



美国文学研究评论选

Selected Readings in American
Literary Criticism

(上册)

常耀信 主编

南开大学出版社

高等院校文科教材

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IN AMERICAN LITERARY CRITICISM

Criticism on Early American Literature

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藏书章

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前 言

美国文学评论的发展大体经历了3个重要阶段。自19世纪40年代爱默生的《论诗人》始至90年代威廉·狄恩·豪威尔斯的《批评与散文》止的半个世纪,是美国独立文学和文化的炼铸成形时期,是美国作家和评论家为美国独立文学的发展而鸣锣呐喊的时期。第二阶段从上世纪末始至本世纪30年代末止,这是美国文学评论气氛活跃、论争热烈、具有决定意义的阶段。除了T·S·艾略特、埃德蒙·威尔逊、艾伦·塔特等“新批评”的声音之外,还有一个不同凡响的声音——凡·威克·布鲁克斯、H·L·门肯以及伦道夫·伯恩等人对美国文学“业已成年”的断言。这是美国文学评论家以全新的目光看待本国文学独特的伟大之处的时代。如果说在这以前,人们习惯于以剖析欧洲和英国文学的思想和方法看待美国文学,因而结论总不外乎“不够伟大”、“不能同欧洲作家的鸿篇巨制相提并论”的话,那末,在这一阶段中,评论家已开始从美国的国情出发认识本国文学,认识到美国文学经过近300年的演变,已于1901年至1920年间达到“成年”。这一论断开创了美国文学评论的新纪元,它标志着美国文学评论界重新评估美国文学的开端。

第三阶段可从40年代初F·O·马西森的《美国的文艺复兴》和艾尔弗雷德·卡津的《在本国的土地上》两部文学评论巨著的发表为始。这是一个“重新发现”美国文学的阶段。美国文学评论界一扫过去追随欧洲文学评论的气氛,把精力集中到从本国的文化历史实际出发剖析美国文学上。如果二、三十年代的论断尚需佐证,40年代后的文学评论则从空泛的议论跃进到从作品的具体实际出发,寻觅出赏析美国文学的理论的阶段。美国文学评论界“重新发现”美国文学的激情在50年代、60年代升至其“沸腾点”,评论巨著迭相面世,每部新书都立论新颖,给人以一新耳目、发聩振聋的印象,真可谓群芳竞艳,让人目不暇接,读者对评论的兴趣有时竟超过对文学作品本身的兴致。倘然美国文学在本世纪前20年

已趋成年,那么美国文学评论做为文学的一个有机组成部分,在50年代和60年代业已成年,并以自己的独特风格和欧洲文学评论比肩齐名。这一时期的评论重点在于美国早期文学,即19世纪美国文学的主要作家及作品。60年代以后,美国文学评论又有了长足发展。在继续探索早期美国文学的内在模式的同时,对本世纪以来,即现代和当代的文学的评论数目剧增。新一代评价家又独辟蹊径,从不同的角度赏析现当代文学,进一步巩固了美国文学与文学评论在世界文坛上不可小觑的地位。

正如美国现代诗人华莱士·史蒂文斯的一首诗所说,看山鸟鸟的方式可有13种之多,四、五十年代以来美国文学评论界所提出的研究美国文学的理论也是各式各样的。事实上,美国文学评论的基本特点在于它的“多元化”;但是透过这些纷然杂陈的观点,人们可以看到评论家都在努力寻觅一种“合成”理论,以诠释几位作家或某一时期内作家的创作活动,使之具有令人信服的理性基础。他们从美国历史或文化发展的角度去赏析本国文学,每人提出的理论都有合理之处,各种理论的总和便使读者有可能在较可靠的基础上看到美国文学的全貌。因此,把这些理论的精粹编选出来以飨读者是非常必要的。

