

外研社学术文库·英美文学

# Literary Theory



*An Introduction*

## 文学理论导论

第2版

Terry Eagleton

外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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# General Preface

Among the most important developments in contemporary global culture is the arrival of Western literary criticism and literary theory in China. FLTRP is to be congratulated for its imagination and foresight in making these crucial texts available to teachers and students of literature throughout China. There is arguably no greater force in producing understanding between peoples than the transmission of literary traditions—the great heritage of narrative, lyric, and prose forms that give cultures their distinctive character. Literary criticism and theory stand at the crossroads of these transmissions. It is the body of writing that reflects on what a literature has meant to a culture. It investigates the moral, political, and experiential dimensions of literary traditions, linking form to content, literature to history, the sensuous love of literature to analytic understanding.

The availability of these important texts will greatly help students and teachers to become acquainted with recent criticism and major critical theories and movements. I am convinced that the series will make an important contribution to the literary education of China, increasing literacy in new fields and international understanding at the same time. It is an extraordinarily timely venture, at a time when comparative literary study in a global context has become increasingly important for professionals, and beyond that, for a general readership that seeks a deeper understanding of literature.

**W. J. T. Mitchell**

Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor  
English and Art History  
University of Chicago  
Editor, *Critical Inquiry*

## 出版说明

近年来,许多大专院校为英语专业的学生开设了英美文学课程,市场上也出现了各种版本的原版英美文学经典著作,它们基本上满足了高校对课堂阅读教材的需要。但是,英美文学教学中仍然严重缺少原版文学史、文学理论、文学评论和文学工具书等重要参考书,以至于许多学生写论文时收集资料成为一大难题,专业教师和研究人員业务水平的提高因此受到限制,在知识更新及学术研究上也难以与国际接轨,北京、上海等大城市以外的地方尤为如此。

据此,外研社组织了全国17所著名高校或研究院的44名英美文学领域的专家学者,经过仔细斟酌,决定引进一批与教学需要相适应,有学术价值,在国外最常用且被国际公认为优秀的文学评论、文学理论、文学史和文学工具书。这是一套开放型的系列图书,以原版加中文序言的形式分批出版。相信这套书的出版定可缓解国内大专院校中英美文学参考书匮乏的现象;同时,通过这种途径,可以有意识地引进国际知名学者的代表作,这无疑会推动和提高我国在英美文学领域的研究水平。

钱青

北京外国语大学英语学院

毫无疑问,在当代西方文论界,继雷蒙德·威廉斯(Raymond Williams, 1921—1988)之后,英国最杰出的文学理论家、文化批评家和马克思主义理论家当推特里·伊格尔顿(Terry Eagleton, 1943—),他为马克思主义文学理论批评在新的形势下仍保持旺盛的生命力,从而使之成为当代西方各种批评理论中的一支重要力量立下了汗马功劳。如果我们将伊格尔顿的批评道路与和他齐名的美国同行弗雷德里克·詹姆逊(Fredric Jameson, 1934—)的批评道路作一比较的话,就不难发现,作为文学理论家和文化批评家,这二者至少有好几个相同的地方,但也在一些方面各有千秋:两人都是从文学研究入手逐步进入当代文化研究和文化批评领域的,但前者的切入点主要是英国文学,因而属于国别文学的研究范畴,因而伊格尔顿常常以英国文学和文学理论教授而著称,而后者所赖以起家的则是法国文学和比较文学,而且更习惯于作一些形而上的沉思,因而詹姆逊的公开头衔是法文和比较文学教授。两人都以较大的热情投入到国际性的后现代主义理论争鸣中,前者对各种后现代/后结构主义理论的态度往往是批判多于同情,特别对后现代文化和反历史倾向提出了尖锐的批评,有时达到了否定的地步;后者则积极地与之对话,并从马克思主义的角度对后现代主义现象作了全新的阐释,可以说,后者的立场越到后来越踟躇于马克思主义和后现代主义之间。两人都积极投入当代文化研究的大潮之中,但前者主要是由文学研究出发逐步进入对文化现象的分析,体现了马克思主义文化研究的批判风格;而后者的视野则早已超越了文学研究的范围,广泛涉猎包括建筑在内的造型艺术和包括电影在内的当代大众传媒,似乎对大众文化有着较多的宽容性和同情。可以说,正是有了这两位大师级学者的共同努力,马克思主义文学理论才得以在当代英语世界乃至整个西方文学批评和文化理论界占有重要的地位。而且随着时间的推移,这种重要地位越来越清楚地显示出来。我想这也许正是为什么我们今天要在各种驳杂的西方文学理论著作中单单选中这本

