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# A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory

当代文学理论导读 第4版

Raman Selden  
Peter Widdowson  
Peter Brooker

外语教学与研究出版社  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS  
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PEARSON EDUCATION

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# A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory

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当代文学理论导读 第1版  
藏书章

Ramán Selden  
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## 当代文学理论导读 第4版

Raman Selden 等著

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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*

在关于20世纪西方文论的众多英语教材中,《当代文学理论导读》无疑是独树一帜的一本。<sup>1</sup> 它不像特里·伊格尔顿的《文学理论导论》(1983,第二版1996)那样深奥,也不像乔纳森·卡勒的《文学理论简介》(1997)那样随便。<sup>2</sup> 它以全面、准确、可靠、流畅等诸多优点赢得了读者,自问世以来受到广泛欢迎。在同类教材中,它是再版次数最多的一本。20世纪西方文论以其复杂深奥著称。对于这一学科在普通读者中的普及,这本书可谓功不可没。1985年第一版全书的基本架构就已经完成;1989年第二版时补充了部分内容。这两版是英国文学理论家拉曼·塞尔登教授(1937—1991)完成的。但塞尔登先生在第二版出版不久患脑瘤不幸去世,他的生前好友,当时英国布赖顿大学的教授彼得·威多森受塞尔登夫人之托,改写了新批评、后现代主义、后结构主义、女性主义文学批评等章节,于1993年出版第三版。1997年出第四版时,另一位研究现代主义和后现代主义的专家、英国北安普敦大学教授彼得·布鲁克也加盟合作者的行列,将后现代主义与后殖民主义改写为独立的两章,加写了怪异理论一章,并更新了全书的参考书目,使本书的视野更为全面,继续保持有关西方文论最新成果和动态的信息优势,使塞尔登先生开创的这一事业得以与时俱进。

拉曼·塞尔登先生在英国学界是一位卓有成就的学者。早年他在英国南方的普利茅斯大学教书,后来分别任英国达勒姆大学“17世纪英国文学研究

- 1 除下文涉及的著作外,还有几本西方文论教材非常适合初学者: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995; Keith Green and Jill LeBihan, *Critical Theory and Practice: A Course Book*, London: Routledge, 1996; Wilfred L. Gueerin, Earle Labor, Lee Morgan, Jeanne C. Reesman and John R. Willingham, *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 前两本教材的特点是为学生设计了很多思考题,后一本教材的特点是用不同的批评理论和方法分析同一部文学作品。
- 2 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1996; Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

中心”主任、英国兰开斯特大学和森德兰大学教授。他最初的研究领域是17—18世纪英国诗歌，第一本著作是关于英国诗歌中的讽刺<sup>3</sup>。他的这项研究在英国的同行中享有很高的声誉，据称改变了整个学界对这一文学类型的看法。随后他转向了文学批评和文学理论，在1984年出版了一部理论著作《批评与客观性》<sup>4</sup>。这部书是在当时流行的现象学批评和读者反应理论背景下写成的，是他的呕心沥血之作，其中包含了他对主体性问题和历史主义批评的深入思考。特别是书中关于文学作品和文学批评中的“面具”概念和有关文本中的作者概念的理论探讨，与后来以拉康心理分析理论为基础写成的论文《从文本中的作者到分裂的主体》<sup>5</sup>（1990），至今仍然代表着这个问题研究的最高水平，可以说是与韦恩·布思《小说修辞学》<sup>6</sup>中关于“隐含的作者”这一著名概念相媲美的成果。他的论述极大地丰富和拓展了文本与作者关系的研究，与其他有关著作如乔治·T. 赖特《诗歌中的诗人：艾略特、叶芝、庞德的文中作者》（1960）、罗伯特·C. 埃利奥特《文学中的文本作者》（1982）、卡罗尔·T. 克赖斯特《维多利亚及现代诗学》（1984）以及约瑟夫·布里斯托所编《维多利亚诗人：诗学与文中作者》（1987）相比，是最具理论深度的研究。<sup>7</sup>

不过让塞尔登名声鹊起的还是我们手边的这部《当代文学理论导读》，以及他编撰的另一部名为《文学批评理论：从柏拉图到现在》<sup>8</sup>（1988）的文论选读教材。后一部文选已有了中文译本<sup>9</sup>，中国读者可以一睹其博大精深与宏篇巨制。这部文选选材精当，编排出文学理论的基本概念与范畴，涵盖了古往今来所有重要的理论问题，足见编者对整个学科理解的深度与独具的匠心。这两

3 Raman Selden, *English Verse Satire, 1590-1765*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1978.

4 Raman Selden, *Criticism and Objectivity*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1984.

5 Raman Selden, "From Persona to the Split Subject", *Comparative Criticism*, E. Shaffer (ed.), vol. 12, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 57-70.