正是出于这种意图,我们编注了《美国文学研究评论选》,作为大学本科高年级及一年级研究生美国文学批评课教科书。由于侧重点不在于反映美国文学评论的历史颠末,因而它的主要内容不是前面所讲的第一阶段和第二阶段,而是第三阶段,即美国文学评论业已成熟的阶段内的各种评论观点。本书共分上、下两册。上册辑录了美国评论家(除D·H·劳伦斯外)对早期美国文学的各种评论;下册收集了评论界关于现当代美国文学的各种颇富影响的评论。所选注的文章皆出自美国学术界所公认的美国文学研究经典著作,是国外英美文学本科生与研究生的必读书,内容丰富,不拘泥于概念的纷争,不玄秘艰涩,兼具科学性与知识性,对美国文学名家和名著进行生动、透辟的分析,视角多变,说理简洁,文字极流畅。编者相信,本书会成为我国学者和学生研究美国文化背景、文学流派、名作家及名作品的有益指南,将有助于提高我国一般文学爱好者对美国文学的理解和欣赏能力。如果它能以某种方式推动我国文学评论和文学创作的发展,编者将会感到极大的欣慰和

鼓励。

《美国文学研究评论选》(上、下册)共选入 20 位著名评论家的专著或专论。每篇选文均由作者介绍、作品介绍、文章节选、注释、讨论题及参考书五部分组成,以利于教学。同时,考虑到社会上一般读者的需要,简介和注释都以中文写成。所选各篇的排列虽同其内容有些关系,例如在上册中,罗伯特·斯皮勒的《美国文学本末》位于书首,是因为选文为欣赏美国文学提供了必要的历史和文化背景,而佩里·米勒的《进入荒野的使命》位居第二,是由于选文精辟地论述了美国文化和文学的主要因素——美国清教主义传统的始末,等等;但是一般说来各篇可自成一体,读者可择己所需者先读。本书作为美国文学教科书,学生可在阅读所论及的文学作品以前、以后或当中选择最佳时机阅读。

本书由南开大学外文系英美文学研究室负责规划和选材。常耀信任主编。参加编写的有王蕴茹、李前程、吴伏生、常耀信。此外,李刚、刘思远、吴克亮、孙学军和王南等参加了资料收集工作。

本书编注结束之后,便被列入国家教委英语教材编审委员会 1988 年编审计划,厦门大学外语系杨仁敬教授和四川大学外文系朱通伯教授受托对全部书稿进行了认真审阅,并提出宝贵的修改和增删建议,这对我们修订书稿、保证全书质量具有重要意义。我们值此机会向他们表示衷心的感谢。

因编选者水平有限,书中不妥之外,企盼专家与读者匡谬指正。

编者

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CONTENTS

前言	i
Robert Spiller	1
from <i>The Cycle of American Literature</i>	3
Perry Miller	75
from <i>Errand into the Wilderness</i>	76
R. W. B. Lewis	99
from <i>The American Adam; Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition</i> <i>in the Nineteenth Century</i>	100
D. H. Lawrence	139
from <i>Studies in Classic American Literature</i>	140
Henry Nash Smith	173
from <i>Virgin Land; The American West as Symbol and Myth</i>	174
A. N. Kaul	220
from <i>The American Vision; The Actual and Ideal Society in</i> <i>Nineteenth-Century Fiction</i>	220
Leslie Fiedler	255
from <i>Love and Death in the American Novel</i>	256
Richard Chase	333
from <i>The American Novel and Its Tradition</i>	334
Everett Carter	363
from <i>Howells and the Age of Realism</i>	363
F. O. Matthiessen	404
from <i>American Renaissance; Art and Expression in the Age</i> <i>of Emerson and Whitman</i>	405
Charles Feidelson	444
from <i>Symbolism and American Literature</i>	444

