

編者按：本校中正圖書館典藏有關英美文學之圖書相當豐富，此次特邀英文系葉卓爾老師、謝瑤玲老師，推薦幾本英美文學珍藏及雋永的圖書，並針對他們特別推崇或喜愛的作者及作品做進一步的介紹，包括義大利作家安伯托艾可、加拿大作家瑪格莉特愛伍德、俄國的杜斯妥也夫斯基、和土耳其的諾貝爾文學獎得主帕穆斯等等，以供讀者參考。

Compelling Reading

葉卓爾

東吳大學英文學系副教授

Reading material falls into a wide range of categories. Let me mention just a few. First, there is required reading, imposed from without, usually in the form of a textbook. This reading is most often a kind of drudgery, an exercise that at its best reinforces discipline and instills learning, but in its more mundane aspect simply lulls the unwilling into a fitful guilt-ridden sleep. Then there is reading for entertainment, with Japanese comic books appearing high on the list of local avid readers. Paging through an illustrated magazine devoted to the highlights and lowlights of entertainment superstars, the rich and/or glamorous. This is something you are likely to pick up after a meal or before you go to bed, indicative of its rather unsubstantial and transitory nature. Yet for the committed hardcore reader there is another type of reading that deserves the epithet “compelling”. Such reading encompasses the books that regardless of the number of pages and limitations on the reader's free time are read (and re-read) with relish to the very last word. Such reading material stimulates pleasure centers of the mind—just how many of such items there may be is probably dependent on the number of favorite authors a person discovers for himself or herself in the course of a lifetime devoted to reading.

Such a list of authors for this reader has an element of the serendipitous. Casually browsing through the shelves of a library, glancing at selections on display of recommended books by professional readers at a library or bookstore, perusing the insights of reviewers in magazines and journals, or heeding the advice of a reading aficionado friend have all contributed greatly to my stock of compelling reads.

Dostoevsky and the Russians are high on my list of personal favorites. *Crime and Punishment*, *Devils*, and *A Gentle Creature* are books I have reread with a sort of masochistic pleasure and insight. Tolstoy is magisterial—in addition to the large-scale works *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, one is richly rewarded by engaging the truthseekers that appear in the novella *Father Sergius* and the autobiographical tract “Confession”. Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* is a comic and imaginative tour de force set in the deeply corrupt Moscow of the Stalinist 1930s, overripe for the appearance of the Devil himself. Pushkin's story “The Stationmaster” and his short novel *The Captain's Daughter* convey the author's deep humanity and appreciation for types of individuals that would be stereotypes or caricatures in the hands of a less-gifted writer. Chekhov's stories are like bottles of fine wines, aged to perfection, each offering a distinctive bouquet. Andrei Platonov is a twentieth-century writer (*Foundation Pit*, “Fro”) who captures the contradictions presented by Soviet idealistic ideology with its promise of a radiant future and the dreary oftentimes grim reality and traumatized spiritual landscape of Soviet reality. His idiosyncratic characters, disillusioned and drained of the revolutionary élan imbibed in their youth, are forced to draw upon their deep inner sources of strength to lay claim to their humanity.

Another category that has provided me with a wealth of compelling reading material is that devoted to the American Founding Fathers, one that is richly represented by the contributions of contemporary scholars that are insightful without being too scholarly. An outstanding writer to start with is Gordon S. Wood. He has devoted his career to elucidating the nature of the American Revolutionary Experience and those individuals whose combined genius paved the way for future American greatness. His most recent volume, *Revolutionary Character: What Made the Founders Different*, comprises a series of essays devoted to the likes of Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Washington and Jefferson, all of which display his intimate knowledge of the subject at hand. His book entitled *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* is full of insights into the man that takes away some of the hagiographic veneer of his persona without doing harm to his historical significance. The same author's *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* frames events and individuals through ideas such as “republic” “equality” “democracy” that allows him to present in convincing and vivid detail just how far that remarkable generation of Americans had come in

