Identity, Identification, Subject

自我建構 仿效/認同 個體意識

Lecture Notes for CHINESE 521
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The Subject (個體意識)

• Modern thinking on what is this ‘I’ that I am?
  – Is the self something given and something made?
  – Should it be conceived in individual or in social terms?
    • Opting for the given and the individual, treats the self, the ‘I’, as something inner and unique
      – prior to the facts it performs, an inner core which is variously expressed (or not expressed) in word and deed.
    • Combining the given and the social, emphasized that the self is determined by its origins and social attributes
    • Combining the individual and the made
      – emphasized the changing nature of a self, which becomes what it is through its changing nature of a self, which becomes what it is through its particular acts.
    • Combination of the social and the made stresses that I become what I am through the various subject positions I occupy

• Dominant modern tradition in the study of literature
  – “I did what I did because of who I am, and to explain what I did or said you should look back at the ‘I’ that my words and acts express."
The Subject

• Theory
  – Acts or words work by expressing a prior subject, but also the priority of the subject itself

• Michael Foucault
  – “The researches of psychoanalysis, of linguistics, of anthropology have ‘decentered’ the subject in relation to the laws of its desire, the forms of its language, the rules of its actions, or the play of its mythical and imaginative discourse.”

• Psychoanalysis: the product of intersecting psychic, sexual, and linguistic mechanisms.

• Marxist theory
  – Determined by class position
    • Profits from others, labour or labours for others, profit

• Feminist theory
  – The impact of socially constructed gender roles on making the subject what he or she is

• Queer theory
  – Heterosexual subject is constructed through the repression of the possibility of homosexuality.
The Subject

- Question of the subject:
  - What am I?
  - Am I made what I am by circumstances?
  - What is the relation between the individuality of the individual and my identity as member of a group?
  - To what extent is the ‘I’ that I am, the ‘subject’, and agent who makes choices rather than has choices imposed on him or her?

- Subject: an actor or agent, a free subjectivity that does things, as in the ‘subject of a sentence.

- Theory: to be a subject at all is to be subjected to various regimes.
Literature and Identity

• Narrative literature
  – The fortunes of characters as they define themselves and are defined by various combinations of
    • Their past
    • The choices they make
    • The social forces that act upon them

  – Do characters make their fate or suffer it?
    • *Odyssey*
      – Odysseus is labeled ‘multiform’ but defines himself in his struggles to save himself and his shipmates and to get home to Ithaca again.
    • *Madame Bovary*
      – Emma strives to define herself in relation to her romantic readings and her banal surroundings.
Literature and Identity

• A range of implicit models of how identity is formed
  – Narratives where identity is essentially determined by birth:
    • The son of a king raised by shepherds is still fundamentally a king and rightfully becomes king when his identity is discovered
  – Narratives characters change according to the changes in their fortunes
  – Identity is based on personal qualities that are revealed during the tribulations of a life.

• Recent theories about race, gender and sexuality in the field of literary studies
  – Literature provides rich materials for complicating political and sociological accounts of the role of such factors in the construction of identity.

• Whether the identity of the subject is something given or something constructed:
  – Both options amply represented in literature
  – Complications or entanglements are frequently laid out for us
  – Characters acting in such a way that they become what then turns out to be their nature (become what you supposedly were)
Literature and Identity

- Western novels
  - The fundamental identity of characters emerges as the result of actions, of struggles with the world, but then this identity is posited as the basis, even the cause of those actions.

- Recent theory
  - A good deal can be seen as an attempt to sort out the paradoxes that often inform the treatment of identity in literature.

- Literary works
  - Represent individuals
  - Struggles individual and group
  - Theoretical writings
    - Social identity tend to focus on group identities
      - What is it to be a woman
    - Tension between literary explorations and critical or theoretical claims
  - Representations depends on their special combination of singularity and exemplarity
    - Is Jane Eyre’s the predicament of women in general?
Literature and Identity

- Theorists
  - novels construct an ideology of individual identity whose neglect of larger social issues critics should be questioned.
- Literature has made identity a theme.
- Construction of the identity of readers
- Enable readers to know how it feels to be in particular situations and to acquire dispositions to act and feel in certain way.
- Literary works encourage identification with characters by showing things form their point of view
- Identification demand → create identity
  - We become who we are by identifying with figures we read about
- Blamed for
  - Encouraging the young to see themselves as characters in novels
    - Run away from home
    - Exposing the values of heroes and heroines by going against elders
    - Corrupt through mechanisms of identification
- Literature could make us better people through vicarious experience and the mechanisms of identification.
Representing or Producing

• Does discourse represent identities that already exist or does it produce them?
• 19th century novels
  – The homosexual as an identity invented by discursive practices
• 18th century novels
  – Nancy Armstrong argues that 18th century novels and conduct books (books about how to behave) produced “the modern individual,” who was a woman.
  – Modern individual
    • a person whose identity and worth are thought to come from feelings and personal qualities rather than from his or her place in the social hierarchy.
    • An identity gained through love and centered in the domestic sphere rather than in society
Representing or Producing

