## Contents

*Preface*  

1 **Pleasure: Have we neglected it?**  
   - Fiction for pleasure  
   - The case of tragedy  
   - The English curriculum  
   - Cries of joy  
   - ‘Aesthetic’ pleasure  
   - *The Pleasure of the Text*  
   - Modernist unpleasure  
   - Gaiety

2 **Piety: Haven’t we overdone it?**  
   - Criticism on the defensive  
   - Classic defences  
   - The advent of theory  
   - Law  
   - The superego  
   - Neurosis  
   - Complacency  
   - *Culture and Anarchy*  
   - Artefacts and pleasure  
   - Critical writing
## Contents

### 3 Biography: *Friend or foe?*
- Life and art: 37
- Biography in theory: 39
- What the authors say: 42
- New Historicism: 43
- Shakespeare's life: 44
- Fact or fiction?: 46
- Shakespeare's memory: 47
- Romance: 51
- The death of the reader: 52

### 4 Realism: *Do we overrate it?*
- A disputed value: 54
- The default genre: 55
- Imitation: 57
- Insight: 60
- Totalization: 62
- Suspicion: 63
- Objections: 64
- The radical view: 66
- Recuperation: 68
- A counter-example: 70

### 5 Culture: *What do we mean by it?*
- Cultural criticism: 72
- Twin perils: 75
- Culture as meanings: 76
- Meanwhile, in Paris …: 80
- Anthropology: 80
- Another culture: 83
- Perils circumvented: 85
- Work to do: 88

### 6 History: *Do we do it justice?*
- Official usage: 90
- Cultural difference: 91
Contents

History and criticism 93
Customary knowledge 94
Dissonance 97
An example 99
The old historicism 101
Criticism as cultural history 103
The uses of criticism 103
Critical skills 105

7 Desire: A force to reckon with 107
Pleasure revisited 107
Orpheus 108
Loss 109
The desire of the protagonist 111
Stand-ins 113
The desire of the reader 114
The desire of the text 116
Substitution 118
Pacification 119
Defiance 120
Breaking the rules 123
And so … 126
Criticism 126

Notes 128
Index 140