

Decolonizing the Theory Canon: Literary Theory Outside the *Norton Anthology*

The literary ‘canon’, an ever-popular topic for discussion among academics, is experienced most tangibly in the various Norton anthologies of English Literature. But what about the canon of literary theory? This has been defined through successive anthologies used for teaching—such as Hazard Adams’ *Critical Theory Since Plato*, and more recently the *Norton Anthology of Literary Theory*, now in its third edition (current contents are listed pp.3-12 below; essays added to the 3rd edition are listed in bold font). The *Norton Anthology*, which is edited by six academics from the USA, describes itself as follows:

The gold standard anthology for anyone who wants to understand the development and current state of literary theory. Offering 191 pieces by 157 authors, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Third Edition, is more comprehensive and more varied in its selection than any other anthology. Forty-eight **NEW** selections—concentrated mostly on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—make the book not only the best overview of the history of theory, but also a remarkably up-to-date portrait of the state of theory today.¹

A glance through its contents reveals that the historical stretch of the anthology, beginning with Gorgias, Plato and Aristotle, presents literary theory as an almost exclusively European, or later Western, continuous domain from the fourth century BC to the present. We wait until the foot of the sixth page of contents before we encounter a non-Western theorist—C. D. Narasimhaiah, after which the anthology then presents us with single token essays discussing Chinese, Arab and Japanese poetics. This route to opening the canon installs each non-Western tradition as a unified and internally adequate niche. Despite the meaning of “canon” as “The list of *works considered to be permanently established* as being of the highest quality” (Oxford English Dictionary) theory, it seems, is a rapidly changing field, though not one that is taking on any kind of global perspective: while 25% of the material in the third edition is “**NEW**”, just four of the 191 essays, or 2%, consider non-western contributions. Of course, the tradition of “literary theory” presented in the volume is itself an invented tradition, since the majority of the writers, from Plato to David Hume to Marx, are unlikely to have described themselves as literary theorists or indeed to have thought they were writing “literary theory” in the material included under their name. As a result “literary theory” consists of a somewhat random selection of Western texts of different kinds, the majority of them originally written in English. The anthology thus raises not only the question of why literary theory—much of which to judge from the essays does not address literature itself directly—is so exclusively a western concept, but also what its concept is as such and why it should have a canon, characterised as it is by both stasis and selection. As the demands of decolonization confront not only literature but also philosophy and science, the relation between disciplinarity and canon has to be considered. Should decolonization involve a decanonization or only a rearrangement of the canon, and if so, then under which principles of selection? The question of *who speaks for the alternative decolonized canons* grows in urgency with the increasing recognition that national/high/classical traditions within the non-Western realms themselves are analogous to western canons as they exclude, suppress and destroy the literary and cultural expressions of minority groups and languages.

For our 21st annual workshop we invite members of the ICLA theory committee to present papers that address the questions raised by the concept and corpus of “literary theory”. These

¹ <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294994930>

may include:

- How can we conceptualise literary theory outside the Norton? What would an alternative literary theory, not dominated by the usual texts found in such anthologies, look like?
- How could such literary theory go both beyond the West and beyond the canonical image of the West?
- What is a canon and is it a necessary condition for ‘doing’ literary theory?
- What are the languages of literary theory, and how translatable or untranslatable is it?
- Why was “literary theory” invented and for whom?
- What in fact is “literary theory” ?
- Where is “the state of literary theory today”?
- Can we imagine literary theory today outside the politics of nationalism and ethnocentrism of both the West and the non-West?

The ground rule for all papers is that in deliberating on the question of literary theory participants are not allowed to discuss in any detail any texts contained in the Norton.

INTRODUCTION TO THEORY AND CRITICISM

GORGAS OF LEONTINI (ca. 483–376 B.C.E.)

From Encomium of Helen

PLATO (ca. 427–ca. 347 B.C.E.)

Ion

Republic

From Book II

From Book III

From Book VII

From Book X

From Phaedrus

ARISTOTLE (384–322 B.C.E.)