专业的教科书,自1983年出版以来其发行量和普及面之广确实是十分罕见的。光是这本书的中译本就有三种,但都是以初版为蓝本的,而我们现在拿在手里的这本《文学理论导论》则是该书的第二版,出版于1996年,随后几乎每一两年都要重印一次,至今仍畅销不衰。笔者曾在欧美好几所大学讲学或客座,但几乎在我讲学的所有大学,文学理论教材都用的是这本书。甚至连不同意他观点的一些教授也不无感慨地说:“因为我没有更合适的教科书可用了。”作者在本书中向英语文学界和广大读者系统地介绍了自20世纪初以来西方文学批评理论发展演变的脉络,带有很强的政治倾向性,尤其是在对形式主义、英美新批评、结构主义、后结构主义、阐释学和接受美学以及精神分析学等批评流派作了批判性的评介之后,作者在结论中总结道:文学理论具有无可非议的政治倾向性,所谓“纯文学理论”只能是一种学术神话,作为有着鲜明的意识形态意义的文学理论决不当因其政治性而受到责备。但与传统的马克思主义文论教科书不同的是,伊格尔顿始终认为,文学理论批评作为一种意识形态,应当具有鲜明的政治倾向性,但这种倾向性不应该与庸俗社会学的简单化混为一谈。这就相当旗帜鲜明地从一个动态的角度阐述了马克思主义文学批评的基本原理和当代特征。再加之作者的语言流畅犀利,论述如行云流水一般,活脱脱地展现了作者本人的批判精神和论辩风貌。

《审美意识形态》是作者进入90年代以来出版的第一部有着重大意义和广泛影响的力著,在这里,伊格尔顿把审美看作是一种关于身体的话语,认为在当代文化中,审美价值与其他价值的分裂表现了社会关系的复杂多变性和矛盾性。作者继续了以往的研究,把分析对象集中在19世纪后期以来的德国美学,认为尼采、马克思、弗洛伊德是现代文化中最伟大的美学思想家,他们的理论为现代西方美学的发展提供了基本范式。而当代马克思主义的美学研究则是对这些前辈大师的批判性继承和扬弃。

应该指出的是,伊格尔顿的著述生涯还不只限于文学理论和批评,作为一位有着坚定的马克思主义信念的文学理论家,他同时也是一位有着独特批判个性的文化批评家。<sup>1</sup> 60年代以来,文化研究逐步在英国步入理论家的批评视野,其中的一个重要标志就是成立于1964年的伯明翰大学的当代文化研究中

1 关于伊格尔顿对文化问题的最新论述,参阅他的近著《文化的概念》(*The Idea of Culture*),牛津:布莱克韦尔出版公司,2000年版;其中一章“文化之战”由笔者译成中文,发表于《南方文坛》,2001年第3期。



心，由理查德·霍加特(Richard Hoggart)担任该中心的第一任主任。之后，文化研究逐步走出早先的里维斯主义的精英文化认知模式，更为关注当代大众文化和工人阶级的社区生活。到了80年代后期，在后现代主义大潮消退之后，经过后殖民主义的短暂兴盛，文化研究迅速包容了各种后现代/后殖民文化现象，迅速占据了英语文学和文化学术界的主导地位。伊格尔顿的文学研究始终具有文化批评的特征，因而体现了广阔的理论视野。他曾在80年代就积极介入国际性的后现代主义理论争鸣，对后现代主义的表演性和怀疑一切的带有虚无主义色彩的世界观和人生观予以了尖锐的批判。同样，对于当今风行于后现代主义之后的“文化研究”，他也表现了极大的兴趣，但在承认其合法性的同时，又从马克思的文化批判角度作了冷静的分析。这一点尤其体现在他近几年发表的两篇论文中，这两篇论文都由笔者译出，已经发表于国内刊物上。在其中一篇题为“后现代主义的矛盾性”(The Contradictions of Postmodernism, 1997)的论文中，他甚至针对西方以外的第三世界国家的后现代热和文化热发表了不同的意见，一针见血地指出：“当今为什么所有的人都在谈论文化？因为就此有重要的论题可谈。一切都变得与文化有关……文化主义加大了有关人类生活所建构和破译并属于习俗的东西的重要性……历史主义往往强调历史的可变性、相对性和非连续性特征，而不是保持那种大规模不变的甚至令人沮丧的一贯性特征。文化主义属于一个特定的历史空间和时间——在我们这里——属于先进的资本主义西方世界，但现在似乎却日益进口到中国以及其他一些‘新崛起的’社会。”<sup>1</sup>这种现象足以引起包括中国在内的一些第三世界国家理论家的注意。在他看来，有着不同文化传统的国家不必把西方后工业社会的特定文化现象统统引进自己的国家，否则便会丧失自己民族的文化特色。他的这篇论文于1995年在中国大连举行的“文化研究：中国与西方”国家研讨会上首次宣读时引起了与会中外学者的强烈反响。然而，与威廉斯等人所不同的是，伊格尔顿的马克思主义理论主要受到阿尔杜塞的结构马克思主义的影响，因此在很大程度上，他只能算作一位有着强烈精英意识的“学院”马克思主义者或马克思主义理论的研究者，而不是那种坚定地投身社会主义事业的传统意义上的马克思主义者。

