

A Handbook  
*of*  
Critical Approaches  
to Literature

SIXTH EDITION



Wilfred L. Guerin  
*Louisiana State University in Shreveport*

Earle Labor  
*Centenary College of Louisiana*

Lee Morgan  
*Centenary College of Louisiana*

Jeanne C. Reesman  
*University of Texas at San Antonio*

John R. Willingham  
*Late of the University of Kansas*

New York    Oxford  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
2011

# CONTENTS



## PREFACE xv

1. **Getting Started: The Precritical Response** 1
  - I. Setting 6
  - II. Plot 7
  - III. Character 9
  - IV. Structure 10
  - V. Style 10
  - VI. Atmosphere 11
  - VII. Theme 12
  
2. **Traditional Approaches** 17
  - I. A Note on Traditional Approaches 17
  - II. Textual Scholarship, Genres, and Source Study 21
    - A. Textual Scholarship: Do We Have an Accurate Version of What We Are Studying? 21
      1. General Observations 21
      2. Text Study in Practice 23
    - B. Matters of Genre: What Are We Dealing With? 30
      1. An Overview of Genre 30
      2. Genre Characteristics in Practice 33
    - C. Source Study: Did Earlier Writings Help This Work Come into Being? 42
  - III. Historical and Biographical Approaches 44
    - A. General Observations 44
    - B. Historical and Biographical Approaches in Practice 45
      1. "To His Coy Mistress" 45

- 2. *Hamlet* 47
- 3. *Huckleberry Finn* 50
- 4. "Young Goodman Brown" 54
- 5. "Everyday Use" 55
- 6. *Frankenstein* 58
- IV. Moral and Philosophical Approaches 60
  - A. General Observations 60
  - B. Moral and Philosophical Approaches in Practice 62
    - 1. "To His Coy Mistress" 62
    - 2. *Hamlet* 63
    - 3. *Huckleberry Finn* 63
    - 4. "Young Goodman Brown" 64
    - 5. "Everyday Use" 66
    - 6. *Frankenstein* 68
  - V. Summary of Key Points 69
  - VI. Limitations of Traditional Approaches 70
- 3. **Formalist Approaches** 74
  - I. The Process of Formalist Analysis: Making the Close Reader 74
  - II. A Brief History of Formalist Criticism 76
    - A. The Course of Half a Century 76
    - B. Backgrounds of Formalist Theory 76
    - C. The New Criticism 78
    - D. Reader-Response Criticism: A Reaction 79
  - III. Constants of the Formalist Approach: Some Key Concepts, Terms, and Devices 86
    - A. Form and Organic Form 86
    - B. Texture, Image, Symbol 88
    - C. Fallacies 89
    - D. Point of View 90
    - E. The Speaker's Voice 91
    - F. Tension, Irony, Paradox 93
  - IV. The Formalist Approach in Practice 96
    - A. Word, Image, and Theme: Space-Time Metaphors in "To His Coy Mistress" 96
    - B. The Dark, the Light, and the Pink: Ambiguity as Form in "Young Goodman Brown" 99
      - 1. Virtues and Vices 100
      - 2. Symbol or Allegory? 101
      - 3. Loss upon Loss 101
    - C. Romance and Reality, Land and River: The Journey as Repetitive Form in *Huckleberry Finn* 103

- D. Dialectic as Form: The Trap Metaphor in *Hamlet* 107
  - 1. The Trap Imagery 107
  - 2. The Cosmological Trap 108
  - 3. "Seeming" and "Being" 109
  - 4. "Seeing" and "Knowing" 112
- E. Irony and Narrative Voice: A Formalist Approach to "Everyday Use" 113
- F. *Frankenstein*: A Thematic Reading 116
- V. Summary of Key Points 121
- VI. Limitations of the Formalist Approach 122
  
- 4. **Materialisms** 125
  - I. Marxism 125
  - II. British Cultural Materialism 130
  - III. New Historicism 132
  - IV. Ecocriticism 138
  - V. Literary Darwinism 141
  - VI. Materialisms In Practice 148
    - A. A New History of "To His Coy Mistress" 148
    - B. Hamlet's Evolution 149
    - C. *Frankenstein*: The Creature as Proletarian 150
    - D. "The Lore of Fiends": Hawthorne and His Market 151
    - E. Fathers and Sons, Gods and Slaves: The Material versus the Spiritual in *Huckleberry Finn* 154
    - F. "But they're priceless!": Material versus Exchange Value in "Everyday Use" 161
  - VII. Summary of Key Points 163
  - VIII. Limitations of Materialist Approaches 165
  
- 5. **Literature and Linguistics** 169
  - I. Structuralism and Poststructuralism, Including Deconstruction 169
    - A. Structuralism: Context and Definition 169
    - B. The Linguistic Model 169
    - C. Russian Formalism: Extending Saussure 171
    - D. Structuralism, Lévi-Strauss, and Semiotics 171
    - E. French Structuralism: Codes and Decoding 173
    - F. British and American Interpreters 175
    - G. Poststructuralism: Deconstruction 176
  - II. Dialogics 178
  - III. Linguistic Approaches in Practice 183
    - A. Deconstructing "To His Coy Mistress" 183
    - B. The Deep Structure of *Hamlet* 184

