

Terry Eagleton

## **transitions**

*General Editor: Julian Wolfreys*

### *Published titles*

TERRY EAGLETON David Alderson  
BATAILLE Fred Botting and Scott Wilson  
NEW HISTORICISM AND CULTURAL MATERIALISM John Brannigan  
HELENE CIXOUS Abigail Bray  
GENDER Claire Colebrook  
POSTMODERN NARRATIVE THEORY Mark Currie  
FORMALIST CRITICISM AND READER-RESPONSE THEORY Todd F. Davis and Kenneth  
Womack  
IDEOLOGY James M. Decker  
QUEER THEORIES Donald E. Hall  
MARXIST LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORIES Moyra Haslett  
LOUIS ALTHUSSER Warren Montag  
RACE Brian Niro  
JACQUES LACAN Jean-Michel Rabaté  
LITERARY FEMINISMS Ruth Robbins  
DECONSTRUCTION • DERRIDA Julian Wolfreys

ORWELL TO THE PRESENT: LITERATURE IN ENGLAND, 1945–2000 John Brannigan  
CHAUCER TO SHAKESPEARE, 1337–1580 SunHee Kim Gertz  
MODERNISM, 1910–1945 Jane Goldman  
POPE TO BURNEY, 1714–1779 Moyra Haslett  
PATER TO FORSTER, 1873–1924 Ruth Robbins  
BURKE TO BYRON, BARBAULD TO BAILLIE, 1790–1830 Jane Stabler  
MILTON TO POPE, 1650–1720 Kay Gilliland Stevenson  
SIDNEY TO MILTON, 1580–1660 Marion Wynne-Davies

### *Forthcoming titles*

JULIA KRISTEVA AND LITERARY THEORY Megan Becker-Leckrone  
NATIONAL IDENTITY John Brannigan  
HOMI BHABHA Eleanor Byrne  
POSTMODERNISM • POSTMODERNITY Martin McQuillan  
ROLAND BARTHES Martin McQuillan  
MODERNITY David Punter  
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LITERATURE Nicholas Rand  
SUBJECTIVITY Ruth Robbins  
POSTCOLONIAL THEORY Malini Johan Schueller  
TRANSGRESSION Julian Wolfreys  
DICKENS TO HARDY, 1837–1884 Julian Wolfreys

---

### **transitions Series**

**Series Standing Order ISBN 978-0-333-80357-8**

*(outside North America only)*

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

---

**transitions**

# Terry Eagleton

David Alderson

palgrave  
macmillan



© David Alderson 2004

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2004 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010  
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-333-80128-4 ISBN 978-0-230-80180-6 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-0-230-80180-6

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.  
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04

# Contents

General Editor's Preface	vi
Acknowledgements	viii
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Marxism, Culture and English Studies</b>	<b>9</b>
• Marxism and history	10
• Ideology	20
• <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	25
• The Ideology of 'culture'	38
• Theorising literary production	43
<b>2 Culture and Postmodernism</b>	<b>61</b>
• Deconstruction	72
• Poststructuralism and politics	76
• The material body	82
• Deconstruction and criticism	91
<b>3 Marxism, Culture and Irish Studies</b>	<b>99</b>
• History, narrative and famine in Ireland	108
• Revisionism and its discontents	113
• Ireland, nationalism and postcolonialism	119
• Poetry and nationality in Yeats	132
<b>4 A Picture of Oscar Wilde?</b>	<b>142</b>
• Class, gender and sexuality	151
• Sexuality, history and determinism	155
Notes	162
Annotated Bibliography	165
References	172
Index	178

# General Editor's Preface

Transitions: *transition* –, n. of action. 1. A passing or passage from one condition, action or (rarely) place, to another. 2. Passage in thought, speech, or writing, from one subject to another. 3. a. The passing from one note to another. b. The passing from one key to another, modulation. 4. The passage from an earlier to a later stage of development of formation ... change from an earlier style to a later; a style of intermediate or mixed character ... the historical passage of language from one well-defined stage to another.

