

# A Keyword in Western Literary Theory: Text

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**Abstract:** We hope to describe and explain the origin of the concept of "text" in Europe, as well as its significant impact in China. The replacement of the concept of work by the concept of text is the most important conceptual event in literary theory discourse after World War II. The word "text," common in Western languages, and "work" constitute a pair of interrelated concepts, the former referring to the objective, material dimension of literature, and the latter pointing to its subjective, value-based, and spiritual dimensions. This seemingly taken-for-granted opposition and hierarchical division was strongly challenged in the 1960s and 1970s: on the one hand, structuralist literary theory demanded the "scientificity" of literary research, and therefore put aside the "work", which was colored by subjective values, and shifted its focus to the study of the objective laws of the literary text. On the other hand, although the French theory after the rise of post-structuralism inherited the theoretical method of structuralism, it denied the pursuit of scientificity in literary research. Barthes, Kristeva, and Derrida, among others, turn to the practice of the text, which has regained its value, except that the value of the text, contrary to the value of the work, manifests itself in the subversion of value itself. This is a paradox in itself: the value of the text is a subversion of value in the sense of an uninterrupted subversion of significance. The word "text" was translated into Chinese as *wen ben* from 1980s, and became a keyword in Chinese literary theory and critics. The introduction of this word produced some new conceptions of literature, but on the other hand it brought about some misunderstandings, since there is not the opposition of text and works in Chinese.

**Keywords:** Text, Work, French Theory, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism

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## 1. Introduction

This study is based on research originally published in *Revue of Foreign Literature*.<sup>1</sup>

The replacement of the concept of work by the concept of text is the most important conceptual event in literary theory discourse after World War II. Although the difference between these two may seem smaller in recent years, our description of the evolution of this concept today can help us understand the history of avant-garde literary theory and also make us clearer about the literary language of the post theoretical era. The word "text," common in Western languages, and "work" constitute a pair of interrelated concepts, the former referring to the objective, material dimension of literature, and the latter

pointing to its subjective, value-based, and spiritual dimensions. The traditional literary audience is undoubtedly centered on the concept of "work". This seemingly taken-for-granted opposition and hierarchical division was strongly challenged in the 1960s and 1970s: on the one hand, structuralist literary theory demanded the "scientificity" of literary research, and therefore put aside the "work", which was colored by subjective values, and shifted its focus to the study of the objective laws of the literary text. On the other hand, although the French theory after the rise of post-structuralism inherited the theoretical method of structuralism, it denied the pursuit of scientificity in literary research. Barthes, Kristeva, and Derrida, among others, turn to the practice of the text, which has regained its value, except that the value of the text, contrary to the value of the work, manifests itself in the subversion of value itself. This is a paradox in itself: the value of the text is a subversion of value

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in the sense of an uninterrupted subversion of significance. This revolution in literary value is fundamentally different from previous literary movements. Past literary movements have attempted to establish a new system of value and significance while breaking down and critiquing a system of value; this textual movement is an attempt to always subvert, without establishing.

Perpetual revolution may never be more than an ideal, and the same is true of the revolution in French theory, where the notion of text as used today has, in the vast majority of cases, lost its strong revolutionary and rebellious overtones, gradually becoming a generic term for all kinds of humanities, where everything that is considered to be a vehicle of meaning can be called a text, and the distinction between different modes of representation is broken down, with images, sounds, written and non-written forms all being regarded as texts.

Today the term text is in common use in literature and other fields, but it has a rather short history in Chinese, not as a traditional Chinese word, but as a translation originating from occidental languages. The French *texte* or the English *text*, which were originally common words in everyday language for centuries, are also common words in literary criticism, often used in conjunction with the word *work* (*oeuvre* in French). Because they are both common words, the distinction between text and work has not traditionally been the focus of literary theory and critical discussion, each in its own right. But the wave of literary theory after the Second World War, especially French theory, made it gradually become a concept with a special meaning, and even became the key word distinguishing between traditional Criticism and New Criticism (*la nouvelle critique*)<sup>2</sup>: the Traditional talks about the work, the New studies the text. We can see that one of the most striking phenomena in the discourse of literary criticism and theory in the West in the 1960s and 1970s was the rapid decline of the term "work" in the course of a decade or so, and the replacement of the term "work" by the term "text". "The text has replaced the work as the central word, not just as a term, but as the central concept of literature." This event was announced by Barthes's 1971 publication "From Work to Text" (*De l'oeuvre au texte*). In order to speak of the text, it must be discussed in relation to the notion of the work.