- C. Language and Discourse in *Frankenstein* 186
- D. Huck and Jim: Dialogic Partners 189
- E. "Speak of the Devil!": The Sermon in "Young Goodman Brown" 192
- F. "Asalamalakim!": Linguistic Distortion in "Everyday Use" 194
- IV. Summary of Key Points 196
- V. Limitations of Linguistic Approaches 197
  
- 6. **The Psychological Approach** 201
  - I. Aims and Principles 201
    - A. Abuses and Misunderstandings of the Psychological Approach 201
    - B. Freud's Theories 203
    - C. Other Theories 208
  - II. The Psychological Approach in Practice 210
    - A. *Hamlet*: The Oedipus Complex 210
    - B. Rebellion Against the Father in *Huckleberry Finn* 212
    - C. Prometheus Manqué: The Monster Unbound 215
    - D. "Young Goodman Brown": Id Versus Superego 216
    - E. Sexual Imagery in "To His Coy Mistress" 218
    - F. Morality Principle Over the Pleasure Principle in "Everyday Use" 220
  - III. Summary of Key Points 222
  - IV. Other Possibilities and Limitations of the Psychological Approach 222
  
- 7. **Mythological and Archetypal Approaches** 225
  - I. Definitions and Misconceptions 225
  - II. Some Examples of Archetypes 226
    - A. Images 227
    - B. Archetypal Motifs or Patterns 230
    - C. Archetypes as Genres 231
  - III. Myth Criticism in Practice 231
    - A. Anthropology and Its Uses 231
      - 1. The Sacrificial Hero: *Hamlet* 234
      - 2. Archetypes of Time and Immortality: "To His Coy Mistress" 236
    - B. Jungian Psychology and Its Archetypal Insights 238
      - 1. Some Special Archetypes: Shadow, Persona, and Anima 240

- 2. "Young Goodman Brown": A Failure of Individuation 242
- 3. Creature or Creator: Who Is the Real Monster in *Frankenstein*? 243
- 4. Syntheses of Jung and Anthropology 244
- C. Myth Criticism and the American Dream: Huckleberry Finn as the American Adam 245
- D. "Everyday Use": The Great [Grand]Mother 248
- IV. Summary of Key Points 250
- V. Limitations of Myth Criticism 251

## 8. Feminisms and Gender Studies 253

- I. Feminisms and Feminist Literary Criticism: Definitions 253
- II. First-, Second-, and Third-Wave Feminisms 254
- III. Woman: Created or Constructed? 259
  - A. Feminism and Psychoanalysis 260
  - B. Feminists of Color 264
  - C. Marxist and Materialist Feminisms 270
  - D. Feminist Film Studies 272
- IV. Gender Studies 275
- V. Feminisms and Gender Studies in Practice 278
  - A. The Marble Vault: The Mistress in "To His Coy Mistress" 278
  - B. Frailty, Thy Name Is Hamlet: Hamlet and Women 280
  - C. "The Workshop of Filthy Creation": Men and Women in *Frankenstein* 284
    - 1. Mary and Percy, Author and Editor 285
    - 2. Masculinity and Femininity in the Frankenstein Family 287
    - 3. "I Am Thy Creature..." 289
  - D. Men, Women, and the Loss of Faith in "Young Goodman Brown" 290
  - E. Women and "Sivilization" in *Huckleberry Finn* 292
  - F. "In Real Life": Recovering the Feminine Past in "Everyday Use" 295
- VI. Summary of Key Points 298
- VII. The Future of Feminist Literary Studies and Gender Studies: Some Problems and Limitations 299

9. **Cultural Studies** 305
- I. Defining Cultural Studies 305
  - II. U.S. Ethnic Studies 308
    - A. African-American Writers 311
    - B. Latina/o Writers 313
    - C. Native American Literatures 316
    - D. Asian-American Writers 318
  - III. Postmodernism and Popular Culture 319
    - A. Postmodernism 319
    - B. Popular Culture 324
  - IV. Cultural Studies in Practice 325
    - A. Two Characters in *Hamlet*: Marginalization with a Vengeance 325
    - B. "To His Coy Mistress": Implied Culture 329
    - C. From *Paradise Lost* to Frank-N-Furter: The Creature Lives! 331
      - 1. Revolutionary Births 331
      - 2. "A Race of Devils" 331
      - 3. The FrankenpHEME in Popular Culture: Fiction, Drama, Film, Television 333
    - D. Postmodern Goodman Brown 340
    - E. "Telling the Truth, Mainly": Tricksterism in *Huckleberry Finn* 345
    - F. Cultures in Conflict: A Story Looks at Cultural Change 350
  - V. Summary of Key Points 353
  - VI. Limitations of Cultural Studies 354
10. **Postcolonial Studies** 361
- I. Postcolonialism: Definitions 361
  - II. Some Key Figures and Emphases 363
  - III. Postcolonial Critical Practices 371
    - A. Seventeenth-Century English Colonization and "To His Coy Mistress" 371
    - B. Postcolonial Adaptations of *Hamlet* 373
    - C. *Frankenstein*: Are There Any New Worlds? 376
    - D. Jim's Superstitions in *Huckleberry Finn* 378
    - E. Salem: A City Upon a Hill? 379
    - F. The End of an Era in "Everyday Use" 380
  - IV. Summary of Key Points 380
  - V. Limitations of Postcolonialism 381

<b>EPILOGUE</b>	<b>389</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" <b>393</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" <b>395</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" <b>405</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS</b>	<b>413</b>
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>431</b>