

北京外国语大学外国文学选集丛书

E Anthology of English Literature

英国文学选集

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北京外国语大学 外国文学选集丛书

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序

编写一套通用语种国家或地区的原文文学选集是我国外国文学界的著名学者、已故的北京外国语大学教授王佐良先生在几年前提出的一个大胆设想。这个计划起源于1993年。受国家教委专业外语教学指导委员会的委托,王先生领导下的北京外国语大学外国文学研究所和北外英语系于1993年连续举办了两届英美文学教学系列讲座,吸引了数十所高校、近百名讲授英美文学的教师,共同研讨如何给我国高校外语专业的学生讲授有关国家的文学作品。随着讨论的深入,一个问题突出地摆到了教师们的面前:我们这样一个文化大国竟然没有适合我国高校学生使用的原文文学选读教材。王佐良先生当即请北外的教师 and 外语教学与研究出版社把这项重任承担起来,说:“编写和出版这样一套原文的外国文学选集是一件功德无量的大事。”

经过几年的准备,这套原文的外国文学选集丛书终于问世了。由北京外国语大学科研处和外语教学与研究出版社共同组织编写的这套原文文学选集,就是为了满足高校外语专业对外国文学选读教材的需求。参加编写工作的是二十几位北外和其他几所重点院校中长期从事高校外国文学教学工作的教师,他们都有在所学语言国家进修学习的经历,其中很多人在国外获得了外国文学的博士学位。

这套外国文学选集丛书包括英国、美国、俄罗斯、法国、德国、西班牙、意大利、阿拉伯、拉美、日本、韩国等11个国家和地区。各本选集又涵盖了每一个国家或地区文学的全过程,即从文学发展的初期至20世纪80年代。虽然根据各国文学发展的不同特点,各本选集均有不同的侧重点,但是每本选集都包含了文学史上各重

要阶段的代表作家,也涵盖了诗歌、散文、小说和戏剧等主要文学形式。

选集的重心是作品本身,简明扼要的“作者简介”和脚注是为了帮助学生理解作品,而选篇之后的思考题则希望学生在理解了作品的语言之后,将目光转向作品的深层含义,从中挖掘出更多的精神食粮。

既然是选集就不可能做到面面俱到,而作家和作品的取舍常常会引发一些争议,在这方面,各本选集的编者采取了比较现实的态度。各国的经典作家是经过无数代的读者反复衡量而逐渐形成的,他们在各自的国家得到认可,他们的代表作也就自然而然地出现在我们的选集之中。因此,我们书中所列的作家和作品的单子基本上是一个传统的单子。但是,既然编著者都是有教学经验的中国教师,他们在衡量取舍的过程中,充分考虑到了中国学生的接受能力和中国高校的教学特点。这大概就是这套文学选集优于引进的国外同类选读本的主要方面。

在这套选集出版之际,我愿代表全体编者对外语教学与研究出版社的支持和鼓励表示深切的谢意。

何其莘

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I . The Middle Ages (to ca. 1485)

Beowulf

Beowulf is the oldest piece of vernacular literature not only in England but also in the whole Europe. The only surviving copy of *Beowulf* is found in a late 10th-century manuscript and the date of composition is supposed to be some time during the 8th century based on the poem's linguistic and cultural grounds.

The scenes of the poem are laid in Denmark and Sweden and the poet relates how the hero, as a young man and a leader of the Geats, first sails to Denmark across the sea to help King Hrothgar to kill the monster Grendel and his mother and then, fifty years later, as an aged king of his own tribe, kills a treasure-guarding dragon and dies from the wounds received in his last fight.

Beowulf, a constant dramatization of the fight between good and evil, has long been regarded as the first epic in the English language. It was originally written in Old English. The following excerpt is selected from a modern English translation of *Beowulf*'s fight against Grendel.

The Fight with Grendel

Then Hrothgar went out of the hall with his company of warriors, the protector of the Scyldings. The war-chief would seek the bed of Wealhtheow the queen. The King of Glory — as men had learned — had appointed a hall-guard against Grendel; he had a

special mission to the prince of the Danes: he kept watch against monsters.

