

高等院校规划教材

Selected Readings of
English Poetry

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经典英美诗歌赏析

梁英君 王晶晶 编著



中国矿业大学出版社

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编者的话

《经典英美诗歌赏析》选取英美文学史上最著名诗人的经典作品进行剖析,并附有权威准确的中文译文,弥补了市面上英美诗歌赏析类图书只读不析或分析不够深入的不足。

本教材综合了国内外知名诗歌评论家的论述并结合编者多年来在英美诗歌方面的实践教学经验,内容翔实可靠,可作为高校英语专业选修课程教材,供高校英语专业学生参考使用,也可作为英美文学爱好者以及教授英美文学课程的教师们的参考资料。

编者衷心希望这本书能够为英美诗歌的学习者提供帮助并得到认可。

在本教材的编写过程中,我们参考了很多文献和研究成果,这些都已在书后参考书目中列出;本教材部分译作的版权分别属于不同的个人或机构,谨此对有关作者、编者和出版者致以诚挚的谢意,并敬请各版权持有者通过出版社与本教材编者联系处理。

本教材共有二十二个单元,栾玉芹主要负责全书内容的审核和校对。朱德光负责编写第一单元和第二单元;李常玉负责编写第三单元和第四单元;梁英君负责编写第五单元至第十三单元;王晶晶负责编写第十四单元至第二十二单元。

编者经验不足,书中难免有疏漏之处,恳请同行和朋友们批评指正。

梁英君 王晶晶

2014年9月于北京

目 录

编者的话	1
Unit 1 Geoffrey Chaucer	1
<i>The Canterbury Tales</i>	2
Unit 2 William Shakespeare	5
<i>Sonnet 18</i>	9
Unit 3 John Donne	12
<i>Holy Sonnet 10</i>	14
Unit 4 Robert Burns	16
<i>A Red , Red Rose</i>	20
<i>On the Seas and Far Away</i>	22
<i>Auld Lang Syne</i>	24
Unit 5 William Blake	27
<i>London</i>	30
<i>The Lamb</i>	32
<i>The Tyger</i>	35
Unit 6 William Wordsworth	38
<i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i>	40
Unit 7 George Gordon Byron	43
<i>She Walks in Beauty</i>	44
Unit 8 Percy Bysshe Shelley	47

<i>Song to the Men of England</i>	50
<i>Ode to the West Wind</i>	54
Unit 9 John Keats	63
<i>On the Grasshopper and Cricket</i>	64
<i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i>	66
Unit 10 Robert Browning	72
<i>My Last Duchess</i>	73
Unit 11 Alfred Tennyson	79
<i>Break, Break, Break</i>	80
Unit 12 William Butler Yeats	83
<i>The Lake Isle of Innisfree</i>	85
<i>The Second Coming</i>	87
Unit 13 T. S. Eliot	90
<i>Morning at the Window</i>	94
<i>From The Hollow Man</i>	97
Unit 14 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	99
<i>A Psalm of Life</i>	102
<i>I Shot an Arrow</i>	105
Unit 15 Edgar Allan Poe	108
<i>Annabel Lee</i>	111
<i>Sonnet—To Science</i>	115
Unit 16 Walt Whitman	118
<i>I Sit and Look Out</i>	121
Unit 17 Emily Dickinson	124
<i>I'm Nobody</i>	126

<i>Success</i>	129
<i>I Died for Beauty</i>	131
Unit 18 Ezra Pound	133
<i>In a Station of the Metro</i>	135
Unit 19 Wallace Stevens	136
<i>Anecdote of the Jar</i>	137
Unit 20 William Carlos Williams	139
<i>The Red Wheelbarrow</i>	140
Unit 21 Robert Lee Frost	142
<i>Mending Wall</i>	146
<i>The Road Not Taken</i>	151
<i>Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening</i>	153
<i>Fire and Ice</i>	155
Unit 22 Langston Hughes	157
<i>Dreams</i>	158
主要参考文献	160

Unit 1 Geoffrey Chaucer



About the poet

Geoffrey Chaucer is the greatest Middle English writer and the founder of English poetry. He was born in London about 1340. His father was a well-to-do wine merchant. Geoffrey first appeared as a page to the Countess of Ulster, daughter-in-law of King Edward III.

