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# TEACHING THEORY

Edited by RICHARD BRADFORD



# Teaching Theory

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Published in association with the English Subject Centre

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# Teaching Theory

Edited by

Richard Bradford

*Research Professor of English, University of Ulster, UK*

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# Series Preface

One of many exciting achievements of the early years of the English Subject Centre was the agreement with Palgrave Macmillan to initiate the series “Teaching the New English.” The intention of the then Director, Professor Philip Martin, was to create a series of short and accessible books which would take widely-taught curriculum fields (or, as in the case of learning technologies, approaches to the whole curriculum) and articulate the connections between scholarly knowledge and the demands of teaching.

Since its inception, “English” has been committed to what we know by the portmanteau phrase “learning and teaching.” Yet, by and large, university teachers of English – in Britain at all events – find it hard to make their tacit pedagogic knowledge conscious, or to raise it to a level where it might be critiqued, shared, or developed. In the experience of the English Subject Centre, colleagues find it relatively easy to talk about curriculum and resources, but far harder to talk about the success or failure of seminars, how to vary forms of assessment, or to make imaginative use of Virtual learning Environments. Too often this reticence means falling back on received assumptions about student learning, about teaching, or about forms of assessment. At the same time, colleagues are often suspicious of the insights and methods arising from generic educational research. The challenge for the English group of disciplines is therefore to articulate ways in which our own subject knowledge and ways of talking might themselves refresh debates about pedagogy. The implicit invitation of this series is to take fields of knowledge and survey them through a pedagogic lens. Research and scholarship, and teaching and learning are part of the same process, not two separate domains.

“Teachers,” people used to say, “are born not made.” There may, after all, be some tenuous truth in this: there may be generousities of spirit (or, alternatively, drives for didactic control) laid down in earliest childhood. But why should we assume that even “born” teachers (or novelists, or nurses, or veterinary surgeons) do not need to learn the skills of their trade? Amateurishness about teaching has far more to do with university claims to status, than with evidence about how people learn. There is a craft to shaping and promoting learning. This series of

books is dedicated to the development of the craft of teaching within English Studies.

*Ben Knights*  
Teaching the New English *Series Editor*  
*Director, English Subject Centre*  
*Higher Education Academy*

## **The English Subject Centre**

Founded in 2000, the English Subject Centre (which is based at Royal Holloway University of London) is part of the subject network of the Higher Education Academy. Its purpose is to develop learning and teaching across the English disciplines in UK Higher Education. To this end it engages in research and publication (web and print), hosts events and conferences, sponsors projects, and engages in day-to-day dialogue with its subject communities.

<http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk>



# Notes on Contributors

**Richard Bradford** is Research Professor of English at the University of Ulster. Previously he has taught in the Universities of Oxford, Wales and Trinity College Dublin and has been Visiting Lecturer in the Universities of Warsaw and Budapest. He has published twenty-one books, most recently *The Novel Now* (2007), *First Boredom, Then Fear. The Life of Philip Larkin* (2005) and *The Life of a Long Distance Writer. The Biography of Alan Sillitoe* (2008). His authorised biography of Martin Amis will appear in 2011 and his *Poetry: The Ultimate Guide* was published in 2010.

**Katherine Byrne** is a Lecturer in English at the University of Ulster, where she teaches nineteenth-century fiction and critical theory. She has a PhD from the University of East Anglia, and has published articles on nineteenth-century literature and medicine. Her book, on the representation of tuberculosis in Victorian literature and culture, will be published next year.

**Madelena Gonzalez** is Professor of English Literature at the University of Avignon. Her latest publications include: *Fiction After the Fatwa: Salman Rushdie and the Charm of Catastrophe*, *Translating Identity and the Identity of Translation* and *Théâtre des minorités: Mises en scène de la marge à l'époque contemporaine*. She has published widely on contemporary literature and culture and is currently editing a collection of articles on genre in the contemporary novel, as well as a second volume on Minority Theatre, in English this time.

**Andrew Hadfield** is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. He was educated at the Universities of Leeds and Ulster, and previously taught at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Leeds, and Columbia University. He has published a number of books, including *Literature, Politics and National Identity: From Reformation to Renaissance* (1994), *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545–1625* (1998, paperback 2007), and *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (2005, paperback, 2008). He has also edited, with Raymond Gillespie, *The History of the Irish Book: Vol. III: The Irish Book in English, 1550–1800* (2006). He is editor of *Renaissance Studies* and is currently writing a biography of Edmund Spenser.