6 Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

7 George T. Wright, *The Poet in the Poem: The Personae of Eliot, Yeats, and Pound*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1960; Robert C. Elliott, *The Literary Persona*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982; Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984; Joseph Bristow (ed.), *The Victorian Poets: Poetics and Persona*, London and New York: Croom Helm, 1987.

8 Raman Selden, *The Theory of Criticism from Plato to the Present: A Reader*, London: Longman, 1988.

9 拉曼·塞尔登《文学批评理论：从柏拉图到现在》，刘象愚、陈永国译，北京大学出版社，2000。

部书一纵一横,加上他专门为学生设计的案例研究<sup>10</sup>,对于一般读者来说,即便没有专业教师的指导,仅凭自学也可成功。西方文论作为20世纪后半叶最具影响力的学科,其主要内容、观点、方法、问题、成果、发展趋势在这两部入门著作中均有全面的反映。

当然这两部书也不是没有缺点,特别是《当代文学理论导读》,由于篇幅的限制,作者为了全面不得不牺牲深度。在本书出版之初,当时英国的青年学者、英国现代主义文学专家托尼·宾尼就曾抱怨此书关于拉康的章节太过简短。对于这样一个大理论家的介绍竟然只有四五页的篇幅,无疑是等于蜻蜓点水。这种情况也表现在对其他几个重要理论家的叙述之中。当然关于拉康,读者最好去看伊格尔顿《文学理论导论》中的有关章节;如果有进一步了解的愿望,再看马尔科姆·鲍伊或马丹·萨鲁普介绍拉康的著作。<sup>11</sup>关于德里达,最好去看克里斯托弗·诺里斯和乔纳森·卡勒的介绍著作。<sup>12</sup>关于福柯,可以直接去读他本人的作品。这个补充书目还可以列得很长。但是如果一部以本科生和硕士研究生为对象的教材如此这般无休止地写下去,恐怕就不是一卷著作可以完成。而本书最初的目的是写成一个“导游图”,也就是绘制出一张关于20世纪西方文论的图谱。对于任何学科来说,这张图谱都是至关重要的。它首先为我们建立起一个学科的整体知识结构。至于对各个流派和各种理论问题的深入研究,各章后面的参考书目已经提供了线索。特别是对于我们中国读者,在研究西方文论的初始阶段,许多介绍性著作仍然存在以偏概全、良莠不分、以讹传讹、丢三落四的情况下,有这样一本准确可靠的导读备于手边,一定会使我们受益无穷。

《当代文学理论导读》为我们学习20世纪西方文论提供了一个良好的起点。多年来我在北京大学英语系讲授20世纪西方文论时一直使用这部书作教材。而据我所知,在英国和美国的许多大学,在香港大学、北京师范大学,这本书都曾用为课本,可见其读者之盛。这本书行文流畅、文字浅显,一般读者都不会有什么阅读困难。因此此书的英文版能在中国出版,是一件值得庆贺的事。

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10 Raman Selden, *Practising Theory and Reading Literature: An Introduction*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.

11 Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan*, London: Fontana, 1991; Madan Sarup, *Jacques Lacan*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

12 Christopher Norris, *Derrida*, London: Fontana, 1987; Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*, revised edition, London: Routledge, 1991; Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.



