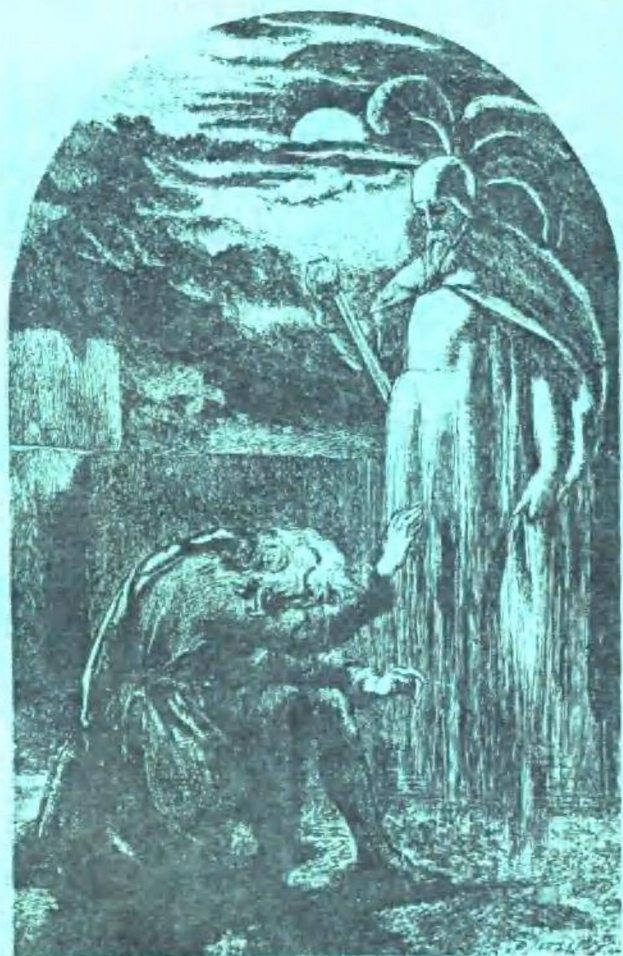


英国戏剧选读

何其莘 编



外语教学与研究出版社

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英国戏剧选读

YINGGUO XIJU XUANDU

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编者的话

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国家教委颁布的《高等学校英语专业高年级英语教学大纲》规定在大学三、四年级开设一定数量的英美文学课。《英国戏剧选读》就是根据教委大纲的精神编写的，可以作为《英美文学选读》、《戏剧导论》等文学选修课的主干教材。

本书曾由国家教委高校外语教材编审委员会英语组聘请的陶洁教授（北京大学）、陈瑞兰教授（北京大学）、常耀信教授（南开大学）和黄兰林教授（国际关系学院）审稿。在此，我对参加审稿的专家表示衷心的感谢。

这本教材是我在西安外国语学院工作期间编写而成，并在1988—1990年的《英国文学选读》、《英国戏剧》和《戏剧导论》等课上试用。本书的出版得到了西安外国语学院教务处和英语系、高校外语教材编审委员会北方办公室、外语教学与研究出版社的鼓励和支持。我在此对我的学生和支持该书的同志表示深切的谢意。

编者
一九九一年三月
北京外国语学院

PREFACE

The title of this book sufficiently indicates its purpose — to provide a brief survey of the development of dramatic literature in Britain from the earliest times to the present. The idea of combining a brief “history” with an “anthology” in one volume for Chinese college students arose from the teaching needs of its editor, who wished to deal with a comprehensive range of British drama but had failed to locate a suitable coursebook on the subject for senior students of English major.

The selection of the author and the play in this anthology was made on the basis of three criteria: (1) the author should be an important dramatist of the historic period; (2) the play had to be the representative work of the author; and (3) the act or the scene selected should be an exemplar of both the author and the play.

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高等学校教材

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INTRODUCTION: The Idea of a Theatre

Drama is an important literary genre in English literary history. In the course of about five hundred years, English theatre has produced a number of literary giants, such as Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Oscar Wilde, and Bernard Shaw, whose plays are still being read by scholars and students of English literature today and staged in twentieth-century theatres. English Renaissance, the years of 1485–1660, especially the last decade of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, is universally regarded as the golden age of English literature simply because it is, in the first place, the golden age of English drama, which left us a great number of memorable plays: *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Volpone*, and *Every Man in His Humor*. Today, we usually treat drama as literature: we read the plays and write critical essays about them. However, we should not forget that drama is originally written for the stage — something to be put on show, to be acted out and to be accepted as true. So, drama is at once literary art and performing art.

1. Drama as Literary Art

Although early dramatists, such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, had no intention to publish their scripts, drama is appreciated by more readers who read and even study every line of the play than those who actually go to the theatre. Drama is a form of literature — an art made out of words. Dramatists use words to create action through the dialogues of characters talking to each other. As a literary art, drama takes on the characteristics and devices of other literary forms: like narration, drama contains a plot and characters; like poetry, drama is meant to be overheard by the audience rather than being addressed to a reader; like a piece of persuasion, drama

is very often intended to discuss certain issues and convey ideas.

A dramatist always creates a world of his own, in which the actions of the play take place. Without this specific world of drama, it is impossible for the audience to understand the meaning of the play. To bring about this understanding, the dramatist has to rely on the devices of storytelling. Naturally, we do not find in a play storytellers addressing us directly, but very often the characters become story-tellers in their dialogues.

