Selected Modern English Essays for College Students

现代英国名家文选

Selected and Annotated
by
Y. M. Hsü（徐燕谋）
D. Z. Zia（谢大任）and T. W. Chou（周缵武）

With a Foreword
by
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内容提要

本书精选19世纪末20世纪初英国散文名家包括罗素、普莱斯利、萧伯纳、毛姆、吉辛、康拉德、E. M. 福斯特、高尔斯华绥、赫胥黎、弗吉尼亚·伍尔夫等的散文40篇，附有作者简介、详尽的注释及三篇论述英国散文的文章。本书选文精当，注释详尽，可较大程度地提高中级以上英语学习者对现代英国散文的了解和鉴赏。钱锺书先生和陆谷孙先生分别为本书初版和新版作序。

本书可用作高等院校英语专业教材，也可供其他英语爱好者阅读参考之用。

Xu Yanmou: An Eidetic Memory

—In Lieu of a Foreword to the New Edition of *Selected Modern English Essays for College Students*

By Lu Gusun

Professor Xu Yanmou (徐燕谋), or Y. M. Hsü (1906-1986) by Wade-Giles, taught me Fifth-Year Intensive Reading in English and was advisor to me for three years from 1962 through 1965 when I studied as a graduate student at the Foreign Languages and Literature Department of Fudan University, Shanghai. The mentor-disciple relationship spanned the tumultuous years of the so-called "anti-rightist campaign," "the Great Leap Forward," and finally "the Cultural Revolution" from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. Xu was a sanguine person by nature — what with his hallmark guffaw in classroom and office alike, the *laisser-aller* of a poet, and a repute of a gourmet big on such delicacies as long-tailed anchovy from the Yangtze — popularly known as "knife fish," but like all literati of his time, he was subjected to all kinds of brainwashing and micromanagement until he was reduced to a speechless and sleepless old man murmuring "No can do; no can do" all the time to himself in a secluded corner away from the crowd. After 1976, the year when the Gang of Four headed by Mrs Mao were dethroned, Xu partly recovered his ebullience — but briefly: the trauma was too deep-seated for him to get on top of. It was due to a progressive chronic depression that Xu chose to terminate his own life some time in the small hours of 26 March 1986 by drowning himself in a well in the courtyard of an old-style Shanghai building on Wuding Street, on the cramped ground floor of which the three old folks (Xu's couple and his lifelong single sister), along with his books by the thousands, found a humble shelter. I remember weeping that night out of a gnawing remorse that I had joined in mass criticism of him by *dazibao*, albeit mildly, in an early stage of the

"Cultural Revolution," as was requested of every graduate student by the powers that be; weeping as if I had vicariously felt what a claustrophobic death it must have been for him in that vertical tube of a well. I wept myself eventually into composing a tearful poem in his memory:

留得孤危劫后身
旧游多半委沙尘
相怜惟有墙头月①
磊落光明永照人

Yes, Xu is a man of integrity. With an unwilling effort, he swam with the tide and managed to survive. However, deep down in him remained intact an esotericism of an ununiformed conscientious objector, a dissident forcibly made to consent and condone. Extremely fond of and prolific in writing poems, in addition to the occasional topical ones, in most of his works the poet bemoaned the sheer waste of lives, his own nightmarish experience, and a lone soul craving for empathy. For instance, he wrote about his *bas bleu* colleague/friend Yang Bi (杨必), who had suffered abysmally during the "Cultural Revolution":

估铺狐裘稳称身
心头冷彻总难温
何堪重过邯郸路
不待霜风已断魂
(一日寒甚遇君邯郸路上披狐裘犹瑟缩云冬衣已尽失以六十元从估铺易得数裘御寒)

and

我书未散苦无庐
君屋犹存恨失书
天上银河万斛水
难求升斗活枯鱼
(文化大革命初君藏书尽失我住房紧缩书皆束阁两人如鱼失水)

---

① As three tall walls encircle and overlook the lone well in the midst of the courtyard.

