


英语文学系列教材

英国文学选读新编·20世纪卷

陈红 段汉武 主编

 华中师范大学出版社



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英语语言文学系列教材

英国文学选读新编·20世纪卷

陈红 段汉武 主编
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前 言

《英国文学选读新编·20世纪卷》是一部在新的社会文化历史语境下编写的供英语专业高年级本科生或研究生使用的教材,也可作为文学研究者的参考书。当历史进入国家十二五规划时期,我国社会和高校对文学以及高校英语专业文学教育的观念发生了很大变化,对英语专业文学课程的教学时数、内容、手段和方法以及教材的编写与使用等都提出了新的要求。随着时代的发展和文学观念的更新,国内外对于20世纪英国文学的认识也发生了变化。

为了适应新时代高校文学教学的要求和文学史观的特点,也为了更充分地体现教材在文学教学和学术研究中的意义和价值,我们根据下列原则编写了本书:第一,力求体现新形势下研究型教学的要求和探究式学习的特点。本书以作品选读为主,兼顾文学史的梳理,强调基于作品研读的问题探究,注重学生的课外学习与课堂研讨相结合,适度引导学生进行深度的阅读和研究。第二,注重教材内容的时代性。本书在作家作品的选择上兼顾学界关于文学经典的传统的和当下的观点,在内容的分布上则强调现当代部分,兼及21世纪英国文学。第三,适度打破文学史的时间框架,按照文学流派和文学体裁建构章节,帮助学生更好地把握作家作品的共性与个性。第四,教材性与资料性并重。本书选材丰富、内容系统、体系完整,既是教材也是文集,适度超过教学时数的限定,供教师根据实际选择使用和供学生进行拓展学习,同时也可供文学研究者参考使用。

全书共分为八章:诞生期的现代主义文学、高潮期的现代主义文学、新戏剧、后现代主义小说、运动派及其后的诗歌、荒诞派戏剧、女性文学、少数族裔文学,较全面系统地反映了20世纪英国文学的精髓。本书每章都有概述和作家作品选读两大部分。概述部分注重历史梳理和文学概念厘清;作家作品部分则主要是针对重要文学流派及其代表作家作品选材,分为预习问题、作品选读与问题、补充阅读材料三个板块,补充阅读材料一般为作家本人或其他学者撰写的学术性文章,便于本书的使用者进行深度研究。

本书由来自国内近10所高校的专业教师共同编写而成。第一章由陈红、徐燕负

责,第二章由段汉武、刘春慧、徐燕负责,第三章由李晶负责,第四章由刘春慧、徐燕负责,第五章由陈晔、陈红负责,第六章由刘红卫、李晶负责,第七章由赖艳负责,第八章由刘茂生、管南异负责。本书的编辑出版得到了华中师范大学出版社范军社长、段维总编、曾巍副社长以及高校教材编辑室刘晓嘉主任、李郭倩编辑等的大力支持,我们在此一并致谢。

文学选读的编写难度远比看上去的大。我们在学习国内外同类教材和相关著作的经验和优点的同时,也力图在视角、结构、体系、作家作品选择、问题设计等方面都能体现新时代的特点和我们自己的学术观点。但是由于时间仓促、资料难寻、编者学养有限,不足之处在所难免,敬请广大师生和学者批评指正。

编 者

2010年6月

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Chapter 1 The Birth of Modernism

1. Introduction

Abundant textbooks and academic papers have concluded modernism as a prime concept in the 20th century owing to its dominance in the visual, plastic, musical, design, and literary arts, especially in the first four decades. But as abundant are the arguments on the definite time and place of the emergence of modernism. Some artistic movements have definitive, easily identifiable “birthdays”; the Imagism of Ezra Pound (1885—1972), for instance, was kicked off when Pound and F. S. Flint (1885—1960) each wrote and published manifestos, Pound’s “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” and Flint’s “Imagism,” in the March 1913 issue of *Poetry* magazine. Modernism, however, is a much larger, much less coherent movement, and consequently its origins are more ambiguous, just like the ambiguity in its features. As an international movement, modernism differs dramatically in duration and characteristics from place to place. In some countries, modernism sustains a long time; while in some others, it vanishes soon after a short hubbub. In some countries, modernism makes every effort to destroy the long-received tradition—Romanticism or Victorian style, realism or impressionism; while in some others, it seems to be the inevitable development of the tradition. But historically, modernism is associated with the coming of a new era which characterises a high aesthetic self-awareness and a tendency to non-expressionism and witnesses a transition from realism and representation of human nature to style, skill and spatial form in order to plunge into the thick of life.

