Literary theory

A guide to critical theory resources on the Internet

by Julie Roberson, Debora Richey, and Mona Kratzert

S tudies in literature in colleges and universities over the last three decades have been marked by a growing interest in a set of related theoretical approaches known collectively as "literary theory." While there have always been literary theories, these new theoretical approaches—such as structuralism, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, and new historicism—often seem complex and impenetrable to students, researchers, and uninitiated readers.

The Internet provides a unique opportunity for readers to gain instant access to approachable information on competing interpretive practices and cutting-edge theories. Literary theories change with time and as new theoretical approaches emerge, the Internet can serve as an excellent means of keeping abreast with the field of literary study.

This article presents a selected guide to some of the more understandable and useful Web resources devoted to contemporary theory. The introductory sites are helpful for describing the various schools of criticism, while the theorist and theoretical sites concentrate on specific critical approaches. Literary theory is an interdisciplinary field that includes several broad areas, among them anthropology, art, philosophy, psychology,

history, and linguistics, and the included sites reflect this wide scope.

Not covered in this guide are one-page sites, college course notes, and personal pages devoted to a single theory. Rather than list Web resources devoted to a single theorist (e.g., Derrida, Lacan, Bakhtin), which would be too numerous to cover, directory sites providing links to more than one critic are provided.

Reference sources

• **Guide to Philosophy on the Internet.** This searchable database, which is broad in scope, provides quick and easy access to information on critical theories and theorists who have influenced historical and contemporary literary theory. Along with the quick look-up feature, users can also browse through an extensive list of categories related to philosophy, including guides, journals, e-texts, newsgroups, bibliographies, associations, dictionaries, and individual philosophers. *Access:* http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/philinks.htm.

• **Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism Online.** An international, encyclopedic guide to the important figures, schools, and movements in literary

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theory. Its chronological range extends from Plato and Aristotle to the present. The electronic version of the print source has several useful enhancements, including full-text and field searching and a hypertextually linked cross-reference system. All the material in the print guide is available online; however, there is a subscription fee. *Access:* http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopkins_guide_to_literary_theory/.

THE JOHNS HOPKINS GUIDE TO LITERARY THEORY & CRITICISM

Edited by Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth
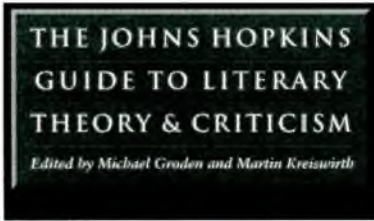
Groden, Michael, and Martin Kreiswirth, eds. The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism (Online). pp. online logo. ©2002 Reprinted with the permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.

• **Bibliography of Literary Theory and Criticism.** The bibliography is an FTP Web site of bibliographies related to literary theory and criticism. The files are arranged by author/theorist name, critical school, and subject. More than 10,000 entries are listed. The bibliography is maintained by José Angel García Landa at the University of Zaragoza in Spain. *Access:* http://fyl.unizar.es/FILOLOGIA_INGLESA/BIBLIOGRAPHY.HTML.

• **Glossary of Literary Terms and Handbook of Rhetorical Devices.** Of the many glossaries of literary theory available online, this one is probably one of the most user-friendly. Both the glossary and handbook are searchable and can also be browsed alphabetically. Short, concise definitions of terms are provided along with examples. *Access:* http://www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/Classics/Harris/rhetform.html.

• **UC Irvine Critical Theory Resource.** This resource presents bibliographies prepared by Eddie Yeghiayan, critical theory and philosophy bibliographer at University of California, Irvine. There are three sections: "Wellek Library Lecturer Bibliographies," "University of California Humanities Research Institute Bibliographies," and "Philosophy Colloquia Bibliographies." Each section can be searched or browsed. *Access:* http://sun3.

lib.uci.edu/indiv/scctr/online.html. Also see Yeghiayan's personal Web site at http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~eyeghiay/.

