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A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel

当代英国小说导读

Frederick R. Karl

外语教学与研究出版社 FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX 出版公司 FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX, LLC

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General Preface

Among the most important developments in contemporary global culture is the arrival of Western literary criticism and literary theory in China. FLTRP is to be congratulated for its imagination and foresight in making these crucial texts available to teachers and students of literature throughout China. There is arguably no greater force in producing understanding between peoples than the transmission of literary traditions—the great heritage of narrative, lyric, and prose forms that give cultures their distinctive character. Literary criticism and theory stand at the cross-roads of these transmissions. It is the body of writing that reflects on what a literature has meant to a culture. It investigates the moral, political, and experiential dimensions of literary traditions, linking form to content, literature to history, the sensuous love of literature to analytic understanding.

The availability of these important texts will greatly help students and teachers to become acquainted with recent criticism and major critical theories and movements. I am convinced that the series will make an important contribution to the literary education of China, increasing literacy in new fields and international understanding at the same time. It is an extraordinarily timely venture, at a time when comparative literary study in a global context has become increasingly important for professionals, and beyond that, for a general readership that seeks a deeper understanding of literature.

W. J. T. Mitchell

Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor English and Art History University of Chicago Editor, Critical Inquiry

出版说明

近年来,许多大专院校为英语专业的学生开设了英美文学课程,市场上也出现了各种版本的原版英美文学经典著作,它们基本上满足了高校对课堂阅读教材的需要。但是,英美文学教学中仍然严重缺少原版文学史、文学理论、文学评论和文学工具书等重要参考书,以至于许多学生写论文时收集资料成为一大难题,专业教师和研究人员业务水平的提高因此受到限制,在知识更新及学术研究上也难以与国际接轨,北京、上海等大城市以外的地方尤为如此。

据此,外研社组织了全国17所著名高校或研究院的44名英美文学领域的专家学者,经过仔细斟酌,决定引进一批与教学需要相适应,有学术价值,在国外最常用且被国际公认为优秀的文学评论、文学理论、文学史和文学工具书。这是一套开放型的系列图书,以原版加中文序言的形式分批出版。相信这套书的出版定可缓解国内大专院校中英美文学参考书匮乏的现象,同时,通过这种途径,可以有意识地引进国际知名学者的代表作,这无疑会推动和提高我国在英美文学领域的研究水平。

钱青

北京外国语大学英语学院

当代英国小说导读

导 读

英美文学文库

《当代英国小说导读》出版于 20 世纪 60 年代初,但即便从 40 多年后今天的立场来看,它立论之精当,对所涉及作家的判断之到位,也是令人惊叹的。40 多年来,英国小说乃至世界小说的口味发生了很大的变化,20世纪80年代以来更是新作不断,新人辈出,其中不乏奈保尔、拉什迪、石黑一雄等非西方文化背景的杰出小说家,但《当代英国小说导读》对所涉及小说家的定位却一点也不过时。它的另一个显著的优点是:立场鲜明、极具批判锋芒。这对于我国英语文学研究学界,尤其是攻读研究生学位者来说,不失为一个学习的榜样。对于一般英语学生而言,《当代英国小说导读》以浅显的文字讲深刻的道理,也能起到了解英国文学、扩大知识面的作用。总而言之,这是一部好书,颇值得一读。

在初版于 1962 年的《当代英国小说导读》中,作者弗雷德里克·R. 卡尔所谓的"当代"指的是他本人所处的那个时代,确切地说,是距其写作本书30来年的那一时间段,即 1930 年代初至 1960 年代初,或 20 世纪的"第二个三分之一"。在本书作者看来,英国小说史上 20 世纪的"第一个三分之一",是康拉德、乔伊斯、劳伦斯(其实还应加上福斯特、吴尔夫)的时代。这无疑是一个巨擘迭出的时代。紧跟其后的则是"后《尤利西斯》"时代,产出于这个时代的英国小说当然就是"后《尤利西斯》"小说了。作这样的时段划分似乎不无理由。20 世纪 30 年代初的乔伊斯虽然仍在写《芬尼根守灵》,但其影响早已为《尤利西斯》所奠定。劳伦斯则刚刚去世。同样已经去世的康拉德自1915年发表《胜利》以来,未再有重要作品问世。福斯特自1924年发表《印度之行》后,干脆不写小说了。而吴尔夫最后一部重要小说《海浪》是于1931年问世的。于是,1931年成了当然的分水岭。

