

# Terry Eagleton's Re-writing of Postmodernism

**Dalia Bakr Abdel-Aal**

*Assistant Professor Al-Asyah College of Science and Arts  
QASSIM UNIVERSITY*

**Abstract:**

It is apparent from Eagleton's critique of Postmodernism that he criticized the features of the postmodern enterprise less than criticizing the postmodern enhancement of 'the system', that is the late Capitalism. Therefore, it is explicitly a critique of the late Capitalism that implies a proposition of another system, may be a new justification which requires a re-consideration of the Marxist project. Ironically enough, despite being the foremost Marxist critic who is explicitly opposed to Postmodernism, Eagleton makes use of some of the postmodern techniques in some of his works in

order to redirect the attention to the Marxist enterprise. As a matter of fact, he uses the postmodern techniques only to deconstruct them. As a true Marxist theorist and critic, Eagleton uses and abuses the postmodernist trajectory. Hence, not only does he attack Postmodernism from outside as a sincere Marxist, but he also abuses it from inside under the cloak of a postmodernist writer

**Keywords:**

Terry Eagleton – Postmodernism-  
Marxism - Late Capitalism  
Literary Theory - Critical Theory -  
Cultural Theory

كاتب من كتاب ما بعد الحداثة.

الكلمات الدالة:

تري إيجلتون - ما بعد الحداثة -  
الماركسية - الرأسمالية حديثة العهد -  
نظرية الأدب - نظرية النقدي - نظرية  
الثقافة

#### الملخص:

من خلال دراسة نقد تري إيجلتون  
لمدرسة ما بعد الحداثة يتضح أنه انتقد  
تدعيم مشروع ما بعد الحداثة للنظام  
القائم وهو الرأسمالية حديثة العهد أكثر  
من أنتقاده لخصائص مشروع ما بعد  
الحداثة ذاته. وهكذا فإن النقد الواضح  
للرأسمالية حديثة العهد يتضمن في طياته  
طرح نظام بديل وهو تبرير يتطلب إعادة  
النظر للمشروع الماركسي. ومما يدعو إلي  
السخرية أن إيجلتون - والذي يعتبر أول  
ناقد ماركسي يعارض بوضوح مشروع ما  
بعد الحداثة - يستخدم بعضاً من  
أساليب ما بعد الحداثة في بعض أعماله  
من أجل إعادة توجيه الاهتمام إلي المشروع  
الماركسي. في حقيقة الأمر نجد أن إيجلتون  
يستخدم أساليب ما بعد الحداثة فقط من  
أجل هدمها. وحيث إنه منظر وناقد  
ماركسي مخلص لمدرسته حق الإخلاص  
فلقد استخدم إيجلتون مشروع ما بعد  
الحداثة في بعض من أعماله من أجل  
أفساده. ومن ثم فهو لم يكتفي بمهاجمة  
مشروع ما بعد الحداثة من الخارج  
كما ركزي صادق العهد بمدرسته ولكنه  
أيضاً أفسدها من الداخل تحت عباءة

#### Introduction:

It is apparent from  
Eagleton's critique of  
Postmodernism that he criticized  
the features of the postmodern  
enterprise less than criticizing the  
postmodern enhancement of 'the  
system', that is the late Capitalism.  
Therefore, it is explicitly a critique  
of the late Capitalism that implies  
a proposition of another system,  
may be a new justification which  
requires a re-consideration of the  
Marxist project. Ironically enough,  
despite being the foremost Marxist  
critic who is explicitly opposed to  
Postmodernism, Eagleton makes  
use of some of the postmodern  
techniques in some of his works in

order to redirect the attention to the Marxist enterprise. As a matter of fact, he uses the postmodern techniques only to deconstruct them. As a true Marxist theorist and critic, Eagleton uses and abuses the postmodernist trajectory. Hence, not only does he attack Postmodernism from outside as a sincere Marxist, but he also abuses it from inside under the cloak of a postmodernist writer.