transcending the archaic values and institutions of Europe in their creation of a new social and political model in the American republic. The most complex figure of this generation, Thomas Jefferson, has been the subject of investigation by such masterly and insightful writers as Joseph Ellis in *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* and Andrew Burstein in several biographical tomes including *The Inner Jefferson: Portrait of a Grieving Optimist*. In the latter book, the author makes use of Jefferson's prodigious epistolary output to evince, among other things, the literary sensibility of one of the leading cultural figures in this most political and politicized of ages. Jefferson, we learn, appreciated the complex wit on abundant display in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, and identified with the sophisticated manner of the fictional traveler Yorick in the same author's *A Sentimental Journey*. Jefferson was also an admirer of the pseudo-historical offerings of MacPherson's Ossian. The legendary Scottish bard evoked a sensibility that was profoundly pre-romantic, characterized by a lofty grandeur and heroism glimmering through the mists of time that appealed to Jefferson's profound patriotism.

John Dryden is finally getting some hard-won respect. A good representative volume of his poetic works can be found in *Selected Poems*. Edited by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins. Longman. He is perhaps the least read of the great and influential English poets, with a sensibility far removed from the Romantic geniuses. Yet he proved extremely versatile in a wide range of genres, including the panegyric poem on Charles II *Astraea Redux*, while his poem, *Annus Mirabilis*, was devoted to the city of London in the aftermath of the Great Plague (1665) and the Great Fire (1666). These works together with his translations from Homer, Persius, Ovid, Virgil and Chaucer, among others, and his critical writings helped make him England's first professional and modern writer.

The most recent summer, that time of year most conducive to novel reading, led to several discoveries of compelling works. Orhan Pamuk, in his novel *Snow*, transports the reader together with his main character, the westernized poet Ka, to the ancient and remote city of Kars in the Anatolian hinterland. He presents a panoramic vision of the traditional Islamic world mistrustful of the newcomer, whose essential humanity is tested in unexpected ways, as he comes to grips with the complex social, political and religious world of Modern Turkey.

Another novel, *Anil's Ghost* by Michael Ondaatje functions on a similar premise. Here the setting is the strife-ridden land of Sri Lanka. Anil of the title is a western-educated native Sri Lankan who returns to her land to investigate political killings and possible government involvement. Her forensic investigations grounded in scientific method, and her notion of truth based on scientific evidence that governs her judgment is forced to accommodate alternative ways at arriving at meaning as she becomes enmeshed in the rich traditional culture of her native land.

Graham Greene, meanwhile, in his *The Quiet American* (Vintage Critical Editions) is one of the master story-tellers of the twentieth century and in this novel he presents an oddly matched pair of rivals, an aging British journalist and a young self-confident American ideologue, competing for the exotic charms of a Vietnamese beauty. Set in the waning days of the French struggle in Indochina that would culminate in the debacle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Greene's prescient novel reveals the bloody onset of American involvement in Vietnam that would prove so destructive for both nations. At the same time, he reveals, through Fowler the journalist, his keen observations and deep appreciation of the life in Vietnam at the time, from its opium dens and outdoor cafes to the complexities of its political life at a time of struggle for national liberation.

Of course the list could go on. I could try to describe several of the many poignant passages of Irene Nemirovsky's *Suite Francaise* set in war-time France, a prelude to her own tragic demise in Auschwitz or E. M. Forster's masterful rendition of the cultural divide separating East and West in his *Passage to India*. Interested readers will have to discover those bittersweet pleasures on their own.

私房書單及參考書籍

		
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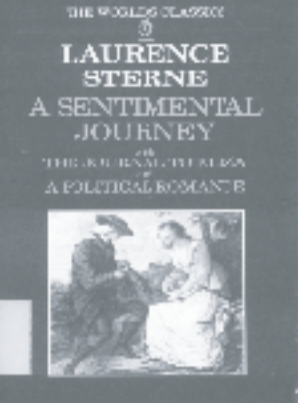

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