20世纪的最初30来年,目前文学史界一般是以"现代主义"来定位的,但本书作者使用了更简洁的"现代"这一字眼。这就意味着,"当代"英国小说不应被称为"现代"小说,甚至不妨说,"现代"(而非"现代主义"!)是康拉德、乔伊斯、劳伦斯之类小说大家的专有名词。在卡尔看来,面对严峻的

国际形势或"危机",新一代英国小说家的反应是"奇怪"的。相比之下,此前30来年的小说家却有着强烈的问题意识。他们关注着文明的根本处境和种种重大的冲突。从意图和手法上看,他们既是"印象主义"和"象征主义"的,又是"现实主义"的。他们笔下的小说天地具有多样性,色调丰富、意味深刻,因而是"令人激动"的。可1931年以后,这种宝贵的知识遗产仅仅被诗人们继承了过去,小说家却与之无缘。在格雷厄姆·格林、伊丽莎白·鲍恩、伊夫林·沃、C. P. 斯诺、乔治·奥威尔和乔伊斯·卡里的创作中,英国小说失去了先前那种大家气象,其所展现给读者的那个世界也不再像先前那么广阔,而是变得狭小、局促了。

也许因为英国小说创作的能量在现代主义高峰期被过度释放,斯诺们、格 林们、卡里们、奥威尔们便显得表现平平了。为了寻找榜样,他们回到了维多 利亚时代甚或更远的年代。斯诺更像一个乔治•艾略特、高尔斯华绥或贝内 特、而非一个乔伊斯或劳伦斯。读格林的小说,使人难免想到威尔基·柯林 斯和罗伯特·路易斯·史蒂文森。乔伊斯·卡里似乎是在追随狄更斯、甚至 是在追随斯特恩和菲尔丁。奥威尔则效法乔治·吉辛和左拉。新一代小说家 仿佛不约而同地达成了这一共识,即现代主义的实验小说不再可行。实验当然 有实验的风险,不留神便会造成"灾难性后果"。那么不实验呢?本书作者认 为,"不实验的坏处就像其好处那么明显。"新一代小说家纵然有朴实无华、明 白易懂等优点,但这是以牺牲"悖论、反讽、内容的密度以及主题的意味性" 等等为代价的,而恰恰是这些因素使印象主义和象征主义的"现代"小说家们 得以超越平凡。曾几何时,人们以为维多利亚时代及其晚期的小说已把小说作 为一个特殊文类的潜力挖掘殆尽,但这种看法很快便被证明是错误的。康拉 德、乔伊斯、劳伦斯等小说家用他们对存在对生命的深切体悟、对文明对社会 的睿智洞察,用他们的广阔视野和娴熟技巧向读者展示,小说的潜力远远没有 被穷尽。在实验性创作中,他们不仅推出了新型的小说,也创造了新型的阅读 趣味和读者群。可新一代小说家并没有把英国小说创作椎向一个更高的层次。

从出身和背景来看,新一代小说家也显示出了明显的收敛性。除贝克特以外,他们都没有跨国文学活动的经历,或者说是土生土长的英国人。这意味着,新时代的英国小说已丧失了先前的"国际性"。如果说在乔伊斯手中,英国小说"国际化"了,那么在卡里和沃手中,英国小说又重新"盎格鲁化"或本地化了。在本书作者谈及的三个主要的"现代"小说家中,有两人是"外国人",即康拉德和乔伊斯,只有劳伦斯是土生土长的英国人。可实际上,即便是劳伦斯也众所周知地十分"非英国"甚或"反英国"(或者说,英国反劳伦

斯),是一个非常"国际化"的人物。他对欧洲大陆文化——尤其是德国哲学思潮——的了解、认同之深,对英国社会和英国文化的批评、反叛之烈,是新一代小说家所根本无法比拟的。更何况劳伦斯把后半生差不多全花在周游列国上了。他对欧洲大陆、澳大利亚和美洲一些地区进行了深入考察和体验,其创作不可能不因之受到深刻的影响。假如把《当代英国小说导读》所谓"主要"的现代主义小说家的范围稍加扩大,则显然福斯特和吴尔夫也应当包括在内。二人所具有的国际眼光和艺术趣味,也是绝大多数新一代小说家所不能相提并论的。