\* \* \*

There is no doubt that Terry Eagleton (b. Feb.22, 1943 - ) has a great influential impact on the theoretical formations and critical practice of the literary and cultural theory in the Twentieth Century. Describing by *the Guardian* as not only “the grand old man of British literary theory”, but also “the best known and the most influential academic critic in Britain” (2002),

Eagleton’s publications vary from academic to popular works, including a play, an autobiography, and a novel. As the most significant and prolific figure in contemporary British literary criticism, when we examine a volume of critical writings by Terry Eagleton we can realize that no one explains critical theory with greater clarity and cogency than he does. Hence, his theoretical and critical achievements elevate him to that distinction which he himself reserved for his forefather Raymond Williams ‘the single most important critic of postwar Great Britain’.

To call Eagleton the most gifted Marxist thinker of his generation is only a slender acknowledgement of his critical and creative achievements. There is simply no other cultural critic

writing today who can match his popularity or his prolific output. His work has made an impact on the teaching of literary and cultural studies throughout Europe, and in almost every part of the world including China, Japan, India, Russia, Australia, Canada and the United States. For the post-1970 generation of students, researchers and teachers currently engaged in literary and cultural studies in Britain, Eagleton is the critic par excellence. The appeal of his work stems, in part, from the bold enquiry he has launched into the origins and aims of English Studies, and from a closely related and equally relentless questioning of the functions of criticism today. Almost single-handedly he has transformed the very nature of critical discourse, breaking down distinction between critical and

creative writings, between academic seriousness and popular comedy, and generally making criticism a more companionable and hospitable domain.

For over thirty years Eagleton has been steadfast in this commitment to the socialist transformation of class society, however outdated or obdurate that idea might seem amidst more fashionable postmodern pursuits. It is more than a shade ironic. Therefore, his critics seem to delight in the scandalous suggestion that Eagleton keeps changing his mind. At every stage of Eagleton's engagement with theory, there is also a critical transformation of theory, an ability to use its insights and perspectives in the interest of a radical socialist politics. Terry Eagleton's critical career falls roughly into three phases. The first phase, which

ends in 1970, shows the influence of his mentor, Raymond Williams. Works such as *Shakespeare and Society* (1967) belong to this period and show a marked sociological tendency. In the second phase, Eagleton comes directly under the impact of French Marxism and looks at literature as an ideological institution. To this phase belong works like *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976), *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), and *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990). The third phase marks a return to the cultural theory of Williams as well as textual criticism as shown by works like *The Idea of Culture* (2000) and *After Theory* (2003). Eagleton's major contribution as a critic is his lucid introduction of literary theory into English criticism.

Since the context of the Marxist canon constitutes his major preoccupation, it is the notable contributions of Eagleton in the development in the Marxist movement that has established him as the foremost Marxist critic of the recent time. Eagleton's Marxist criticism emerges out of the tremendous influence of the philosophical writings of Althusser. There was a considerable theoretical shift of thought from socialist humanism to Althusserian 'science of the text'. Moreover, recognizing the great impact of a number of Post-Structuralist theories on literary studies, Eagleton performed a radical shift from Althusserian scientific approach towards the revolutionary thoughts of Brecht and Benjamin which enables him to produce his mode of 'revolutionary criticism'. On the

same track, Eagleton utilized Lacan's Freudian theories, Derrida's Deconstructive philosophy, and feminist approach to postmodernize his 'revolutionary criticism'. The employment of some of such characteristics and techniques in his writings, along with his obdurate commitment to Marxism, established his interdisciplinary approach that combines the social and political phenomena in the context of literary and cultural theory which, consequently, enables him to create a distinctive version of Marxism.

