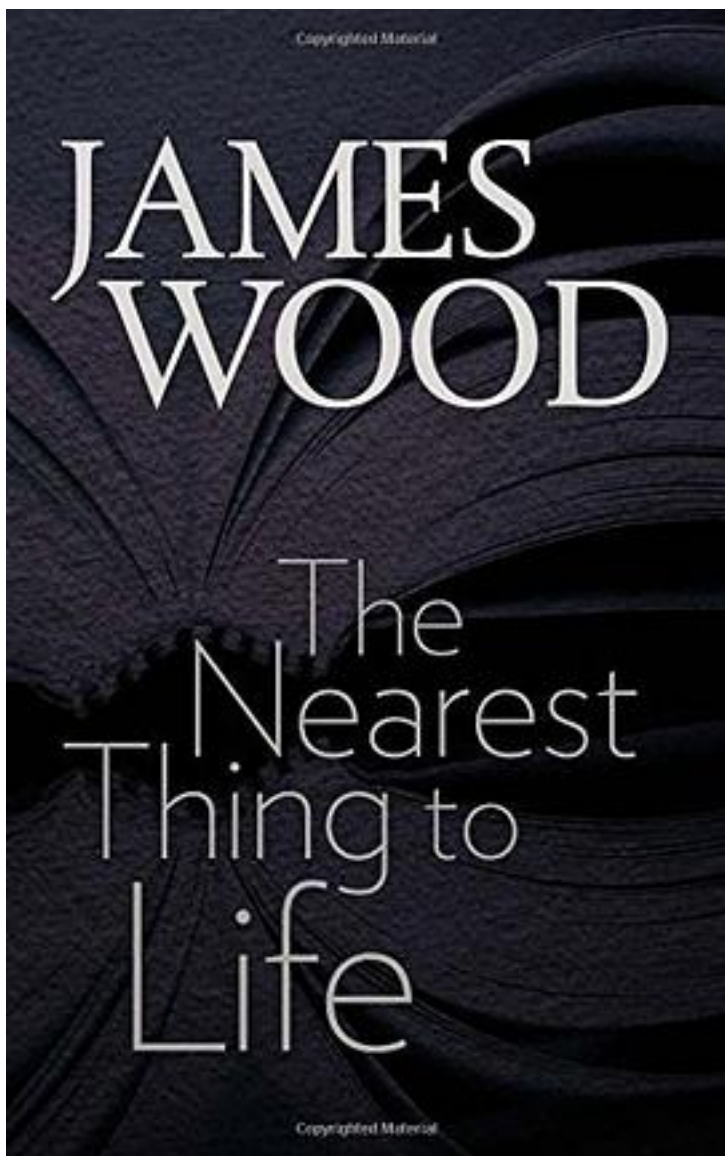


# The Nearest Thing to Life



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著者:James Wood

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In this remarkable blend of memoir and criticism, James Wood has written a master class on the connections between fiction and life. He argues that, of all the arts, fiction has a unique ability to describe the shape of our lives, and to rescue the texture of those lives from death and historical oblivion. The act of reading is understood here as the most sacred and personal of activities, and there are brilliant discussions of individual works – among others, Chekhov’s story ‘The Kiss’, W.G. Sebald’s *The Emigrants*, and Fitzgerald’s *The Blue Flower*.

Wood reveals his own intimate relationship with the written word: we see the development of a provincial boy growing up in a charged Christian environment, the secret joy of his childhood reading, the links he makes between reading and blasphemy, or between literature and music. The final section discusses fiction in the context of exile and homelessness. *The Nearest Thing to Life* is not simply a brief, tightly argued book by a man commonly regarded as our finest living critic – it is also an exhilarating personal account that reflects on, and embodies, the fruitful conspiracy between reader and writer (and critic), and asks us to re-consider everything that is at stake when we read and write fiction.

#### 作者介绍:

James Douglas Graham Wood is an English literary critic, essayist and novelist. He is currently Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard University (a part-time position) and a staff writer at *The New Yorker* magazine.

