

主 编 郑体武

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现代主义的文学世界

与世界文学中的现代主义

Literary World of Modernism

and

Modernism in World Literature

 上海外语教育出版社

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前 言

现代主义是一个影响深远的世界性文学现象,同时也是一个内部流派众多、成分复杂、边界模糊、难以定义的文学现象。同样一个概念,其含义在欧洲和美国就不尽相同,即便是在欧洲,在俄罗斯、东欧和西欧也有差异,而中国在这一概念的理解和使用上,又与欧洲和美国不可同日而语,其复杂程度由此可见一斑。诚如布雷德伯里和麦克法兰所说:“显而易见,许多标准的名称——自然主义、印象主义、象征主义、意象主义、未来主义、表现主义,等等——都令人生畏地纠缠重叠在一起,形成了一个在性质和程度上由许多根本不同的运动组成的难以确定的综合体。显然,无论现代主义是这一系列运动内部使用的词语,还是用来描述这一系列运动的词语,它都毫无例外地容易引起极端的语义混乱。”然而这一点并没能让国际学术界望而却步,反而使得现代主义的魅力有增无减。

西方现代主义文学进入中国主要是在 20 世纪二三十年代,中国自己的现代主义文学大体上也是在这一时期,在西方现代主义的影响下形成的。二三十年代是中国翻译文学的一个高潮期,对现代主义的译介在这时也经历了一次初步的繁荣。可惜好景不长,由于众所周知的原因,在此后相当长一段时间里,在战争与革命以及各种运动的背景下,现代主义文学一直被当作西方资产阶级颓废文学的代表,要么对之全盘否定,要么只是将之视为文学史上的二流或三流现象而一笔带过。80 年代初期,学术界关于现代派文学的那场激烈的大讨论、大辩论,至今人们记忆犹新。虽然论战双方对现代派文学的看法各执一端,互不相让,但在客观上还是为当时现代派文学热的形成起到了推波助澜的作用,也为我们真正客观认识和理解现代主义文学的实质、风貌、成就和历史地位提供了新的思考和判断标准。然而好景不长,现代派文学的风光很快又被拉美文学爆炸以及后现代主义浪潮所淹没,在我个人印象里,90 年代以来,外国文学界召开的各类学术研讨会,讨论后现代主义的很多,但专

门讨论现代主义的似乎没有；在已发表或出版的诸多论著乃至相关专业研究生的学位论文中，研究后现代主义的很多，研究现代主义的相对较少。何以至此？是现代主义文学价值本身不足以吸引学术界的广泛关注？是现代主义文学已经过时了激不起我们的研究兴趣？是我们对现代主义文学的研究已经足够全面深入以致无话可说？显然都不是。个中原因虽然不一而足，一言难尽，但至少也跟学界过于喜好跟风逐新以及引导不力不无关系。

有鉴于此，经过一番酝酿和筹划，我们决定以“现代主义的文学世界和世界文学中的现代主义”为主题，举办一次大型国际学术研讨会，邀请国内外相关专家和学者，专门就现代主义及其各流派的美学主张、诗学特征、艺术追求、创作成就，现代主义及其各流派在各个国家和地区的表现以及跨国界传播、接受与影响等方面的问题进行研讨和交流。我们的目的不是人为地制造什么学术热点，或者为再现“现代派文学热”造势（这也是不现实的），而是希望能借此举引起学术界对现代主义文学的应有重视，毕竟现代主义在文学史上具有划时代的意义，也是研究后续文学尤其是后现代主义文学不可或缺的重要一环，而我们对现代主义文学的了解和认知至今仍存在着许多偏差、空白和盲点。

值得欣慰的是，当我们把发起此次会议的想法分别跟美国弗吉尼亚大学世界文化研究中心主任莱文森教授和俄罗斯科学院高尔基世界文学研究所副所长波隆斯基教授沟通后，立即得到他们的支持和响应。就这样，经过一年多的筹备，由中国外国文学学会和上海外国语大学文学研究院主办，吉尼亚大学世界文化研究中心、高尔基世界文学研究所和上海外语教育出版社协办的“现代主义的文学世界与世界文学中的现代主义”国际学术研讨会，终于在2013年岁末在上海外国语大学拉开帷幕。