In 1372, he went to Italy to negotiate a commercial treaty with Genoa. He was thus introduced to first-hand Italian life and culture; but that he met either Petrarch or Boccaccio, famous Italian writers at that time, has never been shown. Upon his return to England he was given a dwelling at Aldgate, London, where he lived for the next twelve years. This long period was a period of official duties for Chaucer.

In 1386 he gave up his residence at Aldgate. He retired to Kent, and lived like a country gentleman, being a Knight of the Shire and Member of Parliament in 1386. Three years later he was made Clerk of the King's works, the superintendent of building and repairs in all the king's palaces. During these years Chaucer seems to have been at the zenith of his prosperity. It has been inferred that he was often in financial crisis during the last years of the decade.

Chaucer's works fall into three main groups corresponding roughly to the three periods of his adult life: (1) The period of French influence (1359-

1372), which saw him writing in the manner of contemporary French poets. To this period belongs *The Book of the Duchess*, and *The Romance of the Rose*. (2) The period of Italian influence, especially of Dante and Boccaccio (1372-1386), during which he traveled Italy and made the acquaintance of Italian literature and in which he used mainly the “heroic” stanza of seven lines, and began to use the heroic couplet. To this period belongs *The House of Fame*, *The Assembly of Fowls*, *Troilus and Cryseyde*, *The Legend of Good Women*, and the first drafts of some of his tales. (3) The period of his maturity (1386-1400), in which he used the heroic couplet and which saw his full attainment belonged *The Canterbury Tales*, designed about 1387.

About the poem

The Canterbury Tales is Chaucer's greatest work and the greater part of it is written in heroic couplets (about 17,000 lines). It is probable that Chaucer began *The Canterbury Tales* about 1387. The whole poem is a series of stories arranged in the “framework” as the Prologue provides.

Coming together at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, a party of thirty (or thirty-one, if including Chaucer himself) pilgrims prepare to go to the shrine of Becket at Canterbury next day, and Chaucer joins them. It is such a lovely spring day that the pilgrimage seems like a holiday excursion to most of the pilgrims though it is a religious duty to them.

Selected Reading

The Canterbury Tales

The General Prologue

(An Excerpt)

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March^[1] to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor^[2] of such power
As brings about the engendering^[3] of the flower,
When also Zephyrus^[4] with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath^[5]

Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of *the Ram*^[6] has run,
And the small *fowl*^[7] are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye
(So nature pricks them and *their heart engages*^[8])
Then people long to go on pilgrimages

Notes

- [1] March is usually a dry season and April showers relieve its drought.
[2] shower or rain
[3] growth
[4] West wind from Atlantic is gentle and warm to forecast the coming of Spring.
[5] woods and deserted plains
[6] 白羊宫, 古代用于解释天体运行的黄道带十二宫中的一个。“half course”的时间应该是 3 月 27 日。太阳经过白羊宫时正值春天, 因此前文称太阳为 young sun。
[7] birds
[8] Heart of birds is attracted by nature.

Question

Point out the description of spring in this poem.

Chinese version

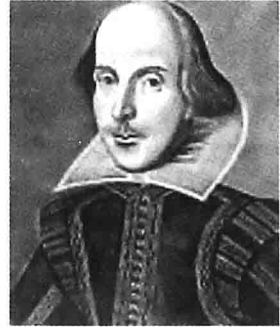
坎特伯雷故事集
总引(节选)

当四月的甘霖
渗透了三月枯竭的根须,
沐浴了丝丝茎络,
触动了生机,
使枝头涌现出花蕾;
当和风吹香,

使得山林莽原
遍吐着嫩条新芽，
青春的太阳已转过半边的白羊宫座，
小鸟唱起曲调，
通宵睁开睡眼，
是自然拨弄着它们的心弦：
这时，人们渴望着朝拜四方名坛。

（方重 译）

Unit 2 William Shakespeare



About the poet

Shakespeare is a master of English poetry and drama in English literary history. His life can be researched from three sources: church and legal records, folk tales and the comments of his contemporaries. He was born in a small town called Stratford-on-Avon in 1564. Shakespeare only received grammar school education because in this year his father fell into debts. Later, in 1582 Shakespeare married to Anne Hathaway who was 8 years older than him. It was very probable that it was a hurried marriage because their first child Susanna was christened on May 26, 1583. The fact that the child was born only 6 months after the marriage suggests that it might be a forced marriage and an ill-matched one.

