

一百丛书

汉英对照 Chinese-English

# 中国历代散文一百篇

戴 抗 选      谢百魁 译

## 100 CHINESE PROSE WRITINGS THROUGH THE AGES

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## 序 言

中国古代散文是优秀的中国古代文学和文化的一个重要组成部分。如同《唐诗三百首》一样,《古文观止》作为古代散文选集,成了中国古典文学爱好者的必读书籍;如同李白、杜甫、王维、白居易、陆游、苏轼等一样,韩、柳、欧、苏等唐宋八大散文家也都是中国人民家喻户晓的文学大师。至于陶渊明、柳宗元、欧阳修、苏轼等则既是优秀的散文家,又是卓越的诗人。

中国古代散文以文言文为其载体,与现代白话文差别巨大。虽然中国文字从古至今,一脉相承,但古今两种散文,风格迥异。因为前者除开提倡“文以载道”为其精神实质以外,在形式上也以突出散文的风格,包括章法、结构、格律、音韵等,使其成为具有音乐感,读来令人神往的艺术珍品。因而中国古代散文(文言文)十分注重语言的洗练、简约、严密、紧凑,如起承转合恰到好处,长短句安排得体,并往往辅以对偶、排比等,以达到均衡、和谐之美。非特抒情、写景的辞赋、骈文、韵文如此,即使叙述、论说、小品文也或多或少有此特点。因此,诸如陶渊明的《归去来辞》、《桃花源记》,王羲之的《兰亭集序》,李密的《陈情表》,诸葛亮的《前出师表》,韩愈的《祭十二郎文》,柳宗元的《至小丘西小石潭记》、《捕蛇者说》,欧阳修的《秋声赋》、《醉翁亭记》,苏轼的《前赤壁赋》,袁枚的《祭妹文》等早已成

为人们从中学时代便十分喜爱背诵的名篇，流传百世而不衰。其原因正在于它们不但具有高尚、动人的丰富思想感情，而且具有形式上的优美及其所富含的音乐韵味。

正因为古代散文的精练、简约，讲究所谓“字字珠玑”，因此往往几个字包含现代汉语需用一倍或数倍的字才能表达的含义。而要译成英文，则既要忠实于原文，以表达出原文的思想、感情，又要贴近原文的风格，这就必须引伸适度而不滥；在遣词、造句方面，则必须在正确的基础上，以一定的“雅”来媲美“雅”。凡此也许正是英译中国散文的困难所在。

以《古文观止》为代表的中国古代散文选集多从先秦两汉起始，以迄于明代，而以唐宋为重点。然而，明清两代亦不乏佳作，而且更接近现代。因此，我们在《中国历代散文一百篇》的选材上加大了明清的比重。

以时代分，计先秦两汉十八篇，魏晋南北朝六篇，唐宋三十三篇，明清四十三篇。以题材分，计论说文约二十一篇，抒情文约十三篇，写景、游记文约十七篇，人物传记文约十三篇，历史、叙述文约十四篇，寓言、小品文约十四篇，杂记文约八篇。当然，基于“文以载道”的原则，中国古代散文中夹叙夹议的情况是很多的。王安石的《游褒禅山记》便是以游记作引子来抒发议论的很好例子。此外，如苏轼的《前赤壁赋》虽然抒情成分十分浓厚，也以表达作者的人生哲理为

归结。其他,如王羲之的《兰亭集序》,范仲淹的《岳阳楼记》等一些文章,类似情况也比比皆是。因此,题材的归类某些情况下也难以截然划分。

选材的主旨在于以一百篇为范围,尽可能反映中国历代散文的梗概,既注重题材的思想、情操和精神境界,又兼顾知识性、趣味性和可读性。因此,除开一些有口皆碑、家喻户晓的文学名篇之外,也选了一些能反映中华民族古代哲学、政治、经济、法律、思想以及历史、文化、艺术(如绘画、雕刻、表演等)和人物描绘、寓言小品方面的作品。至于晚清部分,则结合当时变法维新,借鉴西方的思潮,选了薛福成的《观巴黎油画记》和黎庶昌的《卜来敦记》,同时也选了徐珂的《冯婉贞》,以反映当时中国人民反抗列强的爱国主义精神。此外,也选了清末爱国的改革派先驱魏源的时论《湖广水利论》。当然,这一百篇的绝大多数都是在多种散文选集中入选过的,故不存在冷僻的问题,但考虑到文章的可读性,这一百篇便不见得全都最具有代表性,或从某种角度说,最值得入选。

本文不拟对中国古代散文汉译英的理论和技巧问题多做探讨,但“信达雅”既是翻译的共同原则,而中国散文又以“雅”为其特色,作为英译者,正如前面所说,除应注重信达之外,自然“雅”也十分重要。然而,由于译者水平有限,恐难反映出原文优雅之十一,至于错误与欠妥之处,尚希读者不吝指正。

## Preface

Ancient Chinese prose constitutes an important component part of the splendid ancient Chinese literature and culture. If *the Three Hundred Tang Poems* (唐诗三百首) is a must for lovers of Chinese classic literature, the same certainly applies to *the Treasury of Ancient Chinese Prose* (古文观止). If Li Bai, Du Fu, Bai Juyi, Su Shi and other poets are masters of literature known to every household in China, the same must be true of Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, Ouyang Xiu, Su Shi and other prose writers. Many of them, such as Liu Zongyuan and Su Shi, are eminent men of letter both for their poetry and their prose.