来自美国、俄罗斯、英国、法国、加拿大、捷克、哈萨克斯坦、日本、韩国、马来西亚，以及中国大陆、香港特区、台湾地区等十几个国家和地区的150余位学者参加了会议。与会学者提交的论文议题非常广泛和丰富，仅就大会主题发言来看，就具有广泛的代表性，涵盖了西欧、俄罗斯与东欧、北美、拉美、阿拉伯、中国等主要大的区域和国别，既有理论思考和文化批评，也有影响研究和文本分析，各分组会议的发言同样如此。值得一提的是，除了关于外国现代主义的讨论，会议上还形成了中外学者关于中国现代主义文学的直接对话，这应该说是这次会议的另外一个收获。

这本论文集就是在与会者提交的一百多篇论文中选编而成,算是为这次会议留下的一份文字资料。借此机会,谨向对论文集的出版给予大力支持的上海外语教育出版社社长兼总编辑庄智象教授以及各位同仁表示诚挚的谢意。

郑体武

2014年12月

The Fate of Modernism and the Future of the University

Michael Levenson

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Abstract: This paper begins with an episode occurring just after the end of the First World War, when James Joyce's *Ulysses* reached a decisive and difficult stage in its writing and publication. The controversies that erupted at this moment illuminate a broader history of Modernism, its challenge to the cultural order and also the limits of that challenge. As early as the 1920s, modernist writers and artists confronted both hostility and a neutralizing form of acceptance of their work. Teodor Adorno remains one of the most impressive theorists of this turn in the history of the modernist avant-garde, but by placing Adorno's critique within a wider frame, it becomes possible to re-consider the "incomplete project" of Modernism and to ask in what form, if any, does the modernist epoch survive? The final stage of the paper discusses the bearing of the modern university on this question, its status as a place, not only for the production and transmission of knowledge, but also for forms of the experiment that might sustain Modernism within the new millennium.

Key words: Modernism; university

I begin with a moment in 1919, just after the end of the First World War, but still in the midst of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. That monument of Modernism had an uneven and difficult arrival. Through the good offices of Ezra Pound, Joyce had been able to publish the early episodes of his novel in the small American journal called *The Little Review*, with the first parts of *Ulysses* appearing in the spring of 1918, and continuing through the year. Within a still small group of readers, the response was keenly enthusiastic. One of his great supporters, Harriet Weaver, found a publisher in London willing to print the finished work. These began as good months for Joyce — the European war ending, supporters rallying around him, while his work won rapt attention.

But the success was suddenly interrupted. Joyce himself describes the

course of events.

My new book *Ulysses* was to appear in the *Egoist* of London. The same old story from the very beginning the printers refused again. It appeared in fragments in the New York *Little Review*. Several times it was taken out of circulation through the post, by the action of the American Government. Now legal action is being taken against it.

The occasion for legal trouble was the appearance of a next episode, Nausicaa, which was the most rudely transgressive chapter so far. The American authorities seized all copies of the journal containing the episode and burned them. Soon after, the publishers of *The Little Review* were brought to trial. Joyce was annoyed, but he also wrote with pride that “a great movement is being prepared against the publication, initiated by Puritans, English Imperialists, Irish Republicans, Catholics — what an alliance!”

In one respect the episode gives a familiar story. Modernism assumes the character of opposition and resistance; in those terms I prefer, modernism remains the adversarial culture of the new. It is not simply committed to novelty, but to the novelty of an alternative culture that stands as a rival to dominant forms of life. Joyce certainly saw his book in this way, writing to one correspondent that *Ulysses* will seem “as remote to yourself as the sun — or any other solar system.”

But the politics of modernism were more complex than Joyce’s account suggests. At the very moment his work was being repudiated by those who resisted the challenge of Modernism, he was finding that his friends and close associates were also retreating from the book. The episode “Sirens” attempts to write literature in the form of music. Sentences break down and sounds appear without any evident meaning.