Poetics

On Rhetoric

Book I

From Chapter 2

From Chapter 3

Book II

From Chapter 1

Book III

From Chapter 2

HORACE (65–8 B.C.E.)

Ars Poetica

LONGINUS (first century C.E.)

From On Sublimity

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354–430)

On Christian Teaching

From Book Two

From Book Three

MOSES MAIMONIDES (1135–1204)

The Guide of the Perplexed

From [Introduction to The First Part]

THOMAS AQUINAS (1225–1274)

Summa Theologica

From Question I

DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265–1321)

Il Convivio

Book Two

Chapter 1

From The Letter to Can Grande

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO (1313–1375)

Genealogy of the Gentile Gods

From Book 14

V. Other Cavillers at the Poets and Their Imputations

Vii. The Definition of Poetry, Its Origin, And Function

Xii. The Obscurity of Poetry Is Not Just Cause For Condeming

It

CHRISTINE DE PIZAN (ca. 1365–ca. 1429)

Christine's Reaction to Jean de Montreuil's Treatise on the *Roman de la Rose*
The Book of the City of Ladies
From Part One
From Part Two

JOACHIM DU BELLAY (ca. 1522–1560)
The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language
First Book
Chapters 1-7
Second Book
Chapters 3-4

GIACOPO MAZZONI (1548–1598)
On the Defense of the *Comedy* of Dante
From Introduction and Summary

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554–1586)
From The Defence of Poesy

PIERRE CORNEILLE (1606–1684)
Of the Three Unities of Action, Time, and Place

JOHN DRYDEN (1631–1700)
From An Essay of Dramatic Poesy

BARUCH SPINOZA (1632-1677)
Theologico-Political Treatise
Chapter 7. Of the Interpretation of Scripture

APHRA BEHN (1640–1689)
The Dutch Lover
Epistle to the Reader
Preface to *The Lucky Chance*

GIAMBATTISTA VICO (1668–1744)
From New Science

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672–1719)
The Spectator, No. 62
[True and False Wit]
The Spectator, No 412
[On the Sublime]

ALEXANDER POPE (1688–1744)
From An Essay on Criticism

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784)
The Rambler, No. 4
[On Fiction]
The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia
Chapter X. Imlac's History Continued. A Dissertation upon Poetry
From Preface to Shakespeare
Lives of the English Poets
From Cowley
[On Metaphysical Wit]

DAVID HUME (1711–1776)
Of the Standard of Taste

IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804)

Critique of Judgment

From Introduction

From First Book. Analytic of the Beautiful

From Second Book. Analytic of the Sublime

EDMUND BURKE (1729–1797)

A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful

From Part I. Sections I–VIII

From Part III. Section XXVII

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING (1729–1781)

From Laocoön

FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER (1759–1805)

On the Aesthetic Education of Man

Second Letter

Sixth Letter

Ninth Letter

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759–1797)

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

From Chapter II. The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed

GERMAINE NECKER DE STAËL (1766–1817)

From Essay on Fictions

On Literature Considered in Its Relationship to Social Institutions

On Women Writers (2.4)

FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER (1768–1834)

Hermeneutics

Outline of the 1819 Lectures

Introduction

Part Two. The Technical Interpretation

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770–1831)

Phenomenology of Spirit

[The Master-Slave Dialectic]

Lectures on Fine Art

From Introduction

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772–1834)

Biographia Literaria

Volume 1

From Chapter 1

From Chapter 4

From Chapter 13

Volume 2

Chapter 14

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792–1822)

From A Defence of Poetry

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803–1882)

From The American Scholar

The Poet

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809–1849)
The Philosophy of Composition

KARL MARX (1818-1883) and FRIEDRICH ENGELS (1820–1895)
From Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844
From The German Ideology
From The Communist Manifesto
From Grundrisse
From Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy
Capital, Volume 1
From Chapter 1. Commodities
From Chapter 10. The Working-Day
From Letter from Friedrich Engels to Joseph Bloch

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822–1888)
The Function of Criticism at the Present Time
Culture and Anarchy
From Chapter 1. Sweetness and Light

WALTER PATER (1839–1894)
Studies in the History of the Renaissance
Preface
Conclusion