In British literary modernism, this transition results from two factors; the change within British society and the influence from without. While the two Jubilees celebrating respectively the 50th and the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria’s reign in 1887 and 1897 testify to the height of political and military power

for the British Empire, the Boer War of 1899—1902 in South Africa marks the precipitant decline in Britain's prestige and prosperity. England by 1900 is surpassed or equalled by USA and Germany in industry. Large-scale strikes in the years 1911—1914 and Irish resistance become hard nuts for British government to crack. All this begins to shake English people's confidence. Britain has always come ahead of the world in science research. From Newton to Charles Darwin till the young scientists in Cavendish Lab, English scientists all have extraordinary contributions to the world. British literature is quick to respond not only to the lessening confidence but also to the latest scientific results and their practice in industry. Good examples are found from William Blake's rebuke for the devil mills at the turn of 19th century, Tennyson's apprehension of the changing physical world in mid 19th century and the Pre-Raphaelites' advocate of handicraft industry and "labour joy" to resist the enslavement and corruption of human mind by the civilisation of machines in 1880s. All these verify the British writers' sensitivity to and countermeasures against the changing world. Profound changes from scientific study also reach ideology and culture fields. Concepts of time and space are renewed by Theory of Relativity. Studies in biology and psychology spread far to subconsciousness. Sigmund Freud's interpretation of human conducts eliminates the boundary between the normal and the abnormal. Anthropology shakes tradition. Sociology reveals the real deprivation of the capitalist society with stacks of statistics. All these new theories and new thoughts have their strong and indelible impact upon the literary scene in Britain. Simultaneously, as fluctuating are other fields of art in European continent such as music, architecture, sculpture and painting. Painting bears the brunt of all. New schools flood into the stage after French impressionism; post-impressionism, expressionism, primitivism, Matisse's fauvism and Picasso's abstractionism. What substituted the clichéd paralogy of the classical academic is a new sense of reality which contains subconsciousness, megrim and a new outlook of time and space. New schools break the boundaries between different arts and form a new synthesis. Art Nouveau at the turn of the century is such a case and Diaghilev's Ballet Russe is another. Running through all these new schools are a weariness of and dissatisfaction with traditional styles and theories and a pursuit of new methods to express the new reality and new feeling of the 20th century.

As far as the birth time of modernism is concerned, there are many different claims. According to Cyril Connolly (1903—1974), 1880 is a year that marries the Enlightenment “criticism of intelligence” and the Romanticism “exploration of emotions,” which encourages the first generation of real modern writers to work. A. Alvarez (1929—) concludes that he who wants to look for modernism must turn to the first three decades of the 20th century from E. Pound, T. S. Eliot (1888—1965) and James Joyce (1882—1941). To Frank Kermode (1919—), 1890s should be the pioneering years of modernism and anyone who reflects on the meaning of modernism should observe with rapt intensity the period 1907—1925. Graham Hough wrote in 1960 that from 1901 to the outbreak of World War I English literatures witnessed a revolution as powerful and dynamic as Romanticism from such writers as W. B. Yeats (1865—1939), James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and E. Pound. Virginia Woolf (1882—1941) boldly stated in an essay “Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown” in 1923 that human nature changed around December 1910. In the same year D. H. Lawrence (1885—1930) wrote in his novel *Kangaroo* that the old world ended in 1915. Richard Ellmann (1918—1987) suggested that 1900 should be more convenient and precise than Woolf’s 1910 in deciding the changing moment of human nature because theme of modernism reverberated through the whole Edwardian Era. Despite the different years mentioned above, we can safely conclude that modernism appeared around the turn of a new century, a period of profound change in thoughts and society, and came to its first peak after the end of World War I.

With the precedent discussions about the birth of modernism, reader’s attention naturally shifts to the expression of modernism. Just as mentioned before, modernism is also ambiguous in its features. But some clues can be traced. With the changing social reality and the war, much skepticism and disillusionment spread among the whole post-World-War-I generation. T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) in both title and content expresses the despair and despondency prevalent among the intellectuals in the two decades following 1918. The influence of the Theory of Evolution advanced by Charles Darwin in the mid-19th century spreads far and wide, and the orthodox Christian belief in God and the Creation of the World is gradually replaced either by complete atheism or by faith in all sorts of myths of Oriental or Occidental origin. The influence of Freud’s psychoanalysis is

broad and penetrating for many British authors of the 20th century, particularly those of the 1920s like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf with their “stream-of-consciousness” method in prose fiction. The requirement and possibility of expressing the new reality and new feeling in the 20th century embraces the sensitive authors.

The most sensitive authors to the changing time should be poets, but the early British reactions from French symbolism are not so deep to the spirit but just its melancholy tone is accepted. There do appear some active poets, like Rudyard Kipling (1865—1936), Poet Laureate Robert Bridges (1844—1930), to introduce some new themes and new skills, but they still belong to the late romanticism tradition. Only one man, G. M. Hopkins (1844—1889) is experimenting poetry writing with true value, but his “sprung rhythm” has to wait to be recognised by the public with the publication of his first collection of poems in 1918. There are other two great poets obvious to the readers, Thomas Hardy (1840—1928) and W. B. Yeats. Thomas Hardy, one of the major novelists in the late Victorian age, becomes a distinguished poet with his numerous volumes of verse that dilate more or less on the same themes of chance and irony in human existence that has prevailed in his works of prose fiction. W. B. Yeats, beginning his poetic career in the 1890s by following the French symbolists and Arthur Symonds’ aestheticism, is obdurately innovative in the styles and themes so that he achieves sort of maturity in his later works, which is often anthologised as modernist works. Imagism is probably the first distinctively modernist movement; and here, too, writers born outside the United Kingdom, especially Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, are central to its early development. Following on the heels of Imagism (in which he never participated), Eliot forges a style of aggressively fragmentary, urban poetry, full of indelicate, “unpoetic” images and diction; early experiments in this vein include the well-known “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917) and the “Preludes” (1917), culminating, of course, in the fragmentary modernist epic *The Waste Land*.

