

普通高等教育“十一五”国家级规划教材



新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材(修订版)

总主编 戴炜栋

# 英美诗歌：作品与评论

## British and American Poetry: Poems and Criticisms

主 编 / 杨金才 于建华



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## 总 序

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我国英语专业本科教学与学科建设,伴随着我国改革开放的步伐,得到了长足的发展和提升。回顾这 30 多年英语专业教学改革和发展的历程,无论是英语专业教学大纲的制订、颁布、实施和修订,还是四、六级考试的开发与推行,以及多项英语教学改革项目的开拓,无不是围绕英语专业的学科建设和人才培养而进行的,正如《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》提出的英语专业的培养目标,即培养“具有扎实的英语语言基础和广博的文化知识并能熟练地运用英语在外事、教育、经贸、文化、科技、军事等部门从事翻译、教学、管理、研究等工作的复合型英语人才。”为促进英语专业本科建设的发展和教学质量的提高,外语专业教学指导委员会还实施了“新世纪教育质量改革工程”,包括推行“十五”、“十一五”国家级教材规划和外语专业国家精品课程评审,从各个教学环节加强对外语教学质量的宏观监控,从而确保为我国的经济建设输送大量的优秀人才。

跨入新世纪,英语专业的建设面临新的形势和任务:经济全球化、科技一体化、文化多元化、信息网络化的发展趋势加快,世界各国之间的竞争日趋激烈,这对我国英语专业本科教学理念和培养目标提出了新的挑战;大学英语教学改革如火如荼;数字化、网络化等多媒体教学辅助手段在外语教学中广泛应用和不断发展;英语专业本科教育的改革和学科建设也呈现出多样化的趋势,翻译专业、商务英语专业相继诞生——这些变化和发展无疑对英语专业的学科定位、人才培养以及教材建设提出了新的、更高的要求。

上海外语教育出版社(简称外教社)在新世纪之初约请了全国 30 余所著名高校百余位英语教育专家,对面向新世纪的英语专业本科生教材建设进行了深入、全面、广泛和具有前瞻性的研讨,成功地推出了

理念新颖、特色明显、体系完备的“新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材”，并被列入“十五”国家级规划教材，以其前瞻性、先进性和创新性等特点受到全国众多使用院校的广泛好评。

面对快速发展的英语专业本科教育，如何保证专业的教学质量，培养具有国际视野和创新能力的英语专业人才，是国家、社会、高校教师共同关注的问题，也是教材编撰者和教材出版者关心和重视的问题。

作为教学改革的一个重要组成部分，优质教材的编写和出版对学科建设的推动和人才培养的作用是有目共睹的。外教社为满足教学和学科发展的需要，与教材编写者们一起，力图全方位、大幅度修订并扩充原有的“新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材”，以打造英语专业教材建设完整的学科体系。为此，外教社邀请了全国几十所知名高校 40 余位著名英语教育专家，根据英语专业学科发展的新趋势，围绕梳理现有课程、优化教材品种和结构、改进教学方法和手段、强化学生自主学习能力的培养、有效提高教学质量等问题开展了专题研究，并在教材编写与出版中予以体现。

修订后的教材仍保持原有的专业技能、专业知识、文化知识和相关专业四大板块，品种包括基础技能、语言学、文学、文化、人文科学、测试、教学法等，总数逾 200 种，几乎涵盖了当前我国高校英语专业所开设的全部课程，并充分考虑到我国英语教育的地区差异和不同院校英语专业的特点，提供更多的选择。教材编写深入浅出，内容反映了各个学科领域的最新研究成果；在编写宗旨上，除了帮助学生打下扎实的语言基本功外，着力培养学生分析问题、解决问题的能力，提高学生的思辨能力和人文、科学素养，培养健康向上的人生观，使学生真正成为我国新时代所需要的英语专门人才。

系列教材修订版编写委员会仍由我国英语界的知名专家学者组成，其中多数是在各个领域颇有建树的专家，不少是高等学校外语专业教学指导委员会的委员，总体上代表了中国英语教育的发展方向和水平。

系列教材完整的学科体系、先进的编写理念、权威的编者队伍，再

次得到教育部的认可,荣列“普通高等教育‘十一五’国家级规划教材”。我深信,这套教材一定会促进学生语言技能、专业知识、学科素养和创新能力的培养,填补现行教材某些空白,为培养高素质的英语专业人才奠定坚实的基础。

戴炜栋

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## INTRODUCTION TO POETRY AND POETIC THEORY

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Poetry is a form of speech, or discourse in which the expression of thoughts and feelings or the description of places and events is given intensity by particular attention to diction, rhyme, rhythm, and imagery. In short, the difference between poetic speech and other forms is more one of degree than of kind; poetry is an art of condensation and implication, saying most in the fewest words, but a line of poetry is like dancing — the words have definite positions in time and space. The aim of this book is to introduce college students to the appreciation and experience of poetry.