The chapter was sent to Ezra Pound, who had continued as the mainstay of support, and also to Harriet Weaver, Joyce’s editor in London. But even these great allies worried about the latest change in his ever-changing novel. Why was it so difficult? Why did every episode require a new style? The first lines of “Sirens” are these:

Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing imperthnthnthnthn.

Chips, picking chips off rocky thumbnail, chips.

Horrid! And gold flushed more.

A husky fifenote blew.

Blew. Blue bloom is on the.

Goldpinnacled hair.

For many of the novel's first readers, these words were simply incomprehensible. Fragments of sentences with no obvious relation to one another. Sounds that merely resembled words. When Joyce sent the chapter to his first circle of supporters, he found them confused and disoriented and unhappy.

Pound, reports Joyce, responded "rather hastily in disapproval," asking for just "a few sign posts" for the reader, perhaps just twenty "coherent" words and wondering whether it was so important for Joyce "to demand a new style per chapter." Harriet Weaver also showed her uneasiness. But Joyce was unrepentant; he declined to apologize, insisting that his novel requires more changes, more experiment, more challenge to those who try to grasp it. Of his new episode "Oxen of the Sun" he writes that "it presents for me great technical difficulties and for the reader something worse."

The episode registers a moment, just after World War I, of remarkable resonance and complexity in the history of European modernism. The war had displaced artistic experiment from cultural attention; but when the hostilities and violence ceased, modernism resumed with a new character. Woolf, Eliot, Proust, Joyce, Picasso, Stein, had not yet achieved or published the major work to which they aspired, although the war years had opened a time for their work to grow in scale and ambition. The so-called *annus mirabilis* — the miracle year — of Modernism, 1922, marked the culmination of this new phase. It was the year *Ulysses* was finally published, and "The Waste Land," Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, and Jean Toomer's *Cane*. But it also marked new tension among modernists themselves. Virginia Woolf and Katharine Mansfield had a great rivalry; Joyce dismissed Proust; the new gang of Surrealists attacked the gang of Dadaists.

The struggles of Joyce are then interesting in themselves; but they also suggest the larger terms of conflict for Modernism. On the one side, an increasing hostility from public authorities is now willing to use the law in order to suppress literary experiment. But on the other side, a condition too often ignored — namely this dispute internal to Modernism — the struggle among

artists themselves, and artists and their editors, artists and their audiences. Joyce's capacity to carry on — living with his family in crowded flats in Trieste, Zurich, Paris; writing difficult pages that he knew would startle and disturb his readers; but carrying on, in the face of material and artistic impasse — this is the unsettled, agitated but productive condition of High Modernism at this distinctive period just after the war; in 1919, 1920 and 1921.

I want to offer this moment and these conditions as decisive to our understanding of Modernism and its after-history in our times. The work was demanding and uncompromising; it created anger; it was seized and burnt. But it also created those internal disputes, artists contending with each other. And then there were two other features of the postwar condition that will take me to a next stage in my talk — namely the beginnings of academic and commercial encounters with modernist experiment.

The development of High Modernism of the postwar period became quickly and deeply dependent on the arrival of a new group of explicators and annotators — university-trained and university-located critics who began to engage with the difficulties of those such as Joyce, Woolf, Eliot and Stein. Cambridge University was one important site in this reception. It was where I.A. Richards, an early admirer of Eliot, introduced new styles of reading — so-called 'practical criticism' — that gave young students tools for approaching the formidable world of the new texts. Intellectual journalism was another contributing force, especially as practiced by Edmund Wilson in the United States. His early review of "The Waste Land" was crucial in making it available to a wider audience. And when Wilson published *Axel's Castle* in 1931, he offered terms of understanding that eased the assimilation of adversarial Modernism into the wider culture. Works that had seemed dangerous now took on a more comfortable status as signs of modernity.