HENRY JAMES (1843–1916)
The Art of Fiction

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844–1900)
From The Birth of Tragedy
On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense

OSCAR WILDE (1854–1900)
Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
From The Decay of Lying: An Observation
From The Critic as Artist

SIGMUND FREUD (1856–1939)
The Interpretation of Dreams
From Chapter V. The Material and Sources Of Dreams
From Chapter VI. The Dream-Work
From The “Uncanny”
Fetishism

FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE (1857–1913)
Course in General Linguistics
Introduction
From Chapter III. The Object of Linguistic
Part One. General Principles
Chapter I. Nature of The Linguistic Sign
Part Two. Synchronic Linguistics
Chapter IV. Linguistic Value
Chapter V. Syntagmatic and Associative Relations

W. E. B. DU BOIS (1868–1963)
The Souls of Black Folk
From Chapter 1. Of Our Spiritual Strivings
Criteria of Negro Art

VIRGINIA WOOLF (1882–1941)

A Room of One's Own

[Shakespeare's Sister]

[Chloe Liked Olivia]

[Androgyny]

GYÖRGY LUKÁCS (1885–1971)

The Historical Novel

From Chapter One. The Classical Form of the Historical Novel

T. S. ELIOT (1888–1965)

Tradition and the Individual Talent

The Metaphysical Poets

JOHN CROWE RANSOM (1888–1974)

Criticism, Inc.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER (1889–1976)

Language

ANTONIO GRAMSCI (1891–1937)

The Formation of the Intellectuals

ZORA NEALE HURSTON (1891–1960)

Characteristics of Negro Expression

What White Publishers Won't Print

ERICH AUERBACH (1892–1957)

Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature

Chapter 1. Odysseus' Scar

WALTER BENJAMIN (1892–1940)

The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility

MIKHAIL M. BAKHTIN (1895–1975)

From Discourse in the Novel

MAX HORKHEIMER (1895-1973) and THEODOR W. ADORNO (1903–1969)

Dialectic of Enlightenment

From The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception

F.R. LEAVIS (1895-1978)

The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad

***From* Chapter 1. The Great Tradition**

ROMAN JAKOBSON (1896–1982)

From Linguistics and Poetics

Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances

V. The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles

FRIEDRICH HAYEK (1899-1992)

The Constitution of Liberty

Chapter 6. Equality, Value, and Merit

LEO STRAUSS (1899-1973)

Liberalism Ancient and Modern

Chapter 1. What is Liberal Education?

JACQUES LACAN (1901–1981)

The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience
From The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious
The Signification of the Phallus

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902–1967)
The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain

LIONEL TRILLING (1905-1975)
Beyond Culture
Chapter 1. On the Teaching of Modern Literature

HANNAH ARENDT (1906-1975)
The Human Condition
***From* 24. The Disclosure of the Agent in Speech and Action**
25. The Web of Relationship and the Enacted Stories
***From* Truth and Politics**

CLEANTH BROOKS (1906–1994)
The Well Wrought Urn
Chapter 11. The Heresy of Paraphrase

WILLIAM K. WIMSATT JR. (1907-1975) and MONROE C. BEARDSLEY (1915–1985)
The Intentional Fallacy

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR (1908–1986)
The Second Sex
Part Three: Myths
Chapter 3

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS (1908–2009)
Tristes Tropiques
Chapter 28. A Writing Lesson

J. L. AUSTIN (1911–1960)
Performative Utterances

NORTHROP FRYE (1912–1991)
The Archetypes of Literature

ROLAND BARTHES (1915–1980)
Mythologies
Photography and Electoral Appeal
The Death of the Author
The Reality Effect
From Work to Text

LOUIS ALTHUSSER (1918–1990)
From Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses

PAUL DE MAN (1919–1983)
Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust
Chapter 1. Semiology and Rhetoric

C. D. NARASIMHAIAH (1919–2005)
Towards the Formulation of a Common Poetic for Indian Literatures Today

RAYMOND WILLIAMS (1921–1988)
Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory

GILLES DELEUZE (1925-1995) and FÉLIX GUATTARI (1930–1992)

Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature

From Chapter 3. What Is a Minor Literature?

