



田俊武 编著

从柏拉图到尼采

——古典西方文论纵横

From Plato to Nietzsche

A Survey of Classical Western Critical Theory



四川大学出版社
Sichuan University Press



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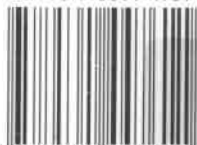
本书以历时的概览和共时的细读相结合，梳理了西方古典文学理论发展的脉络，重点分析了柏拉图、亚里士多德、贺拉斯、朗基努斯、锡德尼、约翰逊、黑格尔、康德、尼采等西方文学理论大家的文学理论观点。其特色如下：

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Introduction

1. What Is Theory of Art and Literature?

When we take this course, some terms appear before us: “literary criticism,” “critical theory,” “literary theory” and “theory of art and literature.” British scholars like to use the term “literary criticism,” while Americans often use the term “critical theory.” Whether literary criticism, critical theory, literary theory or theory of art and literature, these terms all contain the key words of “literature,” “criticism” and “theory.” Before studying this course, students must have a general understanding of these terms.

First and foremost, what is literature? The question is extremely difficult to answer since literature seems to include everything verbally or orally recorded. But this is an important question because both classical and contemporary critical theory stated with efforts at such a definition. There have been various attempts to define literature, for example, we can define literature as “imaginative writing” in the sense of fiction—writing which is not literary true. But even the briefest

reflection on what people commonly include under the heading of literature suggests that this definition will not do. Seventeenth century English literature included Shakespeare, Webster, Marvel and Milton; but it also stretched to the essays of Francis Bacon, the sermons of John Donne, John Bunyan's spiritual autobiography. It might even at a pinch be taken to encompass Hobbes's *Leviathan* or Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. French seventeenth-century literature contained, along with Corneille and Racine, La Rochefoucauld's maxims, Bossuet's funeral speeches and the philosophy of Descartes and Pascal. So if literature is "creative" or "imaginative" writing, does this imply that history, philosophy and natural science are uncreative and unimaginative?

The definition of literature may be approached in a different way. Literature is definable not according to whether it is fictional or "imaginative," but because it uses language in peculiar ways. On this theory, literature is a kind of writing which, in the words of the Russian formalist Roman Jakobson, represents an organized violence committed on ordinary speech. Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech.

What is "theory"? As a field of intellectual inquiry, theory may be "a body of generalizations and principles, or an ideal or hypothetical set of facts and circumstances, developed in association with practice in a field of activity and forming its content as an intellectual discipline." In other words, "theory" deals with things on abstract level (generalizations and principles), not in their concrete forms, though this abstraction is based on the actual practices.

"Criticism" originated from the Latin word "criticus" and the Greek word "kritikos," meaning "judgment" or "evaluation." In the middle century, it was only used in the field of medicine, indicating that the patient was in "critical condition." Even today "critical condition" is still used to refer to the crucial state that a person is in. In the Renaissance period, the word resumed its original meaning



which is judgment and evaluation. Later, it gradually replaced "poetics" and "rhetoric" in a broad sense. So "criticism," according to Wellek, is a "study of concrete works of art." "Criticism," includes "describing, interpreting and evaluating the meaning and effect that literary works have for competent but not necessarily academic readers." Since "criticism" deals with the experience of reading, it is "not exclusively academic, but often personal and subjective." In Britain, the first person who applied "criticism" to any formal discussion of literature was John Dryden, a famous poet, dramatist and critic of the 17th century. From his *Of Dramatick Poesie*, we may find that the past literary criticism paid more attention to the analysis of concrete works than to theories, more to personal impressions than to systematic expositions.

Then, literary theory is "speculative discourse on literature and on practice of literature." Apart from criticism of concrete literary and artistic works, literary theory mainly expounds the fundamental issue concerning literature and art, such as the features, functions, values of literature and art, their relation to society and individual, the methods and origins of creation, genre, standards of aestheticism and various critical approaches etc.