The most obvious storytelling occurs at the beginning of a play, called exposition, where the background, or pre-play action, is being built up and the mood of the play is being set. In Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*, we are informed, through the expository dialogue between Horatio, Prince Hamlet's close friend, and two soldiers in Act I, scene i, of the death of old King Hamlet, of the long-standing dispute between Norway and Denmark, and of the domestic unrest in the kingdom of Denmark and the danger of foreign invasion to the nation. Of course, the information does not come to us as a whole; it is revealed bit by bit, and we have to put them together to form a background of the dramatic world.

In building up the background of a play, dramatists often use another narrative device — retrospection. Very often characters look back and recall the events that occurred before the time of the beginning of the play. Once again, in Act I, scene ii of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the opening speech of Claudius relates to the death of old King Hamlet, his brother, the state funeral for the dead, and his marriage to the wife of his brother.

Reporting is also a narrative device employed by dramatists. Often off-stage actions are reported by a messenger, some characters in the play, or in a letter form to help the audience form a complete view of the play. In *Hamlet*, Prince Hamlet's encounter with some pirates during his voyage to England is narrated in his letter to Horatio (IV, vi), the news of his sudden return to Denmark is brought to Claudius, and the audience as well, by a messenger (IV, vii), and the drowning of Ophelia is reported by the Queen (IV, vii).

Like a narrator of a story who sometimes comments on the

events and characters, dramatists employ choric commentator in their plays. In Shakespeare's love tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, the chorus at the opening of the tragedy reveals the central theme of the play: "the fearful passage" of the "death-marked love" of "a pair of star-crossed lovers." Sometimes, the choric commentary is carried out by minor characters in the play, who for a time stand off from the action and regard the action as spectators rather than as participants. A good example is the closing lines of *Romeo and Juliet* uttered by the Prince of Verona:

A glooming peace this morning with it brings.
The sun for sorrow will not show his head.
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;
Some shall be pardoned, and some punished;
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo (V. iii. 305–10).

Besides narrating the events, a dramatist is also expected to reveal to his audience the innermost thoughts of his characters. Here he employs the techniques of poetry, using words of a character when he talks or thinks to himself, known as soliloquy. The most remarkable soliloquy is certainly the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy uttered by Prince Hamlet in Act III, scene i of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the young prince meditates upon suicide, reckons on the ills of life and concludes that man bears the burden of life only because of fears of the life to come. This famous speech performs two customary functions of a soliloquy: to give expression to a complicated state of mind and feeling of a character and to provide a point of view on the events of the play.

Like an essay, a play very often is written for the purpose of persuasion. The plot, characters, and their dialogues may be used to illustrate ideas, to persuade the audience into taking side with the dramatist in a debate of two conflicting opinions, and inevitably to influence the ideas of the audience. Prince Hamlet comments on the purpose of drama in Act III, scene ii of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by

saying:

. . . the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

The aim of praising the virtues and scorning the vices of the age might have been quite obvious before and in Shakespeare's time, but today the purpose of persuasion still remains consciously or semi-consciously in the mind of the dramatist. Although modern drama is very often regarded as ambiguous, there exists in plays like Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Bond's *Lear* a rather clear message: the loss of value systems in the former and the condemnation of violence in the latter.

2. Drama as Performing Art

Whatever similarities we can find between drama and other literary forms, we should bear in mind the fact that drama is primarily written for the theatre. Actors and directors not only use words but also depend on the power of spectacle to bring out the desired effect of the play and to realize the intended goal of the dramatist. By spectacle we refer to the sights and the sounds of the performance: from the movement of an army on the stage to the raise of an actor's eyebrows, from the thunder and lightning of a storm to the broken sobs of an actress. When we watch a play in the theatre, we are aware of both the words of the actors and the spectacle of the play. But when we read a play, our thoughts and feelings are not so easily provoked. Therefore, in reading a play, we are required to create the dramatic spectacle in our own minds.

Early dramatists do not have what we call today "stage directions" in their plays. This does not seem to be an obstacle for directors when they are trying to put these classical drama on the stage.

But, if we observe the history of English theatre, especially the staging of classical drama on English stage, it is easy to find a variety of approaches to a single play from among some directors. As some people say, there are as many Hamlets, or Shylocks as the productions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Then, how could these directors decide upon the ways in creating spectacle in their productions when there is no stage direction in the original plays by Shakespeare? The answer is that they find some clue in the text of the plays. Thus, it is a challenge to us, readers of a play, to detect the clue from the script.

Let's take a passage from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to illustrate how a text of a play contains clues for performance. The memorable lines uttered by the two young lovers at their first meeting in Act I, scene v may serve as a good example. In Act I, young Romeo, who is melancholy because of his love for Rosaline, is encouraged by his friends to attend a dance at the house of the Capulet, the enemy of his family. He is rather reluctant when he comes, but is cheered up by the sight of Juliet and falls in love with her immediately. Then we hear the first exchange of words between the two young lovers:

Romeo If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this;
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
Juliet Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do
touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
Romeo Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
Juliet Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
Romeo Oh, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do!
They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
Juliet Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.