



**Beyond the Text:
Direction of Literary Study
from Studying the Fiction and Literary
Career of Penelope Fitzgerald**

文本之外：由佩内洛普·菲茨杰拉德的小说
及文学生涯看文学研究

● 卢丽安 著





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Preface

This book is based on my PhD thesis entitled *Penelope Fitzgerald's Fiction and Literary Career: Form and Context* (University of Glasgow, Scotland, 1999).

The literary career of contemporary English novelist, Penelope Fitzgerald (1916 – 2000), poses a fascinating case for literary study. Fitzgerald started her literary career late in her late 50s, after retiring from various clerical and educational jobs. She has only produced 9 novellas and a few short stories. Throughout her literary career she had won much professional esteem: the Booker Prize (*Offshore*, 1979), the British Academy Crawshay Prize for Biography (*Charlotte Mew and Her Friends*, 1985), and the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction in the United States (*The Blue Flower*, 1998); besides, she was thrice shortlisted in the Booker Prize (*The Bookshop*, 1978; *The Beginning of Spring*, 1988; *The Gate of Angels*, 1990). *The New York Times Magazine* praises Fitzgerald as “among the two or three best novelists in England today” and indeed many of her contemporary novelists honor her as one of England’s celebrated contemporary writers. However, in spite of her highly acclaimed prestige in both the literary circles of Britain and the US, it was largely after her death that the influ-

ence and popularity of her novels started to invite wider academic attention and general awareness. In conducting this research, I had the pleasure of corresponding with the novelist herself, who more than generously and ungrudgingly answered questions about her life, works, and thoughts. Result: the first monograph devoting to the novels and literary career of this significant yet quiet novelist in the historical moment of late 20th century. Collections of Fitzgerald's short stories, letters, essays and reviews have appeared in 2003; but not yet an academic volume dedicating to study the overall literary outputs and career of Penelope Fitzgerald.

The aim of my PhD research was therefore to systematically investigate what kind of novellas Fitzgerald's are, why they are considered significant, the works' relation with the author's contemporary literary circle, and the formation and taste of such an allegedly elitist literary circle. The present volume is necessarily re-titled in order to suit the needs of those who are generally interested in contemporary literary study.

The present title clearly speaks its focus on the text *and* beyond the text. Late 20th century literary study has outgrown -- but not rejected -- the previously authorial-historical approach; it now further takes up various critical leverages to engage with the work itself -- its inconsistency, silence, and unsaid. The present volume wishes to demonstrate how a literary case-study can be text-based, contextualized, and extended into critical issues often generalized under the umbrella term of "contemporary literary theories". The volume begins with studying the themes, language/style, and genres of Fitzgerald's novellas, continues with the novelist's sense of liberal tradition and her role as a lit-

erary reviewer within contemporary British fiction, and, theoretically, crosses over several critical issues:

First, how a woman novelist textually approaches feminism. Compared with other women novelists of the late 20th century, Fitzgerald does not portray a combative relationship between the sexes as Fay Weldon does, nor does she philosophizing like Iris Murdoch, or fantasizing surrealistically like Angela Carter. In studying the works of contemporary women novelists, such a strategy of deviation implies the innate limitation of feminism *per se* and reveals a broader option of *womanism* that encompasses the multiplicity of literature by women.

Second, how a comparatively elder writer tackles the confrontation between a conventional language of realism and the disrupting, open-ended discourse of postmodernism through fiction-writing. Chronological periodization has Fitzgerald classified as a "contemporary" novelist; yet not all late 20th century writers write *a la* postmodernist mode — the often misconceived and misapplied exchangeability of contemporary writing and postmodernist writing deserves critical examination. The development of Fitzgerald's novelistic language serves an interesting showcase of how such a sensational mode of writing, along with all the debates about Postmodernism/ Postmodernity, is appropriated by a novelist deliberately outside the conspicuous camp.

Third, how the English nationhood is textualized and consolidated in language. Fitzgerald's early works are all set in England and are highly praised for their embodying "Englishness" in language as well as in ambience. This study investigates what stylistic features are most often considered "English" and

how such an arbitrary correlation contributes to the formation of a literary national identity.

Fourth, how the pursuit of literary writing can be ensnarled with the intricate workings of the culture industry. Fitzgerald was a celebrated novelist, a competent biographer, a reviewer for prestigious literary journals in London and New York, and a judge of literary prizes — UK's esteemed Booker Prize in particular. Scrutinizing Fitzgerald's career as a whole suggests the presence and taste of the Establishment literature in Britain, and tentatively explores the issue of canon formation in relation to the preservation and popularization of literary works.

Above all, this book illustrates not only my own engagement with literary study but also the development and change-of-focus of literary critique of the 20th century. My own undergraduate education of British literature stopped at the Victorian period and I started off my postgraduate research ignorant of all the critical interpretive approaches. The book's methodological framework thus witnesses my juvenile wrestling with critical thoughts of feminism, postmodernism, and cultural materialism. For students of literature who are not yet acquainted with applying theories to literary reading, perhaps this book may be of some help.