• **The Untimely Past.** This is an online bibliography of English-language entries "relating to the intersection of historiographic practice with poststructuralism, postmodernism, and allied areas of theory/practice." It includes links to sites devoted to specific theorists and theories, as well as online articles. *Access:* http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jeffreyhearn/home~1.htm.

• **Words of Art.** This is a browsable dictionary of terms related to art criticism; however, it also has application for literary criticism. The site is sponsored by the Department of Fine Arts at Okanagan University College in British Columbia, Canada. *Access:* http://www.arts.ouc.bc.ca/fiar/glossary/gloshome.html.

Introductory sites

• **Contemporary Literary Theory.** This resource is a Web site for a course on literary theory taught by John Lye at Brock University. More than just class materials, the site features some useful essays on differences among literary criticism, literary theory, and theory itself; characteristics of contemporary theory; and a checklist of theoretical concerns. In addition, there are introductory essays on problems and issues with structuralism, reader-response theory, and poststructuralism. *Access:* http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/index.html.

• **Critical Reading: An Introduction to Literary Theory & Criticism.** This well-designed and easy-to-use site was put together by Professor Barry Laga at Mesa State University as a guide for undergraduate students. Each page is divided into three sections to answer three questions: Why do we read? What do we read? and How do we read? Laga also addresses some issues in literary theory, such as the problem of meaning and authorial intention. *Access:* http://mesastate.edu/~blaga/theoryindex/theoryhomex.html.

• **Introduction to Modern Literary Theory.** Fourteen major theories from archetypal/myth criticism to new criticism to postmodernism are covered. For each one there is a short paragraph summary, a bibliography for further research, and links to suggested Web sites. This compact site is use-

ful for those who want quick overviews of a wide variety of theories. *Access:* http://www.geocities.com/kristisiegel/theory.htm.

• **Postmodernism and Its Critics.** Described as a "guide prepared by students for students," this Web site examines basic premises and key works, contrasts modern and postmodern thinking, and includes a bibliography and links to related sites. *Access:* http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/pomo.htm.

• **SWIRL: Your Guide to Post-Millennial Paradigms.** Maintained by Warren Hedges, an English professor at Southern Oregon University, SWIRL offers a comprehensive introduction to critical theory. Sections of the site include an introduction to theoretical paradigms, main issues, timelines of major critical theories, an overview of the major theorists, and controversies. *Access:* http://www.sou.edu/English/IDTC/Swirl/swirl.htm.

• **Teacher's Guide to Postmodernism.** A collection of issues developed for instructors interested in integrating postmodernism themes into their teaching, this guide provides basic information on the literary canon debate, implications of teaching poststructuralism and deconstructive theory in the English classroom, and literary theory from the perspective of the writer, reader, and filmmaker. *Access:* http://edu-ss10.educ.queensu.ca/~qbell/update/tint/postmodernism/post.html. Also useful for instructors designing a course on literary theory is CROW: Introduction to Literary Theory at http://www.lfc.edu/crow/.

• **Undergraduate Introduction to Critical Theory.** This guide by Dino F. Felluga, professor at Purdue University, West Lafayette, is one of the most-cited literary theory resources on the Web. It covers new historicism, cultural materialism, feminism, and psychoanalysis. For each theory there is an overview, a list of key concepts, questions that theorists may ask, and examples of readings using the theory. This site is an excellent introduction for students and others interested in theory but lacking specialized knowledge of different approaches. *Access:* http://omni.cc.purdue.edu/~felluga/theory.html.

• **www.theory.org.uk.** Developed by David Gauntlett at the University of Leeds, this Web site is described as "social theory for fans of popular culture and popular culture for fans of social theory." An unusual collection of resources, the site provides information on social and cultural theory, gender and identity, and media studies, while also including a set of downloadable trading cards featuring major theorists and concepts. *Access:* http://www.theory.org.uk.