British drama and dramatists are greatly challenged by two great masters from north Europe: Henrik Ibsen (1828—1906) and August Strindberg (1849—1912). The modern theatre begins to deal with contemporary problems in a contemporary dramatic idiom; among his earliest and most apt disciples in Great Britain is George

Bernard Shaw (1856—1950). Shaw's plays stage multiple autonomous voices presenting mutually incompatible perspectives, forcing the reader to work out for himself where the play's truth might lie. Other Irish dramatists, such as John Millington Synge (1871—1909) and Sean O'Casey (1880—1964), bring contemporary issues and experimental dramatic techniques to the British stage.

In fiction, British literature has been brought to modernism by an American and a Pole: Henry James (1843—1916) and Joseph Conrad (1857—1924) when traditional novel writing is still overwhelming. Dickens's realism, prevailing owing to readers' habit, is in a dead state; less critical in themes, trite in skills, only interesting in plot. Through his unparalleled detailed explorations of individual psychology and, especially in his last three novels (*The Wings of the Dove*, 1902; *The Ambassadors*, 1903; *The Golden Bowl*, 1904), Henry James brings to England an increasingly stylised and stylistically experimental narrative form. At about the same time, Joseph Conrad takes up, in such texts as *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Heart of Darkness* (serial publication, 1899; book publication, 1902), vital new modern topics in a teasingly difficult, relativistic narrative form in which stories are recounted through unreliable narrators. Joseph Conrad, born of Polish parents, served for 16 years in the British merchant navy and became a naturalised British subject in 1886. He started to write fiction in earnest in the 1890s but he didn't distinguish himself till the publication of his first major novel *Lord Jim*. Almost all his novels and stories are based on his personal experiences. His "modernity" is mainly in his absorbing interest in the innermost conflicts in human consciousness, in his penetrating portrayals of sharp mental contradictions of the major characters in his novels, in his outpouring sympathy for the conscience-stricken individuals of personal misdemeanors or public outrages, and in his extensive use of symbols and images. Native writers like James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence are also describing a changing, unknown and unconstrained inner world, consciously or unconsciously influenced by the work of the father of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud (1856—1939). His turn-of-the-century text *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) illustrates in an especially vivid way Freud's evolving theories about the influence of the unconscious mind on our daily lives. The unconscious is thus not just a subject of modernist writing but also the motivation for many of its most extreme stylistic experiments. Though also considered to belong to the "modernist" school of

writers in early 20th-century Britain, Lawrence is very different from W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce not only in the matter of experiments in new technique in writing, but more especially in the themes he deals with and in the philosophical beliefs behind them. Lawrence is a rebel against the materialism of the modern western society and conventional religion and morality. He is chiefly interested in the relationship between a man and a woman and in the themes of love and marriage, neglecting larger social issues.

Ambiguous as modernism is in characteristics, when modernist writers seek restlessly for new forms that might more adequately convey their new insights, one point they find is modernist literature must be new through formal and stylistic experimentation. This equals to mean that modernist literature must be difficult. That perhaps testifies the fact that modernist literature has been considered disinteresting by common readers from the first day of its birth but just object of study for scholars. For another point, the modern literary text must be a self-sufficient aesthetic object, answerable to no demands or laws outside the world of its own creation. However, this standard always seems inconsistent to the need for psychological realism, like that in D. H. Lawrence's works. So the desire to break down Victorian-era taboos regarding sex and sexuality requires a sometimes quite direct treatment. In defense of his scandalous novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), for instance, Lawrence protested: "In spite of all antagonism, I put forth this novel as an honest, health book, necessary for us today. . . . We are today, as human beings, evolved and cultured far beyond the taboos which are inherent in our culture. . . . The mind has an old groveling fear of the body and the body's potencies. It is the mind we have to liberate, to civilise on these points." Surely it is this commitment to a thoroughgoing psychological realism that is initially seen as modernism's great literary contribution. A third point is the technique that critics call the "mythical method." It is experimented in Yeats' early poetry writing and carried out to full length by James Joyce in his *Ulysses* as well as in T. S. Eliot's tour de force *The Waste Land*. This part shall find its elaboration in the following chapter about high modernism.

2. Thomas Hardy (1840—1928)

2.1 Presentation topics

- (1) Hardy as a transitional writer between the Victorian age and the 20th century.
- (2) Recurring themes in Hardy's fiction and poetry.
- (3) Controversy concerning Hardy's pessimism.

2.2 Selected reading

I. Central issue of concern

Hardy's stern look on life, though not without love, despite his pessimistic view of human existence.

II. Text

The Darkling^① Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of the day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted night
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.

① In the dark.