Around 1586 or 1587, Shakespeare arrived in London. He once worked as an actor and then became a playwright. He revised old plays and wrote new ones at the rate of about two a year.

From 1593 to 1594, Shakespeare published his two narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Shakespeare was “a handsome, well-shaped man, very good company and very ready and pleasant smooth wit” according to his friends.

About 1611 he retired to his native town. There seems to be some connection between his retirement and the growing reaction of King James’

reign and the accompanying decline of the stage.

April 23rd, 1616 Shakespeare died at the anniversary of his birth.

There are some mysteries in the life and career of Shakespeare:

(1) Why did Shakespeare leave his hometown?

It is said that he annoyed Sir Thomas Lucy; some said he talked into the theatre manager accepting him as one of the theatre company.

(2) Shakespeare seems to have made no attempt to collect and publish his works, or even to save his manuscripts, which were carelessly left to the stage managers of the theatres. Why?

(3) Mysterious dark lady in his sonnets are always unknown to readers.

(4) He receives little education, where did he get so rich material, so resourceful language in writing?

(5) Shakespeare is a literary master greatly respected by people. However, after his death, the huge stone covering his tomb is inscribed as follows to show his fear of being revenged by others after death:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear;

To dig the dust enclosed here

Bless the man that spares these stones,

And curst be he that moves my bones.

Shakespeare's Sonnets

Sonnet is a kind of a fourteen-line poem, usually written in rhymed iambic pentameter. A sonnet generally expresses a single theme or idea. Sonnets may vary in structure and rhyme scheme, but are generally of two types: Petrarchan or Italian sonnet and the Elizabethan or Shakespearean sonnet. The former was first written by the Italian poet, Petrarch (1304-1374), who wrote sonnets to a lady named Laura.

Historical development of Sonnet: sonnet was introduced to England by poets Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517-1547). Shakespeare wrote his sonnets in about 1589 and they were published in 1609. The writing of sonnets, either to one's love, or to one's patron, or to one's friend, was a fashion in his time. Later, it became conventional for English poets to address sonnets to a beautiful but cruel mistress whose eyes were stars, whose lips were cherries, and whose cheeks

were roses. It is obvious that Shakespeare wrote his sonnets partly in conformity with the popular vogue but the difference is that he revealed his innermost thoughts and feelings, his rare comments on social evils of his time. His realistic depiction of persons and things instilled something new to the conventions.

Generally speaking, in these sonnets, Shakespeare exalted friendship and love, and sang the praises of youth and beauty. The 154 sonnets fall into two groups, divided at sonnet 126. The first group was addressed to a Mr. W. H. People have been making guesses about who this W. H. was. It is very likely that he was a nobleman. The second group was addressed to a Dark Lady and people have been puzzling their brains for ages to find out who this Dark Lady was.

The first 17 sonnets urge the young man to marry and bear children so that his beauty may pass on to the next generation. This handsome young man is possibly his patron, the Earl of Southampton. Beginning with sonnet 18 *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day*, Shakespeare is concerned about the effects of passing time on the young man. He says though his friend may grow old and lose his beauty, he will be immortalized in the sonnets that Shakespeare wrote for him.

In the group of sonnets written to that dark skinned, dark eyed and dark haired lady, Shakespeare blamed her for betraying his love. She had lured him once and then deserted him and went to his friend.

Amid his exaltation of love and beauty, the poet sometimes condemned certain common vices (e. g. in sonnets 70, 90, 129) and more frequently voiced his criticism of certain social evils through the utterances of his own personal miseries (e. g. in sonnets 29, 110, 111, 121). The most striking example among the whole is the well known Sonnet 66 *Tired with all Those, for Restful Death I Cry*, which is a very eloquent and comprehensive expose of social evils. A realistic picture of English society and poet's strong protest against the degeneration and corruption, both can be found in Shakespeare's poems.

The metrical form of Shakespeare's sonnets is different from that of Petrarch's. Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two parts. The first 8 lines are called Octave (first 8 lines) with a rhyming pattern of "abba abba", in which

the theme of the sonnet is put forward or a problem is raised. The next 6 lines are called a sestet (last 6 lines) following a rhyming scheme “cde cde”, in which the answer to the question is given. Shakespearean sonnet consists of three quatrains (three four-line stanzas) with a rhyming scheme “abab cdcd efef” and ends with a couplet rhyming “gg”. In the three quatrains the theme is put forward and developed, and in the couplet the sonnet ends with a surprise conclusion or a shift of ideas (e. g. Sonnet 18).