About the tough time he had gone through the poet reminisced:

清谈何止十年灾
虚耗英英一代才
屈指今朝有为者
阿谁不自白专来

and

狂风吹散读书声
学府翻腾似沸羹
呼马呼牛呼老贼
惟君依旧唤先生

Woe worth the day when Xu managed to trudge through a strenuous life as delights were so few and far between, and simple and petty too!

小院墙高日色微
莳葱种蒜也难肥
南邻养得牵牛好
看罢归来露未晞
(南邻牵牛盛开花多过墙侵晓往看不须问主人也)

or

嚣嚣扰扰两童孙
夺果争糖晓到昏
藻鉴颇闻今异昔
不然为讲让梨人

or

元夕儿时玄妙观
广场提线洛阳桥
岂知老去童心在
夜半偷看匹诺曹

（儿时住苏州玄妙观有提线木偶戏洛阳桥匹诺曹为《木偶奇遇记》中木偶名）

We know that posterity have to read Shakespeare's sonnets, rather than his plays, to know more proximately about the Bard the person. The analogy would be too presumptuously offending to the unassuming poet if I should advise people to read Xu Yanmou's poems with a view to understanding him better. None the less, it is hardly an overstatement to say that Xu's crowning achievement lies in his poetry composed in keeping with classical prosodic norms in Chinese. For all I know, Xu may have been the only professor of English in China in his time who was indisputably a poet worth his salt. Prominent scholar-friends of his like Qian Zhongshu（钱锺书）and Su Buqing（苏步青）sang praises of him in glowing terms in their own poems. A Chinese professor of English, so enamored by and so well versed in his infinitely rich mother tongue, is nothing short of a phenomenon for a host of xenogenetic members of present-day Chinese young men and women who are head over ears into English often, regrettably, at the expense of needful linguistic equipment in Chinese. For me personally, I read his poems primarily for glimpses into the *sanctum sanctorum* of a broken heart of a modern Chinese man of letters and therefrom into the warp and weft of his time.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

It is my ex-classmate and friend Professor Zhai Xiangjun's（翟象俊）suggestion that we commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of the two late Professors Xu Yanmou and Ge Chuangui（葛传槼），to whom we both are much beholden, academically and otherwise. As part of the proposed commemoration, this present pre-1949 anthology of English Essays edited by Xu Yanmou and the other two gentlemen and foreworded by Qian Zhongshu is being republished through the good offices of Fudan University Press. Teaching English essays to students at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels used to be Xu's cup of tea. With an eye for what is tailored to the palate of an aesthete（e. g. , beautiful but not bland; colourful but not gaudy; moderate but not nonchalant; determined but not bigoted; plain but not prosaic; friendly but not forward; buoyant but not unctuous）, Xu had a penchant for the familiar type of essays *à la* Charles Lamb. As can be seen clearly from the writings

hereby anthologized, Xu's taste can easily pass for being high-brow in the eyes of post-moderners. On a recent occasion when some of my literary friends in Hong Kong and I discussed Max Beerbohm with hearty gusto, we were scoffed at by a British professor in our presence for our "antediluvian taste" who alleged that few if any college students in Britain today would care to know of the essayist's name! Hearing that, I thought I saw Professor Xu turning in his grave.