我曾经在1988至1990年间师从塞尔登先生学习文学批评理论。我在他的指导下写了多篇理论文章以及博士论文中最初的部分章节。现在能为他的著作的中国版写导读，对我来说不仅是莫大的荣幸，也是多年的夙愿：终于有机会表达我对雷（他的同事和朋友都亲切地称呼他 Ray）的深切怀念。雷离开热爱他的朋友和学生已经有12年了。但是他的音容笑貌犹在昨日，依然清晰可辨。雷高高的个子，肤色微黑，有一半印度血统。他自称是历史主义批评家，喜欢福柯，对后结构主义主体性问题有着深刻的理解与洞见。在谈到学术问题时，他总是那么博学、睿智、机敏；在谈起日常生活时，他又是那么和气、亲切、随便。他永远是一个助人为乐又善解人意的敦厚长者。彼得·威多森教授在《当代文学理论导读》第三版序言中写道：“拉曼之所以为人热爱并深受尊敬，他写就了这样一部简洁、清晰、信息量充分、几乎是无可挑剔的当代文学理论著作还不是唯一的原因。”<sup>13</sup> 的确，正如诗人所言：有人活着，但他已经死了；有人死了，却还活着。美国前总统里根也曾说过：如果你仔细倾听，就一定能听见那些已故的朋友和亲人的声音。他们没有离去，他们只是在另一个维度。这不仅是因为他们仍然活在他们的著作之中，而且还因为他们已经成为我们内心深处最珍贵、最温馨、最持久的组成部分。让我对塞尔登先生的“文中作者”概念做一个通俗的解释：“文中作者”是什么呢？就是这样一种历久弥新、永不消逝的声音。

周小仪

北京大学英语系

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13 Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, p. xi.

## Preface to the Fourth Edition

Raman Selden's original *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (1985) now appears in a new fourth edition. Some little while after revising the second edition, Raman prematurely and tragically died of a brain tumour. He was much loved and highly respected – not least for the remarkable achievement of producing a short, clear, informative and unpolemical volume on a diverse and difficult subject. A third edition appeared in 1993, Peter Widdowson having been honoured to take on the task of keeping the book up-to-date. Now, as witness to its continuing success and popularity, the moment for further revision of *A Reader's Guide* has arrived once more.

Three years is a long time in contemporary literary theory, and the terrain, not surprisingly, has undergone substantial change. The whole of the book, therefore, has been extensively reworked – this time by Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker – and the reading lists again updated. We noted in the third edition that, in the nature of things, the volume was beginning to have two rather more clearly identifiable functions than it had when Raman Selden initiated the project only a decade ago in the mid-1980s. The earlier chapters were taking on a historical cast in outlining movements from which newer developments had received their impetus and had then superseded, while the later ones attempted to take stock of precisely those newer developments, to mark out the coordinates of where we live and practise theory and criticism now. This tendency has strengthened in the

present version – evident in further reordering and restructuring – so that nearly half the book is now comprised by its last four chapters. The Introduction reflects on the issues which lie behind these revisions.

For the third edition, Peter Widdowson was crucially assisted by three advisors: Peter Brooker (now a co-author), Maggie Humm (author of *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Criticism*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) and Francis Mulhern. The debt to them still stands – their contributions continuing to inform parts of the present volume – as, too, does that to the authors of books acknowledged for their assistance in previous prefaces. On the present occasion, the authors are indebted to a further trio of advisers: Sonya Andermahr and Ian McCormick of Nene College, Northampton, and Lynnette Turner of the University of Hertfordshire. The former have made invaluable contributions to the composition of the new chapter on 'Gay, lesbian and queer theories', and the latter to the heavily revised chapters on 'Feminist', 'Postmodernist' and 'Postcolonialist' theories. Without their up-to-the-minute knowledge and critical perceptiveness, the new edition would be but a pale shadow of what it sets out to be. Our sincerest thanks to them.

The preceding edition of *A Reader's Guide* was cross-referenced to Raman Selden's parallel volume, *Practising Theory and Reading Literature* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), in an attempt to give students access to concrete examples of theory in practice. That book remains a useful resource for such applications, and we have retained selective reference to it (abbreviated in footnotes to PTRL). But the fully complementary volume to this fourth edition is now the present authors' recently edited, *A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996), which is in many respects a custom-made companion to *A Reader's Guide*. It includes examples of criticism on specific literary texts by many of the theorists discussed here, and is cross-referenced throughout as *A Practical Reader* (together with relevant chapter numbers).

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# Introduction

It is bewildering to think how much has changed since the mid-1980s – only a dozen years ago – when Raman Selden first undertook the daunting task of writing a brief introductory guide to contemporary literary theory. In the Introduction to the earlier editions of *A Reader's Guide*, it was still possible for him to note that:

until recently ordinary readers of literature and even professional literary critics had no reason to trouble themselves about developments in literary theory. Theory seemed a rather rarefied specialism which concerned a few individuals in literature departments who were, in effect, philosophers pretending to be literary critics .... Most critics assumed, like Dr Johnson, that great literature was universal and expressed general truths about human life ... [and] talked comfortable good sense about the writer's personal experience, the social and historical background of the work, the human interest, imaginative 'genius' and poetic beauty of great literature.