The comparison with blank verse (无韵诗或素体诗): blank verse is another form used frequently by Shakespeare. When writing narrative poems or dramas, poets think rhymes will confine and restrict thoughts, ideas and feelings; it would be unnatural in conveying ideas, so they adopt blank verse, such as most of Shakespeare's dramas, which are written in blank verse. Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Tennyson's *Ulysses* are also written in blank verse. Blank verse has enormous power of expression. It is flexible, vivid and fluent. Imagining it becomes a rhymed poem, we will find it loses all above characteristics.

Nowadays, most poets write in free style. They don't consider the consistency of rhymes, the length of lines and the completion of sentences.

About the poem

Sonnet 18 was published in 1609. Because of its profound thought and charming expression, it is very popular among readers around the world. This poem is supposed to be addressed to “a woman coloured ill” who has generally been referred by literary historians as “the dark lady of the sonnets”, one of mysteries in Shakespeare's life. The poet declares that his poetry will immortalize his beloved one in the last two lines, which point out its theme.

Sonnet 18 is a classic poem to eulogize love and friendship. In this poem, the poet compares his lover to summer's day, but he feels it is not enough. She is much more lovely and gentle than summer. Summer is short; however his lover will live in this world forever. She will gain immortality in his sonnets. So long as the poem is read by readers, the life of his lover will exist. Sonnet 18 used the rhetorical devices such as contrast, metaphor, rhetorical question and parallelism, which make the sonnet itself so passionate, romantic and realistic.

Selected Reading

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?^[1]
 Thou art^[2] more lovely and more temperate.
 Rough winds^[3] do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date;^[4]
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,^[5]
 And often is his gold complexion^[6] dimm'd;
 And every fair from fair sometimes declines^[7],
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd^[8];
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade^[9]
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;^[10]
 Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade^[11],
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.^[12]
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,^[13]
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.^[14]

Notes

[1] The first line of Shakespeare's sonnet is generally taken as its title. One can also give a title according to its content. So Sonnet 18 is also entitled "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?" or "To His Love". The first line, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" is a rhetorical question.

thee; you

In the 17th century, "thou" is the singular form of the second person pronoun, serving as "subject". Its objective form is "thee"; the possessive case (所有格) is "thy" or "thine". The absolute form of possessive pronoun (名词性物主代词) is "thine". So "thou", "thee", "thy or thine" and "thine" are respectively taken the place by contemporary English "you 主格", "you 宾格", "your" and "yours".

A summer's day; summer day

Summer in Britain lasts only ten days or so in July. It is agreeable and comfortable, resembling the late spring days in north China. Summer in

Britain is a season, which will bring people pleasant feelings and thoughts.
That's the reason why the poet compares his lover to a summer's day.

[2] *Thou art*: you are

[3] *Rough winds*: strong winds

[4] *lease*: a space of time, or term for which a contract is made (a law jargon). This line means summer's time is too short and limited.

[5] *sometime*: sometimes

the eye of heaven: sun (metaphor)

[6] *complexion*: good-looking appearance

his gold complexion dimm'd: his shining face is gradually turning dark

[7] "And every fair from fair sometime declines,": The normal order of this sentence is "And every fair sometime declines from fair."

Every fair: every beautiful thing or person.

fair and "fair" in the 10th line: beauty ("美"本身)

sometime: from a certain time.

This line means every beautiful thing or person's beauty from a certain time will disappear.

[8] "By chance or nature's changing course": either by chance/ fortune or by the course of nature's changes (自然的变迁进程)

untrimm'd: stripped (of beauty)

This means "By chance or by the course of nature's changes, beauty will be taken away."

由于偶然的原因和必然的发展,美的东西到最后总会凋谢的。

[9] This line means "you will not lose your beauty".

[10] *thou + vt.* (动词变位 + st)

ow'st: own

It means you will not lose what you own, in another word, you will not lose beauty.

[11] "Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade": The God of Death shall not boast that you are wandering in his shade. (死神也奈何不了你 = you will be perpetual and immortal.)

[12] This line means: in the lines of this poem and my other sonnets, you become a part of time. (你和诗一样与时光共存。)

[13][14] "This" in line 14 refers to this sonnet and "life" means immortality.