Ancient Chinese prose uses as its vehicle literary language (文言文), in sharp contrast with the vernacular language (白话文) as used by the modern Chinese prose. Although Chinese characters have in the main remained unchanged throughout the ages, the styles of the two kinds of prose are nevertheless totally different. Because the ancient Chinese prose, in addition to adhering to the principle of "using writing as a vehicle of the truth" and making this its ideological and spiritual substance, gives prominence to its style, including its structure and rhythm etc. so as to produce an exquisite work of art having a sort of musical quality which makes it more



attractive to readers. It lays great stress on coherence, compactness and terseness as shown in the proper arrangement of long and short sentences, the use of the least possible words for an idea, often adorned with antitheses, couplets and other rhetoric devices to achieve the beauty of balance and harmony. It is not only the case with antithetical and rhythmic writings of lyrical and descriptive nature, narrative and argumentative essays are also more or less marked by this feature. Prose writings, such as *Sentiments on My Homecoming* and *Peach Blossom Source* by Tao Yuanming, *Preface to the Lanting Collection* by Wang Xizhi, *Memorial to the Emperor Stating My Case* by Li Mi, *Memorial to the Emperor Before the Northern Expedition* by Zhuge Liang, *Lament for My Nephew* by Han Yu, *the Small Tarn West of the Knoll* and *the Snake-Catcher* by Liu Zongyuan, *the Sound of Autumn* and *the Arbour of the Drunken Graybeard* by Ouyang Xiu, *Boating at the Red Cliff* by Su Shi, *Lament for My Younger Sister* by Yuan Mei etc. have long been famous writings much liked and often recited by people since their school days, namely because of their excellent styles and rich musical quality as well as their lofty and moving thoughts and feelings.

Since ancient Chinese prose sets great store by compactness and terseness, it is often the case that several words may contain a meaning which

can only be expressed by modern vernacular Chinese through using a number of words twice or even several times that of the original. When translated into English, it is required that the translation be faithful to the Chinese text in terms of the expression of the original feelings and thoughts as well as the reproduction of the original style. In this connection, it is necessary to make due rather than excessive extensions to bring out the full meaning of the original sentences and paragraphs. And in respect of the choice of words and the sentence-making, it is necessary, so far as it is appropriate, to have a certain degree of elegance to match the original elegance. Herein lies probably the difficulty of the English translation of ancient Chinese prose.

Selections of ancient Chinese prose, with *the Treasury of Ancient Chinese Prose* as their representative, mostly start from the Pre-Qin Era as well as the Qin and Han dynasties and end at the Ming Dynasty, while concentrating on the Tang and Song dynasties. Nevertheless, there was no lack of excellent prose works during the Ming-Qing Era, which are closer, in some respects, to the modern times. We have therefore given greater proportions to this era with regard to the selection of material.

Included in this selection are 18 articles belonging to the Pre-Qin Era as well as the Qin and Han dynasties, 6 belonging to the Wei, Jin,

Southern and Northern dynasties, 33 belonging to the Tang and Song dynasties, 43 belonging to the Ming and Qing dynasties, or, according to subject matter, 21 argumentative writings, 13 lyrical writings, 17 descriptive writings, 13 biographical writings, 14 historical and narrative writings, 8 miscellaneous writings, and 14 fables and sketches. Noteworthy is the fact that ancient Chinese essays are in many cases characterized by the combination of description or narration with discussion, as dictated by the principle of using writing as a vehicle of the truth. *A Trip to Baochan Mountain* by Wang Anshi is a case in point, where the trip is used to introduce a topic of discussion. Take another example, *Boating at the Red Cliff* by Su Shi, though very lyrical in nature, ends in the author's setting forth his philosophical views on life. Similar instances are invariably found in a great many other writings, such as *Preface to the Lanting Collection* by Wang Xizhi and *Yueyang Pavilion* by Fan Zhongyan and other essays. Therefore, the classification of writings according to subject matter cannot be done categorically under certain circumstances.

The selection of material aims at giving a general survey, within the framework of 100 articles, of the Chinese prose throughout the ages as comprehensibly as possible, with emphasis laid on the thoughts, feelings and the spiritual per-

spective of the writings, and attention paid to their readability in terms of the amount of knowledge and interest they contain. Therefore, apart from a number of masterpieces which have become monuments in Chinese literature, we have also selected articles which can reflect the philosophical, political, economic and legal thinking of the ancient Chinese people in addition to ancient Chinese history, culture, arts (painting, sculpture, performance), as well as portrayals of personages, fables and sketches. As for the last period of the Qing Dynasty, we have, in connection with the reform and the trend of learning from the west at that time, selected *Oil Paintings in Paris* by Xue Fucheng and *Brighton* by Li Shuchang. Meanwhile, we have selected *Feng Wanzhen* by Xu Ke, in order to give the readers some idea of the Chinese people's patriotic spirit in resisting foreign aggression. Incidentally, we have selected the treatise *On Water Conservancy in Mid-South China* by Wei Yuan, the patriotic reformist precursor who lived at the end of the Qing Dynasty, as an example of journalistic writing.

It is to be noted that the great majority of the writings included in this book have been incorporated in many prose selections available to the reading public, and consequently there is no problem of their lack of popularity. However, since much importance has been attached to

readability, the included 100 articles are not necessarily the most representative, or from certain point of view, the most deserving of being selected.

This article does not intend to dwell on the theory and skill of English translation of ancient Chinese prose. However, since fidelity, fluency and elegance are the common criteria for translation, whereas elegance is most characteristic of ancient Chinese prose, it is therefore of particular significance to a translator, who must in the same time give due consideration to fidelity and fluency. Nevertheless, being limited by his scholastic standard, the translator of this book can hardly expect to bring out the elegance of the original writings. As for possible errors and shortcomings, it is hoped that the readers will not stint their criticisms.

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