### The Elements of Poetry

The basic elements of a poem include a *speaker* or the addresser we hear in it; its *diction* or choice of words; its *syntax* or the order of those words; its *imagery* or representation of sense experience through language; its *figures of speech* or non-literal ways of expressing one thing in terms of another, such as symbol and metaphor; its *sound effects*, especially rhyme, assonance, and alliteration; its *rhythm* and *meter* or the pattern of accents we hear in the poem's words, phrases, lines, and sentences; its *structure* or formal pattern of organization; its *tone* or the writer's or speaker's attitude towards his subject, his audience, or himself; and its *theme* or the total meaning abstracted from a poem. Though we usually analyze poetry through elements, we have to bear in mind that a poem is a unified and organic whole, and all the elements of a poem work together to harmoniously convey feeling and embody meaning.



## Diction

The words that a poet or any other writer or speaker chooses to use are called his *diction*. Words are the most basic of the writer's tools. As a carpenter works with hammers and saws, writers work with the words that will most exactly convey their awareness or vision of reality to their readers. What, then, is poetic language? It is the same language that is used in speech and in prose, but it receives more careful attention from the poet and is, therefore, more exact in expression. Selecting the best words for the desired effect, the poet combines vocabulary with imagery, rhythm, and sensory evocation. In other words, a poet's words are everyday words used in a very special way — a sensitive, perceptive way allowing them to function completely at more than one level.

While reading a poem, one needs to understand what the words mean. The words a poet uses are both *denotative* and *connotative*. That is, they denote the surface or literal meaning, while, connotatively, carry implications and additional associations both public and personal. The word *home*, for instance, by denotation means only a place where one lives, but by connotation, it suggests security, love, comfort, and family. Connotation is thus very important, for it is one of the means by which a poet can concentrate or enrich his meaning. As for the reader, it is necessary for them to cultivate a habit of examining the connotations of words as well as their denotations, for words in a poem often imply more than they state.

## Imagery

A good poet labors harder than any other kind of writer in order to disclose exactly what he means. His passion for exactness is like a mathematician's. But unlike the mathematician, who thinks in abstractions, the poet not only thinks hard but pours out his thought concretely. Thus poetic language is more sensuous than ordinary

language; it is full of imagery without which the poet will fail to evoke the emotions that accompany his sensations.

**Imagery** can be defined as a concrete representation of experience that appeals to the reader's senses. Although most of the image-making words suggest a mental picture — something seen in the mind's eye — and visual imagery is the one that frequently occurs in poetry, there are also images of sound, touch, smell, taste, and even an internal sensation, such as hunger, thirst and nausea.

As the reader, we must open our “reading eye” to the poet's images. We must see the flash of color, hear the clash of approaching steps, feel the skin of the toad, smell the aroma of forest, and touch the underbelly of the snake. Otherwise the poet's experience will not become our experience.

### Western Wind

Western wind, when will thou blow,  
The small rain down can rain?  
Christ, if my love were in my arms  
And I in my bed again.

In this short poem by an anonymous writer, the lonely speaker longs for the western wind which will bring a change in the weather and a reunion with the woman he loves. The visual-auditory-tactile image *small rain* communicates a variety of ideas: a relief from a dry spell, the return of his love, and the renewal of life.

### Figures of Speech: Simile and Metaphor

Language can be conveniently classified as *literal* and *figurative*. When we use *literal* language, we mean exactly what each word conveys. “The jacket is white”; “The municipal hospital is five miles away”; “Turn

right at the second crossing” — these are literal statements, since they mean no more than the actual meaning of the words. *Figurative* language, in contrast, is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way by way of a figure of speech. Like lies, figurative statements depart from literal truth, though without the intention of deceiving. Thus when a man complains “I have mountains of homework”, he is not preparing to climb Mount Tai; and when he says “It’s raining cats and dogs outside”, he has no intention to be a weather observer, but rather shows his reluctance to go out.

