of Bakhtin's more idiosyncratic terms.

#### *Cultural Studies*

Raymond Williams's *Keywords* (Fontana, 1976) describes itself in its subtitle as 'a Vocabulary of Culture and Society', and makes fascinating reading. The concentration upon the origins and historical changes in meaning of key terms is especially illuminating. The 1988 edition was revised by Williams not long before his death. See also the glossaries mentioned at the start of this section.

#### *Feminism*

See above for my recommendation of *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*, by Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell and Carol Wolkowitz (Arnold, 1997). Maggie Humm's *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (Harvester Wheatsheaf) appeared in a second edition in 1995. *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary* (Blackwell, 1992) is highly recommended; it is edited by Elizabeth Wright, and contains a large number of well-informed and clearly written entries from a range of contributors.

#### *Gay Studies*

A very brief *Glossary of Historic Gay Terms* can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.psn.net/~martyn/slang.html#GlossR>

#### *Linguistics and Stylistics*

Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (Longman, 1989) contains useful explanations of many of the specialist terms from Linguistics and Stylistics which are likely to be of interest to students of literature and literary theory. R. L. Trask, *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics* (Routledge, 1993) is recommended, as is *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics* (Routledge, 1999), by the same author. The latter is an ideal reference text, accessible, well referenced and cross-referenced.

#### *Media Studies*

James Watson and Anne Hill, *A Dictionary of Communication and Media Studies* (4th edn, Arnold, 1997), gives concise definitions of most of the specialist terms from this area which are likely to be of interest to students of literature and literary theory. Frank Beaver's *Dictionary of Film Terms: The Aesthetic Companion to Film Analysis* (revised and expanded edition, Twayne, 1994) focuses more on technical than on theoretical terms, but is well worth consulting.

## Using the Glossary

### Narratology

*A Dictionary of Narratology* by Gerald Prince (Scolar Press, 1988) is highly recommended. Most of the entries are relatively short, but they are clear and detailed, and the dictionary is very comprehensive. *COGNAC: A Concise Glossary of Narratology from Cologne* by Manfred Jahn, Inge Molitor and Ansgar Nünning is an admirably compressed and informative 32-page duplicated pamphlet published by the Englisches Seminar at the University of Cologne (1993).

### Postcolonialism

*Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (Routledge, 1998) covers this field comprehensively and engagingly.

### Russian Formalism and the Prague School

A very useful source here is L. M. O'Toole and Ann Shukman, 'A Contextual Glossary of Formalist Terminology', which is to be found in the journal *Russian Poetics in Translation*, vol. 4, 1977, pp. 13–48. The entries consist of brief quotations from the key texts, grouped under central terms and concepts.

### Semiotics

Vincent M. Colapietro, *Glossary of Semiotics* (Paragon House, 1993) is a handy guide, although the entries are generally short and contain little bibliographic detail.

### Structuralism and Post-structuralism

Although not a dictionary or a glossary, Richard Harland's *Superstructuralism: The Philosophy of Structuralism and Post-structuralism* (Methuen, 1987) contains useful and intelligent discussions of many of the relevant central terms.



# A

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## Aberrant decoding See CODE

**Abject** A concept taken from the work of Julia Kristeva, one which she discusses and defines in great detail in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) – especially in the first essay in the book, ‘Approaching Abjection’. For Kristeva the abject is a ‘twisted braid of affects and thoughts’ which ‘does not have, properly speaking, a definable *object*’.

The abject is not an object facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an object, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. What is abject is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*. (1982, 1)

Kristeva suggests that ‘food loathing’ is ‘perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection’ (1982, 2), and she relates it to boundaries and ambiguous entities such as food, filth, waste or dung – items typically found on ambiguous borderlines between self and not-self. The abject is ‘a wellspring of sign for a non-object, on the edges of primal repression’, it is thus ‘*the “object” of primal repression*’ (1982, 11, 12).

Judith Butler has related the concept to the way in which conventionality defines itself by creating what we can term an excluded OTHER: ‘oppression works not merely through acts of overt prohibition, but covertly, through the constitution of viable subjects and through the corollary constitution of a domain of unviable (un)subjects – *abjects*, we might call them – who are neither named nor prohibited within the economy of the law’ (1991, 20).

The abject has, moreover, a close relationship to (especially MODERNIST) literature. ‘Approaching abjection’ opens with a quotation from Victor Hugo’s *La Légende des siècles*, and closes with sections linking the concept to Dostoevsky, Proust, Joyce, Borges and Artaud. Thus Kristeva argues that the ‘abject is, for Dostoevsky, the “object” of *The Possessed*: it is the aim and motive of an existence whose meaning is lost in absolute degradation because it absolutely rejected the moral limit (a social, religious, familial, and individual one) as absolute – God’ (1982, 18). Molly Bloom’s monologue (in Joyce’s *Ulysses*), Kristeva continues, spreads out the abject not because in it there is a



woman speaking, but 'because, *from afar*, the writer approaches the hysterical body so that it might speak, using it as springboard, of what eludes speech and turns out to be the hand to hand struggle of one woman with another, her mother of course, the absolute because primeval seat of the impossible – of the excluded, the outside-of-meaning, the object' (1982, 22).

See also DESIRE.

#### Abrogation See INCORPORATION

**Absence** An interest on the part of READERS and critics in what is not to be found in a literary WORK as against what is, did not suddenly emerge in the twentieth century: a concern to note what is lacking in one or more of an AUTHOR's works seems to be a natural component of literary-critical discussion. But recent theorists have drawn more particular attention to this issue, and since the publication of Pierre Macherey's *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* (1966; translated as *A Theory of Literary Production*, 1978) such absences have been accorded more overt theoretical attention. According to Macherey the book is not self-sufficient but is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence without which it would not exist, and he draws our attention to the fact that Freud relegated the absence of certain words to the UNCONSCIOUS. Perhaps not surprisingly, the more a critic or theorist sees the author as in less than complete conscious control over his or her creation, the more likely it is that absences from the work will be seen to be significant. At the time of writing this work Macherey was a disciple of the French MARXIST philosopher Louis Althusser, and Althusser had argued that novels could allow us to see (but not know) the IDEOLOGY from which they were born and in which they bathed, from the inside (1971, 204). In like manner Macherey, and others following him, gave the concept of absence a specifically ideological importance. As it is seen by such theorists to be typical of ideologies that they are unable to confront their own conditions of existence, any ideology imposes blank spots and absences upon those in its grip. Thus by a process of logical retracing of steps it should be possible to read off the ideological underpinnings of a work by isolating its significant absences. From this perspective a work's absences are as significant as was the dog that did not bark to Sherlock Holmes.

An absence can, according to such theorists, be *determinate*. In other words, it can be so central that it structures the work around itself, determining the final form of the work. Thus using both Althusser and Macherey, Graham Holderness (1982, 12) has argued that the determinate absence of D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* is the bourgeois CLASS; this is the missing element which forms and controls the novel, and which has to be perceived in order fully to understand it. There is no direct engagement with the bourgeoisie in the novel, but the importance of that class to Lawrence and in his society ensures that even its exclusion from the novel is determining. This is an absence on the level of content, but absences may also occur with regard to formal and technical matters: in the final section of James Joyce's *Ulysses* or in the poetry of e e cummings we notice the absence of many conventionally expected PUNCTUATION marks.

The Freudian concept of *lack*, associated most with the castration complex and the female's definition in terms of her lack of a penis and her attendant penis envy, has not surprisingly attracted a fair amount of FEMINIST criticism. Some feminist writers have