**Andrew James** is a lecturer at Chikushi Women's University in Japan, where he has lived and worked for the past sixteen years. He holds a BA in English literature from Queen's University in Canada, an MA in English literature from Mississippi State University, and an MA in TESL/TEFL from the University of Birmingham in England. He is currently completing his PhD part-time at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland on the development of Kingsley Amis's narrative voice. His recent publications include essays on Amis in *Englishness Revisited* (2009) and *Life Writing* (2009, Palgrave Macmillan).

**Jill Le Bihan** is Lecturer in English at Sheffield Hallam University. She specialises in Feminist Theory, Psychoanalysis, Contemporary Women's Writing and 19th Century Fiction, and has published widely in journals and volumes of essays. Her most recent work in print focuses on popular film and fiction and Feminist Theory.

**Vincent B. Leitch**, George Lynn Cross Research Professor, holds the Paul and Carol Daube Sutton Chair in English at the University of Oklahoma, where he teaches criticism and theory. He is author of *Deconstructive Criticism* (1983), *American Literary Criticism from the 1930s to the 1980s* (1988; 2nd edition, 2009), *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism* (1992), *Postmodernism – Local Effects, Global Flows* (1996), *Theory Matters* (2003), and *Living with Theory* (2008). He serves as the General Editor of the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2001; 2nd edn, 2010).

**Neil Murphy** has previously taught at the University of Ulster and the American University of Beirut and is currently Associate Professor of contemporary literature at NTU, Singapore. He is the author of several books on Irish fiction and contemporary literature, and has published numerous articles and book chapters on contemporary Irish fiction, postmodernism, and theories of reading. His collection of essays on Aidan Higgins' work is forthcoming.

**Stephen Shapiro** teaches in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at Warwick University. He is author of *How To Read Marx's Capital* and the co-editor of the *How to Read Theory* series. His *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-system* received Honourable Mention for the British Association of American Studies Prize for best book in American Studies published during 2008.

**Leona Toker** is Professor in the English Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is the author of *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures* (1989), *Eloquent Reticence: Withholding Information in Fictional Narrative* (1993), *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (2000), *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission* (forthcoming), and articles on English, American, and Russian literature. She is the editor of *Commitment in Reflection: Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy* (1994) and co-editor of *Rereading Texts/Rethinking Critical Presuppositions: Essays in Honour of H.M. Daleski* (1996). At present she is Editor of *Partial Answers: A Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, a semiannual periodical published by the Johns Hopkins University Press.

# Chronology

- 1897      Walter Raleigh, *Style*
- 1989      George Saintsbury, *A Short History of English Literature*
- 1900      George Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*  
Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
- 1904      A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*
- 1905      *Modern Language Review* founded
- 1907–11   Ferdinand de Saussure's lectures at the University of Geneva,  
published posthumously as *Course in General Linguistics*  
(1916)
- 1908      Sigmund Freud, 'Creative Writers and Day Dreaming'
- 1909      A.C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*
- 1911      J.E. Spingarn, *The New Criticism*
- 1913      George Saintsbury, *The English Novel*
- 1915      Moscow Linguistic Circle founded, with Roman Jakobson its  
leading figure
- 1916      St. Petersburg Linguistic Circle (OPOJAZ) founded by Boris  
Eikhenbaum, Boris Tomashevsky, Yuri Tynyanov and Victor  
Shlovsky  
A. Quiller Couch, *On the Art of Writing*
- 1917      Victor Shlovsky, 'Art as Technique'
- 1918      A. Quiller Couch, *Studies in Literature*

- 1920 T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*
- 1922 *The Fugitive* founded by John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate  
*Criterion* founded
- 1923 Georg Luckács, *History and Class Consciousness*  
The (Marxist) Frankfurt School of Social and Cultural Theory founded
- 1924 I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*
- 1926 Prague Linguistic Circle formed  
I.A. Richards, *Science and Poetry*
- 1928 P.N. Medvedev and Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*  
Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*  
Roman Jakobson and Yuri Tynyanov, 'Problems of Research in Language and Literature'
- 1929 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*  
Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*  
I.A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*
- 1930 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*  
F.R. Leavis, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*
- 1931 Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle*
- 1932 F.R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*
- 1933 T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*
- 1934 F.W. Bateson, *English Poetry and the English Language*
- 1935 William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*  
Edmund Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*
- 1936 Jan Mukarovsky, *Aesthetic Function. Norm and Value as Social Facts*  
F.R. Leavis, *Revaluation*

