



Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture

By Terry Eagleton

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When James Joyce called the Irish “the most belated race in Europe,” he stated a complex truth about the history of his people and the nation they had been creating since the eighteenth century. The Irish would, in Joyce’s lifetime, write many masterpieces of modernism in English, while at the same time forging a nation-state in many ways still backward-looking and traditionalist.

This paradox of Irish history is one of the many topics addressed in Terry Eagleton’s latest book. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* reads Irish culture from Swift and Burke to Yeats and Joyce in the light of the tortuous, often tragic socio-political history that conditioned it.

Eagleton opens with a brilliant conjugation of *Wuthering Heights* in the context of the famine in Ireland, highlighting the Irish connections of the Brontë family. He follows with a powerful analysis of the Protestant Ascendancy’s failure to achieve hegemony in Ireland; a dissection of the paradoxes of the Act of Union; a detailed account, spanning fiction from Swift and Maria Edgeworth, through Lady Morgan, Maturin, Le Fanu and Stoker, to George Moore, of why the realist novel never flourished in Ireland; and a pointed consideration of the two great Irish exiles, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. The book also looks at the radical culture of Ulster and the cultural politics of nineteenth-century Ireland.

Drawing culture, writing and history together in a bold configuration, Eagleton changes the contours of Irish criticism and intervenes powerfully in Irish historical debate.

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Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture By Terry Eagleton Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2416423 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Verso
- Published on: 1996-10-17
- Released on: 1996-10-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x .75" w x 7.40" l, 1.24 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 368 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

“[*Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*] is not merely a series of studies on Irish culture, but one of the most noteworthy contributions to it in recent times.”—*London Review of Books*

“Absorbing and original”—*Sunday Telegraph*

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“Erudite and ingenious.”—*Spectator*

“Provoking in the best sense, and written with wit, passion, sophistication and brio a brilliant tour de force.”—*Independent*

“Terry Eagleton has not just produced an impressive cultural history or reunited the literary and the political, he has provided a frame through which Britain and Ireland can re-vision a shared and savage past. In doing so, Eagleton has confirmed his standing as second to none among cultural critics writing in the English language today.”—*Guardian*

“This is Eagleton at his best: lucid, original and witty.”—*Times Literary Supplement*

About the Author

Terry Eagleton is Professor of Cultural Theory and John Rylands Fellow, University of Manchester. His other books include *Ideology*; *The Function of Criticism*; *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*; *Against the Grain*; *Walter Benjamin*; and *Criticism and Ideology*, all from Verso.

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