Wood advocates an aesthetic approach to literature, rather than more ideologically-driven trends in academic literary criticism.

Wood is noted for coining the genre term hysterical realism, which he uses to denote the contemporary conception of the "big, ambitious novel" that pursues vitality "at all costs." Hysterical realism describes novels that are characterized by chronic length, manic characters, frenzied action, and frequent digressions on topics secondary to the story.

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Acknowledgments

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标签

James-Wood

文学

非虚构

英文

英国

文学评论

文学理论

criticism

## 评论

书里的大部分观点不算新颖，但是James Wood毕竟读书多，文笔也不错，还是值得一看的。最后一章"Secular Homelessness"更像是一篇私人的散文作品，夹杂着作者离开英国到美国定居的经历，写出了那种远离故土后心灵上漂泊无定的感受，还挺有感触……

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Wood is well worth reading,as always, persuasive & potent!

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不明白为什么这么多人追捧James Wood的这系列讲座，境界和语言上不抵How Fiction Works的三分之一。主题都是轻描淡写，偶尔有人让人停顿反思的句子，是一部平庸的作品。

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Interesting little thinking in the first two chapters. Skip the rest!

不要说投入那个叫做「生活」的东西，单单是接近那个叫做「生活」的东西就使人发憊了，而如果是「最接近生活」，那真是自找罪受。是这样吗？

好喜欢，是每天读时觉得可以躲进去一会儿的一本书。与其说是文学评论，不如称作是写给不同文学作品的一封长长的情书，基于文学本身思考生命，死亡，时间，和家乡vs. 异乡。

fiction is the knownly best metaphor of life, thus the nearest thing to life. As life can never be described the same as anything solid in this world, it can only be reproduced resembling infinitely to the original in the past through the way of creating metaphorical feelings and sensations.

太合口味yum yum

没啥可说的，开头还比较好懂，后面越来越无法深入，还是英文不行。纯英文书籍还是有个具体的故事比较好理解一些。

Wood重视文学作品中的细节在本质上就是一种轻逸的痛苦，这种痛苦相悖于生活中沉痛的打击，而是在转瞬即逝的小事中瞥到无法逃避的宿命感。如同纳博科夫将纸巾落下赋予“infinite listlessness”，作家的职责就像他所说的那样，是rescue the life of things for their death.

同时，Metaphor的实质是identification，世界主义和后殖民主义的浪潮将我们所有人都置身于他所描述的transcendental homelessness，这一切苦涩融入我们的血液后再次变成我们的文字，也同时变成我们的生命。

为第四章探讨移民，homelessness，homesickness加一星。前三章是很纽约客风格的文章，偶尔有一些闪光，但是就文学评论本身来说有佳句没有佳篇。最后一章探讨exile, homeless，有自身的经历显得太真诚了，或许我们从本质上来说是来到这个世界的流民，不是选择在这个地方生活就是那个地方生活，那个我们出生的地方真的能被叫做home吗？

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在读The Blue Flower时，正好第一章提到，好兴奋。虽然抓不着这些讲稿的重点，但是听他聊聊各种小说也是惬意的事。

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从生活察觉的小说，到小说撞击的生活

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Wood真是细腻的学院派文学评论家，没有一直谈过于艰深的理论，而是不断回归文本本身，对于所提小说的细节分析得很妙，只可惜里面有些作家的书我没有读过，领会不到。最后一章讲“secular homelessness”，我觉得对于普通移民来说，这是culture shock造成的；对于异常敏感敏锐的小说家，无论身在何地，总会有种不合时宜、无所适从感吧。

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“In America, I crave the English reality that has disappeared; childhood reality seems breathingly close. But the sense of masquerade persists...”一样的他乡非故乡。

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对小说的理解与共鸣算是个很私人的东西了。从生活里取片段进行描写，读者情感共鸣还是得看脑补。这本书真是写的很随性（便）了.....

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书评

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