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Preface books

王尔德导读



A Preface to

Oscar Wilde

〔英〕 Anne Varty 著



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总 序

1970年英国朗文出版集团 Pearson 教育出版社出版了《华兹华斯导读》，作者是华兹华斯研究专家约翰·珀金斯。该书首先提供华兹华斯的基本信息，介绍诗人的教育背景、哲学和宗教思想，特别强调了他与英国当时经济发展的关系，随后对华兹华斯各个时期代表作品进行深入细致的解读，分析其诗歌创作的成就及其特点，最后提供相关资料，如华兹华斯圈子内的人、阅读书目等信息。《华兹华斯导读》是一部学习和研究华兹华斯诗歌极为有用的参考书，深受学生、教师和研究工作者欢迎。时隔多年，Pearson 教育出版社又推出《华兹华斯导读》修订版，原作者对该书内容作了调整，并增加对自传体长诗《序曲》的论述。《华兹华斯导读》是 Pearson 教育出版社出版的“英国文学名家导读丛书”第一册，入选该丛书的其他名家有莎士比亚、弥尔顿、邓恩、斯威夫特、蒲柏、约翰逊、雪莱、济慈、奥斯丁、狄更斯、勃朗特姐妹、霍普金斯、王尔德、哈代、康拉德、H. G. 威尔斯、E. M. 福斯特、欧文、劳伦斯、庞德、T. S. 艾略特、乔伊斯、奥威尔、格林等，在时间上涵盖文艺复兴、新古典主义、浪漫主义、现实主义、现代主义及战后等不同历史阶段，在文体上包括小说、诗歌、戏剧等文学样式。

“英国文学名家导读丛书”作为一套“学术与研究丛书”，旨在向英国名家作品的读者提供“现代和权威的导引”，帮助他们克服在阅读时遇到的特有的困难，达到“智性理解和艺术欣赏”之目的。一如《华兹华斯导读》，该丛书各册的结构一般分为三个部分，第一部分是关于作家的生平经历，所处的历史时代背景，所受到的文学、文化、宗教、哲学思潮的影响。第二部分是评论研究，以文本分析为主，涉及作家的代表性作品、创作思想、艺术手法，同时展示各种研究视角。第三部分是参考信息，包括对作家有重要影响或与作家关系密切的人物的简介、较为完备的研究书目等内容。

“英国文学名家导读丛书”各册的作者均为学有所成的专家学者,他们学术研究功底深厚,对英语文学文化传统以及当代西方文学理论有深入了解,注意将作家及其作品置于历史和社会文化背景之下,对文本进行深度解读,论证充分,剖析精辟,有不少独到的见解,形成了鲜明特色。例如,《莎士比亚喜剧导读》从研究笑的社会功能入手,分析莎剧中的幽默和丑角,将伊丽莎白时代观众对喜剧的期待与二十世纪读者对莎士比亚喜剧的接受进行区别。《莎士比亚悲剧导读》研究莎士比亚四大悲剧,对莎士比亚的语言有精当的论述。《弥尔顿导读》精选诗人不同时期的诗篇进行细读,有效帮助现代读者理解弥尔顿作品中所包含的清教主义思想以及他的诗歌艺术。《奥斯丁导读》对奥斯丁与十八世纪文学的关系进行梳理,详尽分析了她的人物塑造和小说结构,并专门讨论《爱玛》中的两位男性人物。《王尔德导读》按照王尔德的创作轨迹评析他的诗歌、小说、社会喜剧和自传,试图解开他经久不衰的魅力之谜,对王尔德的性倾向问题也有专门论述。《哈代导读》展示了哈代在小说中描写悲剧情感和普遍人性时所表现出来的深度和力度,并有专门章节讨论他的短篇小说和诗歌创作成就。《康拉德导读》揭示了康拉德复杂的欧洲文化思想背景,关于《诺斯特罗摩》的解读成为全书的亮点。《劳伦斯导读》将劳伦斯的生平经历、时代背景与文学创作结合起来考察,对《儿子与情人》和《虹》的评析清晰明了,令人信服。《庞德导读》以较多的篇幅介绍庞德这位有争议的诗人的生活和文学、文化、政治背景,对其鸿篇巨制《诗章》内容的复杂性以及诗人在二十世纪诗歌中的地位进行较为客观中肯的评析论述。《艾略特导读》强调了历史文化传统在艾略特生活和文学创作中的重要性,对他的代表作品诗歌《荒原》、《四个四重奏》和诗剧《大教堂谋杀案》作了现代阐释。《乔伊斯导读》分析了乔伊斯作品中的爱尔兰文学意识和现代主义特征,对《一个青年艺术家的画像》、《尤利西斯》和《芬尼根的苏醒》文本的分析解读起到了解惑释疑的功能,是学习乔伊斯小说的良师益友。