And the man of the Geats had sure trust in his great might, the favor of the Ruler. Then he took off his shirt of armor, the helmet from his head, handed his embellished sword, best of irons, to an attendant, bade him keep guard over his war-gear. Then the good warrior spoke some boast-words before he went to his bed, Beowulf of the Geats: "I claim myself no poorer in war-strength, war works, than Grendel claims himself. Therefore I will not put him to sleep with a sword, so take away his life, though surely I might. He knows no good tools with which he might strike against me, cut my shield in pieces, though he is strong in fight. But we shall forgo the sword in the night — if he dare seek war without weapon — and then may wise God, Holy Lord, assign glory on whichever hand seems good to Him."

The battle-brave one laid himself down, the pillow received the earl's head, and about him many a brave seaman lay down to hall-rest. None of them thought that he would ever again seek from there his dear home, people or town where he had been brought up; for they knew that bloody death had carried off far too many men in the wine-hall, folk of the Danes. But the Lord granted to weave for them good fortune in war, for the folk of the Weather-Geats, comfort and help that they should quite overcome their foe through the might of one man, through his sole strength: the truth has been made known that mighty God has always ruled mankind.

There came gliding in the black night the walker in darkness. The warriors slept who should hold the horned house — all but one. It was known to men that when the Ruler did not wish it the hostile creature might not drag them away beneath the shadows. But he,

lying awake for the fierce foe, with heart swollen in anger awaited the outcome of the fight.

Then from the moor under the mist-hills Grendel came walking, wearing God's anger. The foul ravager thought to catch some one of mankind there in the high hall. Under the clouds he moved until he could see most clearly the wine-hall, treasure-house of men, shining with gold. That was not the first time that he had sought Hrothgar's home. Never before or since in his life-days did he find harder luck, hardier hall-thanes. The creature deprived of joy came walking to the hall. Quickly the door gave way, fastened with fire-forged bands, when he touched it with his hands. Driven by evil desire, swollen with rage, he tore it open, the hall's mouth. After that the foe at once stepped onto the shining floor, advanced angrily. From his eyes came a light not fair, most like a flame. He saw many men in the hall, a band of kinsmen all asleep together, a company of war-men. Then his heart laughed: dreadful monster, he thought that before the day came he would divide the life from the body of every one of them, for there had come to him a hope of full-feasting. It was not his fate that when that night was over he should feast on more of mankind.

The kinsman of Hygelac, mighty man, watched how the evil-doer would make his quick onslaught. Nor did the monster mean to delay it, but, starting his work, he suddenly seized a sleeping man, tore at him ravenously, bit into his bone-locks, drank the blood from his veins, swallowed huge morsels; quickly he had eaten all of the lifeless one, feet and hands. He stepped closer, then felt with his arm for the brave-hearted man on the bed, reached out towards him, the foe with his hand; at once in fierce response Beowulf seized it and sat up, leaning on his own arm. Straightway the fosterer of crimes

knew that he had not encountered on middle-earth^①, anywhere in this world, a harder hand-grip from another man. In mind he became frightened, in his spirit: not for that might he escape the sooner. His heart was eager to get away, he would flee to his hiding-place, seek his rabble of devils. What he met there was not such as he had ever before met in the days of his life. Then the kinsman of Hygelac, the good man, thought of his evening's speech, stood upright and laid firm hold on him: his fingers cracked. The giant was pulling away, the earl stepped forward. The notorious one thought to move farther away, wherever he could, and flee his way from there to his fen-retreat; he knew his fingers' power to be in a hateful grip. That was a painful journey that the loathsome despoiler had made to Heorot. The retainers' hall rang with the noise — terrible drink for all the Danes, the house-dwellers, every brave man, the earls. Both were enraged, furyfilled, the two who meant to control the hall. The building resounded. Then was it much wonder that the wine-hall withstood them joined in fierce fight, that it did not fall to the ground, the fair earth-dwelling; but it was so firmly made fast with iron bands, both inside and outside, joined by skillful smith-craft. There started from the floor — as I have heard say — many a mead-bench, gold-adorned, when the furious ones fought. No wise men of the Scyldings ever before thought that any men in any manner might break it down, splendid with bright horns, have skill to destroy it, unless flame should embrace it, swallow it in fire. Noise rose up, sound strange enough. Horrible fear came upon the North-Danes, upon every one of those who heard the weeping from the wall, God's enemy sing his terrible song, song without triumph — the hellslave bewail

① on middle-earth: between heaven and hell, every corner of the earth.