Some rhetoricians have catalogued as many as 250 separate figures of speech. They include: *personification*, attributing human qualities to inanimate objects or abstractions (“And flowers lift their faces to the sun.”); *hyperbole*, a purposeful exaggeration to create a specific effect (“I just die laughing.”); *understatement*, deliberately saying less than could be said either to diminish or to enhance a subject (“This is *something* of handicap in a bicycle race.”); *synecdoche*, using a part to signify the whole (“The *hand* that signed the paper felled a city.”); *metonymy*, substituting an attribute of a thing for the thing itself (“In the *sweat* of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”). Two commonly used figures of speech for poetry are *simile* and *metaphor*.

A *simile* uses *like*, *as* or *than* to establish explicit connections between essentially unrelated things. “My daughter dances like an angel”; “Her lips are sweeter than honey”; “He’s as ugly as a mud fence” — all these are examples of similes. But it should be observed that not every comparison is figurative: “Her hair is fluttering in the wind like a burning fire” is figurative; “Her wig, like Jane’s, is red” is a literal statement because it compares two entities of the same kind, two wigs.

A *metaphor* is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. The most remarkable difference from simile is that a metaphor employs no such comparative term as *like*, *as*, or *than*. While

a simile states that  $x$  is like  $y$ , a metaphor only states that  $x$  is  $y$ : “His hand was a hammer of steel”; “All the world’s a stage”; “Kindness is the golden chain by which society is bound.” The following anonymous song consists of four explicit metaphors (*April-face*, *July-eyes*, *September-bosom*, and *December-heart*):

April is in my mistress’ face,  
And July in her eyes hath place;  
Within her bosom is September,  
But in her heart a cold December.

However, a metaphor is not necessarily in the form that  $x$  is  $y$ ; more commonly, in metaphor the comparison is implied — that is, it assumes that  $x$  is  $y$  and then goes on to say something about  $x$  as though it were  $y$ . For instance, “I will drink life to the lees” (life is assumed to be a glass of wine); “He glittered as he walked” (he was a shiny jewel); “She whispered into her husband’s long furry ear” (the husband is a jackass) — all these figurative statements contain implicit metaphors.

## Tone

**Tone** may be defined as the speaker’s or writer’s attitude toward his subject, his audience or himself. It is the emotional coloring, or the emotional meaning, of the work and is an extremely important part of the full meaning. In spoken language it is indicated by the inflections of the speaker’s voice. If, for instance, a girl says “No” to you when you make a proposal of marriage, your interpretation of her tone may determine whether you should ask her again and win her or start going with someone else.

In poetry, tone is likewise important but is a much more delicate matter to determine, since a printed poem lacks the intonations of spoken

words. Thus the reader must learn to “hear” a poem’s tone from the details of its language: the use of meter and rhyme, particular choices of certain words and sentence pattern; the inclusion of some kinds of imagery and figurative speech.

The range of tones in poems is as various and complex as the range of voices and attitudes we discern in everyday experience: irreverent, familiar, cryptic, reasonable, sweet, intense, tender, angry, patronizing, sneering, offhand, detached, and mock-serious. In addition, the tone — unlike rhymes which are heard at the end of lines — cannot merely be recognized in one particular place, since it is a reflection of the general attitude and always pervades the whole poem. We need to look at all the elements of poetry in order to get its tone.

Differences in tone and their importance can be achieved through careful reading. Consider, for instance, the following poems.

### **The Villain**

While joy gave clouds the light of stars,  
That beamed where'er they looked;  
And calves and lambs had tottering knees,  
Excited, while they sucked;  
While every bird enjoyed his song,  
Without one thought of harm or wrong  
I turned my head and saw the wind,  
Not far from where I stood,  
Dragging the corn by her golden hair,  
Into a dark and lonely wood.

— W. H. Davies (1871 – 1940)

### Apparently with No Surprise

Apparently with no surprise  
To any happy flower,  
The frost beheads it at its play  
In accidental power.

The blond assassin passes on,  
The sun proceeds unmoved  
To measure off another day  
For an approving God.

— Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886)

Both of the above poems are concerned with nature; both use contrast as their basic organizing principle — a contrast between innocence and evil, joy and tragedy. But in tone the two poems are sharply different. The first is light and fanciful; its tone is one of delight and fanciful surprise. The second, though superficially fanciful, is essentially grim, and gives a sense of barbarity; its tone is one of horror.

### Symbol and Allegory

A *symbol* is any object or action that means more than itself or represents something beyond itself. Darkness can symbolize ignorance, death or evil. Fire may stand for warmth, passion or purification. A tree might represent a family's roots and branches. According to their degree of freshness and familiarity, literary symbols are classified as *conventional* and *nonce*. *Conventional symbols* are objects that, by customary association and general agreement, have a relatively fixed significance. A marriage ring, a Christian's cross, a red rose — these are all conventional symbols, since their implications are evident and generally accepted. Creative writers, however, decline to draw their symbolism from a large

body of traditional symbolism. They prefer a nonce symbol to a conventional one. A *nonce symbol* is a private symbol that a writer himself invents “for the nonce”, that is, for a particular purpose or occasion. Blake’s *The Sick Rose* is such an example.

O Rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,  
  
Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy:  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.

The rose in this poem might have conventional associations with love or beauty, but the appearance of “the invisible worm” drives away all the romantic aroma and suggests images of nastiness that are quite different from the pretty rose in Robert Burns’ poems. By introducing into the poem the unseen force that destroys love and beauty, Blake has expanded and developed the conventional symbol of rose into something unique.

Image, metaphor, and symbol often shade into each other and are sometimes hard to distinguish. In general, however, an *image* means only what it is; a *metaphor* means something other than what it is; and a *symbol* means what it is and something more too. That is, a literary *symbol* is a thing that functions simultaneously in two ways: as itself and as a sign of something outside itself. Robert Frost’s *The Road Not Taken*, for instance, concerns a choice made between two roads by one who is walking in the woods. But the significance of the poem lies in the roads as symbols. They are implicative and rich in meaning. Hence, the choice may imply some choice in life. It is actually a symbol for any choice in

life between alternatives that will lead to essentially different results.

*Allegory* is a narrative or description in which each of the main elements stands for something else — something that is not mentioned by name. Allegory is now less popular than it was in medieval and Renaissance writing, and it is less often found in short poems than in long works because it requires more space for development than a short poem can afford. Two of the world's most famous poetic allegories are Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Christina Rossetti's *Up-Hill* is an allegorical poem that depicts a journey along an uphill road that ends with the traveler arriving at an inn. We can immediately see that the uphill road represents a struggling journey through life, and that day and night stand for a life span ending in death. The question-and-answer structure of the poem and its reassuring tone suggest that it can be read as a religious allegory, specifically a Christian one.

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?

A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.

May not the darkness hide it from my face?

You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?

Those who have gone before.

Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?

They will not keep you standing at that door.



Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?  
Of labor you shall find the sum.  
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?  
Yea, beds for all who come.

Although allegory is sometimes defined as an extended metaphor and sometimes as a series of related symbols, it is usually distinguishable from both of these. It differs from metaphor in that it involves a system of related comparisons rather than one comparison drawn out. It differs from symbolism in that it establishes a strict system of correspondences between details of action and a pattern of meaning. A symbol is more elusive and more open-ended in its meaning; its contents cannot be exhausted by paraphrase. But in allegories, though the details may have more than one meaning, these meanings still tend to be definite. Thus allegory emphasizes the ulterior meaning of an image and is an effective way of making the abstract concrete. Once the key to an allegory is found, each element in the submerged story comes to the surface.

### **The Sound of a Poem: Rhyme, Alliteration and Assonance**

Poetry is a much older activity than printing or even writing. It makes a greater use of the “music” of language than any non-poetry discourse. A student of poetry must, therefore, learn to use his ears as well as his eyes if he is to appreciate poems. The sound patterns of poetry may be classified mainly as the following: *alliteration*, *assonance*, *consonance* and *rhyme*.

A syllable consists of a vowel sound that may be preceded or followed by consonant sounds. Any of these sounds may be repeated. **Alliteration** is the repetition of identical or similar consonantal sounds, especially at the beginnings of words: green grass, safe and sound, rime or reason, fit as a fiddle. *Beowulf* is typical of this device of versification: