

外语院系英语专业
高年级系列教材

王丽丽 编著

二十世纪英国文学史

(第二版)

*A History of
20th-century British Literature*

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序 言

英国文学浩繁宏大,源远流长。20 世纪英国文学由于世界局势的激烈动荡所带来的巨大影响而呈现五彩缤纷的繁荣景象。随着我国的改革开放,对 20 世纪英国文学史的研究愈来愈深入,著述和评介文章也越来越多。但是,由于文学史撰写的难度较大以及时代的接近,为中国学生用英文撰写的系统论述 20 世纪英国文学史的书还极为鲜见。王丽丽撰写的这部《二十世纪英国文学史》从某种意义上可以说填补了这方面的空白。

《二十世纪英国文学史》在编排上大胆创新,突破了以往编撰文学史的传统,把文学史同历史背景、人物影响、术语解释等有机地结合在一起,使学生能够迅速地深入理解特定历史环境中的作家和作品,汲取文学作品的精髓。书中对作家作品的评论有自己独到的见解,不人云亦云。可以看出作者思路的敏捷以及对学术孜孜不倦的追求。

王丽丽是我早年的学生。她当学生时就虚心好学,锐意进取。她从山东大学外国语学院毕业后留校执教至今,从事英国文学的教学和研究工作,积累了比较丰富的经验。她在 20 世纪末赴美国留学做学术研究,开始撰写这本书,同时又收集了大量最新材料,回国后又历时两年多,终于写成了这部书。这是她多年从事英国文学教学经验的概括和总结,是她长期从事当代英国文学研究成果的结晶。该书资料翔实,观点明确,有较高的学术价值;同时它深入

Foreword

The idea of writing a history of the 20th century British literature came to me several years ago when I noticed a shortage of books of this kind while teaching English literature to my students. Even the few books available traced the history only as late as the 1970s. Furthermore the layout of the material in these books, with many unexplained terms and missing background material, is not altogether suitable for Chinese students who have no easy access to reference books. This idea was strengthened when I realized that this gap could be bridged while I studied abroad. As a result, I pursued the subject while I was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1998—1999. For that opportunity, I am most grateful for the sponsorship of the China Scholarship Council.

The book spans the period from the end of the 19th century through the 1990s. It is divided into four parts. Part One deals with the period before 1914. Part Two covers the period between World Wars I and II. Part Three dwells on the period from the beginning of the Cold War to the end of the 1960s. Part Four is concerned with the remaining decades of the 20th century.

In each part a general development of the British literature for that period is given. Background information and definitions of

terms are also provided. By so doing I hope the readers will thoroughly understand what they have read and have a clear picture of the 20th century British literature. To facilitate understanding, I have also alphabetized each part of the discussion for most of the writers.

This book is by no means, nor does it attempt to be, a comprehensive history of the 20th century British literature. Nor does it include all of the best writers. For most of the writers after the 1970s, because of the lack of reference material I only comment on their work instead of giving a detailed and separate analysis. I regret these omissions. Concerning points of view, besides being inspired by other writers I naturally yield to my instincts and personal judgement. If there is anything improper or wrong, the responsibility is mine.

Acknowledgements

The completion and publication of this book is due to the help from many sources.

My gratitude goes to Dean of the Foreign Language School, Shandong University, Professor Wang Shouyuan who encouraged me to write the book and helped me over many a hump.

I owe a special debt to Vice-President of Association for Comparative Study of Sino-American Culture & China's Association for Study of American Literature, Professor Guo Jide who read an early draft of the manuscript and offered me many useful comments and criticisms and who was also kind enough to write a preface to this book.

I also would like to give my greatest thanks to Mr. Carl A. Palm in the United States who helped me with his valuable advice and suggestions and in providing some of the reference material for this book. Without his help this book would have been impossible to finish.

My thanks also go to China Scholarship Council, which, by sponsoring my study in the University of Wisconsin-Madison, gave me an opportunity of obtaining some first-hand material for this book.

I also owe a lot to Mr. Zhang Xiaobo from Shandong University Press for his valuable suggestions and help in this work.

This book has also been wonderfully served by many reference books, which have helped in various ways and are listed in the bibliography.

Acknowledgments

The completion and publication of this book is due to the help from many sources.

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Part I From the End of 19th Century to 1914

Chapter 1 General Introduction

General characteristics of England from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century.

The period from the end of the 19th century to that before World War I can be said to be a transitional period in many fields. In terms of political and social situations, England still retained its comparative stability with its solid economic basis as the pioneer industrial country and its rapidly increasing colonial expansion over vast "backward" regions of the earth. Yet with the death of Queen Victoria came not only the weakening of the Victorian values, but also the economic and political decline of the whole state. Now being a parasitic usurer state to an ever-increasing extent, England showed two ominous symptoms of declining: one is its slow progress of industry at home as compared with that of its principal rivals, Germany and the United States; the other is an ever-growing nationalism for independence in its colonies abroad, which was to cause the

breaking-up of British Empire a few decades later.

In the field of science, the rapid development of modern science and technology not only unbalanced the conflicting power between science and religion, but, while shocking people into the modern comfort and convenience, also threw them into the fear for and worries about the potential horrors of the future.

In the literature of this period, the novel became a central means of exploration of the state of the nation, the feel of the culture and the relationship between personal and historical life, although there came to be a dramatic revival with the appearance of Bernard Shaw. Realism still occupied a dominant position in literary techniques, yet the co-existence in Europe of many other literary tendencies and schools such as naturalism, aestheticism and symbolism, and the rising of some new experimenting art such as impressionism and expressionism shown in paintings had a great influence on the British writers.

So far as novels were concerned, most of them followed the realistic tradition in techniques, such as the novels of Henry James, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, but some of their novels were interspersed with some attempts at new techniques such as symbolism, impressionism, etc., especially the writings of Conrad. And there was also a growing concern with the internal feelings or subjective sensibilities. D. H. Lawrence created his 'psychological realistic' novels under the influence of the theories of Freud.

In poetry, there co-existed several groups of poets. One group was the successors to the role and inheritance of the major Victorian poets. The major representative is Sir William Watson. Another group of poets referred to those who were against Victorian tradi-

tion and followed the currently Romantic conventions combined with new tendencies such as aestheticism, symbolism and impressionism in their poetry-writing. The representatives were W. B. Yeats, Bridges, Symonds, Housman, etc. The third group of poets were mainly narrative poets. The representatives were Kipling, Masfield, Davidson, Chesterton, etc.

Hardy began to write poetry at the beginning of the 20th century. His poetry as much followed the Victorian tradition as contained some elements of modern poetry, with a peculiar structure of his own. He and W. B. Yeats became the two most important poets at the beginning of the 20th century.

In drama, after a long period of decline since Sheridan, there appeared the modern revival of English drama at the end of the 19th century, preceded by minor playwrights in the mid-19th century such as Thomas William Robertson, Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones, who in different ways contributed to the revival. But the first important playwright in a modern sense was Oscar Wilde with his witty drawing-room comedies. He did much to improve the literary standing of English drama. He brought into the theatre an acute and brilliant wit, which, together with his style and epigrams, made his comedy get beyond the melodrama and become classics in the history of English comedies. The first serious playwright and the most influential playwright at this time was Bernard Shaw. He was among the first to introduce Ibsen's plays to the English public. By transforming Ibsen's legacy to create his own plays, and through his own dramatic criticism, he began the English dramatic revival of 1890—1914, which consisted predominantly of realistic plays, dealing with social problems. Other drama-