

Preliminary Note

A few indications may be given about some of the characteristics of this book.

I. The material of the quotations is principally English and French. Many excerpts from French authors (especially poets) have been cited in the original, not only because it is almost impossible, except for a poet, adequately to translate poetry (especially modern French poetry), but also, and first of all, because this book—in its perspective, if not in its subject matter—is concerned with comparative poetry. In the view of its author, it is a kind of joint tribute to British and American and to French poetry.

II. The book has been illustrated in a twofold way: by pictorial illustrations and by literary illustrations. The latter are the Texts without Comment which occur at the end of most of the chapters.

The pictorial illustrations refer mainly to Chapter I and Chapter VI. The photographs which illustrate Chapter I are distributed throughout Chapters I, II, III, and IV. Those which illustrate Chapter VI are distributed throughout Chapters V to IX. The series of works reproduced in Chapters VII and IX (nos. 53 to 56, and 61 to 68), which has to do with the last pages of Chapter VI, is interrupted in Chapter VIII by illustrations dealing especially with the “illuminating image.”

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III. The Texts without Comment must also be regarded as simple illustrations. My purpose in selecting them was not to set up an apparatus of authorities and witnesses; it was only to prepare a set of significant images, not for the eye but for the mind. I have added the usual references to a number of these excerpts (at least those from modern authors) in order to facilitate research. Yet my only aim has been to group and present some “pure texts” for “pure reading,” as self-sufficient objects likely to nourish either the reflection or the pleasure of the intellect.

In many cases only a fragment of a poem, which I considered particularly significant for my purpose, could be given. I hope I shall be pardoned for the liberty I thus took.

IV. Finally, I might mention here that while I cite the existing English translations of my books and give page references where required, I have exercised the privilege, occasionally, of revising the language.