Megasites

• **Continental Philosophy.** This extensive site provides information about critical theory, cultural theory, deconstruction, existentialism, feminist theory, Marxism, post-colonialism, post-modern thought, semiotics, structuralism, and other theoretical approaches. Historical in orientation, the collection of continental philosophy resources covers both theories and theorists from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Access:* http://www.augustana.ab.ca/~janzb/continental.htm.
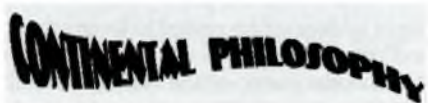
• **The Eserver: Accessible Online Publishing.** Founded in 1990 as the English Server, EServer offers 42 collections covering such areas as art, cultural logic, cultural theory, feminism, and philosophy. Users can scan through the collections or use the search engine on the main screen to quickly find information on a particular theory or theorist. *Access:* http://eserver.org.

• **Jack Lynch's Literary Resources—Literary Theory.** A favorite of literary researchers, this megalist of Web sites includes links to pages about contemporary theory, philosophy, cultural theory, and semiotics. There are also links to the Web sites of individual theorists. *Access:* http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/theory.html.

• **Voice of the Shuttle: Literary Theory Page.** This site is part of the Voice of the Shuttle Web site, an extensive site devoted to all aspects of literary research. The Literary Theory Page has general theory resources followed by links to theory sites ranging from the classical period to the 20th century. In

addition, links to e-journals, electronic lists, course syllabi, and conference announcements are included. *Access:* http://vos.ucsb.edu/shuttle/theory.html.

• **Yahoo! Critical Theory.** This is an extensive list of sites devoted to theories and theorists. *Access:* http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Critical_Theory/.

Theorists

• **Illuminations: The Critical Theory Website.** Based on the Frankfurt School, this site concentrates on such figures as Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and William Benjamin. *Access:* http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations.

• **LitLinks: Critical Theory.** Arranged simply from A to Z, this site provides biographical information on various critics from the classical era to the present, as well as links to Web sites, e-texts, and interviews. *Access:* http://www.smpcollege.com/litlinks/critical/index.htm.

• **The Notebook for Contemporary Continental Philosophy.** Alphabetically arranged by theorist/philosopher, this clear and easy-to-use site concentrates on the philosophy of theorists rather than their critical approaches to literature. The site also provides links to general philosophical resources and online journals and magazines. Periodically updated, the "What's New in the Notebook" section provides the latest articles and information on continental philosophical approaches. *Access:* http://www.baylor.edu/~Scott_Moore/Continental.html.

• **Popculture.com Theorists and Critics.** This searchable database provides links to sites devoted to major contemporary theorists ranging from Adorno to Zizek. *Access:* http://www.popcultures.com/theorist.htm.

• **Thinka-Links.** This site presents bibliographies, e-mail forums, journals, organizations, papers, Web sites, and other information on five modern and postmodern thinkers: Bakhtin, Derrida, Freud, Lacan, and Zizek.

Access: http://www.mii.kurume-u.ac.jp/~leuers/Links.htm.

• **Who's Who in Theory.** Somewhat satiric and tongue-in-cheek, this directory presents information on key figures in literary theory, including Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, and Stanley Fish. The site also describes the works of several theorists, lists suggested readings, and provides access to related resources for each entry. *Access:* http://www.sou.edu/English/IDTC/People/theory/therists.htm.

Theoretical approaches

• **Contemporary Philosophy, Critical Theory and Postmodern Thought.** Sponsored by the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Denver, this Web site has many links to individual theorists, contemporary general critical theory and philosophy resources, and links to online readings. A unique section of the Web site is the list of resources on critical pedagogy and semiotics. *Access:* http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc/postmodern.html.

• **Contemporary Postcolonial and Postimperial Literature in English.** Compiled by George P. Landow, an English and art history professor at Brown University, this Web site covers postcolonial theory in general while concentrating on specific geographical areas and authors. This site is particularly helpful for those interested in authors from developing countries frequently not covered by more traditional resources. *Access:* http://65.107.211.208/.