So, as Xu's disciple, I now have a new tide to swim with if I wish to stay afloat: that of nouveau utility, of dogged accrual of knowledge about English as a means to a utilitarian end, and of anxious yearnings for material well-being. Taking over Xu's mantle, today I teach English Essays too. However, to ensure a sustained, robust interest on the part of the students so as to optimize the value of my teaching, deletion of previously much anthologized masterpieces in the Essay as a particular genre of literature has become a must, making room for adds that are written in the presumably more practicable and realistic English of the 21st century. The insouciant aesthete who sat back relaxed in an armchair pondering over what is beautiful must needs yield up the ghost, surrendering place to a restless and banausic soul ready to be slave-driven in a modern firm as a would-be white-collar. Literature as a Wonderland is but a sad anachronism. A no mean number of young men and women are ruefully bound, headlong, for a Wasteland: aesthetically barren and devoid of euphoria and ecstasy. Truth to say, I am often quite ambivalent about some of the sample essays I have lately selected — often with a sense of guilt and betrayal — for my students to read, not because they veer away from the traditional criterion of literary excellence, but because their topicality and the facileness of English with which they are written may, above all, help toward the making, say, of a tolerably informed bilingual CEO or CFO or whatever, rather than of a perspicuous connoisseur of art and literature with true aplomb. In short, the crux of the matter is that today we train rather than cultivate, looking agape at a ubiquitous realism taking the upper hand of idealism or, disparagingly, Don Quixotism.

Ecce, like teacher, like student. There is a stubborn destiny we have to be part of, however averse to it the participants are. Bound down by such a common destiny and looking always forward in vain to the *Jenseitigkeit* of an elixir for all men and women, Xu and I have a lasting like-minded rapport, and even though he is now a centenarian he remains my eidetic memory.

August 2006

FOREWORD

Writers from Sydney Smith to Julien Benda have argued that the father or discoverer of an idea is the man who popularises it rather than he who originates it. Others pitch the case of the populariser less high, but still think that he is entitled to as much esteem as the originator. Now what is an anthologist but one who makes the good things in literature accessible to many and thus spreads aesthetic joy in the widest commonalty? He therefore in the scheme of things stands only next to the writers he has anthologised. I should like to put forth such a claim for my friends the compilers of this book but for the fact that they are very modest men and would be embarrassed.

Anthologies have come to supersede *A Tale of Two Cities*, *John Halifax*, *Gentleman*, etc. in first-year and second-year English courses in Chinese colleges. The missionaries who used to dominate the field of English teaching in China had an uncanny knack of making over the classroom to the Reign of Dulness by choosing the most tedious Victorian novels for the delectation of their students. On the other hand, the prevailing fashion of serving quick lunches out of cheap and not very readable stuffs is also deplorable. The present book avoids both extremes between which English teaching in China oscillates like the famous drunken peasant swaying on horseback. Ranging very wide in its choice, it serves admirably the two-fold purpose of light reading and serious study. The notes, too, are very helpful, and, where the text is elusively allusive, reveal a brilliant skill in literary detective work.

C. S. Ch'ien(钱锺书)

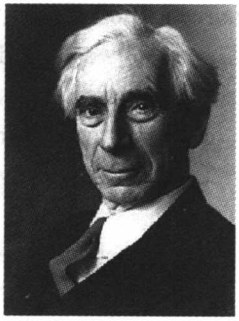
July 1947

CONTENTS

1 CHINESE AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION CONTRASTED

Bertrand Russell

Russell, Bertrand Arthur William (1872-1970)



Bertrand Russell was born at Trelleck on May 18, 1872, the second son of Viscount Amberley. His grandfather was Lord John Russell, Liberal Prime Minister and a follower of John Stuart Mill. Left an orphan at the age of three, he was brought up by his grandmother. Taught by governesses and tutors, he acquired a perfect knowledge of French and German, and laid the foundation for a lucid prose style. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he obtained a First Class in Mathematics and Moral Sciences. At the Mathematical Congress in Paris in 1900 Russell became interested in the Italian mathematician Peano, and after a study of his works wrote *The Principles of Mathematics*. With Dr. A. N. Whitehead, he developed the mathematical logic of Peano and Frere, and jointly they wrote *Principia Mathematica*. In 1910 he was appointed lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge. He made frequent trips to the Continent and occasionally abandoned philosophy for politics. When World War I broke out he took an active part in the No Conscription Fellowship and was fined one hundred pounds for issuing a pamphlet on conscientious objection. His library was seized in payment of the fine. Trinity College cancelled his lectureship. In 1918 he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for his pacifist views expressed in the *Tribunal*. He wrote his *Introduction to Mathematical*

Philosophy in prison. In 1920 he came to China to lecture on philosophy at Peking University. In 1927 Russell and his second wife, Dora Winifred Black, started a famous nursery school, which was closed in 1931 for financial difficulties. He led a busy and adventurous life. His *A History of Western Philosophy* was published in 1945.