Moreover, as Michael North has stressed, the styles of Modernism — especially the visual styles — were rapidly absorbed by the growing realms of fashion and advertising. The hard geometry of Picasso, or the decadent curves of Aubrey Beardsley, became elements within the spectacle of new commodities in the 1920s. It's a moment when what we know as modern mass culture crossed a threshold toward consolidation. This happened above all in

cinema — in the Hollywood film industry. The great works of literary Modernism — including “The Waste Land” and *Ulysses* were fully conscious of the rise of a dominant commercial culture that was becoming pervasive. Eliot brings popular music and jazz into his poem; Joyce makes “the gentle art of advertising” a central vocation in *Ulysses*.

The question then becomes, who contains what? Does a strenuous literary modernism absorb modernization within its terms? Or does modernization simply make a toy, a distraction, of the new art and literature? Here we move into the theoretical issues raised so powerfully by the Frankfurt School. Most important is our recollection of the central claims developed by Teodor Adorno in his essays on “The Culture Industry.”

The great historical change, according to Adorno, was the loss of distance between the art-work and the everyday life of commerce, what he speaks of as “the elimination of the distinction between art and reality.” There is no longer any “intransigent modernism in art. Advertising has absorbed surrealism and the champions of this movement have given their blessing to this commercialization.” The conclusion to this line of thought is contained in these brisk and haunting words:

Culture (in the true sense) did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honoring them. In so far as culture becomes wholly assimilated to, and integrated in those petrified relations, human beings are once more debased.

Adorno paints a deeply demoralized portrait of late modernity — a prison of consumerism that contains any challenge and renders it harmless. What is worth considering here is the way that consumerism and academic life converge toward the same end: both take the sting out of audacious art and literature? Lionel Trilling, the distinguished midcentury American critic, once described how difficult it had become to demonstrate the force of Modernism to his students. They already came equipped with styles of thinking that protected them against the disturbances of Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and Stein. It's in this respect that, the academy and the advertisers work toward a common result — a taming of the cultural provocation within difficult Modernism.

Here I come to another turn — turns that will bring us back to our own

situation in academic life. From one critical perspective, universities perform the role that I have just been describing: a role of pacification and neutralization. Through a system of degrees and credentials, students are trained to see Modernism, the cultural avant-garde, as merely another item within a system of knowledge. This is what Trilling was regretting when he talked about the difficulty of recovering the defiance of the great modernist works. His students had already been given defenses against the promise contained in the new art.

But here — and I speak now only of my own country in the last generation — here we come to some subtle and neglected aspects of the after-history of Modernism. I can approach them by returning to that immediate postwar moment when Ezra Pound formulated his celebrated distinction among three kinds of poetry:

Melopoeia, “which moves by its music”;

Phanopoeia, “wherein the feelings of painting and sculpture are predominant”;

And logopoeia, “the dance of the intelligence among words and ideas.”

We should notice that whereas the first two modes depend on the relationship between poetry and other arts — poetry and music, poetry and painting — the third (logopoeia) depends on a faculty (the intelligence and its ideas) which goes beyond the boundaries of literature. Pound identifies logopoeia as a distinctly modern form of expression, only fully realized in the poetry of the French poet Laforgue and T.S. Eliot, the ones who create a poem based out of the play of thought.

From our own standpoint it is possible to recognize logopoeia as a much broader historical current than Pound realized, possible to extend Pound’s point and to see the evolution of this “intellectual” mode not just in modern poetry, perhaps not even especially in modern poetry, but preeminently in the body of criticism and theory that has become such a marked feature of our academic life. The rise of what we now call theory (and no longer criticism) must be seen as not merely an event in the history of academic life but an event in the history of modernism.

The true heirs to the poetry of Laforgue and Eliot may not be their poetic descendants but those theorists who now perform the modernist dance of the

intelligence. Uneasy though the perception makes us, it may be that literary theory has usurped the place of the artistic avant-garde, and still more disquieting, it may be that theory has succeeded where the avant-garde failed. The large audience, the abiding appetite of readers, the proliferation of journals — these were what the modernists had sought and what academic theorists have attained.