• **Marxist.org Internet Archive.** This archival Web site features information on Marxist writers/critics, Marxist history, and reference materials. This site also includes the Georg Lukacs Archive. *Access:* http://csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/marxists.org/admin/intro/.

• **Philosophy: Your Guide to the Wonderful World of (Post) Modern Thinking.** Concentrating primarily on postmodernism, this site offers access to discussion forums, foundations, electronic journals, representative theorists, and various fields related to philosophy. Links are provided for such well-known critics as Saussure, Derrida, and Foucault, but the directory includes other individuals, such as Ayn Rand, Camilia Paglia, and Marshall McLuhan, not

Transactions Act (UCITA). UCITA is a proposed state contract law developed to regulate transactions in intangible goods, such as computer software, online databases, multimedia products, computer data and databases, online information, and other information products in digital form. It was designed to create uniform commercial contract law for these products and calls itself "a cyberspace commercial statute."

According to ALA, UCITA would, in effect, intersect federal copyright law. Its ratification could make it much more difficult for libraries to negotiate licenses that allow for the broadest use rights possible, including the right to lend, preserve, and make fair use of a work. UCITA is strongly opposed by the library community.

The Copyright and Fair Use Town Meeting on Intellectual Property and Multimedia in the Digital Age was a very useful and instructive forum. It is obvious that there is still a great deal of confusion, ignorance even, about the very basics of copyright and fair use and of how the Internet is likely to change and complicate them even further. A special thanks should go to the New York Public Library for its wonderful show of hospitality during a difficult time.

More information on NINCH and the Copyright Town Meetings is on the Web at http:// www.ninch.org. ∎

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covered elsewhere. *Access:* http://www.sci.fi/~phinnweb/links/philosophy.html.

• **Post World War II American Literature and Culture Database: Genres.** Sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley, English Department, this site includes sections on bibliographies, postmodernism, feminism, multiculturalism, queer, and popular culture. The bibliography section of this site is searchable. This resource is particularly useful for its links to theoretical studies of contemporary American authors. *Access:* http://english.berkeley.edu/Postwar/genres.html.

• **Sites of Significance for Semiotics.** This site provides access to essays, glossaries, and online resources related to semiotics. *Access:* http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/french/as-sa/EngSem1.html. Also useful for this topic is David Chandler's Semiotics for Beginners at http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html.

• **Studies Resources: Feminist Theory.** Compiled and edited by Karla Tonella at the University of Iowa, this extensive resource site offers access to articles, bibliographies, and societies, as well as reviews of feminist theory books and images of women philosophers. *Access:* http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/theory.html.

Electronic journals

• **CT Theory.** This weekly online periodical, an international journal of theory, technology, and culture, provides articles, interviews, and book reviews in contemporary discourse. Past articles of the journal are searchable and readers can make a request to receive each issue automatically. *Access:* http://www.ctheory.com/.

• **Cultural Logic: An Electronic Journal of Marxist Theory and Practice.** This full-text online journal offers articles on Marxist theory and practice, as well as feature articles, poetry, and book reviews. *Access:* http://eserver.org/clogic/.

• **Other Voices: The (e)Journal of Cultural Criticism.** A full-text publication issued free by the University of Pennsylvania, Other Voices publishes essays, interviews, roundtable discussions, lecture transcriptions, multimedia projects, translations, and reviews devoted to cultural criticism in the arts and humanities. *Access:* http://www.othervoices.org/.

• **Postmodern Culture.** Issued since 1990, this entirely Web-based scholarly journal presents an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary culture, theory, and the humanities. The current issue and previous issues, which include essays and book reviews, can be accessed in a free text-only archive, but the complete searchable text with graphics is also available on Project Muse. *Access:* http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/. ∎