



The Binary Oppositions in Robert Southey's Epics

罗伯特·骚塞史诗中的二元对立

赵丽娟 著

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- 邯郸学院学术著作

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## 序

李维屏<sup>\*</sup>

赵丽娟教授是当前国内为数不多的研究罗伯特·骚塞的学者之一。她的博士论文《罗伯特·骚塞史诗中的二元对立》经过认真修改、补充和完善后,即将付梓。作为她的导师,我颇感欣慰。这部学术著作以中国学者特有的眼光来审视骚塞的史诗,并体现了作者强烈的问题意识。它的出版无疑将促进我国的英国“湖畔诗人”研究,尤其是骚塞研究。

在博士学位论文选题时,赵丽娟教授先后拟选了两三个题目,她经过反复考虑,并与我及同门魏晓红教授一起多次讨论,在查阅了国内外大量文献的基础上,决定将罗伯

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<sup>\*</sup> 上海外国语大学二级教授,校外国语言文学学科学术委员会主任和英语学科学术委员会主任,博士生导师,教育部“跨世纪优秀人才”,《英美文学研究论丛》主编。

特·骚塞的三部重要史诗中的二元对立问题作为选题。在选题确定之后,赵丽娟广泛阅读有关文献,尤其是哲学、心理学、人类学的有关理论和概念进行了深入细致的研究和思考,为其博士学位论文的撰写打下了良好的理论基础。同时,她费尽周折收集国外出版的原版作品及相关文学评论,为其研究提供了有力的支持和可靠的佐证。我认为,《罗伯特·骚塞史诗中的二元对立》是一部具有原创性的研究成果。作者在书中以翔实的文本分析来探讨骚塞诗歌艺术的核心——史诗,并明确指出:骚塞的史诗充满多种二元对立因素,其对立性与当时英国社会矛盾的不可调和性遥相呼应。骚塞将欧洲历史上的英雄人物塑造为史诗中的主人公,通过描写他们异乎寻常的境遇和行为来反映英国浪漫主义时期社会主体的困境和情感愿望。骚塞以史为镜,运用二元对立诗歌艺术在其史诗中呈现当时英国社会纷繁复杂的矛盾:例如,共和与专制,战争与和平,道德与罪恶等。本书作者借鉴后殖民主义的观点和心理分析等理论深入探讨了诸多对立因素的形成、发展和结果,展现诗人在多种观念碰撞、各种势力交锋的时代背景下的创作思想和价值取

向,并系统阐述诗人在思想上由激进到保守的演变过程。作者开创性的选题、富于新意的立论和充分的论证表明,这部学术著作不仅具有较高的学术水平,而且对国内的骚塞研究具有重要参考价值。

我认为,这部难能可贵的著作使赵丽娟教授成功而又清晰地构建了罗伯特·骚塞研究者的学术面貌。本书的出版当在学界产生积极的影响,并促进我国的骚塞研究和“湖畔诗人”批评的发展。

李维屏

2016年6月

于上海外国语大学

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## Introduction

Robert Southey ( 1774—1843 ) is one of the representatives of the British Romantic Lake Poets. Although his fame tends to be outshone by that of his contemporaries William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Southey's verse equally enjoys perpetual prestige. In addition to his poetry, Southey is a prolific writer of histories, biographies, and essays, many of which are considered even as good as his verse. The Romantics such as Charles Lamb, George Gordon Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley all regard Southey as a central figure who demands serious attention.

Though, as the Poet Laureate to serve the king

George III, he enjoyed considerable fame and his works were well respected during his lifetime. His reputation since then has been overshadowed by those more influential poets. "Robert Southey is the least known and least appreciated of the lake poets."<sup>①</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, among the list of romantic writings, his poetry was not only rarely included, but also largely forgotten. Being considered outside the canon of Romantic literature, even for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his poetry is almost neglected. Moreover, people show less interest in his social and political thought than in that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Later literary critics, historians and readers even lose interest in his voluminous writings. Southey becomes the least read of the three Lake Poets, and gradually he is lowered to the

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<sup>①</sup> David M. Craig. *Robert Southey and Romantic Apostasy: Political Argument in Britain, 1780—1840*. Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2007, p. 8.

margins of English Romanticism.

However, Southey's contribution to poetry can not be denied. Byron once wrote that "his appearance is epic, and he is the only existing entire man of letters".<sup>①</sup> Byron proceeded to praise Southey's talents and he thought that Southey should belong to the first rank. Byron found that Southey's writings and poems "equal to any thing".<sup>②</sup> It is fair to say that literary innovations are presented more briefly in Southey's poetry than a literary critic would wish. But it should not be forgotten that it was Southey who instituted the typical and formal breakthroughs of Romanticism, and defined the modes of Romanticism. To modern readers, Byron's remarks seem to be high commendation for Southey because he had severely criticized and mercilessly ridiculed Southey.

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① Lionel Madden. *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Press, 1972, p.1.

② Ibid. , p.1.

It is true that Byron later appeared as Southey's most powerful satirist and critic. Byron's contradictory attitude to Southey may be seen as an indication to show the complex contemporary responses to his works. Nowadays researchers have rescued Southey again from oblivion, regarding him as a missing link in the development of English Conservatism between Burke<sup>①</sup> and Disraeli<sup>②</sup>. As an entire man of letters, therefore, once again he occupies a central place in the literary and political worlds of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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① Edmund Burke (1729—1797): British statesman and philosopher remembered for his support of the cause of the American Revolutionaries, and for his later opposition to the French Revolution. In literature, he is well-known mainly for his theory of aesthetics, that is, the theory of sublime. In 1757, he published a monograph entitled *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which influenced many writers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

② Benjamin Disraeli (1804—1881): twice as British Prime Minister, parliamentarian, conservative statesman and literary figure.

## 0.1 The Success of Southey's Epics

The scores of works Southey wrote are on topics of literary, social and political nature. His works abound with contemporary issues, such as the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and human rights and so on. Generally speaking, as a representative of Romantic poets, his prestige is founded in his verse. To be exact, Southey's reputation during his lifetime is largely established by his epics.

Southey's epics combine tradition with innovation. He learned from and imitated the forerunners of epics in literary history. During his school days, he stated that, "I took Spencer for my master. I drank also betimes of



Chaucer.”<sup>①</sup> His epics are traditionally well-arranged in structure and sublime in spirit. What's more, Southey makes innovations in the style and subject matter, which are different from his forerunners. He adds foreign and colonial cultures to his epics and builds up a Romantic style, which influences the whole generation. William Wordsworth also benefited from this change in *The Excursion*. Southey's distinguished epics include *Joan of Arc* (1796), *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *Madoc* (1805), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814). They were conceived and written from 1793 to 1814, which was the transforming period of his thoughts, in which he was changing from a radical Republican to a royalist conservative. In the

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① This is quoted from page 8 of Robert Southey's *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey*, published by D. Appleton & Co. Press in New York in 1839. Further references to this edition will be indicated by quoting page numbers in parenthesis.