A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia

From Introduction: Rhizome

FRANTZ FANON (1925–1961)

Black Skin, White Masks

From **The Fact of Blackness**

The Wretched of the Earth

From On National Culture

JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD (1925–1998)

Defining the Postmodern

MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926–1984)

What Is an Author?

Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison

The Carceral

The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, An Introduction

Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis

Chapter 1. The Incitement to Discourse

Chapter 2. The Perverse Implantation

Society Must Be Defended

From **Chapter 11**

[Biopower]

WOLFGANG ISER (1926–2007)

Interaction between Text and Reader

HAYDEN WHITE (b. 1928)

The Historical Text as Literary Artifact

JEAN BAUDRILLARD (1929–2007)

From The Precession of Simulacra

JÜRGEN HABERMAS (b. 1929)

The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article

Modernity—An Incomplete Project

ADRIENNE RICH (1929-2012)

From Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence

CHINUA ACHEBE (1930-2013)

An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

ADŪNĪS (b. ca. 1930)

An Introduction to Arab Poetics

From Chapter 1. Poetics and Orality in the *Jahiliyya*

From Chapter 4. Poetics and Modernity

HAROLD BLOOM (b. 1930)

The Anxiety of Influence

Introduction. A Meditation Upon Priority, And A Synopsis

Interchapter. A Manifesto for Antithetical Criticism

PIERRE BOURDIEU (1930–2002)

Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste

Introduction

Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field
Part I. *From* Chapter 2
Part III. *From* Chapter 1

JACQUES DERRIDA (1930–2004)

Dissemination

From Plato's Pharmacy

I

1. *From* Pharmacia
2. The Father of Logos
4. *From* The Pharmakon
5. The Pharmakeus

II

9. *From* Play: From the Pharmakon to the Letter and from Blindness to the Supplement

Specters of Marx

From Chapter 1. Injunctions of Marx

From Chapter 3. Wears and Tears

The Animal That Therefore I Am

***From* Chapter 1. The Animal That Therefore I Am (More To Follow)**

ZEHOU LI (b. 1930)

Four Essays on Aesthetics: Toward a Global View

Chapter 8. The Stratification of Form And Primitive Sedimentation

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***From* Unspeaking Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature**

RICHARD OHMANN (b. 1931)

From The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960–1975

STUART HALL (1932-2014)

Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies

SUSAN SONTAG (1933-2004)

Against Interpretation

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Preface

From Chapter 1. On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act

Postmodernism and Consumer Society

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A Brief History of Neoliberalism

Introduction

***From* Chapter 6. Neoliberalism on Trial**

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Orientalism

Introduction

Culture and Imperialism

Chapter 2, Section 2. Jane Austen and Empire

MONIQUE WITTIG (1935–2003)

One Is Not Born a Woman

BENEDICT ANDERSON (1936-2015)

Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism

Chapter 3. The Origins of National Consciousness

SANDRA M. GILBERT (b. 1936) and SUSAN GUBAR (b. 1944)

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination
From Chapter 2. Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship

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Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature
From Chapter 1. "Why Trauma Now?": Freud and Trauma Studies
Freud and Trauma

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The Laugh of the Medusa

GERALD GRAFF (b. 1937)

Taking Cover in Coverage

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Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities
Chapter 14. How to Recognize a Poem When You See One

NGUGI WÃ THIONG'O (b. 1938), TABAN LO LIYONG (b. 1939), HENRY OWUOR-ANYUMBA (1932–1992)
On the Abolition of the English Department

TZVETAN TODOROV (1939–2017)

Structural Analysis of Narrative

KARATANI KŌJIN (b. 1941)

Origins of Modern Japanese Literature
From Chapter 1. The Discovery of Landscape

JULIA KRISTEVA (b. 1941)

Revolution in Poetic Language
From Part I. The Semiotic and The Symbolic

LAURA MULVEY (b. 1941)

Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema

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Means Without End: Notes on Politics
What Is a Camp?

Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life

Part Three: The Camp as Biopolitical Paradigm of the Modern

1. The Politicization of Life

2. *From* Biopolitics and the Rights of Man

GLORIA ANZALDÚA (1942–2004)

Borderlands/*La Frontera*: The New Mestiza
Chapter 7. *La conciencia de la mestiza*: Towards a New Consciousness

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A Critique of Postcolonial Reason
From Chapter 3. History
[Can The Subaltern Speak?]

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Literary Theory: An Introduction
From Chapter 1. The Rise of English

Culture and the Death of God

From Chapter 6. Modernism and After

STEPHEN J. GREENBLATT (b. 1943)

From Resonance and Wonder

N. KATHERINE HAYLES (b. 1943)

How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine

DONNA HARAWAY (b. 1944)

From A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s

The Companion Species Manifesto

From Companions and Species

SUSAN BORDO (b. 1947)

Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body

Chapter 5. The Body and The Reproduction of Femininity

BRUNO LATOUR (b. 1947)

Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern

MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM (b. 1947)

Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education

From Introduction: The Old Education and the Think-Academy

From Chapter 3. The Narrative Imagination

LENNARD J. DAVIS (b. 1949)

Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body

From Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso

HOMI K. BHABHA (b. 1949)

The Commitment to Theory

GAYLE RUBIN (b. 1949)

From Thinking Sex: Notes for A Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK (b. 1949)

Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture

Chapter 5. The Hitchcockian Blot

HENRY LOUIS GATES JR. (b. 1950)

Talking Black: Critical Signs of the Times

FRANCO MORETTI (b. 1950)

Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History

Chapter 1. Graphs

EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK (1950–2009)

Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire

From Introduction

Epistemology of the Closet

From Introduction: Axiomatic

HAMID DABSHI (b. 1951)

The World of Persian Literary Humanism

From Conclusion: Literary Humanism as an Alternative Theory to Modernity

DICK HEBDIGE (b. 1951)

Subculture: The Meaning of Style

Chapter 6. Subculture: The Unnatural Break

BELL HOOKS (b. Gloria Jean Watkins, 1952)
Postmodern Blackness

ROSI BRAIDOTTI (b. 1954)
The Posthuman
From Introduction
From Chapter 1. Post-Humanism: Life Beyond the Self

ROB NIXON (b. 1954)
Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor
From Introduction
The Anthropocene: The Promise and Pitfalls of an Epochal Idea

JUDITH BUTLER (b. 1956)
Gender Trouble
From Preface
From Chapter 3. Subversive Bodily Acts

PAUL GILROY (b. 1956)
The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness
From Chapter 1. The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity

ANDREW ROSS (b. 1956)
From The Mental Labor Problem

JANE BENNETT (b. 1957)
Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things
Chapter 1. The Force of Things

LAUREN BERLANT (b. 1957) and MICHAEL WARNER (b. 1958)
Sex in Public

REY CHOW (b. 1957)
Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment in the Age of Global Visibility
From Introduction

KENNETH W. WARREN (b. 1957)
Does African-American Literature Exist?

KELLY OLIVER (b. 1958)
Witnessing and Testimony

MICHAEL HARDT (b. 1960) and ANTONIO NEGRI (b. 1933)
Empire
From Part 2. Section 4. Symptoms of Passage

JUDITH JACK HALBERSTAM (b. 1961)
Female Masculinity
From An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men

DAVID HERMAN (b. 1962)
Narrative Theory after the Second Cognitive Revolution

MARC BOUSQUET (b. 1963)
From The Waste Product of Graduate Education: Toward a Dictatorship of the Flexible

MARK MCGURL (b. 1966)
From The Program Era: Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction

STEPHEN BEST (b. 1967) and SHARON MARCUS (b. 1966)
From Surface Reading: An Introduction

TIMOTHY MORTON (b. 1968)
The Ecological Thought
From Introduction: Critical Thinking

ALONDRA NELSON (b. 1968)
AfroFuturism: Past-Future Visions

SIANNE NGAI (b. 1971)
Ugly Feelings
From Introduction

IAN BOGOST (b. 1976)
The Rhetoric of Video Games