• Now:
  – The true self is the one you find through love and through your relations with family and friends
    • Begins in the 18th and 19th centuries as an idea about the identity of women and only later is extended to men
    • Developed and extended by novels and other discourses that champion feelings and private virtues.
    • This concept is sustained by film, television, and a wide range of discourses.
      – People are told about what it is to be a person, a man, or a woman.
Psychoanalysis

• Freud
  – Identification is a psychological process in which the subject assimilates an aspect of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, according to the model that the other provides.
  – The basis of sexual identity is an identification with a parent:
    • One desires as the parent does, as if imitating the parent’s desire and becoming a rival for the loved object.
    • Oedipus

• Later psychoanalytic theories
  – Jacques Lacan
    • Mirror stage
      – Beginnings of identity in the moment when the infant identifies with his or her image in the mirror, perceiving himself or herself as whole, as back
        » By a mirror, by the mother, and by others in social relations generally.

• Identity is the product of a series of partial identifications, never completed
Psychoanalysis

- Psychoanalysis reaffirms the lesson one might draw from the most serious and celebrated novels:
  - Identity is a failure
  - We do not happily become men or women that the internalization of social norms always encounters resistance and ultimately do not work
    - We do not become who we are supposed to be
- Further twist to the fundamental role of identification
  - Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen
    - The tendency toward identification comes first
    - A primordial tendency then gives rise to desire
    - Identification brings the desirous subject into being
- Earlier Model
  - Desire is the bottom line
    - Identification precedes desire
    - Identification with another involves imitation or rivalry that is the source of desire
    - Rene Girard and Eve Sedgwick
      - Desire arises from identification and rivalry
        » Heterosexual male desire flows from the hero’s identification with a rival and imitation of his desire.
Group Identities

• Members of historically oppressed or marginalized
  – Stories prompt identification with a potential group and work to make the group a group by showing them who or what they might be.
  – Theoretical debate
    • Focused most intensely on the desirability and political usefulness of different conceptions of identity
      – Must there be something essential members of a group share if they are to function as a group?
      – Are claims about what it is to be a woman or to be black or to be gay oppressive, restrictive, and objectionable?
    • Often been cast as a quarrel about “essentialism”
      – arising through contingent alliances and oppositions
        » Between a notion of identity as something given (an origin) and a notion of identity as something always in process,
Group Identities

• Main question
  – What is the relation between critiques of essentialist conceptions of identity (of a person or group) and the psychic and political demands for identity?
  – How do the urgencies of emancipatory politics engage or conflict with psychoanalytic notions of the unconscious and a divided subject?
    • seeking solid identities for women, blacks, Irish, etc.
  – Marginalized groups
    • Critical investigations demonstrate the illegitimacy of taking certain traits, such as sexual orientation and gender, as essentially defining features of group identity.
      – refute the imputation of essential identity to all members of a group characterized by gender, class, race, religion, sexuality, or nationality.
    • Groups may make identities imposed on them into resources for that group.

– The History of Sexuality
  • 19th century
    – Medical and psychiatric discoursed defining homosexuals as a deviant class facilitated social control
    – The formation of a “reverse” discourse
Pervasive Structures

• Works in theory emanating from different directions that have revealed difficulties involving identity that seem structurally similar
  – Marxism
  – Psychoanalysis
  – Cultural studies
  – Feminism
  – Gay and lesbian studies
  – The study of identity in colonial and pos-colonial societies

• Judith Butler
  – “the reconceptualization of identity as an effect, that is, as produced or generated opens up possibilities of “agency” that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed.”

• Traditional conceptions of the subject in fact work to limit responsibility and agency.
Pervasive Structures

• The expanded notion of the subject combats the restriction of agency and responsibility from traditional conceptions of the subject.

• Accused of ignoring the most insidious effect of colonialism
  – The way it defined the situation and the possibilities of action, making the inhabitants “natives.”