## 2. Work and Text in Traditional Concepts

What is literature? When we are confronted with many different books, what makes us classify them as "literature"? Or when we are confronted with different editions of *The Complete Works of Lu Xun* published by different publishers, as consumers of books, we will consider the binding and printing. But as literary researchers and critics, we must admit that the content and substance of books with different printings but the same text are exactly the same. A literary work is not a book; a book has a form, whereas a work is

purely spiritual. A work is the product of a literary system in which only a certain type of text can be recognized as a work.

The traditional concept of text is one that appears more material. Xu Shen defines text in *The Letters* (*Shuowen*): "Text, cross drawing. The image of crossing traces are the texts." [23] The Latin word for text (*textus*) originally meant textile, the product of the act of weaving (*texere*). In European languages, words related to text have to do with the interweaving of fibers. Both Chinese and Indo-European etymologies point to the fact that text is identical to textile as a result of horizontal and vertical interweaving. This is also closely related to the nature of the language text itself. Saussure's linguistics refers to the interweaving of the vertical and horizontal directions as *syntagmatique* and *paradigmatique*.<sup>3</sup> The French dictionary, *Le Petit Robert*, defines text as follows, "Text: the words and phrases that make up writing and work." [1] However, the dictionary does not indicate what constitutes a text. In his famous entry for the Encyclopedic Dictionary *Universalis*, Barthes describes the concept of text in the usual sense:

What is a text to general opinion? It is the surface appearance of a literary work; it is the textile formed by the interweaving of words in a work organized so as to determine, as far as possible, a unique and stable meaning. Despite the humility and partiality of this concept (it is, in any case, merely an object of vision), the text participates in the glory achieved by the work in the spiritual world; the text is the work's banal but indispensable servant. Because it constitutes writing (text, that is, what is written), and perhaps because, although the shape of the text remains linear, it nonetheless has more meaning than spoken language and pure weaving (text in the etymological sense of weaving tissue). In the case of a work, it implies the guarantee of what has been written, and in it are concentrated the functions of a protector: on the one hand, it is fixed and unchanging, and textual writing can be used to correct inaccurate and unreliable memories; on the other hand, through the unquestionable legitimacy of concrete, tangible, and indelible words, it is assumed that the author has expressed the meaning here as he intended; the text is the weapon that defeats time and forgetfulness! On the other hand, through the concrete, tangible and indelible legitimacy of the text, the author is perceived as having expressed himself as he wished; the text is a weapon against time and forgetfulness; the spoken word is prone to wear and tear, to rephrasing, to change, to self-denial; the text is a weapon against all this. The concept of the text has thus been historically associated with a series of institutions: law, church, literature, education; the text is an ethical and moral object.... [7]

In the Western tradition, the text is that which is woven together in words, the material basis of the work, is neutral. It has no value in itself, it is always "the text of a certain work", and in the field of literature, the text has no independence, it must go to the work, and the latter is the place where it belongs.

2 New Criticism (*la nouvelle critique*) here is not the new critics of UK and USA, but the different literary critics movement which emerged after the Second World War. The structuralism is the most important among them.

3 See: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, édition critique et préparée par Tullio de Mauro, Paris, Payot, 1972.

A work is completely different, it belongs to the spiritual world, still in the *Le Petit Robert Dictionary*, a work is defined as "a whole organized by symbols or by materials belonging to an art, which is given shape by the spirit of the creator; a product of literature or art." Unlike a text, the product of all artistic disciplines is called a work and is not limited to literature. In the field of literature, the relationship between the work and the text is peculiar. They seem to be one and the same, e.g., "*The Dream of the Red Chamber*, "the text" and the "work" of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, are in a sense identical; yet they are on different levels, the work being the "other side" of the text, the "other side" of meaning. The work is the "other side" of the text, something meaningful. If the text means the words on the page, then the work signifies the meaning and value beyond the text, and it is this transcendence that makes people call it a "literary work". According to Mikel Dufrenne, the concept of "work" has three aspects. Firstly, there is a certain value system behind the work that "distinguishes the ancient Greek temple of Athena (Parthénon) from other ruins." [9] And this value system was always taken for granted by the people of the time as a given necessity: "The completion of the work always seems to follow some kind of inner necessity (.....) The work, something self-contained, appears there with a certainty that the way of appearing there for people to take in, and all for the pleasure of the viewer." [9] Secondly, there is an author behind the work and it must be the product of a spiritual subject. People evaluate the author based on the value of the work and vice versa. The author is the source of the work, while the work expresses the author's emotions, thoughts and artistic taste. It is a tautological cycle: Lu Xun is great because his works are great; in turn, Lu Xun's works are great because the author has great spirit and art. Thus, when the reader is confronted with the work, the absent one, the author, is always present in some way. Thirdly: a text always becomes a work when there is more than its literal meaning, as Todorov says, "It is the elements of literature to which the description of a work is addressed; the critic tries to give them an exposition." [18] The work is a structure of evocation that looks to the reader to find a deeper meaning in its so-called gaps. In other words, true communication is reached beyond words, on the other side of the spirit, and the text is only a tool to help the reader and the writer meet on this other side. In short, in the traditional literary system, the work is the text plus the value, the author and the interpretation.