In his prominent Marxist critique to Postmodernism, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996), Eagleton describes the contemporary world as an "appalling mess" (ix). Such chaos, according to Eagleton, was initiated by Capitalism, which he

defines as "the most pluralistic order history has ever known, restlessly transgressing boundaries and dismantling oppositions, pitching together diverse life-forms and continually overflowing the measure" (133). During the Twentieth Century, Capitalism, for Eagleton, "became the new foundation for social cohesion" since "the middle class or bourgeoisie began to focus on business in favour of the metaphysical" as a result of Nietzsche's destructive pronouncement of 'the death of God' "which allowed the individual to subscribe to their own religious, political and cultural ideologies (if any) which were previously used by states as oppressive tools" (2014).

Such characteristics of the late Capitalism seem perfectly compatible with some of the

distinctive features of Postmodernism which was defined by Jameson as “the cultural logic of late capitalism” (1991, 46). Since Postmodernism preceded late Capitalism and, arguably, contributed to its rise, Eagleton regards Postmodernism as a kind of “straw-targeting” or “caricaturing its opponent’s position” (1996, viii) and accuses it of complicity with the late Capitalism, and thus lacking any critical force. It is not only Eagleton, but many other Neo-Marxists who shared the same general view of accusing postmodernists of being “always already complicit in the system” (Sim, 166) they criticize. In sum, the main charge against late Capitalism and Postmodernism, in plainly Marxist terms, is that the infrastructure does not generate the superstructure.

In his *The Illusion of Postmodernism*, Eagleton is concerned “less with the more *recherché* formulations of postmodern philosophy than with the culture or milieu or even sensibility of postmodernism as a whole” (viii). This indicates that Eagleton is more interested in displaying the historical context of the political, economic, social, and cultural background out of which Postmodernism has been emerged, rather than with investigating the philosophical roots embedded in the postmodern thought. Throughout his book, Eagleton sets out to expose the illusion of Postmodernism through his subtle grounded argument, devastating gifts for irony and satire, commitment to the ethical and inspiring social engagement, and sharp refusal to acquiesce in the

“appalling mess” of the contemporary world.

In his well-known article “The Contradictions of Postmodernism” (1997), Eagleton states that “postmodernism is both radical and conservative together, springing as it does from [the] structural contradiction at the core of advanced capitalism itself”. Thus, the contradiction of Postmodernism is mainly due to the contradiction of the late capitalism. He elaborates the very contradiction of the late Capitalism, and of Postmodernism as well, as follows:

*The more market forces level all distinct value and identity to arbitrary, aleatory, relative, hybrid, interchangeable status, confounding fixed ontologies, mocking high-toned teleologies, and*

*kicking all solid foundations from beneath themselves, the more their ideological superstructures ... will need to insist ... upon absolute values and immutable standards, assured grounds and unimpeachable goals, the eternal givenness of a human nature which is mutating before their very eyes, the universal status of values which are being exposed as historically partial even as we speak (4).*

Eagleton’s argument about Postmodernism is based on two fundamental, however opposing, premises which emphasize the contradiction of the overall postmodern movement. According to his argument, Postmodernism is conservative because it lacks the

resources to produce change (1996, 135). As a matter of fact, what distinguished Postmodernism from other movement is its pronounced political dimension. Hence, Eagleton describes Postmodernism as a political project without any “substantial change” on its agenda (95). Thus, he situated Postmodernism inside “the unbreachable system” of the late Capitalism which it mainly aimed to criticize. Incapable to challenge “the system” (2), the conservative character of Postmodernism clearly outweighs its political dimension. Hence, the radical aspirations of the postmodern enterprise to elicit political change resulted in a conservative tendency which legitimate, rather than challenging, “the system”. Eagleton condemns Postmodernism for its:

*Cultural relativism, moral conventionalism, its skepticism, pragmatism, and localism, its distaste for ideas of solidarity and disciplined organization, its lack of any adequate theory of political agency. (1996, 134)*

Since Eagleton defines Postmodernism as “a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation” (1996,vii), thus, it is a mode of interrogation that aims at problematizing the epistemological assumptions whose distinctive characteristics are anti-totality, anti-hierarchy, anti-essentialism, and anti-tetology (93-120). Indissolubly connected to the late Capitalism, yet potentially subversive if “the

system” is not compatible with its demands, Postmodernism has redefined the human being as unstable subject, created a vacuum of moral and social values through its abolition of the concept of absolute truth that shaped the political and social reality of the Twentieth Century.

