

21

世纪英语专业系列教材

Poetry and Poetics Composed
in English: A Reader

英诗及诗学文选



袁洪庚 卢雨菁 杜丽丽 ©编

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A Reader

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总序

北京大学出版社自 2005 年以来已出版《语言与应用语言学知识系列读本》多种,为了配合第十一个五年计划,现又策划陆续出版《21 世纪英语专业系列教材》。这个重大举措势必受到英语专业广大教师和学生的欢迎。

作为英语教师,最让人揪心的莫过于听人说英语不是一个专业,只是一个工具。说这些话的领导和教师的用心是好的,为英语专业的毕业生将来找工作着想,因此要为英语专业的学生多多开设诸如新闻、法律、国际、经济、旅游等其他专业的课程。但事与愿违,英语专业的教师们很快发现,学生投入英语学习的时间少了,掌握英语专业课程知识甚微,即使对四个技能的掌握并不比大学英语学生高明多少,而那个所谓的第二专业在有关专家的眼中只是学到些皮毛而已。

英语专业的路在何方?有没有其他路可走?这是需要我们英语专业教师思索的问题。中央领导关于创新是一个民族的灵魂和要培养创新人才等的指示精神,让我们在层层迷雾中找到了航向。显然,培养学生具有自主学习能力和能进行创造性思维是我们更为重要的战略目标,使英语专业的人才更能适应 21 世纪的需要,迎接 21 世纪的挑战。

如今,北京大学出版社外语部的领导和编辑同志们,也从教材出版的视角探索英语专业的教材问题,从而为贯彻英语专业教学大纲做些有益的工作,为教师们开设大纲中所规定的必修、选修课程提供各种教材。他们把英语专业教材的出版看作是第十一个五年计划期间组织出版“十一五”国家重点出版规划项目——《面向新世纪的立体化网络化英语学

科建设丛书》的重要组成部分。这套系列教材要体现新世纪英语教学的自主化、协作化、模块化和超文本化,结合外语教材的具体情况,既要解决语言、教学内容、教学方法和教育技术的时代化,也要坚持弘扬以爱国主义为核心的民族精神。因此,今天北京大学出版社在大力提倡专业英语教学改革的基础上,编辑出版各种语言、文学、文化课程的教材,以培养具有创新性思维、具有实际工作能力的学生,充分体现了时代精神。

北京大学出版社的远见卓识,也反映了英语专业广大师生盼望已久的心愿。由北京大学等全国几十所院校具体组织力量,积极编写相关教材。这就是说,这套教材是由一些高等院校有水平、有经验的第一线教师们制订编写大纲,反复讨论,特别是考虑到在不同层次、不同背景学校之间取得平衡,避免了先前的教材或偏难或偏易的弊病。与此同时,一批知名专家教授参与策划和教材审定工作,保证了教材质量。

当然,这套系列教材出版只是初步实现了出版社和编者们的预期目标。为了获得更大效果,希望使用本系列教材的教师和同学不吝指教,及时将意见反馈给我们,使教材更加完善。

航道已经开通,我们有决心乘风破浪,奋勇前进!

胡壮麟
北京大学蓝旗营
2007年2月

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Aside from all the debts the textbook has contracted from all the gifted bards and penetrating critics, whose exquisite works are once more recorded here, it reflects insights of our colleagues who made extensive suggestions on its contents and layout, lent us useful books, and taught from the first edition. They are Professor Zhang Shuping (张舒平), Professor Tuo Jianming (脱剑鸣) and Mr. David Frankel.

We especially thank Cui Xiaodan (崔晓丹), a brilliant MA student currently working at the university, for her help in the process of editing the part of "An Outline of Poetry Composed in English."

We are also grateful to the anonymous reader of the manuscript, for his or her sound advice based on scholarly erudition.

Two preliminary versions of the reader, unofficially printed at Professor Zhang Shuping's private press for on-campus circulation, in 2003 and 2005 respectively, have been used as a textbook for third-year undergraduates and second-year graduates in the past four years, though it was primarily meant for the latter. We feel grateful to all the students who displayed their earnest enthusiasm while discussing and reading these poems and critical essays, in and out of class, in an uninspired era in which poetry seems an almost-forgotten luxury to our more practical and less poetical contemporaries.