The aim of *Transitions* is to explore passages, movements and the development of significant voices in critical thought, as these voices determine and are mediated by acts of literary and cultural interpretation. This series also seeks to examine the possibilities for reading, analysis and other critical engagements which the very idea of transition – such as the transition effected by the reception of a thinker's *oeuvre* and the heritage entailed – makes possible. The writers in this series unfold the movements and modulation of critical thinking over the last generation, from the first emergences of what is now recognized as literary theory. They examine as well how the transitional nature of theoretical and critical thinking is still very much in operation, guaranteed by the hybridity and heterogeneity of the field of literary studies. The authors in the series share the common understanding that, now more than ever, critical thought is both in a state of transition and can best be defined by developing for the student reader an understanding of this protean quality. As this *tranche* of the series, dealing with particular critical voices, addresses, it is of great significance, if not urgency, that the texts of particular figures be reconsidered anew.

This series desires, then, to enable the reader to transform her/his own reading and writing transactions by comprehending past developments as well as the internal transitions worked through by particular literary and cultural critics, analysts, and philosophers. Each book in the series offers a guide to the poetics and politics of such thinkers, as well as interpretative paradigms, schools, bodies of thought, historical

and cultural periods, and the genealogy of particular concepts, while transforming these, if not into tools or methodologies, then into conduits for directing and channelling thought. As well as transforming the critical past by interpreting it from the perspective of the present day, each study enacts transitional readings of critical voices and well-known literary texts, which are themselves conceivable as having been transitional and influential at the moments of their first appearance. The readings offered in these books seek, through close critical reading and theoretical engagement, to demonstrate certain possibilities in critical thinking to the student reader.

It is hoped that the student will find this series liberating because rigid methodologies are not being put into place. As all the dictionary definitions of the idea of transition above suggest, what is important is the action, the passage: of thought, of analysis, of critical response, such as are to be found, for example, in the texts of critics whose work has irrevocably transformed the critical landscape. Rather than seeking to help you locate yourself in relation to any particular school or discipline, this series aims to put you into action, as readers and writers, travellers between positions, where the movement between poles comes to be seen as of more importance than the locations themselves.

*Julian Wolfreys*

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to a number of people who, consciously or not, have provided me with various forms of help and support in the writing of this book, especially Howard Booth, Noel Castree, Laura Chrisman, Tony Crowley, Azzedine Haddour, Ken Hirschkop, Benita Parry, Laura Peters, Andrew McNeillie and Alan Sinfield. I am particularly grateful to Richard Kirkland for his scrupulous and insightful reading of Chapter 3. Stephen Regan read the whole manuscript for Palgrave Macmillan and made valuable suggestions on how it might be improved. Clearly none of these people can be held responsible for the book's contents.

This is also the appropriate place to register appreciation of a rather different kind to Jeff Moxham, who lent me a copy of *Literary Theory* back in 1984 and encouraged me both to pursue the study of literature and to recognise the ideological implications of such study.

Both the editors of this series, Julian Wolfreys and Anna Sandeman at Palgrave Macmillan, were extraordinarily patient in waiting for me to deliver the final manuscript. Michael Dunning and Matthew Frost provided many of the distractions which in part made that patience necessary so I guess that deserves acknowledgement too.

In the process of writing this book I changed institutions and so did Terry Eagleton, with the result that he ended up occupying an office only four doors down from me. I did finally get round to letting Terry know what I was up to, but, just for the record, I chose not to discuss the book with him in any detail. I am indebted to him, however, for letting me see draft copies of chapters of his forthcoming book, *After Theory*.

Finally, more formal acknowledgements and thanks are due: to A.P. Watt Ltd on behalf of Michael B. Yeats for permission to reprint extracts from W. B. Yeats's poetry in Chapter 3, and to the AHRB for generously funding a semester's sabbatical leave in which to complete this book under the Research Leave scheme.