

Research Project : "Study of
Contemporary Literature in Britain in
Relation to the Liberalistic Economy and
Society" (2004-2007)

Somura, Mitsutoshi

(出版者 / Publisher)

Institute of Comparative Economic Studies, Hosei University / 法政大学比較経済研究所

(雑誌名 / Journal or Publication Title)

Journal of International Economic Studies / Journal of International Economic Studies

(巻 / Volume)

23

(開始ページ / Start Page)

101

(終了ページ / End Page)

103

(発行年 / Year)

2009-03

(URL)

<https://doi.org/10.15002/00005204>

Research Project: “Study of Contemporary Literature in Britain in Relation to the Liberalistic Economy and Society” (2004-2007)

Mitsutoshi Somura

Professor of the Global and Interdisciplinary Studies, Hosei University

The aim of this research project is to elucidate new trends and changing features of English literature during the past three decades, in relation to changes in society, economy, politics, and culture, as well as to examine developments in literature after postmodernism, involving a re-evaluation of the entire Western value system. From the inauguration of Margaret Thatcher’s government in 1979 to the end of Tony Blair’s in 2008, British society has seen extensive and deep changes. The keywords or key concepts for understanding Britain in this period are rich and diverse, and include, for example, globalization, Thatcherism, the market economy, privatization, neo-liberalism, the Third Way, Americanization, the collapse of Communism, the EU, the multi-cultural society, the multi-racial society, ‘Cool Britannia,’ racism, feminism, gay, lesbianism, and devolution for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Changes in literature since 1979 have been as drastic as those in society. Various new elements, which may be represented by the keywords and concepts listed above, are found in the literature, because the everyday life of the people has been profoundly affected by the new situations and conditions created by those changes in society. Moreover, it should be noted that many writers in Britain today are not Christian white elites, and this represents another transition in English literature. Research on literature under this project has been carried out in an interdisciplinary way, based on a Japanese point of view.

This project started in 2004, and study meetings have been held every two months, mainly at the Ichigaya Campus of Hosei University. The speakers and titles are as follows: (1) Kenji Tozawa (Ehime University), “Britain under Blair: Society, Culture, and Education after Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Revolution” (10 July 2004), (2) Taichi Koyama (Wayo Women’s University), “Ian McEwan and Contemporary British Society” (23 October 2004), (3) Yumiko Hamai (Hokkaido University), “Race and Multiculturalism in the Thatcher Era: The Honeyford Affair and the Rushdie Controversy” (27 November 2004), (4) Akira Ohira (Waseda University), “The Structure of ‘Industry Novels’ in David Lodge’s *Nice Work*” (22 March 2005), (5) Masanori Kimura (Nihon University), “English Novels at the End of the Twentieth Century: Toward the Apocalypse” (4 June 2005), (6) Mitsutoshi Somura (Hosei University), “A Survey of the Liberalistic Changes in Economy, Society and Culture after Thatcher” (1 October 2005), (7) Eiji Kato (Kanagawa Dental University), “On the Disappearance of an Edenic Vision: A Poet Laureate’s View of the Thatcher Era” (22 October 2005), (8) Yasuhito Sato (Toyo University), “Literature in Northern Ireland under the Thatcher Government” (29 March 2006), (9) Masamitsu Hosaka (Hosei University), “On Martin Amis” (13 May 2006), (10) Gen Takizawa (Hosei University), “Stuart Hall and Thatcherism” (3 June 2006), (11) Yoshihide Ujitani (Hosei University), “New Trends in the Presentation of

Elizabethan Dramas, Mainly in London" (8 July 2006), (12) Yoshifumi Nagata (Meisei University), "Lyrics and Poetry in Wales after the Great Coal Strike of 1984-5" (29 July 2006), (13) Mitsutoshi Somura, "Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*: A Novel on the 'Condition of Englishness'" (21 October 2006), (14) Masanori Kimura, "On Ian McEwan" (2 December 2006), (15) Toshiyuki Okuyama (Hosei University), "Thatcherism: The Return to Economic Freedom" and Yoshinori Kano (Aoyama Gakuin University), "The Characteristics of British Films" (13 March 2007). In addition, several study meetings were held during the 2007 academic year.