The postmodern principle of the negation of totality, according to Eagleton, results in the failure of Postmodernism to acknowledge “the system” in the first place, which is the prerequisite for challenging it. Furthermore, such negation of totality involves a liberation from commitments which could enable postmodern subjects to totally undermine “the system” through engaging in a particular radical action. Also, the negation of totality implies the fragmentation of the postmodern subject who loses a clearly defined

identity that suggests his incapability to produce change, and, consequently, to engage in any political action. Hence, Postmodernism legitimate “the system” rather than challenging it as it had previously claimed to aspire. As the incapability to perform any political change suggests the perpetuation of the status-quo.

Furthermore, the postmodern preoccupation with marginal issues such as sexuality, race, gender, language, subjectivity, and identity deliberately redirects the worldwide attention from the truly significant issues to those of secondary importance which, indeed, do not threaten “the system”. Thus, feminism and ethnicity – which Eagleton confesses to credit Postmodernism with some strength especially its

works on identity-thinking and the dangers of totality – are popular postmodern obsessions not because they are significant challenges to Postmodernism but because they are not radical ones. Regarded by Eagleton as the single most enduring achievement, Postmodernism firmly established the questions of sexuality, gender, feminism, race, and ethnicity on its political agenda. For him, Postmodernism only substitutes the more classical forms of radical politics which deal with class, state, ideology, revolution, and material modes of production with less radical ones. In fact, such displacement from pure politics to marginal issues does not indicate that this older political issues have been disappeared or resolved, rather Postmodernism aims at edging them from its political agenda. Once again,

Postmodernism reinforces the confirmation of “the system”, as Eagleton illustrates that:

*The politics of postmodernism, then, have been at once enrichment and evasion. If they have opened up vital new political questions, it is partly because they have beat an undignified retreat from older political issues – not because they have disappeared or have been resolved, but because they are for the moment proving intractable. ...Feminism and ethnicity are popular today ... because they are not necessarily anti-capitalist and fit well enough with a post-radical age. (1996, 25)*

In addition, a major aim of Postmodernism is the gradual loss of traditional values essential to

the human life like the belief in an ultimate truth legitimating existence. Hence, the postmodern insisting rejection of ultimate truth, fixed reality and objective knowledge leads to relativism and disorientation which greatly contributes to the well-functioning of “the system”. Again and again, Postmodernism enhances the consolidation of “the system”. Eagleton states that:

*Its nervous of such concepts as truth has alarmed the bishops and charmed the business executives, just as its compulsion to replace words like ‘reality’ in scare quotes unsettles the pious Bürger in the bosom of his family but is music to his ears in his advertising agency. (1996, 28)*

Consequently, Postmodernism is a provocative movement which in spite of its incapability to perform any meaningful political action, it possesses a fascinating power to persuade oneself that any totality one might fight against is actually illusory. Thus, the postmodern subjects lack any ability to distinguish between truth and false simply because there is no truth in the first place, just several individual interpretations according to everyone’s view of the world. Reality and appearance are one, so that what you see is the truth. Truth, for Postmodernism, is a question of who can practice the most persuasive rhetoric. In the postmodern mode of thought, the individual is a self-fashioning creature whose supreme achievement is to treat himself as a work of art.

One of the major reasons for Eagleton's hostile attitude towards Postmodernism is his established commitment to Marxism. As Marxism has failed to develop throughout time in order to be 'an authoritarian theory' that could be able to impose its own theories and its own version of truth on the critical field. Thus, the failure of the Marxist grand narrative contributes to the ascendancy of Postmodernism (Sim, 12). On the other hand, the opponents of Postmodernism consider it as a kind of "an update version of skepticism" whose ultimate aim is to attack other theories related to truth without "set[ting] up a positive theory of its own" (13). As a result of the purposelessness of Postmodernism, Eagleton announces the end of theory in his *After Theory* (2003). In this book, he stresses that the current cultural

theory of Postmodernism is extremely orthodox, referring to its inability to perform any political change, to the point that it lost its connection to our everyday social and political situation. He states that "I do not believe that this orthodoxy addresses itself to questions searching enough to meet the demands of our political situation" (ix).