But the university has another aspect that we can easily neglect when we occupy rooms such as this one. We can forget that the space of the university includes far more than lecture halls that are used to transmit knowledge and to mark the movement toward degrees and credentials. Students attend lectures, write essays, and sit examinations, but there are other times and spaces which they occupy in different ways. They perform the labor of acquiring their status and certification. But like all laborers they look to find openings outside the routines of the work, and one of the features of university life is that it inevitably provides such openings. Students can only be watched and disciplined so far. By the nature of their work, intellectual work, they require time on their own, time to reflect, to assimilate, to absorb, to learn.

Just a few years ago, there appeared a striking study of literary creation within the walls of the university. Mark McGurl, in a book called *The Program Era*, studied the rise of creative writing programs in the United States since the end of World War II. From modest beginnings there has grown up nearly 1000 programs in the US, and as McGurl points out, it is time for us to think about what it means. “The rise of the creative-writing program,” he writes, “stands as the most important event in postwar American literary history.” Surely McGurl is right to emphasize how most serious American writers are now trained to write in the university and that their readers — the readers of so-called literary fiction — are also products of the university. Many of those trained in these programs such as Raymond Carver, Robert Coover, for instance — can be seen as the inheritors of the early-century figures who made a revolution in literary culture. Here is one site of a still surviving modernism even in the age of the Culture Industry.

Our problem of course remains. As McGurl points out, the writers often represent themselves as outsiders, even though they live and support themselves on the inside — inside the university. They represent, as he puts

it, “the institutionalization of anti-institutionality,” which is a difficult and unstable place for experimental culture to find itself. Often they seek to remain oppositional, these writers — to challenge dominant values and official rhetoric — but that opposition takes place within the secure structures of university. The Creative Writing program is by now itself well supported and well established: it offers courses, stipends for the students, and degrees that they can attain.

We need to ponder the contrast between careers such as those, for instance, of Robert Coover and James Joyce. Joyce in that difficult year 1918 lived from hand to mouth with scarce resources — moving house with his family again and again — borrowing money from his brother, accepting meals from friends, just in order to sustain himself to write. There is no need to romanticize Joyce’s strenuous condition, but it is important to see the extraordinary change between the uncertain beginning of modernism and the establishment of the creative program.

And yet I want to end on a different note, pointing to one more aspect of university life. It’s true, as McGurl emphasizes, that our universities create programs that can institutionalize the anti-institutional. In this respect, they continue the work that Adorno describes — the taming of the very forces that might disturb the equilibrium of culture. But universities are more intricate social worlds than that.

A fuller reading of the world of the university will show that it is a complex zone of formal education and improvisation. In the United States, a familiar pattern often shows itself. At the physical edge of the university stand restaurants, coffee houses, and bookshops where students gather. There are spaces where music is played, and where drawings might be hung or poetry recited. Then, beyond this informal play with words and images, there is the testing of styles of living — new haircuts and clothing styles, new words that are invented, and in general, the enjoyment of a space of experiment beyond the requirements of classroom and degrees.

Students miss lectures, trade songs on their phones, fantasize about a better life they might lead — and they do so, not alone, but in the changing networks of friendship that are also a distinctive feature of academic existence. This sub-culture of informal life can be a space of aimlessness and distraction, but it can also be the site of experimental culture. We who study and teach the

subject need to learn to see what's before our eyes — the students who miss lecture in order to design a poster for a concert or to write a skit for a youtube video.

These activities-informal gestures on the margins of the physical university, often performed as jokes — these too can sustain a modernism. The limitations in Adorno's account — indispensable though it is — are that it misses the power of the remnant, of those who are overlooked by the culture industry, or who stand beyond its reach. Our understanding of the history of Modernism must be an exercise in our own self-understanding, our recognition of the complex scene of university modernity.

Jurgen Habermas wrote of the incomplete project of modernity, by which he meant the failure of Enlightenment to preserve its mission from origins in the 18th century. We can also speak of the incomplete project of Modernism — of a cultural mission to preserve experimental life that can manifest itself in objects and images, texts and sounds, that can flourish in unlikely spaces we should learn to notice, and that can recover the contrast between the actual and the actually possible.