

*A Survey
of American Literature
the 2nd Edition*



美国文学简史

(第二版)

常耀信 著

南开大学出版社

高等院校文科教材

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Foreword

(For the 2nd Edition)

The focus of the revision is on the postwar period (1945 through the present). The new edition has incorporated the latest developments and research findings of the last ten years as much as possible. Adding information on about fifty contemporary poets and novelists, the 2nd edition introduces, in detail, the basic features of Postmodernism in all the major departments of postwar American writing—poetry, the novel, and drama. In addition, the new edition has taken notice of the redefining of American literature that has been going on in the last few decades and has included a number of writers of different ethnic groups—the African American, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic American (Chicano), etc. The emergence of these writers has added the value of diversity and artistic authenticity to American literature. It is a pity that space constraint allows room only for a short list of contemporary authors and works for inclusion in the revised book.

The guideline for inclusion is to choose the well-established authors. The best we can do, as always, would be to catch the few best known and leave the rest to the discretion of the readers. The inclusion of some younger writers, who have received good critical attention, while it is desirable and necessary, may entail a danger here. As time has its own way of making or beheading reputations, some writers who promise well may fall into obscurity, and the ones now in neglect may have history on their side. That makes it all the more imperative to review and revise our survey once in a while.

Although this survey tries to glean from a variety of critical opinions, the interpretations of the works offered here are by no means *the* interpretations and are never meant to be such. I understand the magnitude and subtlety of critical

evaluations, and try to be balanced and just in my introductions of the writers and their works and avoid any misrepresentation or bias. Any possible offense in any form, which may stem from my inadequate preparation, is unintentional and my apologies, if called for, will be genuine and forthcoming.

Since the second edition is a few chapters longer than the first, and some chapters may contain more than one lecture can handle, instructors are advised to prioritize their list of authors and works in their teaching plans. It may be a good idea to spread the survey over two semesters.

My debt is to the University of Guam for its generous help in making available the time and its bountiful resources for me, without which the revision project would have been inconceivable. I express my gratitude to all the generations of my students for their responses and views that have helped me immensely in the revision. My wife deserves recognition for her significant part in bringing the undertaking to fruition.

Y. Chang, Ph. D.

Department of English
The University of Guam
July, 2003

Prefatory Note

(For the 1st Edition)

This book is a condensation of the teaching notes for the course, *A Survey of American Literature*, which this department has compiled and taught as a companion to *The Selected Readings in American Literature* (Tianjin: Nankai Univ. Press, 1987[-1991]). It does not intend to be all-inclusive, being in fact a mere sketch accommodated in a work taught over a semester of some twenty weeks. Although we exerted a measure of discretion in the choice of the primary and secondary materials for the course, we claim little or no originality. All we hope to accomplish is to help Chinese students of English to acquire some acquaintance with the modern and contemporary critical climate in which a certain author has been evaluated. The works of major literary critics, from which we have gleaned, are introduced as much as space permits and acknowledged in the endnotes and “the Bibliography” in detail. For those who take a genuine interest in American literature, this book may serve as a brief introduction to further study. And for those who are less literary in temperament and taste, these pages may give them some background knowledge without which they will find themselves at a disadvantage in their future work as language workers. If the book might by any chance render any help to Chinese teachers of American literature in any way, I would feel more than gratified.

In writing the book I have benefited from the presence of our foreign faculty, especially Dr. R. C. Cosbey and Dr. Carl Englehart, who taught English and American literature in this department. I should like to thank them for the loan of materials and help of other kinds, without which the book would not have been what it is. Naturally, I have converted the substance of other scholars, Chinese as well as foreign, to my own use; some of the debts are obvious and specified, but many may not have been duly discharged. My gratitude is genuine, however, and

nothing like neglect is intentional. Also among my creditors are the students who have taken this course and whose responses have helped, in no small way, to revise my method and priority of presentation.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Qian Qing, professor of English of Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, who read the whole manuscript on behalf of the Textbook Evaluation Committee of the State Commission for Education, and offered painstaking and invaluable criticism. Her standards of academic excellence have made my revision an exciting and gratifying experience. I wish to thank Professor Rong Yi-lun of the Northeast Normal University, who read the manuscript also on behalf of the Textbook Evaluation Committee and whose perceptive observations have proved immensely valuable.

I want to thank Professor Wu Fu-heng, President of the Chinese Association for the Study of American Literature and ex-President of Shandong University, for the gracious "Foreword" which he kindly found time, out of his tight schedule, to write for this book.

Chang Yao-xin, Ph. D.