- 1937 Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*  
L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*
- 1938 Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry*
- 1939 *Kenyon Review* founded by John Crowe Ransom
- 1940 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*
- 1941 John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism*
- 1943 Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Fiction*
- 1946 W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy'  
Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*  
*Chicago Review* founded
- 1947 Ivor Winters *In Defence of Reason*  
Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*
- 1948 W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Affective Fallacy'  
F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*  
Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History*
- 1949 Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*  
Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship*  
René Wellek and Robert Penn Warren, *Theory of Literature*
- 1950 Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*
- 1951 Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*  
William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words*  
*Essays in Criticism* founded
- 1952 F.R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit*  
Donald Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse*
- 1953 R.S. Crane, *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*  
Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*

- 1954 W.K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*
- 1955 Donald Davie, *Articulate Energy*  
F.R. Leavis, *D.H. Lawrence, Novelist*  
Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*
- 1957 Northrop Frye, *An Anatomy of Criticism*  
T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*  
Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*
- 1958 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*  
The Indiana University 'Conference on Style', involving Jakobson's groundbreaking 'Closing Statement: (Linguistics and Poetry)'  
Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) translated into English
- 1959 Jacques Lacan expelled from International Psychoanalytic Association, as a consequence of his radical revisions of Freudianism in seminars during the 1950s
- 1960 *Review of English Literature* founded
- 1961 Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*  
William Empson, *Milton's God*
- 1962 Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*  
Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*
- 1963 Christopher Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style*  
Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity*  
Rene Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*  
Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*
- 1964 Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*  
Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*  
Roland Barthes, *The Elements of Writing*
- 1965 Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture*  
T.S.Eliot, *To Criticise the Critic*  
J. Hillis Miller, *Poets of Reality*

- 1966 Johns Hopkins University International Symposium, 'The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man' at which major European theorists (notably Todorov, Goldmann, Barthes and Derrida) introduced their ideas to a predominantly US audience.  
 Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*  
 Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*  
 David Lodge, *The Language of Fiction*
- 1967 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*  
 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*  
 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*  
 Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin*  
 E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*
- 1968 Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'  
 Norman Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*
- 1969 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*  
 F.R. Leavis, *Literature in our Time*  
 Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?'  
 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*
- 1970 Geoffrey Hartman, *Beyond Formalism*  
 Roland Barthes, *S/Z*  
 Raymond Williams, *The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence*  
 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*
- 1971 Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*  
 Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form*  
*Diacritics* founded  
 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*
- 1972 Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artefacts*  
 Frederic Jameson, *The Prison House of Language*  
 Jacques Derrida, *Positions*  
 Jacques Derrida, *Disseminations*  
 Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*  
 Wolfgang Iser, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach'



- 1973 TLS devotes large parts of two issues to the 'new' phenomenon of Semiotics, with articles by Eco, Todorov and Kristeva.  
Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*  
Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*  
Roland Barthes, 'Textual Analysis of a Tale by Poe'  
Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*
- 1974 Julia Kristeva, 'The Ethics of Linguistics'  
Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*  
Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of The Other Woman*  
Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment*  
*Critical Inquiry* founded
- 1975 Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*  
Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*  
Edward Said, *Beginnings*  
Hélène Cixous, 'The Newly Born Woman'
- 1976 Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*  
E.D. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation*
- 1977 Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*  
Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*  
David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*  
J. Hillis Miller, 'The Critic as Host'
- 1978 Edward Said, *Orientalism*  
Colin McCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*  
Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*
- 1979 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*  
Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert, *The Madwoman in the Attic*  
Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, *Deconstruction and Criticism*  
Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*  
Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*  
Mary Jacobus (ed.), *Women Writing and Writing about Women*  
*Feminist Review* founded

- 1980 Jean Beaudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*  
 Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference*  
 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning*  
 Geoffrey Hartman, *Criticism in The Wilderness*  
 Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*  
 Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*
- 1981 Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*  
 Geoffrey Hartman, *Saving the Text*  
 Press coverage of the 'MacCabe Affair' involving Cambridge University's 1980 decision not to make permanent Colin MacCabe's temporary lectureship.
- 1982 Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*  
 J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition*  
 Harold Bloom, *Agon*  
 Paul de Man, 'The Resistance to Theory'
- 1983 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*  
 Edward Said, *The Word, the Text and the Critic*  
 Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology*
- 1984 Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*  
 Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*  
 Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society*  
 Henry Louis Gates (ed.), *Black Literature and Literary Theory*
- 1985 Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism*  
 Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare*  
 Jerome McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections*  
 Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*  
 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'  
 Eve K. Sedgwick, *Between Men: English literature and male Homosexual Desire*
- 1986 Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*  
 J. Hillis Miller's MLA presidential Address: 'The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base'  
*Textual Practice* founded