There is at present in China a close contact between our civilization and that which is native to the Celestial Empire. It is still a doubtful question whether this contact will breed a new civilization better than either of its parents, or whether it will merely destroy the native culture and replace it by that of America. Contacts between different civilizations have often in the past proved to be landmarks in human progress. Greece learned from Egypt, Rome from Greece, the Arabs from the Roman Empire, medieval Europe from the Arabs, and Renaissance Europe from the Byzantines. In many of these cases, the pupils proved better than their masters. In the case of China, if we regard the Chinese as the pupils, this may be the case again. In fact, we have quite as much to learn from them as they from us, but there is far less chance of our learning it. If I treat the Chinese as our pupils, rather than vice versa, it is only because I fear we are unteachable.

I propose in this chapter to deal with the purely cultural aspects of the questions raised by the contact of China with the West.

With the exception of Spain and America in the sixteenth century, I cannot think of any instance of two civilizations coming into contact after such a long period of separate development as has marked those of China and Europe. Considering this extraordinary separateness, it is surprising that mutual understanding between Europeans and Chinese is not more difficult. In order to make this point clear, it will be worth while to dwell for a moment on the historical origins of the two civilizations.

Western Europe and America have a practically homogeneous mental life, which I should trace to three sources: (1) Greek culture; (2) Jewish religion and ethics; (3) modern industrialism, which itself is an outcome of modern science. We may take Plato, the Old Testament, and Galileo as representing these three elements, which have remained singularly separable down to the present day. From the Greeks we derive literature and the arts, philosophy and

pure mathematics; also the more urbane portions of our social outlook. From the Jews we derive fanatical belief, which its friends call "faith"; moral fervour, with the conception of sin; religious intolerance, and some part of our nationalism. From science, as applied in industrialism, we derive power and the sense of power, the belief that we are as gods, and may justly be the arbiters of life and death for unscientific races. We derive also the empirical method, by which almost all real knowledge has been acquired. These three elements, I think, account for most of our mentality.

No one of these three elements has had any appreciable part in the development of China, except that Greece indirectly influenced Chinese painting, sculpture and music. China belongs, in the dawn of its history, to the great river empires, of which Egypt and Babylonia contributed to our origins, by the influence which they had upon the Greeks and Jews. Just as these civilizations were rendered possible by the rich alluvial soil of the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tigris, so the original civilization of China was rendered possible by the Yellow River. Even in the time of Confucius, the Chinese Empire did not stretch far either to south or north of the Yellow River. But in spite of this similarity in physical and economic circumstances, there was very little in common between the mental outlook of the Chinese and that of the Egyptians and Babylonians. Lao-Tze and Confucius, who both belong to the sixth century B.C., have already the characteristics which we should regard as distinctive of the modern Chinese. People who attribute everything to economic causes would be hard put to it to account for the differences between the ancient Chinese and the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians. For my part, I have no alternative theory to offer. I do not think science can, at present, account wholly for national character. Climate and economic circumstances account for parts, but not the whole. Probably a great deal depends upon the character of dominant individuals who happen to emerge at a formative period, such as Moses, Mohammed, and Confucius.

The oldest known Chinese sage is Lao-Tze, the founder of Taoism. "Lao-Tze" is not really a proper name, but means merely "the old philosopher." He was (according to tradition) an older contemporary of Confucius, and his philosophy is to my mind far more interesting. He held that every person, every animal, and every thing has a certain way or manner of behaving which is natural to him, or her, or it, and that we ought to conform to this way ourselves and encourage others to conform to it. "Tao" means "way," but