为了不至于让人觉得在过分贬低"当代"小说家,本书作者对他们还是 使用了"杰出"和"已拥有稳固地位"一类表达法。可"当代"小说家的作品 固然 "杰出", 他们作为小说家固然 "已拥有稳固地位", 近几十年英国文坛上 却"并没有产生另一个乔伊斯、劳伦斯或康拉德"。假定任何文明、任何国家、 任何民族都不可能马不停蹄地进行辉煌的精神创造(在西方、自一个世纪内连 续产生了苏格拉底、柏拉图和亚里士多德以后、要等待两千多年才又出现莱布 尼兹、康德、黑格尔,在中国,自孔子、孟子、老子、庄子以降,要等待约一 千六百年才又出现二程子、朱熹、陆九渊、王阳明,从中国文学方面看,自唐 诗、宋词之高峰以来直至 20 世纪, 也没有出现真正的好诗), 哀叹没有出现 堪与乔伊斯、劳伦斯和康拉德比肩的巨头——尤其在只有很短的时间间隔的情 况下——实在大可不必。虽然如此,本书作者仍点明了一个不争的事实、即与 现代主义前辈相比,新一代小说家不在一个数量级上。贝克特更像是一个在 《尤利西斯》后遁人"地下"或晦涩中不能自拔的乔伊斯(当然,贝克特能把 哲学思考同艺术创作结合起来,这已实属难得),斯诺则只是把一些道德、政 治和社会问题直白地呈示出来,全然缺乏康拉德、乔伊斯、吴尔夫、劳伦斯、 福斯特的象征主义和印象主义手法所带来的那熠熠灵气。

"当代"小说家固然大大不如"现代"小说家,但这并不等于《当代英国小说导读》一书比许多专门研究现代主义小说的著述逊色。从笔者掌握的有限情况来看,本书立论之精当,对"当代"小说家及其作品的判断之准确,决不亚于大多数现代派小说的评论性文字。本书出版至今已有40来年,这期间英国文坛发生了许多事情。例如及至20世纪60年代,本书作者所痛惜的实验精神不再之状况已有了很大的改观,产生了诸如威廉·戈尔丁、安格斯·威尔逊、艾丽丝·默多克、约翰·福尔斯、多丽丝·莱辛等一大批勇于实验、堪称"现代"小说传人的小说家或富于实验精神的作品,80年代以来又兴起了一波更加令人激动的实验浪潮,出现了诸如马丁·艾米斯、朱利安。巴恩斯、

4. 英英文学文库

伊恩·麦克尤恩和彼得·艾克罗伊德等新潮实验派小说家,对西方中心论的 反省和批判更导致了一批有着非西方文明背景的"外国人"(《当代英国小说导读》所谓"外国人",不过是西方文明内部一些来自不同民族国家的人们)的 崛起,在英国文坛上确立起了他们应有的地位,其中最著名的当为萨尔曼·拉什迪、V.S.奈保尔、石黑一雄、蒂默西·莫。由于本书完成于 1960 年代初,以上列举的多数小说家(或其实验性作品)并没有真正进入本书作者的视野,只有默多克和戈尔丁是例外。但无论情况发生了什么样的变化,现在看来,本书对"当代"小说家及其作品的评价仍然恰如其分,仍然不过时。

中国英语文学研究界对英国现代主义小说家及其主要作品是熟悉的,但对于"后《尤利西斯》"时代或后现代主义的英国小说家及其作品却相对生疏。《当代英国小说导读》是一部相当全面评介这一时期的英国小说的优秀专著。通过本书,中国读者能够相当全面地了解20世纪30年代至60年代初英国小说的基本情况。但本书的长处并不限于此。在笔者看来,本书最大的优点在于作者的批判精神,而中国英语文学研究界的一个大问题,便在于缺乏批判精神,或一种把研究对象真正当作研究对象来对待来处理的勇气。中国英语文学研究界的文化和学术主体性似乎总是缺失的,要养成一种对研究对象进行独立的剖析、判断和批评的风气,不知有多么困难。一种常见的情形是,如果一个研究生甚或青年教师要评论某个英美小说家的某部作品,他或她十有八九会显得缺乏自己的文化和学术主体性,十有八九会认同、肯定该作品的基本立场或倾向,对于它在英语文学史上的地位究竟怎样并不怎么追究,对于它的内在弱点往往视而不见。这就很难谈得上独立的剖析、判断和批评了。