- 1987 Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference*  
 Discovery of pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic articles written by Paul de Man in Belgium during the 1940s.  
 J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*  
 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Post-colonial Critic'
- 1988 Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*  
 Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land*.  
*Genders* founded
- 1989 Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally*  
 Jerome McGann, *Towards a Literature of Knowledge*
- 1990 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*  
 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*  
 Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*  
 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*
- 1991 Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*  
 Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism*  
 J. Hillis Miller, *Theory Now and Then*  
 A.J. Greimas, *The Semiotics of Passion*
- 1993 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*  
 Eve Sedgwick, *Tendencies*
- 1994 Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*  
 Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism*  
 Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*
- 1995 Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*  
 Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non Human*  
 Terry Gifford, *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry*  
 Jeffrey Weeks, *Invented Moralities. Sexual Values in an Age of Uncertainty*

- 1996 Alan Sokal's 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Theory', a spoof post-modern/poststructuralist engagement with science accepted by the journal *Social Text*. His exposure of the weaknesses of Theory was covered later in his 1998 book *Intellectual Impostures*.  
E.D. Hirsch, *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*  
Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*
- 1997 Eva K. Sedgwick, *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*  
Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performance*  
Stuart Hall, *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*
- 1998 Frederic Jameson, *Brecht and Method*  
Malcolm Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars*
- 1999 PMLA Forum on 'Literatures of the Environment' (Ecocriticism)  
David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory*  
Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle*  
Geoffrey Hartman, *A Critic's Journey: Literary Reflections, 1958–1998*  
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*
- 2000 Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the 20th Century*  
Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*
- 2001 Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered Planet*  
J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature*  
Terry Eagleton, *The Truth About the Irish*  
Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief*
- 2002 Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*  
Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*  
Valentine Cunningham, *Reading After Theory*
- 2003 Eve K. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*  
Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*  
Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*  
M. Payne and J. Schad (eds), *Life. After. Theory*

- 2004      Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in The World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*  
            Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*  
            Geoffrey Hartman, *Scars of the Spirit*
- 2005      Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*  
            Judith Butler, *Giving An Account of Oneself*  
            V. Mishra and B. Hodge, 'What Was Postcolonialism?'  
            Jean Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*
- 2006      Jerome McGann, *The Scholar's Art: Literary Studies in a Managed World*  
            Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*
- 2007      Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Other Asias*  
            Terry Eagleton, *The Meaning of Life*

# Introduction: The History and Present Condition of Theory – A Brief Account

*Richard Bradford*

This volume can claim a special status within the 'Teaching the New English' series because its subject is not a branch of the literary canon. It is a way of writing about, or frequently not about, literature. Theory has obtained and maintained a unique status in literary studies. It is neither literature nor in a conventional sense literary criticism, but something that can be both practised and studied in its own right.

An exact and reliable history of how Theory arrived in universities and set up home in English degree programmes would require a full-length, scrupulously researched monograph but I will proffer some observations, based largely upon fact.

Formalism, the mother or father of structuralism, had taken root in Continental European institutions during the early to mid-20th century and it was not regarded as a particularly incongruous presence. Most literature-based degree courses were closely allied with linguistics and the expansion Westward of the linguistics-based sub-discipline of Formalism was a natural progression. In France, during the 1950s and especially the 1960s, the techniques of Claude Lévi-Straus, allegedly the first Structuralist, were annexed by writers and academics as much set upon dismantling as analysing cultural apparatuses, and Barthes was, of course, the best known of these non-conformists. By the end of the 1960s poststructuralism was abroad with its high priest, Jacques Derrida, forging ahead with such icons to abstruseness as *Of Grammatology*. We should never cease to remind ourselves that Literary or Critical Theory had at this advanced stage in its process of gestation become a misnomer. Theory would certainly have groundbreaking repercussions for routine habits of critical analysis and for standard conceptions of literature, but Theory did not service literary criticism; quite the opposite. Criticism and literature were but two of the numerous topics consumed