• Appiah
  – Different sorts of accounts are not in conflict
    • Native are still agents, and a language of agency is still appropriate
Theory

- Desire to see how far an idea or argument can go and to question alternative accounts and their presuppositions
- Does not give rise to harmonious solutions
- Doesn’t tell us whether poetry is a transcendent vocation or rhetorical trick or how much of each
- Offers not a set of solutions but the prospect of further thought
- Calls for commitment to
  - The work of reading
  - Challenging presuppositions
  - Of questioning the assumptions on which was proceed.
- Endless
- Ongoing project of thinking which does not end when a very short introduction ends
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Literary theory is not a disembodied set of ideas but a force in institutions
• Theory exists in communities of readers and writers.
  – Educational and cultural institutions
• Three theoretical modes since 1960
  – Wide-ranging reflection on language, representation, and the categories of critical thought undertaken by deconstruction and psychoanalysis
  – The analyses of the role of gender and sexuality in every aspect of literature and criticism by feminism and then gender studies and Queer theory
  – The development of historically oriented cultural criticisms studying a wide range of discursive practices, involving many objects not previously thought of as having a history
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• **Russian Formalism**
  – In the 20th century early years
  • Critics should concern themselves with the literariness of literature
    – The verbal strategies that make it literary
    – The foregrounding of language itself
    – The “making strange” of experience that they accomplish
  • Questions should be asked:
    – “The device is the only hero of literature.”
    – “What happen to the sonnet here?”
    – “What adventures befall the novel in this book by Dickens”
  • Key figures
    – Roman Jackobson
    – Boris Eichenbaum
    – Victor Shklovsky
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• New Criticism
  – United States in the 1930s and 1940s
  – Focused attention on the unity or integration of literary works
  – Opposed to the historical scholarship practiced in universities.
  – Treated poems as aesthetic objects and examined the interactions of their verbal features and the ensuing complications of meaning
  – Task: to elucidate individual works of art
  – Focus on:
    • Ambiguity
    • Paradox
    • Irony
    • Effects of connotation and poetic imagery
    • Sought to show the contribution of each element of poetic form to a unified structure.
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• New Criticism
  – Left as enduring legacies techniques of close reading and the assumption that the test of any critical activity is whether it helps us to produce richer, more insightful interpretations of individual works
  – 1960s
    • Other theoretical perspectives and discourses offered richer conceptual frameworks than did the New Criticism for reflecting on literature and other cultural products
      – Phenomenology
      – Linguistics
      – Psychoanalysis
      – Marxism
      – Structuralism
      – Feminism
      – deconstruction
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Phenomenology
  – Work of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century philosopher Edmund Husserl
    • Focusing on the phenomenal reality of objects as they appear to consciousness.
      – Seeks to bypass the problem of the separation between subject and object, consciousness and the world
    – Underwrote criticism devoted to describing the “world” of an author’s consciousness, as manifested in the entire range of his or her works (Georges Poulet, J. Hillis Miller).
  – “reader-response criticism” (Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser)
  – For the readers
    • The work is what is given to consciousness
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Phenomenology
  – Criticism can take the form of a description of the reader’s progressive movement through
    • a text
    • analyzing how readers produce meaning by making connections
    • filling in things left unsaid
    • anticipating and conjecturing and then having their expectations disappointed or confirmed
  – Aesthetics of reception (Hans Robert Jauss)
    • Another reader-oriented version of phenomenology
      – A work is an answer to questions posed by a “horizon of expectations.”
    • Interpretation of works should
      – Focus
        » not on the experience of an individual reader
        » the history of a work’s reception and its relation to the changing aesthetic norms and sets of expectations that allow it to be read in different areas.
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Structuralism
  – Share something in common with reader-oriented theory
    • Focuses on how meaning is produced
  – Originated in opposition to phenomenology
    • The goal was to identify the underlying structures that make it possible
  – Sought to analyze structures that operate unconsciously (structures of language, of the psyche, of society)
  – Interest: how meaning is produced
    • Often treated the reader as the site of underlying codes that make meaning possible and as the agent of meaning.
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Structuralism
  – Usually designates a group of primarily French thinkers who influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of language in the 1950s and 1960s
    • Applied concepts from structural linguistics to the study of social and cultural phenomena
  – Developed first in anthropology, then in literary and cultural studies, psychoanalysis, intellectual history, and Marxist theory
  – Work was imported and read in England, the United States
• Literary studies
  • Promotes a poetics interested in the conventions that make literary works possible
  • Seeks not to produce new interpretations of works but to understand how they can have the meanings and effects that they do
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Structuralism
  – Literary studies
    • Main effects
      – To offer new ideas about literature and to make it one signifying practice among others
    • Symptomatic readings of literary works
    • Encouraged cultural studies to try to spell out the signifying procedures of different cultural practices.
  – Distinguish structuralism from semiotics (the general science of signs)