1 参见《新文学史》(New Literary History)，第28卷第1期(1997)，第1页。这篇论文由笔者直接从伊格尔顿的发言打印稿译成中文，先行发表于《国外文学》，1996年第2期。

另一篇就是“文化之战”(Culture War),在这篇论文中,针对当今时代文化的概念无限扩张的不正常现象,伊格尔顿开宗明义地指出:“‘文化’(culture)这个字眼总显得既过于宽泛同时又过于狭窄,因而并不真的有用。它的美学含义包括斯特拉文斯基的著述,但没有必要包括科幻小说;它的人类学意义则宽至从发型和餐饮习惯直到排水管的制造。”对文化概念的这种无限扩张的担忧早就体现在他以前的著述中,在他看来,至少有两个层次上的文化可谈,一种是用大写英文字母开头的“总体文化”(Culture),另一种就是用小写英文字母开头的各民族的“具体的文化”(cultures),这两种文化的对立和争斗使得文化的概念毫无节制地扩张,甚至达到了令人生厌的地步。在分别分析了各种不同版本的文化概念之后,伊格尔顿总结道:“我们看到,当代文化的概念已剧烈膨胀到了如此地步,我们显然共同分享了它的脆弱的、困扰的、物质的、身体的以及客观的人类生活,这种生活已被所谓文化主义(culturalism)的蠢举毫不留情地席卷到一旁了。确实,文化并不是伴随我们生活的东西,但在某种意义上,却是我们为之而生活的东西……我们这个时代的文化已经变得过于自负和厚颜无耻。我们在承认其重要性的同时,应该果断地把它送回它该去的地方。”他的这种警告实际上起到了对文化研究强烈冲击精英文学研究现象的有力反拨作用,对于人们重新正确地、恰如其分地认识文化的价值以及文化与历史和意识形态的关系不无启迪。

作为一位马克思主义文学理论家和文化批评家,伊格尔顿也是中国文学理论界和文化研究界所熟悉的老朋友,他的一些著述自80年代以来就有了中译本。而他本人曾于80年代和90年代两度来中国访问讲学并出席国际学术会议,对中国的改革开放事业深表同情和支持,但同时对中国文化界和学术界大面积地引进西方各种文化思潮和理论又表示担心。在他看来,最新的和最时髦的东西不一定就是最好的,一个国家和民族应当有自己的文化遗产和理论的声音。这是其赖以在国际上发出自己独特声音的资本。我和伊格尔顿教授于90年代初相识,曾频繁通过不少书信。最使我难忘的是,1995年8月,我在北京大学工作时,曾邀请他前来出席我主持的“文化研究:中国与西方国际研讨会”,他欣然前来作了“后现代主义的矛盾性”的主题发言。会前,他曾问我给他多少时间,我告诉他一般主题发言者可讲40分钟。他没用发言稿,一口气讲完,我看看手表正好40分钟。他的这种雄辩如行云流水般的演讲风格

至今仍为不少与会者传为佳话。当我向他索取发言稿为发表所用时，他回答说，回去后两周内一定寄给我。后来他果然也兑现了。1997年至2000年间，我在北京语言大学工作时，我们又在埃及一同出席了国际文学理论研讨会，他还欣然接受我的邀请担任由我参与创办的国际文学理论学会的顾问和我主编的学会中文会刊《文学理论前沿》的顾问。他曾应允近年内将再度来中国访问讲学，因此我和我的同事们一直期待着欢迎这位老朋友的来访。我想，由外语教学与研究出版社原版引进并出版的这本在全世界有着广泛影响的《文学理论导论》一定能促成他的早日来访。

王 宇

清华大学外语系

文学理论导论

英美文学文库

导 读

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## *Preface to the Second Edition*