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July, 1987

序

文学史是文学史科、哲学思想、文学理论缺一不可的统一体，没有充足的史料会流于教条，空疏；没有哲学思想则会成为现象的罗列；没有文学理论则无法对一切材料、一切现象加以分析。美国文学史当然也不例外。我们欢迎的是以马克思主义哲学思想和文学理论为指导思想与分析准则，把美国文学简短的历史产生的并不贫乏的诸多现象按发展顺序加以分析、介绍的文学史。这样一本美国文学史做为大专院校教材或是作为美国文学爱好者的读物都是佳作。

常耀信同志编写的《美国文学简史》恰是这样的佳作。在全书有限的篇幅中包含着丰富的内容。它与美国的历史文化发展联系起来，从殖民地时期写到本世纪七十年代。

这本简史对 19 世纪以前的美国文学从略介绍，突出地介绍清教文学及其代表人物——乔纳桑·爱德华兹和本杰明·富兰克林。从多方面看，这两人都是清教思想的代表人物。前者憧憬来生，后者着眼今世。

从 19 世纪以后对文学的概念来看，有许多殖民地时期的作品不能说是文学。它们有的只是一些信息的报导和宗教的或政治的宣传。但是正如作者在“前言”中说的，清教思想对美国文学产生过持久的影响。可以这样说，殖民地时期许多作品尽管文学性不强，但它们都为 19 世纪的美国文学奠定了基础。美国文学的主题、美国文学的形式都有从那时起的历史根源。例如爱默生的自立自强哲学可以追溯到殖民地时期的司多达牧师的某些著作。梭罗的个人主义也不能说与殖民地时代的约翰·吴勒门没有联系。新英格兰的后

代，一条线从爱默生、梭罗一直到弗罗斯特，另一条线从霍桑、麦尔维尔到詹姆斯等；所有这两条线上各个时期的人都不同地在个人性格中再现出清教心理。

至于说到浪漫主义时期，则更为整个美国文学开辟了丰富的源泉。就拿近代的短篇小说看，也可以追溯到欧文首创，艾德加·爱伦·坡丰富了它的理论和技巧，霍桑则寓教诲于故事之中。短篇小说乃是美国民族文化发展中产生的特定形式。

《简史》以较大的篇幅写 19 世纪和 20 世纪前期。这阶段是美国文学作为独立的民族文学形成和发展的阶段。书中介绍的作家都是在世界上知名，也为我国读者比较熟悉的。全书的章节安排既符合美国文学发展实况，也符合西方文化一般的发展规律。从天真纯朴的浪漫主义到富有喜剧精神的现实主义和悲剧精神的自然主义；然后到成熟老练的嘲讽、幽默精神。就美国文学而言，当前又趋向于返回更高阶段超验主义思想，出现了超验文学。本书作者在详述美国民族文学发展的几十年中列举和分析了不少巨匠。

《美国文学简史》对第二次世界大战后的文学虽然只给了一章的篇幅，但内容还是充实的。而且由于前面的介绍很详尽，对于了解当代文学也是十分重要的。作为教材，我们在讲课时必然要通古才能解今，而从解今中加深通古。一个民族文学史是不能割断其渊源的。例如在第二次世界大战刚刚结束，早期的第一次浪潮中的两个次文化：一是南方文学，它可以追溯到不仅福克纳，甚至于爱伦·坡，更乃至伯克纳·布朗；二是犹太文学，它继承欧州的旧文化和美国的新文化，也可以追溯到 19 世纪的犹太文学。而且在这个浪潮中的两条线上的作家，都有要脱离他们的父辈如海明威、福克纳的趋向。不联系过去则无法深刻地了解如索尔·贝娄、诺曼·梅勒等人的特点。

在 50 年代后期到 60 年代前期的第二次浪潮中的两个次文化，其一是黑人文学。黑人是奴隶的后代，他们的文学与他们的政治运动要联系看；二是垮掉派作家，他们则是中产阶级的白人子弟。他们不满意时代的社会生活，要脱离那些衣冠楚楚的商人而鬻蓄须、

少浴、不修边幅、到处流浪、吸毒、群居。他们从过去的超验主义作家如爱默森、梭罗的世界中寻找；他们从东方的宗教思想中寻找，企图找到可以与他们生存于其中的社会相对抗的力量。

这次叛行失败了。于是不少人趋向保守。第三次浪潮的特点是注意作品的语言，要表达意识的复杂性，要分析语言的复杂性。于是乃产生了实验小说家如罗纳德·苏克尼克，雷蒙德·费德曼和约翰·巴斯等人。只有通晓美国过去的文学，才能对当代文学的许多现象了解和分析得深刻。

中国美国文学研究会会长

吴蔚恒

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