In 1960s, M. H. Abrams pointed out that four elements are involved in literature and art, namely, text, author, world and reader. The four elements form five relationships: author and text, text and reader, text and world, reader and world, text and text. Nearly all the theories of literature and art can not escape from the five relationships. Such as biographical criticism studies the relationship between author and text, and reader-response criticism studies the relationship between text and reader. There are two kinds of classification on literary theory according to different emphasis and approaches: the macro classification and the micro classification. According to the macro classification, literary theory can be classified



into legislative theory, theoretical criticism or literary aesthetics and descriptive theory. Legislative theory expounds the methods of literary creation, such as William Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. Theoretical criticism is a systematic exposition of literature and aesthetics, and this is what we mean the real literary theory, such as Aristotle's *Poetics*. Descriptive theory is the analysis and evaluation of concrete literary texts, such as Bakhtin's *Problems of Doestovsky's Poetics*. According to the micro classification, literary theory can be classified into Mimetic Theory, Rhetorical Theory, Expressive Theory and Formal Theory etc. Mimetic criticism views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is that of the "truth" of its representation to the objects it represents, or should represent. This mode of criticism, which first appeared in Plato and Aristotle, is characteristic of modern theories of literary realism. Expressive criticism treats a literary work primarily in relation to the author. It defines poetry as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the poet's imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; it tends to judge the work by its sincerity, or genuineness, or adequacy to the poet's individual vision or state of mind; and it often looks in the work of evidences of the particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously, has revealed himself in it. Such views were developed mainly by Romantic critics and remain current in our own time, especially in the writings of psychoanalytic critics and in critics of consciousness. In the early years of the 20th century, with the gradual decline of the author-centered expressive criticism, there came the formalist criticism. According to the formalists (Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum), the essence of literature and art lies not in its content, but form. So it is the form of literature and art that is to be studied instead of the external relations such as social, cultural and historical



backgrounds, the author's psychology and life experience etc. For example, Vladimir Prop's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) is a pioneering work in the structural approach to narrative. It shifts attention away from realism and plausibility in a story and focuses on abstract form. Prop describes thirty-one primary functions (basic narrative "acts") that he discovered in the study of a hundred Russian tales. He also isolated abstract agents in narrative, not stock characters, but performative types like "hero," "helper" and "donor" who enact the narrative functions. Russian formalism, structuralism and deconstruction all belong to this category.

2. The Importance of Learning Western Literary Theory

Unlike the traditional Chinese literary theory, which only studies the literature itself, western literary theory, no matter classical, modern or contemporary, covers various fields of knowledge, such as philosophy, politics, anthropology, psychology, aesthetics, art, literature and history ect. By learning western literary theory, students can master vast knowledge of social science.

Learning western literary theory can help students improve their aesthetic judgment. In his *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beauty*, Edmund Burk expounds the aesthetic judgment, saying: "A Rectitude of judgment in the arts, which may be called a good taste, does in a great measure depend upon sensibility; because if the mind has no bent to the pleasure of the imagination, it will never apply itself sufficiently to works of that species to acquire a competent knowledge of them."¹ He also points

¹ Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, *Critical Theory Since Plato*, 3rd ed. (Thomson Wadsworth, 1992), 338-39.

out the way of improving aesthetic judgment: "It is known that the taste (whatever it is) is improved exactly as we improve our judgment, by extending our knowledge, by a steady attention to our object, and by frequent exercise."¹

Learning western literary theory can help students improve their ability of analyzing literary texts with different approaches. For example, common readers are mainly attracted by the loving plot of *Jane Eyre*. But social criticism under the guidance of Marxism may concern Charlotte Bronte's bitter criticism of the bourgeois system, especially of education. Biographical criticism may concern to what extent *Jane Eyre* reflects Charlotte Bronte's life-experience. Feminism is interested in the feminist ideas that the heroine embodies. Narratology studies how the story is narrated.

¹ Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, *Critical Theory Since Plato*, 3rd ed. (Thomson Wadsworth, 1992), 339.



