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A TOUCH OF LOVE BY JONATHAN COE AS A CAMPUS NOVEL

When we refer to or study campus novel as an independent genre, the first thing that comes to mind in the past is David Lodge's *Trilogy* and Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim*, which are all classics of the campus novel genre. Jonathan Coe over the last decade or so has become one of Britain's more respected writers. Here, I'll introduce *A Touch of Love* by Jonathan Coe. Since the background of a campus novel must be set in the campus, the content of the story and the relationships between the characters all take place between students, between students and teachers, or between teachers and teachers. The novel was released in 1989, covers events from April to December 1986. Besides, the characters with Robin as the core are clearly and completely portrayed. Through the analysis of the relationships between the characters in the story, we can sort out the connection between Robin, Ted, and Aparna, as well as the relationship and interaction between Robin and his supervisor, Professor Davis. At the same time, from this novel, Coe's satirical writing style began to form and become more and more mature.

The novel opens with the reunion of two ex-Cambridge friends years after their graduation. Ted is a successful salesman, and his wife, Katharine, has persuaded him to meet with Robin Grant after a confounded phone call between them left her concerned about his perplexity. Robin is a PhD student in Coventry who is disillusioned and despondent after five years' study. Robin's real-life love disappointments inspire him to write about his sentiments, which he conceals in four short passages. It's said that Coe's novel has a postmodernist feeling as it describes the vastly different lifestyles of Robin, Ted, and those who know them. The story involves a lot of conversations, most of them with sardonic humor, and it establishes the characters' thoughts on current issues and life in general. Ted is haughty and lacks empathy, although he eventually grows more empathetic toward Robin. Ted's achievement and Robin's failure present extremely contrasting viewpoints on their Cambridge academic lives. As a result of his naivety and lack of social awareness, Robin is arrested and summoned to court. Aparna, an Indian postgraduate student, has a sporadic connection with Robin, after which they argue and split up. She is a dimly painted figure who, like the others, is swiftly forgotten.

The author makes a number of incisive statements about politics, the status of universities and their instructors, and the loneliness of living in the urban areas—and his stories proceed chronologically. It's brilliantly structured, but towards the

conclusion, I was still confused about the major characters' motivations and the circumstances surrounding the tragedy that impacts them. The only grace of this early book is Coe's satirical humor. Throughout the whole novel, Coe offers no easy answers and conveys an excellent sense of love's fleeting and delicate nature.