Another major difference between Postmodernism and Marxism is their distinct attitudes towards the notion of the self. Whereas Postmodernism considers the self as a language-based social construction without any fixed or stable identity, Eagleton refers to the importance of the existence of an individual identity to the human self as if there were no individual self, there would be no free will and choice. Also, Postmodernism and Marxism differ in their

perceptions of the reflexivity of language. While Postmodernism thinks that the text stands only for itself, Marxism searches for an underlying truth beneath the surface appearance. For Eagleton, the literary text does not only reflect textual reality, but also represents or misrepresents other extra-textual realities. Therefore, he rejects the notion that “a text has a value in itself” (1983, 11) and suggests that “Marxist criticism analyses literature in terms of historical conditions which produce it; and it needs, similarly, to be aware of its own [current] historical conditions” (1976b, vi).

Aiming to illustrate the function of ideology throughout the literary text, the foremost Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton begins with the search for the historical factors which

have contributed to the production of the text in the first place. Selden, Widdowson and Brooker elaborate Eagleton’s view in his *Criticism and Ideology* as follow:

*texts do not reflect historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an effect of the ‘real’. The text may appear to be free in its relation to reality (it can invent characters and situations at will), but it is not free in its use of ideology. ‘Ideology’ here refers not to all formulated doctrines but to all those systems of representation (aesthetic, religious, judicial and others) which shape the individual’s mental picture of lived experience. The meanings and perceptions produced in the text are a reworking of ideology’s own*

*working of reality. (Selden and  
Widdowson, 2005, 101)*

Moreover, the approach to history constitutes a great difference between Postmodernism and Marxism. Firstly, history and literature, for the Marxist criticism, are the components of the superstructure while social, historical, and ideological conditions are the components of the infrastructure. Secondly, history and literature are the outcome of the social, historical, and ideological conditions. Thirdly, the Marxist evolutionary approach to history based on class-struggle and aimed at evoking a socialist revolution whose main purpose is the rise of classless society. On the other hand, Postmodernism aggressively rejects the evolutionary approach to history and accuses Marxism of being illusory. Consequently, in

his attempt to prove the illusion of Postmodernism, Eagleton elaborates that Postmodernism believes in the discontinuous, random nature of history and accuses it of being ahistorical (1996, 51).

From all these reciprocal accusations, it is apparent that both movements are intensely concerned with the past but with different purposes. While Marxism exposes the evolution of societies from one stage to another throughout history, Postmodernism is interested in offering various versions of history depending on its notion of plurality. For Eagleton, there is certain historical moment which initiated the general ideology responsible for the production of the literary text.

Another significant feature of Postmodernism which asserts

the contradiction of the movement is the correlation between history and fiction. Since history, according to Postmodernism, is neither fixed nor stable, so it is various linguistic constructions which differ according to the author's point of view. Thus, there is no total account of history but several histories. Moreover, it is impossible, for Postmodernism, to provide a continuous objective history, instead it proposes discontinuous subjective fragmentations of some events of history. Hutcheon indicates that:

*like fiction, history constructs its objects, that events named become facts and thus both do and do not retain their status outside language. This is the paradox of postmodernism. The past really did exist, but we can only know it today through its*

*textual traces, its often complex and indirect representations in the present: documents, archives, but also photographs, paintings, architecture, films, and literature. (1991, 78)*

On the same track, Marshall confirms the non-linear, discontinuous histories of Postmodernism which differ according to the ideological message that an author wants to deliver to his audience. She illustrates that:

*Postmodernism is about histories not told, retold, untold. History as it never was. Histories forgotten, hidden, invisible, considered unimportant, changed, eradicated. It's about the refusal to see history as linear, as leading straight up to today in some recognizable*

*pattern-all set for us to make sense of it. It's about chance. It's about power. It's about information. And more information. And more. And. And that's just a little bit about what postmodernism [is]. (4)*

In its attempt to cover the fictional formations of history, Postmodernism uses certain devices which emphasize that history is a merely fragmented literary construction that differ in its representation from one author to another according to his intended ideological conviction. For Postmodernism, history is constructed according to the intended ideology of the dominant powers which they aim to deliver to their people. Through its use of irony, parody, and self-reflexivity, –which are mainly modernist

devices that have been modified to fit the postmodern thought – Postmodernism stresses the lack of distinction between fact and fiction as such distinction is relative. Since history is represented through language so history is the product of the limits of our use of language, thus history is what is represented by our language; this summarizes the postmodern approach towards language. Furthermore, the incomplete, fragmented postmodern representations of history evoke the engagement of the audience in order to participate in completing the missing parts according to their own convictions. Such evocation, furthermore, increases the fragmentation of postmodern representations of history.

According to Eagleton, Postmodernism merged history

and fiction in order to create the mode of irony. This postmodern mode of irony is the reason beneath “what condemns postmodernism to triviality and kitsch” (Hutcheon 1991, 18). For the opponents of Postmodernism, including Eagleton, the mode of irony is fundamentally “anti-serious”, while postmodernists intentionally employ it because it is the only serious approach to the past since “The reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and limitation of the inescapably discursive form of that knowledge” (Hutcheon 1988, 127). Moreover, the postmodern mode of irony enhances the postmodern notion of the indeterminacy of language as it is difficult to decide whether a statement is intentionally ironical

by its author or it was only ironically interpreted by its reader. Also, readers themselves differ in their interpretations of the same statement: some of them can interpret it ironically while others can not.

Worthy of mention is Eagleton’s dealing with the notion of the postmodern subject “whose body is integral to its identity” (1996, 69). For Eagleton, the postmodern preoccupation with the body displaces radical politics. Such preoccupation asserts the materiality of the postmodern thought since it concentrates on the concrete body of the human subject as opposite to the humanist approach which concentrates on his abstract soul. In fact, it is a shift from the body as the locus of the phenomenological subject to the body as the total determination of the subject. In brief, it is,

according to Eagleton, a shift “from the body as subject to the body as object” (71). Therefore, Postmodernism centralizes the body as being the main construction of the identity of the human self. For Eagleton, the performance of a significantly transformative action demands the existence of a unified human subject with a reasonably secure identity in the first place. This implies an ethical accusation to the postmodern thought which is morally irresponsible to the importance of the role of ethical in the formation of the human identity. Eagleton refutes this postmodern conviction as follows:

*What is special about the human body, then, is its capacity to transform itself in the process of transforming the material bodies around it. ... But if the body is a self-*

*transformative practice, then it is not identical with itself in the manner of corpses or carpets, and this is a claim that soul language was trying to make. It is just that such language located this non-self-identity in the body's having an invisible extra which is the real me, rather than viewing the real me as a creative interaction with my world. (72)*

Inextricably bound to the notion of the subject is the postmodern oppositional pairing of nature/culture which constitutes an important part of the postmodern thought. According to the radical universalism of the Enlightenment, since all individuals share the same common human nature, all of them have equal rights: every individual is endowed with freedom,

autonomy, justice, and political equality. Eagleton argues that Postmodernism suffers from a 'holophobia': a fear from universality and totality which he considered to be its main charge. He states that "postmodernism is quite mistaken to believe, with Hegel rather than Marx, that all objectification are tantamount to alienation" (74). With its paralysing skepticism, Postmodernism valorizes the postmodern subject in the prison of culture with the help of the so-called "new somatics". In fact, this resulted in the increasing loss of subjectivity as the body becomes a mere object. Eagleton states that "the new somatics ... risks dispelling subjectivity itself as no more than a humanist myth" (75). As a severe reaction and absolute rejection against the natural, biological, and abstract

nature of the existence of the modernist stable human subject, Postmodernism reduces the existence of the self-identity of its postmodern subject to an immanent culturalism. Therefore, it is the external various forces of one's own culture, rather than his own biological nature, that constitutes the self-identity of the postmodern subject.