For the book to be formally published and introduced to a wider readership, my sincere thanks go to the College of Foreign Languages and Literature, Fudan University. For the completion of my research project which constitutes the basis of this book, I am much obliged to Susan Anthony and Willy Maley, professors of British Literature at the University of

Glasgow, whose conscientious guidance and untiring support inspires me to be likewise. And, my parents, my family.

Lian Lu
Department of English
College of Foreign Languages and Literature
Fudan University
June, 2004

引言

本书前身为笔者的博士论文《佩内洛普·菲茨杰拉德的小说及文学生涯：形式与语/环境》(1999, 英国苏格兰格拉斯哥大学, 英国文学系, 当代文学哲学博士学位)。

英国当代小说家佩内洛普·菲茨杰拉德(1916—2000)的文学生涯为文学研究提供一个令人好奇的课题。她经历过不同的职/教员工作, 即近耳顺退休, 才开展文学生涯, 共创作有九本小说及数篇短篇故事。菲茨杰拉德的文学成就卓著, 曾赢得英国布克小说奖(《离岸》, 1979), 英国学院科罗雪传记奖(《夏绿蒂·缪与她的朋友》, 1985), 及美国国家书评家小说奖(《蓝花》, 1998)。此外, 她亦多次入围英国布克小说奖(《书店》, 1978; 《春之始》, 1988; 《天使之门》, 1990)。《纽约时代杂志》称菲茨杰拉德是“英国最优秀的两三位当代小说家之一”, 并且, 许多与菲茨杰拉德同时期的小说家也高度推崇她为当代英国小说家翘楚。然而, 尽管菲茨杰拉德在英美文坛盛名不断, 她的小说的影响及知名度却是在她故去后才开始广泛引起学界讨论与公众认识。笔者有幸在读博期间与菲茨杰拉德本人多次通信, 她和善地、不厌其烦地回答许多关于她生活、小说, 及个人思想的问题。成果: 第一本关于 20 世纪末期英国重要(却)沉静的小说家的小说作品及文学生涯的论文。2003 年, 菲茨杰拉德的短篇小说集、书信集及散文评论都相继问世, 但是在学术界尚未有专门评述她的整体文学产出的论著。

笔者学位论文有系统地研究菲茨杰拉德的小说精神；探究其倍受享誉之由；讨论小说家与她同期作家们的关系；并试图揭示英国所谓“精英文学圈”的独特风格品位形成原因。为了更切合当代文学研究入门者的需求，本书重新更名并在此说明。

新的书名《文本之外》明确表述了对文本及文本之外的语/环境的关注。自20世纪中期以来，欧美文学研究迈出（但不是脱离）原先的单一作者历史观，并运用诸多理论批评方法来阅读文学作品中的不一致，沉默，甚或不语。本书示范了文学研究可以是扎根于文本、扩展至文本以外，并利用当代文学理论来进行阅读诠释的。本书讨论菲茨杰拉德的小说主题、语言风格、文类运用、她的人文主义精神传统、她同时身为当代小说评论家的身份，并在理论视野上延伸到以下四个中心议题：

第一，女作家如何在文本创作过程中体现女性主义想法。与同期女小说家相比较，菲茨杰拉德迥异于菲·维尔登那般描述两性斗争关系；她也不似艾瑞思·默道克那般隐含哲学论述；更不像安吉拉·卡特那样以超写实手法冥想男女平等问题。在研读当代女小说家作品时可发现，偏离正统好战女权主义的创作策略暗示着女小说家们对整个女权运动本身局限的不满，也揭示了妇女主义(womanism)作为广义的取代词更可包含妇女文学的多面性。

第二，熟龄作家如何藉由小说创作来探究传统写实主义文风及后现代主义崩裂的、无结尾的语言之间的冲突。在年代区分中菲茨杰拉德被归类为“当代”作家，但是并非所有的20世纪晚期作家都是后现代风格追随者——“当代”及“后现代”两个词常被误认为同义，这是值得商榷的。菲茨杰拉德小说语言的发展呈现了一个刻意置身于后现代阵营之外的作家理解并选用“后现代小说”、“后现代性/主义”等特质的形式。

第三，英格兰国族观念如何藉语言表达被文本化、强化。菲茨杰拉德早期的小说都设景于英格兰，也都被赞扬充分体现了英

格兰英语特点及风土人情。本书因此分析哪些英语表达特点被公认最具英格兰风味,并研究文学作品如何帮助国家认同感的形式及普及。

第四,文学创作及文化产业运作之间的复杂牵连的关系。菲茨杰拉德不但是个备受赞赏的小说家,杰出的传记家,著名文学杂志的书评家,更是文学奖项——尤其是著名的英国布克奖——的评委。藉由审视菲茨杰拉德的整体文学生涯,研究显示了英国主流文学的品位偏好,也尝试一窥文学作品被普及、保存、及经典文学建构的过程。

尤其重要的是,本书显露的不仅是笔者个人对文学研究的探索,也显露出 20 世纪文学评论中心方法论的演变。笔者本科教育的文学课程终止于维多利亚时期;开始研究生阶段文学研究时,对所谓的当代文学批评理论一无所知。本书的理论框架也因此见证了笔者对批评理论——诸如女性主义、后现代主义、文化物质主义——的粗浅体会。对尚不熟悉把文学理论运用到文学阅读的学生,或许本书能略有帮助。