ROBERT SPILLER

〔作者介绍〕

罗伯特·斯皮勒(Robert Spiller),当代著名的文学评论家,1896年生于费城,毕业于宾夕法尼亚大学。毕业后先后在斯沃斯摩尔学院和宾夕法尼亚大学任教。

斯皮勒一生注重美国文学史和文学批评的研究,成果甚丰。他的著作有:《费尼莫·库柏:他的时代的批评家》(*Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times*, 1931),《独立后半个世纪内在英国的美国人》(*Americans in England During the First Half Century of Independence*, 1926),《美国文学本末》(*The Cycle of American Literature*, 1955),《八位美国作家》(*Eight American Authors*, 1956,与人合著),《第三个侧面:文学史研究》(*The Third Dimension: Studies in Literary History*, 1965),《倾斜的光》(*The Oblique Light*, 1968)。此外,他还结集出版了多部著作,如《民族文化之根》(*The Roots of National Culture*, 1933);主编了《美国文学史》(*Literary History of United States*, 1946)。同时,他还是诸如《美国文学》(*American Literature*)、《纽约时报书评》(*New York Times Book Review*)及《周末文学论坛》(*Saturday Review of Literature*)等著名杂志的撰稿人。

The Cycle of American Literature

〔作品介绍〕

《美国文学本末》(*The Cycle of American Literature*, 1955)是美国文学评论史上一部承前启后的重要著作。作者在主编巨著《美国文学史》(*Literary History of the United States*)之后,进一步回顾和总结了自本世纪30年代以来美国文学评论的丰硕成果,简要地叙述了3个世纪内美国文学发展的历史。作者在《前言》中批驳了美国文学隶属于英国文学的理论,阐明了美国文学本身的发展过程以及它的独到之处。

本书重点突出。它虽然从哥伦布自美洲写回欧洲的信写起,但是它对长达200余年的殖民地时期的文学却只是粗线条地几笔勾勒,然后即转入详述自19世纪起至本世纪40年代止的美国文学的独立发展过程。作者简述了代表美国文学两支伏流的乔纳森·爱德华兹和本杰明·富兰克林,概述了留恋英国和欧洲文学传统的华盛顿·欧文和詹姆斯·费尼莫·库柏,接着便以较浓重的笔墨描绘了诸如爱默生、梭罗、霍桑、麦尔维尔、惠特曼以及埃德加·爱伦·坡等对铸造美国独立文学做出过杰出贡献的文坛巨擘的创作生涯。对在19世纪中期前后几十年间曾享有盛誉的几位诗人,如朗费罗、赫姆士、惠蒂埃及洛厄尔等,作者只是蜻蜓点水,一掠而过,这几位作家热心师法英国文学传统,缺乏爱默生等人的开拓精神,故作者用笔轻淡,以向读者表明他们的历史局限。

在评价19世纪中期以后的美国文学状况时,作者充分肯定了现实主义传统的旗手威廉·狄恩·豪尔威斯的作用(豪尔威斯在本世纪前半叶声誉曾大幅度下降)。斯皮勒对群芳竞艳的美国文坛进行精心分析和筛选,重点评述了马克·吐温、亨利·詹姆斯、西奥多·德莱赛、弗兰克·诺里斯以及斯蒂芬·克兰的创作生涯和主要作品。对本世纪曾蜚声欧美的众多作家,斯皮勒也忍痛割爱,

从而腾出篇幅,把诸如尤金·奥尼尔、海明威、T·S·艾略特和福克纳等人摆到突出的历史位置上加以论述,充分肯定了这些文学巨匠在小说、诗歌和戏剧领域内把美国文学推向新的发展高峰中所发挥的作用。如果说本书提到司各特·菲茨杰拉德、威廉·卡洛斯·威廉斯及华洛士·史蒂文斯等名家时稍有浮光掠影之嫌的话,那么,这只能表明和本书写成于50年代初期这一历史事实相关,因而算不上是什么缺憾。历史学家很难摆脱历史和时间局限,50年代初期,菲茨杰拉德正在从他死后的默默无闻中挣扎出来,而威廉斯和史蒂文斯尚处在T·S·艾略特的盛誉的阴影中。

《美国文学本末》为50年代以后的文学批评指出了方向,它的历史分期和对重点作家的评论今天依然代表着文学评论的主流。它标志着在本世纪初叶布鲁克斯(Van Wyck Brooks)提出“美国成年”以后,经过诸如门肯(H. L. Mencken)、威尔逊(Edmund Wilson)、考利(Malcolm Cowley)及卡津(Alfred Kazin)等著名评论家几十年的不懈努力,美国文学评论也已“成年”。