本书作者对"当代"小说家的批评可以说比比皆是,例如关于戈尔丁的文字和对《蝇王》(1954)及《继承者》(1955)的批评,即使拿今天的眼光来看,也不能说不中肯。本书指出,这两部小说过分依赖寓言手法和语言实验,缺乏实质性内容。仅就《蝇王》而言,"一旦寓言和语言的原创性被穷尽,所剩下的,便只是众多缺乏表达能力的男孩的一片野蛮嬉闹了。"这与后来校园文评产业对戈尔丁,尤其是对其《蝇王》的一片赞扬之声形成了鲜明的对比。戈尔丁于1983年获得了诺贝尔文学奖,这是本书作者始料未及之事。但《蝇王》或《继承者》的短处总归短处,不能因为戈尔丁后来获得了诺贝尔奖就变成了长处。诺贝尔文学奖颁给谁或不颁给谁,本身就存在着意识形态乃至机会主义的变数。"现代"巨头们——康拉德、乔伊斯、劳伦斯——也都不曾获得过诺贝尔奖。

再如对奥威尔的批评。本书指出,作者未能分清历史记录与艺术创造的

关系,将二者混为一谈,往往照顾了前者而牺牲了后者,反之亦然。在冷战期间引起广泛关注的《1984年》(1949)所呈现的极权统治的恐怖,很大程度上渊源于奥威尔早年靠奖学金寄读伊顿公学的个人经历。该校法西斯式的管理在他心里留下了深深烙印。也由于出身贫穷,奥威尔在学校里没有少受同学的欺负和校长的白眼。反映在文学创作上,"《1984年》里的监狱生活与他童年时代所上私立学校的禁闭生活被混淆在一起,二者都是对生活所能提供的东西的想象。如果读者意识到了对于奥威尔,一如对于卡夫卡那样,那噩梦是一种内心的噩梦,那么他就不难明白《1984年》的政治性内容对于个人性内容来说只是次要的这个道理了……他(奥威尔)必须使他个人的梦魇读起来不仅具有说服力,而且富于戏剧性,也就是说,使之显得像我们每个人的梦魇。就此而言,奥威尔失败了,因为他在《1984年》中所描绘的梦魇仅仅在社会、经济的意义上才成立,在心理的意义上却不能成立。"总而言之,作为一个意念领先和有着强烈"宣传"(原文为propaganda,这在英语中绝非褒义词)意识和意图的小说家,奥威尔是"缺乏想象力"的。

最后需指出,外语教学与研究出版社推出的这套丛书中,还有一部由当代著名文学史学者、作家马尔科姆·布拉德伯里(1932 - 2000)撰写的《现代英国小说》(2001)。那部文学史里的"现代"与《当代英国小说导读》之"现代"迥然不同。前者的时间跨度有3个世纪,即1878年至2001年,而后者则狭义地指20世纪前30年"正统"的现代主义。更应注意的是,《现代英国小说》的方法是面面俱到,在貌似不偏不倚的介绍中顺便带入不乏倾向性的评论,虽有立场却不温不火,比较适合一般读者和英语文学教学者对有关英国小说作一般性的了解,而《当代英国小说导读》所涉及的时间要短得多,更具有立场鲜明、批判锋芒咄咄逼人的特点,不仅适合一般读者,而且对于攻读研究生学位者乃至英语文学教学和研究者,均不失为一部很有意义的参考书。

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当代英国小说导读

导读

英美文学文库

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I The Contemporary English Novel | 3



The Contemporary English Novel

WE HAVE BEEN REMINDED with alarming frequency that the English novel of the last thirty years has diminished in scale: that no writer has the moral urgency of a Conrad, the verbal gifts and wit of a Joyce, the vitality and all-consuming obsession of a Lawrence; further, that the novel has forsaken its traditional role of delineating manners and morals, and, finally, that the novel is in a decline from which rescue is virtually impossible. Granted that these claims do have partial substance, nevertheless one must insist that the novel of the last three decades or so-the post-Ulysses novel-contains the vitality and vigor worthy of a major genre. Granted also that recent years have not turned up another Joyce, Lawrence, or Conrad; they have, however, seen distinguished work by established writers like Graham Greene, Samuel Beckett, Henry Green, Elizabeth Bowen, C. P. Snow, Ivy Compton-Burnett, and Evelyn Waugh, as well as promising novels by their younger contemporaries, Lawrence Durrell, Iris Murdoch, William Golding, Doris Lessing, Angus Wilson, and Philip Toynbee, among several others.