The production, circulation and consumption of literature constitute the literary system, and the concepts of "work" and "text" establish a hierarchy of values: the text is low, but at the same time basic and material; the work is high and spiritual -- the ultimate reference of literature is the spirit. In Europe, since the Renaissance, various literary currents have by turns taken center stage, but the order of value between the work and the text is as stable as a mountain, and does not need to be defined or stated, nor can it be contemplated. For Foucault, it is this unthinkable (impensable) order that is at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy and that governs everything else that can be thought about. [10] It was not until the 1960s and 1970s

that the revolution in French literary theory fundamentally introduced a new understanding of the meaning and relationship of these two traditional concepts, creating a major rupture in the idea of literature.

### 3. Text as an Object of Literary Science

After the rise of structuralism, the meaning of the concepts of work and text changed considerably, and we get a glimpse of the semantic confusion of the time. Foucault, for example, uses both concepts in the traditional way in some of his essays, and in speaking of structuralism he says: "In the field of literary analysis, one cannot fail to mention Barthes's work on Racine." [12] In his first lecture at the Collège de France in 1970, however, he pitted "text" against "work" on the same level: "The man who writes a text, in the horizon of which there is always a possible work hovering, takes upon himself again the function of author". [11] How is it to be understood that the text is threatened by a "possible work"? We see here a reversal of the direction of value, where the "work" is transformed from a positive value to a negative one, from a spirit that shines with glory to a threat, because what Foucault is trying to guard against, or rather oppose, is precisely what the notion of "work" implies: "the function of the author". The "function of the author" (fonction de l'auteur) is what Foucault is trying to guard against or oppose. If the traditional literary concept of the author guarantees the spiritual value of the work, in Foucault's view at this time, the author's function is, on the contrary, the control of the meaning of the text, which undermines the richness of the text.

This turn of events took place precisely at the end of the sixties and into the seventies. Perhaps the impact of the French social revolution of '68 on the concept of the text was less direct, yet the social climate created by the young student movement was undoubtedly conducive to the subversion and questioning of traditional thinking that won applause in cultural circles. [8] Barthes' two important essays, "La mort de l'auteur" ("The Death of the Author") [2] and "De l'oeuvre au texte" ("From the Work to the Text") [3], were also important in this regard. They were published in 1968 and 1971 respectively. A striking phenomenon of this period is that the word "work" began to withdraw gradually from literary research and criticism, while "text" became more and more important. At the same time, a series of concepts related to "work" were in crisis, such as author, interpretation, taste, beauty, spirituality, and so on. Foucault proclaimed the "death of the human being", Barthes the "death of the author", and since then the work has also been banished.

The concept of text at this time has two distinct connotations, a distinction that is extremely important for understanding "text". The first is the influence of structuralism. The most significant event in the humanities in the twentieth century was the rise of modern structuralist linguistics, whose methodology constituted the paradigm of the humanities, and the ambition of young scholars to construct, on the basis of the linguistic paradigm, a "scientific study of literature" that could be compared to the natural sciences. Todorov summed up their

quest by stating: "The goal is to study *littérarité*, not literature [.....] One does not study the work, but the potentialities of literary discourse, what makes literary discourse possible: thus, literary studies can become a literary science. study of literature can then become a literary science." [17] Todorov and other young scholars do not deny the value of specific literary works, they just gently set them aside, they do not deny the value of Mallarmé's poetry or Flaubert's novels, they just stop discussing the question.

