

Scholarly Portals, Author Sites, Catalogs and Electronic Text Archives. The difficulty arises when forced to choose among the many candidates for Cultural and Historical Web Resources and Organizations and Cultural Awareness Resources. Those two categories are less well defined and offer a less coherent approach.

The final chapter is devoted to Researching a Thorny Problem. In this chapter, the author describes in detail ways that she would approach a reception study of Octavia Butler, the renowned science-fiction writer who died in 2006. The Appendix contains important reference sources in disciplines related to Postmodern American literature, beginning with the general and ending with the social sciences.

This guide to *Literary Research and American Postmodernism* will be useful to those who take the time to read through the approachable text and to educate themselves on literary research, as well as for anyone who dips in and out of the book for a guide or a database that may be useful at a given moment.

**Sarah G. Wenzel**

*Bibliographer of Literatures of Europe & The Americas, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois, USA*

## References

- Hartzell-Gundy, A. and McCafferty, B. (2015), *Literary Research and British Postmodernism*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.
- Müller, T. (Ed.) (2017), *Handbook of the American Novel of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Niall, N. (2016), *A Dictionary of Postmodernism*, Wiley Blackwell, Malden, MA.

## RR 2017/219

### Literary Theory: The Complete Guide

Mary Klages

Bloomsbury Academic

London and New York

2017

287 pp.

ISBN 978 1 4725 9275 0 (hbk); ISBN 978 1 4725 9274 3 (pbck); ISBN 978 1 4725 9277 4 (ePDF); ISBN 978 1 4725 9276 7 (ePub)

£70 \$94 (hbk); £19.99 \$26.95 (pbck); £19.99 \$21.99 (e-formats)

**Keywords** Culture, Guides and handbooks, Literature, Literary theory

**Review DOI** [10.1108/RR-06-2017-0135](https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-06-2017-0135)

Guides to terms have traditionally focused on literary forms (like poems and novels) and stylistic features (like sonnets and epistolary

novels and metaphors), with some grammatical and linguistic features thrown in. This relative narrow compass has radically changed and now incorporates a wide range of philosophical and ideological, psychological and historical, cultural and racial and gender-based ideas. Students at school, college and university levels need all this critical apparatus to understand and interpret the literary and cultural material presented to them in the classroom, in personal investigation and in their general response to their environment.

Mary Klages offered an attractive and popular introduction to this frame of reference in her 2006 guide *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Klages, 2006), following it up with her *Key Terms in Literary Theory* (Klages, 2011). This *Complete Guide* is an amalgamation of the two earlier works, with expanded and updated material (on such topics as deconstruction and post colonialism), updated reading, some new citation of key texts, further advice to teachers for classroom use and a consolidated index. Her keynote theme of humanism (in the sense that literary theory helps us understand literary and cultural experiences as human beings, and not, say, the rejection of religious belief) appears in the introduction, and pervades the material in a generalized sense after that.

This is a useful and realistically priced item for the student at (above all) college and first-/second-year university levels, and will hold its own against numerous competitors (above all in the area of philosophical ideas and where, as in postmodernism, there is a wealth of print and online information) for at least three years of shelf life. The paperback comes in a durable format, and the availability of ePub and PDF variants will make it more accessible to library users. As well as the wider frame of reference referred to earlier, two things strike the reader with this book. The first is, for all the familiarity of most of the ideas and material, they have been selected and packaged conveniently for the intended readers (mainly students and their tutors and teachers), making the discussions transparently relevant. These discussions are also helpfully presented in an unpretentious and clear manner, and this is not always the case with reference works dealing with continental philosophical and cultural theory.

The second is that a successful attempt has been made to guide students in what class discussions might offer them, how themes might be followed-up in personal research; and beyond that, how tutors and teachers might develop and incorporate ideas and research inquiries into their teaching programmes. With

this last in mind, guidance is provided time and time again on what can be introduced to students in classroom situations – for instance, using psychoanalytical theory from Freud and Lacan in the study of Hamlet, or what Hélène Cixous does in her own criticism in analysing Shakespeare's texts. This regularly occurs in a set of thematic essays that begin the complete guide (and which formed the substance of the original guide “for the perplexed”): structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminist theories, queer theories, ideology and discourse, race and post colonialism, ecocriticism and post-modernism.

Each one of these discusses selects figures from that wide range of cultural reference those who have shaped literary theory (and the study of literature and its cultural satellites like media texts) in distinctive ways – Saussure and Propp from structuralism, for instance, Derrida from deconstruction, Althusser and Bakhtin from ideological discourse and Lugones and Morrison and Gates from race and post-colonialism. Queer theory has Butler and Rubin and Irigaray, Foucault rightly appears everywhere. A 30-page section of biographies points to a wealth of further reading and complements references to figures mentioned in the essays.

The section on Terms (about 100 pages, and originating in Klages's original work *Key Terms* from 2011) reinforces the discussions in the essays (mercifully not confusing them) – for example, deconstruction and postmodernity and sign and interpellation, all get full and clear entries – and complements the essays and the biographies, and all these are supported by a helpful index. Navigating this work should prove no problem to a busy and sometimes perplexed student (and teachers who always wonder whether, with material like this, they have judged the level of explanation correctly as they rush through the syllabus). The complete guide comes out quite well, then, although more work could be done on ecocriticism – a new feature – sadly not at the same helpfulness level as the rest. A useful addition, but, to be plain, not one to buy in hardback unless the trade-off between durability and obsolescence can be resolved easily by the reference librarian.

**Stuart Hannabuss**

*Freelance Reviewer and Researcher, Aberdeen, UK*

## References

- Klages, M. (2006), *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Bloomsbury, London.  
 Klages, M. (2011), *Key Terms in Literary Theory*, Continuum, London.

## RR 2017/220

### Little Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (2nd edition)

*Edited by Elizabeth Knowles*

Oxford University Press

Oxford

2016

xiv + 498 pp.

ISBN 978 0 19 877837 0

£9.99 \$16.95

Also available as an e-book

**Keywords** Dictionaries, English language, Proverbs

**Review DOI** [10.1108/RR-05-2017-0125](https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-05-2017-0125)

The full *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* was first published in 1935. This condensed version first appeared in 2009 (RR 2010/220) and has now appeared in a second edition. It forms a very handy pocket version of the original dictionary and would be very useful to carry around in a large jacket pocket or briefcase for when inspiration is needed.

It is arranged by theme – covering 250 subject headings and contains over 2,000 proverbs taken from many different countries and cultures. There are proverbs here for every situation from Action to Youth. To help the user, there is a list of subject headings at the front of the book with some cross-references. An example of this might be “Flattery see Praise and Flattery”.

The editor – Elizabeth Knowles – is a historical lexicographer who has also worked on the fourth edition of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. She tells us that this edition of *Little Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* has drawn on the fourth edition of the *Oxford Treasury of Sayings and Quotations* (Ratcliffe, 2011) (RR 2012/204) and also the *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (Speake, 2015) (RR 2016/089). She has collected over 2,000 proverbs which are helpfully arranged so that you can find the perfect pithy saying for any situation. Some of the more modern ones include one from Australia – “Rooster today, feather duster tomorrow” which comes under Praise and Flattery and might be interpreted as “How the mighty are fallen!” “Never waste a good crisis!” is another modern saying which is given an airing here under Crises. Many old favourites can also be found such as “Pride goes before a fall” and “The Devil finds work for idle hands”. Altogether, this little book provides a fascinating selection which makes a good read and may introduce readers to not only old favourites but also some new sayings.

One of the pleasures of proverbs is in seeing how, in different parts of the world, the same