全书文字具有雅俗共赏的令人可喜的特点,确是一本好书。这里所选的是作者关于美国文学各阶段的背景章节。

The Cycle of American Literature

THE FIRST FRONTIER

Most of the literature of the United States is written in the English language, much of it by men and women whose forebears came from the British Isles; yet the first man from Western Europe to write home about his adventures in the New World¹ was not an Englishman, nor was the land he discovered a part of the continental United States. Even so, the famous Columbus *Letter* (1493) sets the form and the point of view of the earliest American literature. In a far country, man's immediate impulse is to tell his distant friends of what he finds and how he fares. Columbus, a Genoese in the service of the Spanish King Ferdinand, wrote to the Royal Treasurer, "Because my undertakings have attained success,

I know that it will be pleasing to you." Here was the beginning of the written record of the American adventure.

It has been said that the settlement of America was a by-product of the unsettlement of Europe,² for both events took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Then it was that the great mercantile powers of Spain, France, Holland, and Britain emerged from the combinations of feudal baronies that had kept the Middle Ages in a state of local and constant warfare; that Protestant reformers like Martin Luther³ and John Calvin⁴ finally broke the authority of the medieval church-state that had dominated Europe since the fall of Rome;⁵ that the spirit of inquiry and enjoyment of the senses aroused man to his greatest age of art and learning.⁶ By 1600 Italy had its paintings and sculpture, Holland its learned skeptics and scholars, and England the great plays of Shakespeare. The horizons of the spirit and of the known geographical world expanded together. Shakespeare, the man of thought, and Columbus, the man of action—there is a parallel in the contrasting gifts of these two pioneers. The civilization of Western Europe virtually exploded of its own inner energy in the century 1500-1600, and one wave from that explosion swept over the undiscovered seas and lands to the west.

Other "letters home" reported most of the subsequent voyages of the explorers who followed during this and the next century. The empires of Spain and Portugal followed the course charted by the Genoese sailor,⁷ skirting the Gulf coast and the Caribbean Sea, centering in Mexico, and fanning out along the California coast, over the great plains to the north, and southward into Brazil and Peru. France's explorers and priests followed the course of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes,⁸ and then went down the Mississippi River to cross the Spanish routes at New Orleans. British, Dutch, and Swedes came finally to settle on the fertile Atlantic coastal plain, and, held back by the mountain wall, to build the most stable of all colonial societies. In these two hundred years American literature, though little more than the report of Western European culture on the move, was as cosmopolitan as it was ever to be again.

Except for a few sturdy volumes like William Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation*⁹ (undertaken in 1630, first published in 1856), much of the writing left by these early explorers and settlers makes rather dreary reading today for anyone not interested in the history of probably the greatest single migration of civilization on record. Writers sought mainly to justify their own enterprises, to take possession of the new lands, riches, and peoples for the monarchs who had sponsored their undertakings, and to describe geographic and economic conditions in order to help those who were to follow them. The temptation to belittle hardships and to overstate the possibilities of the future was great. The accounts of the expeditions of the Spanish Conquistador Coronado, the French Father Hennepin, and the British adventurer Captain John Smith¹⁰ tell much the same story of lands rich in natural resources and peopled by strange and primitive tribes.

Forests many hundreds of years old greeted these men from Europe upon their arrival, and the elaborate trappings of their own warriors or priests contrasted sharply with the nakedness of the "savages" they met. But these apparently primitive natives, in spite of their childlike gullibility, were the outer fringes of the ancient civilization that included the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas,¹¹ centered far to the south and west in Mexico and Peru. The people whom the white man called Indians because he thought that the land he had reached was ancient India¹² were the nomadic descendants of rich and powerful Mongoloid races which had migrated many centuries earlier from Asia.¹³ They had probably come by way of the Bering Strait, but they had long since built their major cities and temples in the more hospitable regions nearer the Equator and had then spread out over two continents.