For good or ill, no such generalizations about the field of literary criticism could be made now. Equally, in 1985 Raman would rightly point to the end of the 1960s as the moment at which things began to change, and comment that 'during the past twenty years or so students of literature have been troubled by a seemingly endless series of challenges to the consensus of common sense, many of them deriving from European (and especially French and Russian) intellectual sources. To the

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Anglo-Saxon tradition, this was a particularly nasty shock.' But he could also still present 'Structuralism' as a newly shocking 'intruder in the bed of Dr Leavis's *alma mater*' (Cambridge), especially a structuralism with 'a touch of *Marxism* about [it]', and note the even more *outré* fact that there was already 'a *poststructuralist* critique of structuralism', one of the main influences on which was the 'psychoanalytic structuralism' of the French writer, Jacques Lacan. All of which, he could say at the time, 'only confirmed ingrained prejudices'. No criticism of Raman, of course – indeed, that he *could* say this is to make the very point – but such a conjuncture within 'English' or Literary Studies now seems to belong irrevocably to the dim and distant past. As later pages of the present introduction attest, over the last twelve years a seismic change has taken place which has transformed the contours of 'contemporary literary theory', and which has therefore required a reconfiguration of *A Reader's Guide* to match.

Nevertheless, we retain – along with, it is only fair to note, a good proportion of what Raman originally wrote in the first editions of the book – a commitment to many of his founding beliefs about the need for a concise, clear, introductory guide to the field. We might add that the constant fissurings and reformations of contemporary theory since seem to reconfirm the continuing need for some basic mapping of this complex and difficult terrain, and the *Guide's* widespread adoption on degree courses throughout the English-speaking world also appears to bear this out.

Raman Selden decided to write *A Reader's Guide* in the first place because he believed that the questions raised by modern literary theory were important enough to justify the effort of clarification, and because many readers by then felt that the conventional contemptuous dismissal of theory would no longer do. If nothing else, they wanted to know exactly what they were being asked to reject. Like Raman, we too assume that the reader is interested by and curious about this subject, and that s/he requires a sketch-map of it as a preliminary guide to traversing the difficult ground of the theories themselves. Apropos of this, we also firmly hold that the 'Selected Reading' sections at the end of each chapter, with their lists of 'Basic Texts' and 'Further Reading', are an integral part of our project to familiarize the



reader with the thinking which has constructed their present field of study: the *Guide*, in the beginning and in the end, is no substitute for the original theories.

Inevitably, any attempt to put together a brief summation of complex and contentious concepts, to say much in little, will result in over-simplifications, compressions, generalizations and omissions. For example, we have made the decision that approaches premised on pervasive linguistic and psychoanalytic theories are best dispersed throughout the various chapters rather than having discrete sections devoted to them. 'Myth criticism', which has a long and varied history and includes the work of Gilbert Murray, James Frazer, Carl Jung, Maud Bodkin and Northrop Frye, has been omitted because it seemed to us that it has not entered the main stream of academic or popular culture, and has not challenged received ideas as vigorously as the theories we do examine. The chapter on New Criticism and F. R. Leavis comes before the one on Russian Formalism when even a cursory glance will indicate that chronologically the latter *precedes* the former. This is because Russian Formalism, albeit mainly *produced* in the second two decades of the twentieth century, did not have widespread impact until the late-1960s and the 1970s, when it was effectively rediscovered, translated and given currency by Western intellectuals who were themselves part of the newer Marxist and structuralist movements of that period. In this respect, the Russian Formalists 'belong' to that later moment of their *reproduction* and are mobilized by the new left critics in their assault, precisely, on established literary criticism represented most centrally, in the Anglo-Saxon cultures, by New Criticism and Leavisism. Hence, we present the latter as *anterior* to Formalism in terms of critical theoretical ideology, because they represent the traditions of criticism, from the outset and principally, with which contemporary critical theory had to engage. In any event, while the *Reader's Guide* does not pretend to give a comprehensive picture of its field, and cannot be anything other than selective and partial (in both senses), what it does offer is a succinct overview of the most challenging and prominent trends within the theoretical debates of the last thirty years.

But more generally, and leaving aside for the moment the fact that in 1996, if not in 1985, the effects of these theoretical debates