本书的问世,笔者衷心感谢复旦大学外文学院的鼓励支持。本研究的完成,笔者得力于英国格拉斯哥大学英国文学系苏珊·安东尼及威力·美力两位教授的指导,再次一并致谢。更谢谢父母,家人。

卢丽安

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2004 年 6 月

ABSTRACT

The aim of this book is to examine Penelope Fitzgerald's fiction and literary career in relation to the development of contemporary English writing. Although Fitzgerald is recognized as an English writer of some significance, her fiction is less familiar than that of many of her contemporaries, a fact that relates to the way in which new fiction is read, recognized, rewarded and written about.

Through investigating the issues of form and context, the thesis contends that the novelist's paradoxical standing in contemporary British literature not only suggests a focal shift of Britain's literary culture during the past three decades, it also points to the existence of a complex set of categories that can lead to the exclusion of some authors. The central argument of this thesis is that Fitzgerald's versatile literary career provides evidence of a closed literary Establishment whose values are being perpetuated through its intricate interrelations with the culture industry.

The investigation of Fitzgerald's equivocal success, of the decisive change in Britain's recent cultural perspective, involves raising questions around canon-formation, the consolidation of a national identity, strategies of writing, and the politics of reading. I have found it necessary to examine aspects of theme,

form, genre and context in Fitzgerald's writing, focusing successively on convention and subversion in her work. This "doubleness" has generated the two-part structure of the present thesis, the first book-length study of Fitzgerald's work.

Part One examines the canonical literariness of Fitzgerald's novels through studying literary conventions and thematic preoccupations. It aims to elucidate Fitzgerald's fiction through the tradition of liberal humanism. The canon of English literature is more than a settled corpus, it involves a set of prescribed criteria which, I argue, is the cornerstone of Fitzgerald's literary success as a novelist, biographer, and literary critic.

Contemporary British fiction has undergone a focal sea-change seen in its preoccupation with linguistic experimentation, typographical innovation, and topical engagement with current issues. Fitzgerald's fiction is out of step with current critical paradigms, and thus tends to get caught between the canonical and the contemporary. Part Two explores the impact of postmodern approaches on Fitzgerald's fiction, and examines the ways in which age, race, gender, identity and the nation have impinged on her writing.

The scope of this study, therefore, comprises gender, writing, the construction of nationhood by/in narration, and the culture industry. In view of the scarcity of criticism on Fitzgerald's work, and the difficulties in placing the novelists within the late 20th century British fiction of which the word "postmodernism" has become a catch-word, this study draws on a variety of critical perspectives in order to achieve a historical and contextual understanding of Fitzgerald's fiction and literary career in relation to contemporary British fiction.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PARADOX

The Booker Prize notwithstanding, Fitzgerald has never achieved the “flavour of the month” publicity of other winners. But compare her to some of our contemporary heavyweight women novelists, the politicians, the feminists, the sex-obsessed, the fairy-tale tellers, the working-class snapshotters, and she emerges with distinction. ^①

— Gerda Charles

From virtually the outset of her career as a novelist, Penelope Fitzgerald's work has attracted serious critical attention. Her second novel, *The Bookshop* (1978), was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, which is Britain's most valuable literary award, worth £10,000 to the winner. She won the Booker Prize in 1980 with her third novel; *Offshore* (1979). Her writing couples a traditionally moral humanist approach with a supple, spare style; her novels are

^① Gerda Charles, “Penelope Fitzgerald”, in *Contemporary Novelists*, ed. D. L. Kirkpatrick (London: St. James Press, 1986), pp. 294–296, p. 296.

short, but not slight. ①

— Catherine Wells Cole

1.1) Point of Departure

The Paradox of Penelope Fitzgerald's Success

The central concern of this book rests on the paradoxical reception of Fitzgerald's literary writing. The objective of this study is to elucidate Fitzgerald's fiction — including the novelist's treatment of theme, form, and genre — by way of exploring the issues of literary canon formation, and the relationship between identity and strategies of writing.

The paradox of Fitzgerald's literary achievement, I contend, rests on the fact that, as a frequent Booker Prize shortlisted novelist and onetime winner, as an acclaimed significant voice in present-day English fiction, Penelope Fitzgerald is nevertheless under-appreciated and under-critiqued. As a prize-winning author and a prestigious reviewer, she has not yet been included within academic discussion of contemporary British fiction. My research intends to make a virtue of this paradoxical obscurity, and celebrate the achievement of Fitzgerald's literary writing. The two authoritative reference books cited above represent the different critical perspectives on Penelope Fitzgerald. These epigraphs — written in the early 1980s — hint on the novelist's indefinite standing in contemporary British fiction; they also express a sense of hesitancy regarding what role the novelist was thought to be occupied within contemporary British fiction. Gerda Charles notes

① Catherine Wells Cole, "Penelope Fitzgerald", in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Novelists Since 1960*, Vol. 14, ed. Jay L. Halio (Detroit: Gale Research, 1983), pp.302-308, p.302.