These men of the forest were equally unprepared for the impatient idealism that sought to convert them to Christianity and for the greed that clutched hungrily at their gold and their land. Because they were pushed back, despoiled, and exploited for three hundred years, their part in American literature is more a hint of what might have been than a record of what actually was. It seems to be a law of nature that any

species will rapidly become extinct when confronted with a sudden change in environment or with a new foe whose ways it does not understand. The fact that the American Indian retreated and suffered is not necessarily an evidence of his inferiority. He left an indelible stamp upon the imagination of his conqueror. The Indian was an individualist not because he was in revolt but because he had accepted his place in the physical universe, and with it his place in his own limited society. To the white invaders he was an obstacle to be removed, but to their imaginations he often symbolized the nobility man could achieve by living openly with nature.

In describing him, the Europeans used only black or white, with no shading; and little is left of the Indian's own account of life because his poetry and prose existed only in oral tradition. He had no written record other than pictographs, and his conqueror was not usually interested, at the time, in writing down his thoughts and feelings for him. The stoic calm of his few reported speeches and poems gives only a hint of the rich culture that was so soon forgotten.

Early descriptions of the Indian and his life by the white man are on the whole favorable, with the exception of some of the narratives of captivity. Columbus speaks of the gentleness and timidity of those he encountered on the island of San Salvador, and John Smith makes King Powhatan and his daughter Pocahontas into reasoning human beings. The French friars and the Spanish conquistadors report friendly relations except where the explorers were drawn into the internecine wars of the natives. Puritan, Moravian, and Quaker missionaries of a slightly later date were inclined to take sides in such differences, and in this way helped to cultivate the myth of the very good and the very bad Indians who found their way into later romances. Usually the Europeans were not as much interested in studying the Indian and his civilization as they were in converting him to Christianity or in using him for their own ends, and they were likely to read into his character the traits they wished to find. It was the Indian of the white man's imagination rather than the Indian of historical fact who finally became an important part of the usable past of

American literature.

During the seventeenth century the Spanish and French spread out over the entire American west from the ice fields to the Equator, while the British firmly established themselves on the thin strip of the Atlantic coast. This small area of fertile land was left relatively unmolested for two centuries to develop a new civilization composed of almost all the elements thrown off by a seething Europe. French, Dutch, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, and Swedes were gradually absorbed into the dominant British group. Anglicans and Roman Catholics mingled with the dissenting sects whom they had caused to emigrate, and they thus brought to the New World the full spectrum of religious beliefs and practices they had known in the Old. The solid mercantile and farming middle classes of England and Northern Europe comprised the bulk of the migrants, but there were also lords and indentured servants, Dutch patroons and Negro slaves.

One of the miracles of history is that, by 1700, this new land had become so solid and homogeneous an association of colonies, owing fealty to the British king, mainly Protestant in religion, agricultural in economy, and English in speech. Differences from this pattern of culture, where they continued to exist, were subordinated. Former aristocrats joined with the enterprising bourgeoisie to establish a half dozen and more thriving seaport towns, to lay out acres of fertile farms, and to build the ships that were to circle the globe. Diversity within unity was from the start the shaping characteristic of the new people, their land, and ultimately their literature. Man's hunger, divided to serve both his physical and his spiritual needs, created on the continent of North America a civilization that was similarly divided because it offered tempting satisfactions on both the higher and the lower levels. The chance to create a new order that would reflect divine goodness was made to seem possible by an infinity of material resources which could as well feed the lowest desires. Perhaps in the beginning of American civilization can be found a clue to the incongruous mixture of naive idealism and crude materialism that produced in later years a literature of beauty, irony, affirmation, and despair. The violence of twentieth century American literature owes

much to the energy and the contrasts in its cultural origins.

CHAPTER I

ARCHITECTS OF CULTURE

Edwards, Franklin, Jefferson

The discovery and settlement of the Western continent is only the first part of the American story; America was also a new world of the mind and spirit. The breakdown of the Middle Ages released a flood of energy out of which the modern idea of the free individual was constructed, "I went to the woods," wrote Thoreau many years later, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."¹⁴ The joy that comes from acceptance of this simple faith or the despair that comes from its denial are the two main streams of the American tradition. Americans from the start have gone to the woods to live deliberately, and their literature is the record of their successes and failures. From the religious and political debates on how life should be lived and how a society should be constructed were fashioned a nation and a way of life.