The English literary response to the severe international crises of the second third of this century has been curious. The novelists of the *first* third were concerned with major problems and major conflicts. Forsaking direct political comment, they were neverthe-

less involved in the larger world. The novelists' intentions were realistic as well as impressionistic, and the fictional world that resulted was varied, many-hued, occasionally profound, and often exciting. This heritage of intellectual excitement has passed to the poets and not to the novelists of the second third of the centhe poets and not to the novelists of the second third of the century, while the novel has become something else. In the hands of Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, Evelyn Waugh, C. P. Snow, George Orwell, and Joyce Cary, the novel has generally tended to become restrictive rather than extensive, to bring back traditional character and plot rather than to seek the inexpressible; in brief, to return to more self-contained matter while retaining, however, many of the technical developments of the major moderns. The contemporary novel is clearly no longer "modern."

The second group of novelists, several of whom had begun to write in the early 1930's, skipped the immediate influences of their older contemporaries and with few exceptions returned to the narrative manner of the late Victorians C. P. Snow is closer

the narrative manner of the late Victorians. C. P. Snow is closer the narrative manner of the late Victorians. C. P. Snow is closer to George Eliot, Galsworthy, and Bennett than he is to Joyce or Lawrence, or any of the major continental writers; while Joyce Cary seems to be following Sterne, Fielding, and Dickens; and Graham Greene appears akin to Wilkie Collins, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and early Conrad. Ivy Compton-Burnett does not trespass this side of 1910, and George Orwell returned to Gissing and Zola for his method. In common, these writers agree that the experimental novel—especially its treatment of plot—is no longer viable and that retreat is perhaps expedient. pedient.

In many ways, of course, this realization is healthy. Experimentation is always to be encouraged, but it can easily lead to disastrous results, as many of the less successful attempts at "modernity" have demonstrated. The drawbacks to this failure to experiment, however, are as obvious as the virtues. While the contemporary writer gains directness, he forgoes paradox, irony, density, significance of theme—elements that enabled the impressionists and symbolists to go beyond the stated and the defined. The earlier novelists skillfully manipulated an audience which had accepted the Victorian and late Victorian novel and showed it the possibilities that the genre still offered. Conrad, Lawrence, and Joyce pumped new life into a genre that had been declared dead and created new readers for new novels. The second group of realists has not sought so broad an audience and through retreat has limited the novel's horizons. Technique, experimentation, method—these terms are now hardly mentioned. C. P. Snow, for example, has voiced his disdain for those who create "artistic novels," like Plato apparently desiring to banish the poet from scientific society.

If there is a difference in the creations of the two groups, part of this difference is due to the backgrounds of the various writers. The contemporary novelists represent England and English ideals more closely than did their predecessors. Of the three major novelists in the older group, only Lawrence, it will be recalled, was native-born. The foreigners Conrad and Joyce introduced several ideas into the novel that do not derive from any English tradition; while C. P. Snow, Elizabeth Bowen, Joyce Cary and Evelyn Waugh, to name only four contemporaries, clearly are, whether for good or ill, English. The novel in Joyce's hands was internationalized; in Cary's and Waugh's Anglicized.

The earlier novel, despite its ostensible anti-intellectuality, moved into the realms of psychology, sociology, anthropology; its methodology had the jaggedness of contemporary life. The younger novelists, with some few exceptions, have far less grandiose plans; they do not deride intellect in intellectual terms, nor do they incorporate strange knowledge into their work. Their novels are, generally, shorter than those of their predecessors. We communicate now in communiques, Camus said in The Stranger. One of the most successful and knotty of contemporary novelists, Graham Greene, writes novels that rarely extend beyond 75,000 words; and yet he, more than most of his contemporaries, is concerned with such weighty subjects as man's relation to himself and to his God. Greene is satisfied to make his point specifically: his characters are few, his architectonic is simple, his language direct.

The tremendous pressure of outside events in the last thirty years has resulted in withdrawal; and while the first group of novelists *included*, the second has *excluded*. As outside pressures increased, the retreat became more apparent, the novel attaining chance moments of intensity but at the expense of scope. By some