The introduction of Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* in France aroused great interest among French scholars in the formal analysis of narrative, and in 1966 the journal *Communications* published a special issue on the "structural analysis of narrative" (*Communications* n°8), which caused a sensation. In this issue, however, the objects of study were mostly popular arts and novels, such as James Bond novels and films, which normally do not enjoy much respect. The word "work" is gone, and the eye is filled with linguistic terms: information, encoding, combination, etc. The articles no longer resemble traditional literary criticism. Instead of denouncing the value of the work and raising aesthetic and spiritual questions, as in traditional literary criticism, these essays search for discursive functions and operating principles that are valid for all narrative works. Literary science had to set its object of study as a value-neutral "text", and whether it was Shakespeare or popular fiction that was being studied, they were all texts before science. The text here can be called a text-object.

It is important to note that each specific text of the object text is not important in itself; structuralism transcends the specific work or text, as in the natural sciences, in search of universal laws of literariness that are not valid only for a particular object. In *Truth and Criticism*, Barthes emphasizes that 'the objects of literary science must be redistributed. The author, the work, is merely the starting point of an analysis with language as its field of vision: there can be no science of Dante, of Shakespeare, or of Racine, only a science of discourse.' (Roland Barthes) Thus the all-important "author" of traditional criticism goes up in smoke, as Francois Doss summarizes in *A History of Structuralism*:

Increasingly, the structural nature of the text replaces the inquiry into the process of production, the notion of function replaces the notion of the work, and a Russian formalist perspective is used in literary analyses around the notion of immanence. These different studies were combined by the same plan, that is, a study based on the linguistic model, which, on the one hand, eliminated the role of the subject-creator, which was until then the most important in literature, and, on the other hand, gave primacy to the structure of the text as a whole, a structure whose intrinsic rationality is related to the author's. The structure of the text as a whole is not the same as the structure of the author. The intrinsic rationality of the overall structure has nothing to do with the subjectivity of the author, who does not understand it at the time of writing. [7].

The three aspects that make up the "work", namely value, authorship and aesthetics, are discarded by structuralism, leaving only the text in the field of literature, which has

nothing to do with value, authorship or aesthetics, but only with objective certainty, and which is the ideal object of study for the "sciences". The new paradigm abandons not only the notion of the work, but a whole series of concepts that are closely linked to it: beauty, passion, feeling, genius, creativity..... and introduces another series of concepts into literary theory and criticism: the text, the message, the code, the communication, the discourse, the enunciator, etc. The relationship between the two series mentioned above is superseded by each other, and there is rarely any intersection between them. It is important to note that although the structuralists no longer judge the "value of a work", they do not deny it, but for them the two concepts are at different levels. As a reader of literature, *Les Misérables* is a great work of literature, while as a researcher of literary sciences, *Les Misérables* is regarded as a "text".

#### 4. Texts as Writing Practices

At the end of the sixties there was a new current emerging from the scientific utopia created by structuralism. Kristeva gave a very important lecture at Barthes's seminar in 1966 and published it as "The word, the dialogue and the novel (" Le mot, le dialogue et le roman"), which caused an enormous response. [13] This essay also profoundly influenced her then doctoral supervisor Barthes, who, when writing the thesis "The Concept of the Text" for the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, relied on ideas that in fact came largely from Kristeva.

Barthes, the flag-bearer of structuralism, took a major turn in this period, often called the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism. He abandoned the ambitions of literary science, the metaphysical world of monism could not accommodate colorful literature, the end of science was simplified formulas, which was not in line with Barthes's character as a "writer", and perhaps it was also against the hedonism of literature itself. [21] (The "text" that is the object of scientific research is the single Text in capitals (Barthes himself often used capitals in the early days), whereas literature is a plural lower-case text. In "From Science to Literature", he reflects on his scientific fervor and returns to the world of sensibility, where science cannot solve the problem of "pleasure" and "the role of literature is to express positively to the institution of science what it rejects" [5].