For Eagleton, Postmodernism is a form of culturalism as it refuses to recognize that the common social and political ground is more important for the emancipation of the different ethnic groups than their cultural differences. According to Eagleton, Postmodernism underestimates nature in favour of culture. In his refutation of this point, Eagleton illustrates that there are no non-cultural human beings not because

culture exists everywhere around us, but because culture belongs to our nature. He states that:

*It is important to see, as postmodernism largely does not, that we are not 'cultural' rather than 'natural' creatures, but cultural beings by virtue of our nature, which is to say by virtue of the sorts of bodies we have and the kind of the world to which they belong. Because we are all born prematurely, unable to look after ourselves, our nature contains a yawning abyss into which culture must instantly move, otherwise we would die. ...*

*Because postmodern thought is nervous of the natural, ... it tends to overlook the way in which humans are cuspied between nature and*

*culture ..., and brusquely reduces them to the latter. Culturalism is quite as much a form of reductionism as biologism, or economism, words at the sound of which all stout postmodernists have been trained to make the vampire sign. (1996, 72-74)*

As contradiction exists at the heart of the postmodernist enterprise, the postmodern decentring of the human subject, destabilizing of his self-identity, and subjecting him to various forms of exploitation at the hands of 'the system', that is late Capitalism, contradicts with the postmodern notion of 'difference' which considered the major achievement of the postmodern enterprise because it gives political voice to the marginalized. While the postmodern notion of the self

proposes a fragmented, unstable representation of the human subject, difference can not be flourished under exploitation since it necessarily requires a universal notion of humanity. For Eagleton, it is not Postmodernism which destabilized and decentred the human self, rather it is the late Capitalism which did that for considerable reasons. The deconstructed postmodern subject is capable of performing various types of subversions of the dominant social values and beliefs, but incapable of performing an emancipatory action for a respectable goal of transforming society in any meaningful way. On the other hand, Socialism, according to Eagleton, goes further and performs emancipatory actions at the level of human reciprocity. For Eagleton, the performance of any significantly

transformative action requires a unified human self as rebellion could not succeed if human agents are not self-identical enough to carry it through.

### **Works Cited**

#### **Primary Sources**

- Eagleton, Terry. *Shakespeare and Society: Studies in Shakespearian Drama*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*. London: Verso, 1976a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1976b.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. UK: Blackwell Publishers LTd, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Function of Criticism. From Spectator to*

*Postmodernism*. London & New York: Verso, 1984.

- \_\_\_\_\_ . “Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism” in *Against The Grain: Essays 1975-1985*. London and New York: Verso, 1991, pp. 131-147.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . “The Contradictions of Postmodernism” in *New Literary History*, Vol. 28, No 1, 1997, pp. 1-6.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Eagleton Reader*. Ed. Stephen Regan. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *After Theory*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . “Postmodernism is to blame for religious fundamentalism, Professor Terry Eagleton tells students”. December 3, 2014.

<http://trinitynews.ie/postmodernism-is-to-blame-for-religious-fundamentalism-says-professor-terry-eagleton/>

### **Secondary Sources**

- Hutcheon, L. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Jameson, F. *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. New York: Duke UP, 1991.
- Marshall, Brenda k. *Teaching Postmodernism: Fiction and Theory*. Great Britain: Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc., 1992.
- Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, Peter Brooker. 5th ed. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary*

*Theory*. Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2005.

- Sim, S. *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Wroe, Nicholas. "High Priest of lit crit" in *The Guardian Profile*. Feb.2, 2002.