“英国文学名家导读丛书”各册均由相关领域的专家学者一人独撰,这保证了书中内容结构的系统性和连贯性。该丛书注重学术严谨性,考证细致,阐释得当,同时,论述力求深入浅出,体现导读的特点,既有综合介绍,又有重点分析,可读性强。丛书的作者把作家的文本适当地穿引在评述之中,从而使得论证有理有据,没有脱离文本。书中采用各种研究视角,对一般读者具有启迪作用。作为教学与研究参考书,该丛书的资料不仅丰富全面,而且准确可靠。参考文献汇总了该领域的研究成果,很有针

对性,是查询相关材料的好助手。分类索引便于读者快捷地了解到所需信息在书中的位置。另外,书中附有珍贵的人物照片、历史地图、插图等,图文并茂成为该丛书的一个特点。

Pearson 教育出版社在上世纪七十年代推出“英国文学名家导读丛书”后,受到读者好评。为使该丛书及时反映学术研究最新进展,扩大其规模 and 影响,Pearson 教育出版社对已出版的导读进行修订再版,并继续出版新的导读。长期以来,我国高校英语文学教学与研究原版书刊匮乏,学生写论文时收集资料成为一大难题,教师和研究人员开展学术研究也受资料不足的制约,影响了研究工作的质量和水平。北京大学出版社决定引进 Pearson 教育出版社的“英国文学名家导读丛书”,将有助于改变这种状况。惠普尔说:“书籍是屹立在时间的汪洋上的灯塔。”对于在英国文学海洋中畅游的众多学子来说,该丛书如同灯塔一样,可以起到指引作用。

“英国文学名家导读丛书”在中国出版,将促进我们国家的英国文学教学和研究工作。

王守仁

南京大学外国语学院教授

2005 年 1 月

A Preface to

Oscar Wilde



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For Hety and Kenneth



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Anne Varty
Oxford

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Abbreviations

Works, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, introduction by Merlin Holland (London: HarperCollins, 1994).

Letters, *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1963).

More Letters, *More Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: John Murray, 1985).

Critical Heritage, *Oscar Wilde. The Critical Heritage*, by Karl Beckson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, by Richard Ellmann (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987).

Mikhail, *Oscar Wilde. Interviews and Recollections*, ed. E. H. Mikhail (London: Macmillan, 1979) 2 vols.



Introduction

Oscar Wilde liked secrets; he especially liked to keep them and to broadcast them at the same time. The first night audience of *Lady Windermere's Fan* was party to a typical display of such latent disclosures, not least of which was the show of green carnation buttonholes, worn by Cecil Graham on stage and by Wilde and his friends in the auditorium. 'And what does it mean?' 'Nothing whatever, but that is just what nobody will guess' (Ellmann, 345). This is sheer mischief, for the green carnation was the badge of homosexuality, but it is made by someone who takes calculated pleasure in exclusiveness and provocation, in self-advertisement, and in complicating the distinction between art and life. Subjected to this off-stage drama, the audience was also being teased by secrets kept and broken on stage.

These two examples of Wilde's use of secrets – the first mischievous and played out in the auditorium, the second aesthetic and a component of the plot on stage – illustrate the pleasure he took in generating an air of 'suspense and curiosity' around both his professional and private lives. Today, retrospective knowledge of Wilde's sexuality colours interpretation of his life and work. Wilde, like Mrs Erlynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, had a sexual identity of which the larger part of his contemporary public was unaware. Once revealed, Wilde was punished not just by his two-year prison sentence begun in 1895, but by the subsequent suppression of his work and, with it, his audience. It was not until the 1930s that his plays were regularly revived, or that Wilde could even be discussed in polite circles. This extraordinary reversal of fortunes tells more about social values than it does about either the man or his work, yet the two cannot be divorced. In 1995 Wilde was granted a place in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. Welcomed therefore into the fold of cultural respectability his astonishing literary achievement is now given a measure of national recognition.