As an outcome of this project, the collected essays were published (in Japanese) at the end of March 2008 under the title *Has Neo-Liberalism Changed Literature? Britain after Thatcher*. The authors, titles and contents of each essay are as follows. The introductory chapter, "British Society and Culture after 1979" (Somura), is a survey of changes in politics, society, and culture during the period of the Thatcher and Blair governments. It discusses and presents the new thinking, attitudes and ideas, which form the keynote of the book and may be seen frequently throughout the remaining essays. The next three chapters deal with Thatcher and Thatcherism. Chapter 1, "Thatcherism: The Return to Economic Freedom" (Okuyama), enumerates the causes of the stagnation of British society until the 1970s and discusses Thatcher's policies and philosophy which led to the recovery of economic freedom. Chapter 2, "The New Left Alone" (Takizawa), deals with the series of critical comments by Stuart Hall on Thatcherism, the first of which was written in 1979, and ironically uncovers, within Hall's criticisms, a praise of Thatcher and Thatcherism. Chapter 3, "Statistical Study of Thatcher's Rhetoric" (Yuichiro Kobayashi, Hosei University), traces Thatcher's changing concerns, policies, and thought by statistically processing the frequency of the use of terms and rhetoric in the massive data on her speeches. The next five essays discuss novels. Chapter 4, "The False Image of the Spirit of the 1980s" (Hosaka), deals with Martin Amis' novel, *Money*, a post-modern tragicomedy, in which the anti-hero, taken in by a get-rich-quick scheme, flies between London and New York. A perception gap on 'money' is discovered between the two cities in the 1980s. Chapter 5, "All You Need Is Love" (Kimura), argues that novelist Ian McEwan, who was once labeled an *enfant terrible* because of his outrageous expression of sex and violence, should be thought of as a moralistic novelist in his recent works. Chapter 6, "A Campus Novel in the Thatcher Era" (Ohira), analyses *Nice Work*, a humorous parody novel by David Lodge, from the standpoint of two literary genres, 'industry novels' after the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century and 'campus novels' of the twentieth century. Chapter 7, "A Post-colonial Bildungsroman" (Kimura), argues that Pakistani British novelist Hanif Kureishi, who wrote stories of broken families in the aftermath of the counterculture, now seems to have turned to focusing on the importance of the family. Chapter 8, "The Awareness of Foolishness and a Free Life" (Somura), discovers, as the background of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *The Remains of the Day*, the revival of nationalistic sentiments during the 1980s, and uses the critical noisiness towards it with effect. The third part contains essays on poets and poetry. Chapter 9, "An Essay on the Disappearance of an Edenic Vision: A Poet Laureate's View of the Thatcher Era" (Kato), examines Ted Hughes' poems about the serious environmental pollution and suggests the metaphorical disappearance of an Edenic vision in a modern apocalypse. Chapter 10, "Hills without Coal Mines" (Nagata), looks at lyrics and poetry in Wales after the Great Coal Strike of 1984-5 to find that the distinctive identity and literature were created, ironically, as a result of the economic rationalization, a policy enacted by the Thatcher government. Chapter 11, "Thatcherism and the Poets in Northern Ireland" (Sato), deals with the poets of the 1980s and argues that the sceneries in the poets' minds' eyes have

been changing along with the redevelopment of Belfast under the Thatcherite economic policy after the conflict there came closer to conclusion.

(*Has Neo-Liberalism Changed Literature? Britain after Thatcher*, Hosei University Institute of Comparative Economic Studies Research Project Book, No 23. [ed.] Mitsutoshi Somura, Hosei University Press, 2008)