Chapter 1

Literary Theories in Ancient Greece

1. Social Background

Ancient Greece is the term used to describe the Greek-speaking world in ancient times. It refers not only to the geographical peninsula of modern Greece, but also to areas of Hellenic culture that were settled in ancient times by Greeks: Cyprus, the Aegean coast of Turkey, Sicily and southern Italy. By the 6th century BC, **Hellas** had become a cultural and linguistic area much larger than the geographical area of Greece. Greek colonies were not politically controlled by their founding cities, although they often retained religious and commercial links with them. The Greeks both at home and abroad organized themselves into independent communities, and the city (*polis*) became the basic unit of Greek government. The Persian Wars ushered in a century of Athenian dominance of Greek affairs. Athens was the unchallenged master of the sea, and also the leading commercial power. The wealth of Athens attracted talented

people from all over Greece, and also created a wealthy leisured class who became patrons of the arts. The Athenian state also sponsored learning and the arts, particularly architecture. Athens became the centre of Greek literature, philosophy and the arts. Some of the greatest names of Western cultural and intellectual history lived in Athens during this period: the dramatists Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes, the philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and the historians Herodotus and Thucydides, the poet Simonides etc.

2. The Literature of Ancient Greece

The literature of Ancient Greece was developed by inheriting the myths of the earlier times. The Greek Mythology mainly includes the stories of gods and legends of heroes. The narratives of gods tell the stories of the births and conflicts of the first divinities: Chaos, Nyx, Eros, Uranus, Gaia, the Titans and the triumph of Zeus and the Olympians. As the Earth Goddess, Gaia mates with her son Uranus to produce six gods and six goddesses, which are called the Titans. Uranus is hostile to his children, and keeps them in the underground. Cronus, one of the Titans, rebels against his father Uranus by castrating him, saves his brothers and sisters, and becomes the ruling Titan. Later, Cronus marries his sister Rhea, who bears the Olympians. After hearing that he will be overthrown by his sons, Cronus devours all the newly born children, only Zeus the youngest son escapes the tragic fate. After growing up, Zeus manages to make Cronus spit all the other children. Then Zeus, together with his brothers and sisters, launches a ten-year fight against his father, which is called "fight of Titans." After dethroning his father Cronus, Zeus establishes on Mount Olympus his God Family, which includes



12 main gods and goddesses, such as Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Ares, Aphrodite, Athena, Apollo and Dionysus etc. Hesiod's *Theogony* is a great work in describing the stories of the Greek gods and goddesses.

The other part of the Greek Mythology is the legends of heroes, many of which are mingled with myths. Some of the heroes are demi-gods and demi-men, such as Heracles and Jason etc. Heracles is the son of Zeus and Alceme (daughter of king of Mycenae), and he is the greatest of the mythical Greek heroes, best known for his superhuman strength. Many stories tell of his life, such as the most famous *The Twelve Labours of Herakles*. These heroic legends are the eulogies of the ancient Greek people to their ancestors and the outstanding people of the tribes of their ancestors' time. These legends form an organic part of the Greek Mythology.

Among the Olympian gods, the one that is worshiped by all is Apollo, who is steady and handsome, signifying nobility, calmness, dignity, rationality and self-discipline etc. It is said that Apollo embodies the moral standards of Ancient Greece's upper society. When we read Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, we find that Apollo plays a predominant role in these works of philosophy and literature. The other god who forms a sharp contrast to Apollo is Dionysus, whose Latin name is Bacchus. Among the Olympian gods, Dionysus is the only one whose mother is a mortal. Yet he is free from care, roaming freely all over the world with his companions, singing and drinking. He symbolizes the philosophy and hedonism. Dionysus represents the passions, irrationality and the sub-consciousness of human beings. In literature, Apollo and Dionysus also become the representatives of two literary schools and styles. In the history of English literature, the Renaissance was the period in which the Dionysus spirit was fully developed; while the Enlightenment was the period in which Apollo played the predominant role. In the first half of the 19th century, there appeared the Romantic movement, which was the revolt to the