

英語童詩，貴在朗讀

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詩的創作最初是為了便於朗讀吟詠，即使到了小說年代，作家在完成初稿後大都會逐句出聲誦讀，若是讀起來不順暢，或者不好聽，一定是遣詞用字不精確或者是斷句出了問題，務必反覆推敲直到滿意為止。長篇小說況且如此，講究字字精準的詩歌更不在話下了。英語童詩承襲了偉大的英詩傳統，早已內化了音韻的神髓，以之做為取舍的首要標準絕不為過。換句話說，經得起朗讀考驗的才有可能成為好詩。透過朗讀才能充分表現意境、傳達趣味、領會感情。

且先讀讀佛洛斯特 (Robert Frost) 的

Stopping by Wood on a Snowing Evening :

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound' s the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

這首詩用字簡白而意境深遠，宛如中文古詩，每個字都不超過兩個音節，每行八個音步，韻腳毫不生澀，詩人在林中深情遙望朋友的村落，坐騎的嘶聲襯托了雪夜的寂寥。未能造訪不是盡興即去，而是有漫漫長路要趕。最後重複的兩行實為神來之筆，也唯有朗讀才能領略那竟夜綿延不絕的旅程。

再讀讀下一首丁尼生 (Alfred Tennyson) 的名篇：

The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;

Close to the sun in lonely lands,

Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls,

He watches from his mountain walls,

And like a thunderbolt he falls.

這首詩共兩闕，僅六行，每行八個音步，一靜一動，刻畫老鷹的神采。首句運用了三個 c 開頭的字 clasp, crag, crooked, 刻意經營讀來不順暢的感覺，非如此則無以傳達老鷹以其銳爪立足，沿著峭壁俯視海洋，展現其孤高不群。傲視藍色大海，瞬間俯衝而下，猶如迅雷，氣勢威猛無比。兩個詩節僅用了 ds 和 ls 兩個韻腳，讀來初如山雨欲來，繼之以風雷大作。單憑閱讀，絕對無法充分刻畫出老鷹的英姿。

桑德堡 (Carl Sandburg) 的 Buffalo Dusk 讀來又是另一番韻味：

The buffaloes are gone.

And those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

Those who saw the buffaloes by thousands and how they

Pawed the prairie sod into dust with their great hoofs,

Their great heads down pawing on in a great pageant of dusk,

Those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

And the buffaloes are gone.

我譯過這首詩，全文對照如下：

〈水牛遲暮〉

水牛已經不再，

那些見過水牛的也已經不再，

那些見到上千水牛的

看牛蹄如何踏上草原，

足蹄揚起塵土，碩大牛頭朝下，

掌蹄踏著黃昏絢爛。

那些見過水牛的已經不再，

水牛也已經不再。

Carl Sandburg 多才多藝，曾當過樂團的歌手，這首詩首兩行與末兩行前後呼應，第一句雖然已經下了定論，卻是開始講述草原的滄桑，牛群奔騰的景象與姿態，最後一句重複，道出昔日風華不再，在輕輕地嘆息聲中淡出。這首詩沒有講求格律，讀來卻有強烈的搖滾樂音效。運用之妙，令人隨之擊筑而歌。

以上三首經常出現在包括童詩在內的英詩選輯中，類似的例子俯拾皆是，詩是聲音的藝術，唯有朗讀，乃見真趣。