• Semiotics
  • International movement
    – Incorporate the scientific study of behavior and communication
    – Mostly avoiding the philosophical speculation and cultural critique that has marked structuralism in its French and related versions.
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Post-Structuralism
  – Theorists distanced themselves from it after structuralism was defined as a movement or school.
  – Works by alleged structuralists did not fit the idea of structuralism as an attempt to master and codify structures
  – Barthes, Lacan, and Foucault
    • Identified as post structuralism
    • Gone beyond structuralism narrowly conceived
  – How texts create meaning by violating any conventions that structural analysis locates
  – Recognized the impossibility of describing a complete or coherent signifying system
  – Does not demonstrate the inadequacies or errors of structuralism so much
  – Emphasize a critique of knowledge, totality, and the subject
    • Do not exist independently of the subjects
    • Structures for subject
      – Entangled with the forces that produce them.
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Deconstruction
  – Critique of the hierarchical oppositions that have structured Western thought
    • Inside/outside
    • Mind/body
    • Literal/metaphorical
    • Speech/writing
    • Presence/absence
    • Nature/culture
    • Form/meaning
  – To deconstruct an opposition is
    • To show that it is not natural and inevitable but a construction, produced by discoursed that rely on it.
    • To show that it is a construction in a work of deconstruction that seeks to dismantle it and re-inscribes it
      – Not destroy it but give it a different structure and functioning
  – Barbara Johnson
    • An investigation of the tension between modes of signification, as between the performative and constative dimensions of language
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Feminist Theory
  – Undertakes to deconstruct the opposition man/woman and the oppositions associated with it in the history of Western culture
  – A version of post-structuralism
  – Champion the identity of women
  – Demand rights for women
  – Promote women’s writings as representations of the experience of women
  – Undertake a theoretical critique of the heterosexual matrix that organized identities and cultures in terms of the opposition between man and woman.
  – French feminism: woman comes to stand for any radical force that subverts the concepts, assumptions, and structures of patriarchal discourse
  – Effected a substantial transformation of literary education in the US and Britain
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Psychoanalysis
  – Had an impact on literary studies as a mode of interpretation and a theory about language, identity, and the subject
  – Most powerful modern hermeneutic
    • An authoritative meta-language or technical vocabulary that can be applied to literary works
    • Criticism alert to psychoanalytic themes and relations
    • Subject as an effect of language
    • Emphasized the crucial role in analysis of what Freud called transference
      – Analysis and casts the analyst in the role of authority figure from the past.
      – Makes psychoanalysis a post-structuralist discipline in which interpretation is a replaying of a text it does not master
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Marxism
  – Post-structuralism arrived through Marxism in Britain.
  – Texts belong to a superstructure determined by the economic base.
  – To interpret cultural products is to relate them back to the base
  – The subject is an effect constituted in the processes of the unconscious, of discourse, and of the relatively autonomous practices that organize society.
  – This conjunction is the basis of much theoretical debate in Britain.
  – Investigations of relations between culture and signification, 1970s
    • Screen
Theoretical Schools and Movements

- **New Historicism/Cultural materialism**
  - 1980s and 1990s: Britain and the US have been marked by the emergence of vigorous, theoretically engaged historical criticism.
  - British cultural materialism:
    - defined by Raymond Williams as “the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within a culture means and conditions of their production.”
  - Renaissance specialists influenced by Foucault have been particularly concerned with the historical constitution of the subject and with the contestatory role of literature in the Renaissance.
  - New historicism is less inclined to posit a hierarchy of cause and effect as it traces connections among texts, discourse, power, and the constitution of subjectivity.
    - Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose
      - Treating literature as one of several sometimes antagonistic practices
      - Key question: dialectic of “subversion of containment”
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Post-Colonial Theory
  – The attempt to understand the problems posed by the European colonization and its aftermath.
  – Institutions and experiences form the idea of the independent nation to the idea of culture itself are entangled with the discursive practices of the West.
  – Formation of colonial and post-colonial subjects: hybrid subjects
    • Emerging from the superimposition of conflicting languages and cultures
    • Orientalism: examined the construction of the oriental “other” by European discoursed of knowledge
    • Then, post-colonial theory and writing has become an attempt to intervene in the construction of culture and knowledge to write way back into a history others have written.
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Minority Discourse
  – Main effort has been to revive and promote the study of Black, Latino, Asian-American, and Native American writing.
  – Debates bear on the relation between the strengthening of cultural identity of particular groups by linking it to a tradition of writing and the liberal goal of celebrating cultural diversity and “multiculturalism.”
  – “white” questions or philosophical issues
  – Latino, African-American, and Asian-American
    • critics pursue the theoretical enterprise in developing the study of minority discourses, defining their distinctiveness, and articulating their relations to dominant traditions of writing and thought.
  – Generate theories of “minority discourse”
    • Intervene in theoretical debates
Theoretical Schools and Movements

• Queer Theory
  — Uses the marginal to analyze the cultural construction of the center
    • Heterosexual normativity
  — Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler
    • Become the site of a productive questioning not just of the cultural construction of sexuality but of culture itself, as based on the denial of homoerotic relations
  — Feminism and versions of ethnic studies before it
    • Gains intellectual energy from its link with social movements of liberation and from the debates within these movements about appropriate strategies and concepts
  — At stake in theory
    • Should one celebrate and accentuate difference or challenge distinctions that stigmatize?
    • How to do both?
Reference


Thanks for tolerance on typo errors which might have inadvertently occurred.