Cultural Materialism

Theory and Practice

Scott Wilson



Contents

	Preface : -	viii
PA	RT I Cultural Materialism	1
1	Introduction	3
	Political Shakespeare	3 4
	Traditional approaches	
	Historical context and theoretical method	8
	Political commitment and textual analysis	15
	Excellence	22
2	Culture and Materialism	26
	Whole ways of life	26
	Materialism and the real	33
	On the good in social goods	38
	Production and expenditure	44
3	Stephen Greenblatt and New Historicism	53
	American cultural materialism	53
	Self-fashioning	56
	Power	61
	Spenser's Irish mistress in the Bower of Bliss	67
	The properties of Bliss	73
	Nomads beyond the Pale	77
PA	RT II Value	83
4	Shakespeare	85
	Profit and loss	85
	Use-value	91
	Exchange-value	96

vi Contents

5	Usure in The Merchant of Venice	104
	Laughter	104
	Gift exchange	108
	Symbolic exchange	110
	Usure	115
PA	RT III History	119
6	Four Fundamental Discourses of History	121
	The master signifier	121
	Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'	132
	Michel Foucault's genealogical histories	135
	Civilization and barbarism: horror in the archive	141
	The gaze of the oppressed	144
	Father Enjoyment	149
7	Enjoying the Nature of Britain in King Lear	152
	History and the mother Thing	152
	The leap from myth to history	154
	Out vile jelly – Father can't you see I'm	161
	Nature	165
8	General Economy and The Changeling	169
	The subject of tragedy	169
	Profligate zero: restricted and general economies	173
	The changeling	177
	The sovereignty of mistress and servant	180
	The phallus and the meteor	187
	Beauty, history and the Work	191
PA	RT IV Community	197
9	The Utopian Orgy	199
	Passion	199
	Identity	200
	Non-identity	204
	The unavowable community	207
10	Queer Gifts	212
	The community of those without a community	212
	The gift – if there is any	214
	Counterfeit money	217

	Contents		vii
11	Oscar Wilde and the Love of the Impossible		221
	Transgression		221
	Aesthetics and death		223
	The portrait of Mr WH		231
	The crystal closet		235
	The gift, sacrifice and the impossible		240
12	Conclusion		245
	The law of transgression		245
	Mourning for Marxism		248
	The end of culture and the last intellectual		252
Bibliography		;	263
Index			274

.