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This book is an attempt to make modern literary theory intelligible and attractive to as wide a readership as possible. Since it first appeared in 1983, I am gratified to report that it has been studied by lawyers as well as literary critics, anthropologists as well as cultural theorists. In one sense, perhaps, this isn't all that surprising. As the book itself tries to demonstrate, there is in fact no 'literary theory', in the sense of a body of theory which springs from, or is applicable to, literature alone. None of the approaches outlined in this book, from phenomenology and semiotics to structuralism and psychoanalysis, is *simply* concerned with 'literary' writing. On the contrary, they all emerged from other areas of the humanities, and have implications well beyond literature itself. This, I imagine, has been one reason for the book's popularity, and one reason which makes a new edition of it worthwhile. But I have also been struck by the number of non-academic readers it has attracted. Unlike most such works, it has managed to reach a readership beyond academia, and this is especially interesting in the light of literary theory's so-called elitism. If it is a difficult, even esoteric language, then it seems to be one which interests people who have never seen the inside of a university; and if this is so, then some of those inside universities who dismiss it for its esotericism ought to think again. It is encouraging, anyway, that in a postmodern age in which meaning, like everything else, is expected to be instantly consumable, there are those who have found the labour of acquiring new ways of speaking of literature to be worthwhile.

Some literary theory has indeed been excessively in-group and obscurantist, and this book represents one attempt to undo that damage and make it more widely accessible. But there is another sense in which such

theory is the very reverse of elitist. What is truly elitist in literary studies is the idea that works of literature can only be appreciated by those with a particular sort of cultural breeding. There are those who have 'literary values' in their bones, and those who languish in the outer darkness. One important reason for the growth of literary theory since the 1960s was the gradual breakdown of this assumption, under the impact of new kinds of students entering higher education from supposedly 'uncultivated' backgrounds. Theory was a way of emancipating literary works from the stranglehold of a 'civilized sensibility', and throwing them open to a kind of analysis in which, in principle at least, anyone could participate. Those who complain of the difficulty of such theory would often, ironically enough, not expect to understand a textbook of biology or chemical engineering straight off. Why then should literary studies be any different? Perhaps because we expect literature itself to be an 'ordinary' kind of language instantly available to everyone; but this is itself a very particular 'theory' of literature. Properly understood, literary theory is shaped by a democratic impulse rather than an elitist one; and to this extent, when it *does* lapse into the turgidly unreadable, it is being untrue to its own historical roots.

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students and critics also protest that literary theory 'gets in between the reader and the work'. The simple response to this is that without some kind of theory, however unreflective and implicit, we would not know what a 'literary work' was in the first place, or how we were to read it. Hostility to theory usually means an opposition to other people's theories and an oblivion of one's own. One purpose of this book is to lift that repression and allow us to remember.

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material fact, whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine. It was made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it was a mistake to see it as the expression of an author's mind. Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Osip Brik once airily remarked, would have been written even if Pushkin had not lived.

Formalism was essentially the application of linguistics to the study of literature; and because the linguistics in question were of a formal kind, concerned with the structures of language rather than with what one might actually say, the Formalists passed over the analysis of literary 'content' (where one might always be tempted into psychology or sociology) for the study of literary form. Far from seeing form as the expression of content, they stood the relationship on its head: content was merely the 'motivation' of form, an occasion or convenience for a particular kind of formal exercise. *Don Quixote* is not 'about' the character of that name: the character is just a device for holding together different kinds of narrative technique. *Animal Farm* for the Formalists would not be an allegory of Stalinism; on the contrary, Stalinism would simply provide a useful opportunity for the construction of an allegory. It was this perverse insistence which won for the Formalists their derogatory name from their antagonists; and though they did not deny that art had a relation to social reality – indeed some of them were closely associated with the Bolsheviks – they provocatively claimed that this relation was not the critic's business.

The Formalists started out by seeing the literary work as a more or less arbitrary assemblage of 'devices', and only later came to see these devices as interrelated elements or 'functions' within a total textual system. 'Devices' included sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, narrative techniques, in fact the whole stock of formal literary elements; and what all of these elements had in common was their 'estranging' or 'defamiliarizing' effect. What was specific to literary language, what distinguished it from other forms of discourse, was that it 'deformed' ordinary language in various ways. Under the pressure of literary devices, ordinary language was intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, turned on its head. It was language 'made strange'; and because of this estrangement, the everyday world was also suddenly made unfamiliar. In the routines of everyday speech, our perceptions of and responses to reality become stale, blunted, or, as the Formalists would say, 'automatized'. Literature, by forcing us into a dramatic awareness of language, refreshes these habitual responses and renders objects more 'perceptible'. By having to grapple with language in a more strenuous, self-conscious way than usual, the world which that language contains is vividly renewed. The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