In *S/Z*, he criticizes in a way that no one has done before or since, turning Balzac's so-called classical text into a pioneering writable text. He says of the book that "the battle should be taken a step further, not only to open up the seams of the signifier, on the one hand, and the referent, on the other; but also to break down the idea of the signifier: one might call it *sémioclastie* (sign-destructionism)" [6]. Its goal is not the "real" world, but rather the child-like destructive pleasure and joy, an orgasm ("jouissance") is not the possessive pleasure common in the world of mortals. The work gives pleasure to the reader, and textuality challenges the reader by transgressing and destroying the existing order. Pleasure is the repetition of beauty, while the climax breaks all preconceptions. Literature that fulfils our expectations brings

pleasure, while orgasm comes from transgression:

I am convinced that no signifiante (jouissance) can occur within a culture of the masses, because it is completely different and incompatible with the culture of the masses. This culture is modelled on the petit-bourgeoisie. This is part of our (historical) paradoxical character, which means that the signifiante process (jouissance) is in a situation of extreme alternatives: either in the use of power (as a result of the weakening of bourgeois culture), or in some kind of utopia (a conception of a future culture, originating from a complete, unheard of, unforeseen revolution, which is nowadays known only as one thing by whoever writes about it): It is that, like Moses, one does not enter into it).

The jouissance is non-social. It is the precipitous disappearance of sociality and does not fall back into the subject (subjectivity), the individual, the loner, either: everything is lost and no dribble remains. It is the state of hidden extremes, in the dark places of the cinema. [4]

In fact, although post-structuralists such as Barthes challenged the traditional literary values and institutions in the name of "text", they did not really establish a new value system, or rather, they were caught in a profound value paradox. In *S/Z*, Barthes establishes the text as the antithesis of the "classic," but after his own death, the Barthes's text gradually becomes the classic. Because literature is necessarily a system of values, so the anti-value, as a gesture, eventually becomes a value. This is the fate of various literary trends characterized by "anti-" since the twentieth century. The text referred to by post-structuralism, unlike structuralism, is not a mere object of study, but a textual practice (pratique textuelle). The aim of this practice is no longer to achieve a specific result - a work - but a more mysterious linguistic revolution, which has no definite procedure or method, and is not a book of words, but is fluid, or rather a process of making the whole world of texts fluid. In the entry for "text", Barthes cites Kristeva:

Julia Kristeva's definition of text is based on an epistemological goal: "We define the Text as a hyper-linguistic device that redistributes the categories of language, linking the speech that would have been used for the direct transmission of a message to other previous or contemporaneous speech....." [15] Thereafter, one no longer moves from text to work, but from work to text, for it is the text that defines the work, [.....] the text makes it possible to determine the value of the work on the basis of the intensity of its signifying processes (signifiante). [7]

The signifying processes referred to here is not the making and determining of meanings, but precisely the subversion of meanings and the possibility of making them always subject to a constant redistribution. The text is strongly re-associated with value, because one no longer follows the literary scientist: "whatever criticism can pick any object", but even utters the very peculiar expression in French: there is some text in a certain work (il y a du texte). The notion of text is sanctified like the notion of work in the past. In "The Productivity of the Text", Kristeva argues that the work is only a consumer product [14] and that the text implies a truly valuable

production. "The relationship between the work and the text is completely reversed: the work was once a literary entity and the text a phenomenon; now the text becomes an entity and the work a phenomenon. The latter is palpable, material, it occupies a concrete space, whereas the former is instead invisible and untouchable because it is only in language, and the text is not a product, but production." [22]

Overall, both structuralist and post-structuralist conceptions of the text are products of the linguistic turn in the humanities. The latter's conception of the text is also based on the former, and the post-structuralist conception of the text was only established when Saussure's linguistics and structuralist poetics attempted to separate the connection between discourse and the external world.

Having traced the rise of the concept of "text" in the field of literary theory, we find that the use of the term text in the humanities is much more generalized today than in the past, and seldom has a stronger literary revolutionary or rebellious overtone. The age of theory has dwindled, and the revolutionary ideas that were implicit in the replacement of the work by the term text in the last century have either become a theoretical legacy or have faded away, and sometimes are simply another alternative to the term work, without necessarily implying a change of method or literary conception. It has also gradually become a generic term in all kinds of humanities disciplines and is not limited to literature. Film, music, painting, photography and other things that are regarded as carriers of meaning can be called text, this word breaks the distinction between linguistic and other means of expression, semiotics treats them all as symbols, the concept of text is constructed as a platform for the transformation, exchange and mutation of meanings, which provides more possibilities for the discourse of different disciplines to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue. On the one hand, it can cover all meaningful phenomena, but at the same time, it is not like the "work" that already has a predetermined value judgement. The word "text" presupposes "meaning", so text implies a call for "interpretation", especially when one uses the word in the non-linguistic realm. For example, when one calls a painting a "text", it means that one emphasizes the meaning of the painting and its connection with other systems of meaning, rather than just the appreciation and aesthetics of its appearance.