The Editors at Lanzhou University

Introduction

Perhaps you have already read elsewhere lines like—

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players...

Or:

The pence are here and here's the fair,
But where's the lost young man?

Or:

The old dog barks backward without getting-up.
I can remember when he was a pup.

These are some remarkable lines from poetry, a term applied to the various forms in which human beings have given rhythmic expression to their most intense perceptions of the world, themselves, and the relation of the two. A genre of literature, poetry is supposed to be highly imaginative.

Traditionally, what distinguishes poetry from prose is certainly rhythm, although nowadays some modern and postmodern poetry tends to become rhythmless. It is true that good prose also has a more or less conscious rhythm, but the rhythm of poetry is marked by a regularity far surpassing that of prose. One of the chief rewards of reading poetry is the satisfaction that comes from finding "variety in uniformity," a shifting of rhythms that eventually returns to the basic pattern. The ear recognizes the existence of recurring accents at stated intervals and recognizes, too, variations from these patterns.

Aside from rhythm, poetry should possess significance, for it will certainly enrich people's store of knowledge or experience, which is, in Wordsworth's words, "a worthy purpose" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* [1800]). The existence of a purpose, an idea, or an attitude distinguishes poetry from doggerel that also has a sort of rhythm.

Therefore, an ideal poem, traditionally speaking, should be a perfect combination of sound and sense, and the sense is not forced rudely upon the reader, but, to quote Wordsworth again, is to "be found carried along" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* [1800]) with powerful feelings. However, the fact that poetry is concerned with some significance does not necessarily render it didactic. Great didactic poetry exists, but it is not great because it is didactic.

Poetry may communicate in several ways at once, and with the special vocabulary that is regarded as the language of poetry. A poet would assign himself the task of de-mystifying the monumental and/or celebrate the ordinary. While poetry's forms and genres are as diverse as its practitioners, poetry is generally distinguished by its attention to line, form, sound, density, image, etc. As the chief aim of poetry is to please, various senses of sight, sound, and color have to be appealed to, and various emotions of love, fear, and appreciation of beauty have to be called forth.

"All great poetry gives the illusion of a view of life" (T. S. Eliot). Moreover, may we add that, human beings living under various circumstances and on various occasions depend on such illusions?

Poetry has been composed by every civilization in history; nowadays it shows no sign of losing its power. The art of poetry composed in English has also undergone a long process of change. It has become intensely individualistic from its original collective interest; similarly, it has become the vehicle for drama, history, and personal emotions from the ceremonial recounting of tribal and group movements. It is, however, still common today to classify poetry

into three great type-divisions: epic, dramatic and lyric. These three types are, in turn, broken into further classifications. Further subdivisions have been made on the basis of mood, purpose, and school, such as the pastoral, the didactic, or the “Black Mountain”.

Evidently, there are poems, and there are thousands of ways of composing them and approaching them. To demonstrate some of the ways in which poems are composed and approached, this textbook commences with over 100 poems (Part One) composed in English by 75 poets, ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer to Seamus Heaney, and from the middle Ages to the postmodern era. To help students, especially graduates, to better understand the longstanding splendor of Anglo-American-Canadian poetic tradition, we include in the *Reader* 10 critical essays or excerpts (Part Two) that are enlightening in way or the other, and a glossary of poetic terms (Part Three).

We agree to Robert Frost’s definition of poetry: “Poetry is what gets lost in translation;” therefore, we restrain from attaching Chinese versions of these poems in the *Reader*, though some renditions are done by great scholars in Anglo-American literary studies in China, like Liang Zongdai (梁宗岱), Zha Liangzheng (查良铮), Tu An (屠岸), and Fei Bai (飞白), among others, and have been read and appreciated by several generations of Chinese readers. We find that, some of the renditions, owing to the subtle nature of poetry itself, instead of any inadequacy of the translators, still leave something to be desired.

We, the editors of the reader, specifically suggest that English majors, both undergraduates and graduates, employ their leisure, however scant as it might be, to read (aloud) repeatedly or even try to learn by heart the verses after class, for we definitely believe these poetic works will definitely benefit them, not merely as inquisitive and promising university students, but also as enlightened, intelligent citizens of independent thinking in the years to come.

The Editors

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