In the creation of this new world of the mind, America became, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a vast laboratory in which ideas formed in England and Western Europe could develop into action without being hampered by the laws, customs, and traditions of an obsolete feudal society. The difference in those years between America and Europe was that the things which could be only talked about in Europe, in America could be actually done. The great religious, political, and intellectual revolution that moved from the Renaissance and the Reformation into the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason¹⁵ became, in the colonies of the Atlantic seaboard, the pattern of everyday life. For its first two hundred years, American writing reflected this sense of the present im-

portance of ultimate things.

As Luther defined it by his "theses" of 1517¹⁶, the Protestant Reformation was a political as well as a religious movement, a break away from the temporal as well as the ecclesiastical authority of the Church of Rome. In England that break was almost wholly political when the separation of the Church of England was declared by King Henry VIII for his own personal reasons;¹⁷ but the wars of theological doctrine that had originated in France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland had, by the seventeenth century, crossed the Channel and become central in British political and religious life. The fall and restoration of the Stuart dynasty¹⁸ and the rise and fall of the Puritan Commonwealth determined in large part the characters of the first American colonies, for members of all parties sought refuge in their turns in the fertile lands of the West. Thus Puritanism settled New England, Pennsylvania took its character from the Quakers and Deists, Virginia was predominantly Anglican, and Maryland was at least in part Roman Catholic.

Of the early colonies, Massachusetts—together with its offshoots, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and later the settlements to the north—was most consecrated to the ideals of the Protestant Reformation. Although the shore had first been scouted by the irreligious Captain John Smith of Virginia, it was soon settled by men devoted to the cause of freedom of conscience and to the religious way of life. Both the "Pilgrims" who settled Plymouth in 1620 and the "Puritans" who settled Massachusetts Bay ten years later¹⁹ accepted religion as law, custom, and daily care because they had been denied and persecuted at home. The Plymouth colonists, as they prepared to disembark from the *Mayflower* under the leadership of William Bradford, drew up a covenant in which they combined themselves "into a civill body politick" for the "glorie of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith." The Bay colonists were even more devout, while to the south in Connecticut and Rhode Island the fiery Roger Williams²⁰ and other dissenters from Puritan orthodoxy used the language of religion for ideas that anticipated the revolutionary theory of the rights of man.

Much has been written to prove that in their first century the New England colonists were as much concerned with the things of this world as with those of the next, but their own writing was sober. These were plain men and women, devoted to the arduous task of creating a civilization in a wilderness, and their sense of responsibility generally outweighed their sense of humor. Many had university training, but none were of the court where much of Elizabethan literature had been made. Their poetry and prose have the variety if not quite the finish of the religious writers of seventeenth century Britain, from the stark directness of the journals of Bradford and Winthrop to the rhetoric and symbolism of Cotton Mather's²¹ massive history, the *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), and the subtle and exquisite metaphysical poetry of Edward Taylor.

It was in the sermons and tracts of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the last and greatest of the Puritan divines, that this intensity of spirit found its most enduring expression. In his church at Northampton, Massachusetts, this spare and devout man, of thin lips and quiet eyes, for twenty years fanned the dying fires of Calvinism to a white heat—and then retired, an exile from his people, and a missionary to the Indians in a remote village in the Berkshire Hills.²²

Although his recent biographers are careful to point out that the philosophical idealism of his college writings, the emotional abandon of his mid-life sermons, and the dogmatic logic of his later tracts are but three parts of the same substance, it is easier to understand this complex and powerful nature if they are also regarded as three periods in his life. And to understand him is essential if it is admitted, as his most learned biographer insists, that he is one of America's five or six major artists—one who happened to work with ideas rather than with poems or novels, and one who, like Franklin and Jefferson, succeeded in generalizing his personal experience into the meaning of America.

In his earliest phase Edwards seemed to be the liberal who would bring sweet reason to the dogmatic rule of the Puritan oligarchy. Born of a cultured family which was to become famous for the many