## 5. The Concept of "Text" in the Chinese Context

The concept of text, entered Chinese literary discourse with the wave of structuralism after the 1980s, and did not become a key word until after the 1990s. The acceptance of the concept of text in the Chinese context has a special travelling path. First of all, there was no word corresponding to text in Chinese, and the Chinese literary discourse created two words to translate it, one is 文本 and the other is 本文. After nearly twenty years of discussion and controversy, the mainstream of academia finally chose the first as the translation of text.

These phenomena show that there is no word in Chinese that corresponds exactly to text in terms of meaning, and what is more troublesome is that there is no category that corresponds to text in the traditional Chinese context. Mr. Fu Xiuyan once tried to discuss the Chinese "text idea" [20] in his book "Textology", but this is a misinterpretation. Because the semantic basis for the formation of the Western concept of text in the 1960s and 1970s was the difference and opposition between "text" and "work", without which the transformation from "work to text" would not have been possible. Without this opposition, the transformation from "work to text" would not be possible. In Chinese, however, there is no "work" which is different from and opposed to "text", which not only makes it difficult to translate, but also makes it difficult for us to understand the revolutionary significance of the concept of text in French theory.

The concept of text entered Chinese literary literature with the translation of structuralism and post-structuralism on the one hand, and Reception Aesthetics and New Criticism on the other. In fact, the use of the concept of "text" in Reception Aesthetics and New Criticism is basically in line with the traditional usage of the western language, and in "On Literary Reception", published in 1983 by *Studies in Literary Theory*, Feng Hanjin, the translator, specifically commented on the term "text": "Reception theory calls a work that has not been read and examined by the reader a 'text', and only after it has been read and examined is it called a 'work'." [16] This is about the first time that the difference between the use of the concepts of "text" and "work" is explicitly stated in a literary translation. Reception aesthetics has been quite popular in China since the end of the last century, and its division between the terms text and work is the main approach accepted by contemporary Chinese literary criticism.

When Anglo-American New Criticism re-entered China in the 1980s, it was not really "new", but after a long period of isolation from Western thought, it was a refreshing change for the Chinese literary criticism community. 1984 saw the translation of *Theory of Literature*, a book co-authored by Wellek and Warren, [19] into China, where it quickly gained a high status, followed by Mr. Zhao Yiheng's introduction of the "New Criticism. A specific formal literary theory". [25] The connection between the concept of text and the New Criticism lies in the fact that "close reading" is commonly translated as "textual close reading" in China, and that the New Criticism "puts more emphasis on the analysis of the text of the work, and goes deeper into the interior of the literary work, reaching the realm of meticulous and in-depth". [24] However, the term itself has little to do with "text" in the original English, and has nothing to do with the structuralist concept of text. The New Criticism's view of literature was in fact more conservative, in opposition to the subversive values of French theory, for which the expression of beauty and spirituality was, of course, at the heart of literature.

After years of separation between China and the West, New Criticism, Receptionist Aesthetics, and French Theory have entered the Chinese literary and critical discourse with the new concept of "text," which has easily caused confusion in

the Chinese literary community. Chinese scholars also often use the term in different senses, and although they can find correspondences with Western theories, there are not without differences. Most of the time, if the term text is not used within the framework of structuralism and post-structuralism, it is actually a somewhat fashionable synonym for "work," which emphasizes the attention to the language of the literary work itself, and which does not, as in the case of receptive aesthetics, treat the text as an objective basis for the aesthetic prior to the aesthetic, nor does it imply subversive value, as in the case of post-structuralism.

## 6. Conclusion

After the revolutionary impact of French theories in the 1960s and 1970s, the relationship between the concepts of text and work has changed, but with the ebbing of theories, the concept of text is no longer a term of strong value. In the contemporary discourse of Chinese literary criticism, it is often used as a synonym for "work", but with more emphasis on the close reading of the text. The absence of a text-work dichotomy in the Chinese tradition creates an obstacle in our understanding of the meaning of the emergence of the text, and clarifying the origins of the concept helps us to grasp this theoretical and discursive phenomenon, as well as a series of concepts related to the notion of the text, such as writing, intertextuality, subversion, re-writing, pheno-texte, geno-texte, and so on. At the same time, the notion of text assumes an outward expansion of the discourse of literary criticism, in which everything that can be "expressed" can be taken as a text, and the world is a text, thus providing a cross-disciplinary possibility for the critical discourse of cultural studies, and making it possible for cross-disciplines to converge.

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