The celebrity status Wilde enjoyed at the peak of his career, a century earlier, is summarised by his friend Ada Leverson:

It is difficult to convey in words the strange popularity, the craze there was at this moment [February 1895] . . . 'To meet Mr. Oscar Wilde' was put on the most exclusive of invitation cards, yet every omnibus conductor knew his latest jokes . . . His greatest pleasure was to amuse the mob, to frighten the burgess and to fascinate the aristocrat.

(Mikhail, II, 268)

Introduction

And what is the secret of this success? It is absurd even to frame the question, but it is hoped that this book will serve as an invitation to the reader to ponder the imponderable, to consider the sources of Wilde's extraordinary capacity to amuse, frighten and fascinate across a powerfully unified body of work. The achievements for which Wilde is best remembered today were written during a startlingly short five-year period from 1890 to 1895. This study focuses critical attention on the work from this period. But since Wilde's literary endeavours from 1881 contributed significantly to his mature success, work from this earlier period is also represented. During the 1880s Wilde worked as a poet, lecturer, journalist and short-story writer. All these aspects of his production are considered here. His ability to observe issues of the day and to comment obliquely on them – most important elements of his dramaturgical and critical power in the mature comedies – are evident as crafts learned early in his literary development, and during the 1890s he frequently returned to matters both of style and substance which he had treated earlier.

While the story of Wilde's life has sustained both scholarly and speculative investigation, his biography is not a major topic for this book. Students should consult Richard Ellmann's brilliant and compendious *Oscar Wilde* for biographical information, to which reference is made throughout this study. Instead, this 'preface' opens with a skeleton biography of Wilde in tabular form, and goes on to consider four major aspects of his life and afterlife: the two figures in his immediate family, his mother and his wife; the politics of the late-nineteenth century relating to Ireland and homosexuality; and, last, a glance at the legendary Wilde, as our culture has incorporated ghostly versions of the man in the visual arts, literature and film.

Part Two of this book surveys Wilde's philosophy through an analysis of his various non-fictional writings. The third section offers critical interpretations of his major works, arranged chronologically, and concludes with an account of his letters. Finally there is a reference section which both supports the preceding chapters and provides resources for further study.

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“英国文学名家导读丛书”旨在推介国外文学领域经典的和新近的英文原版优秀著作和文献,使我国读者能够接触到原汁原味的第一手资料。

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'A description of what the *Preface Books* were intended to be was included in the first volume and has appeared unchanged at the front of every succeeding title: "A series of scholarly and critical studies of major writers intended for those needing modern and authoritative guidance through the characteristic difficulties of their work to reach an intelligent understanding and enjoyment of it." This may seem modest enough but a moment's reflection will reveal what a considerable claim it actually is. It is much to the credit of Longman and to their (founding) editor Maurice Hussey and his authors that these words have come to seem no more than a plain statement of fact.'

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Part One

The Writer and His Setting



Chronology

	WILDE'S LIFE	OTHER EVENTS
1835		Théophile Gautier, <i>Mademoiselle de Maupin</i> .
1854	Oscar Wilde born in Dublin on 16 October, christened Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde. (Elder brother, William, born 26 September 1852.)	
1855	Family move into the exclusive Georgian square, 1 Merrion Square North, Dublin.	
1857		First edition of <i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i> by Baudelaire.
1864	Father knighted for services to medicine.	Matthew Arnold (Oxford Professor of Poetry) lectures on 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time'.
1864-71	Sent to board at Portora Royal School, Enniskillen, north west of Dublin.	
1867	Younger sister, Isola, dies, aged eight.	Zola, <i>Thérèse Raquin</i> .
1871-74	Reads Classics at Trinity College, Dublin.	
1873		Walter Pater's first edition of <i>Studies in the History of the Renaissance</i> .
1874	Graduates from Trinity College with a First Class	First Impressionist Exhibition in Paris.