this statement in metre that we are not supposed to ask whether he actually had a lover who for some bizarre reason seemed to him to resemble a rose. He is telling us something about women and love in general. Literature, then, we might say, is 'non-pragmatic' discourse: unlike biology textbooks and notes to the milkman it serves no immediate practical purpose, but is to be taken as referring to a general state of affairs. Sometimes, though not always, it may employ peculiar language as though to make this fact obvious – to signal that what is at stake is a *way of talking* about a woman, rather than any particular real-life woman. This focusing on the way of talking, rather than on the reality of what is talked about, is sometimes taken to indicate that we mean by literature a kind of *self-referential* language, a language which talks about itself.

There are, however, problems with this way of defining literature too. For one thing, it would probably have come as a surprise to George Orwell to hear that his essays were to be read as though the topics he discussed were less important than the way he discussed them. In much that is classified as literature, the truth-value and practical relevance of what is said is considered important to the overall effect. But even if treating discourse 'non-pragmatically' is part of what is meant by 'literature', then it follows from this 'definition' that literature cannot in fact be 'objectively' defined. It leaves the definition of literature up to how somebody decides to *read*, not to the nature of what is written. There are certain kinds of writing – poems, plays, novels – which are fairly obviously intended to be 'non-pragmatic' in this sense, but this does not guarantee that they will actually be read in this way. I might well read Gibbon's account of the Roman empire not because I am misguided enough to believe that it will be reliably informative about ancient Rome but because I enjoy Gibbon's prose style, or revel in images of human corruption whatever their historical source. But I might read Robert Burns's poem because it is not clear to me, as a Japanese horticulturalist, whether or not the red rose flourished in eighteenth-century Britain. This, it will be said, is not reading it 'as literature'; but am I reading Orwell's essays as literature only if I generalize what he says about the Spanish civil war to some cosmic utterance about human life? It is true that many of the works studied as literature in academic institutions were 'constructed' to be read as literature, but it is also true that many of them were not. A piece of writing may start off life as history or philosophy and then come to be ranked as literature; or it may start off as literature and then come to be valued for its archaeological significance. Some texts are born literary, some achieve literariness, and some have literariness thrust upon them. Breeding in this respect may count for a good deal more than birth. What matters may not be



Perhaps the simple answer is that the first three are examples of 'fine writing', whereas the last three are not. This answer has the disadvantage of being largely untrue, at least in my judgement, but it has the advantage of suggesting that by and large people term 'literature' writing which they think is *good*. An obvious objection to this is that if it were entirely true there would be no such thing as 'bad literature'. I may consider Lamb and Macaulay overrated, but that does not necessarily mean that I stop regarding them as literature. You may consider Raymond Chandler 'good of his kind', but not exactly literature. On the other hand, if Macaulay were a *really* bad writer – if he had no grasp at all of grammar and seemed interested in nothing but white mice – then people might well not call his work literature at all, even bad literature. Value-judgements would certainly seem to have a lot to do with what is judged literature and what isn't – not necessarily in the sense that writing has to be 'fine' to be literary, but that it has to be *of the kind* that is judged fine: it may be an inferior example of a generally valued mode. Nobody would bother to say that a bus ticket was an example of inferior literature, but someone might well say that the poetry of Ernest Dowson was. The term 'fine writing', or *belles lettres*, is in this sense ambiguous: it denotes a sort of writing which is generally highly regarded, while not necessarily committing you to the opinion that a particular specimen of it is 'good'.

With this reservation, the suggestion that 'literature' is a highly valued kind of writing is an illuminating one. But it has one fairly devastating consequence. It means that we can drop once and for all the illusion that the category 'literature' is 'objective', in the sense of being eternally given and immutable. Anything can be literature, and anything which is regarded as unalterably and unquestionably literature – Shakespeare, for example – can cease to be literature. Any belief that the study of literature is the study of a stable, well-definable entity, as entomology is the study of insects, can be abandoned as a chimera. Some kinds of fiction are literature and some are not; some literature is fictional and some is not; some literature is verbally self-regarding, while some highly-wrought rhetoric is not literature. Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist. When I use the words 'literary' and 'literature' from here on in this book, then, I place them under an invisible crossing-out mark, to indicate that these terms will not really do but that we have no better ones at the moment.

The reason why it follows from the definition of literature as highly valued writing that it is not a stable entity is that value-judgements are notoriously variable. 'Times change, values don't,' announces an advertisement