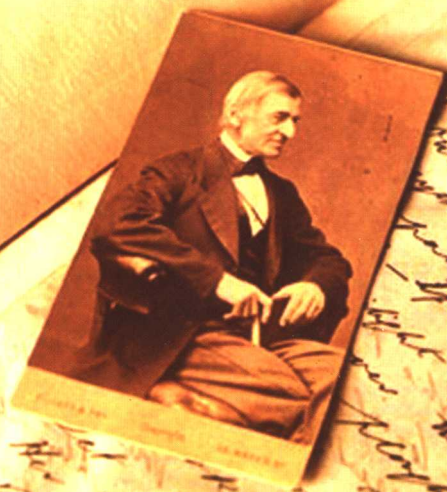


AN INTRODUCTION
TO ENGLISH AND AMERICAN
ROMANTIC POETRY

英美浪漫主义诗歌 概论与欣赏

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前言

英语语言文学研究生研究的两大学科领域是英语语言学和英美文学。英美文学的研究包括英美诗歌、小说、戏剧、散文及文学批评理论,英美诗歌的研究又包括古典主义、浪漫主义、现实主义、现代主义等流派。目前,我国高等院校英语专业为研究生开设的英美诗歌课程侧重点虽有所不同,但大多都集中在浪漫主义阶段,因该流派处在英美诗歌发展的鼎盛时期,在英美诗歌的发展过程中起着承上启下的作用,对研究整个英美诗歌有一定的借鉴意义。鉴于国内目前就英美浪漫主义诗歌教学还没有固定、系统的教材,教师的授课内容多以个人的喜好偏重某一个层面或作者,这样使英美浪漫主义诗歌的教学显得不够统一、系统。

笔者在2004、2005级英语语言文学研究生的诗歌概论课程上,参考自己2003年在英国访学期间收集的有关方面的资料以及英国高校浪漫主义诗歌的教学模式,引导学生从诗歌批评理论的不同侧面,对英美浪漫主义诗歌进行深入分析,学生的反映很好。在此教学实践的基础上,在张德玉和赵德玉教授的参与、帮助下,我们编写了《英美浪漫主义诗歌概论与欣赏》一书。本书分15个章节。第一章从宏观上概述了诗歌的内涵、诗歌与其他体裁相比的独特之处、诗歌的分类以及诗歌批评的基本原则与方法;第二章全面系统地阐述了英美浪漫主义诗歌的发展渊源与历史、创作原则和思想风格特点,并以具体的诗歌实例强调了浪漫主义诗人崇尚大自然、返璞归真、对美好理想社会的憧憬;第三章至第十五章分别研究了英美13位浪漫主义诗人——布莱克、华兹华斯、格莱律治、雪莱、拜伦、济慈、勃兰特、朗费罗、惠特曼、迪金森、爱默森、梭罗、爱伦坡。

每一章皆首先概述诗人的生活社会背景、文学地位、创作风

格、思想内涵以及他们诗作的社会意义,接着节选诗人重要的、具有代表意义的名作,然后从语言、修辞、音韵、主题等方面对诗作做详细、深入的分析,并从当代西方文艺理论的角度分析诗人诗作的现实意义。每个章节又根据内容需要分为若干层次。在编写本书的过程中,力求达到:章节条理,层次分明,文字通俗易懂(根据中国学生的实际需要,避免晦涩难懂的英语单词,使学生能在较短的时间内掌握有关的知识);科学性、系统性强:对诗人、诗作的分析有根有据,严密深入,有利于培养学生严谨的思维能力和科学的研究方法;重点突出:以主要英美浪漫主义诗人的代表作为重心,从语言、修辞、音韵等方面分析研究他们的创作风格和思想内涵。

对于书中的不妥之处,欢迎同行不吝赐教。

左金梅

2006年12月

Contents

Chapter I	Introduction to Poetry and Criticism	1
Chapter II	Introduction to the Romantic Poetry	23
Chapter III	William Blake	47
Chapter IV	Samuel Taylor Coleridge	73
Chapter V	William Wordsworth	96
Chapter VI	George Gordon Byron	127
Chapter VII	Percy Bysshe Shelley	160
Chapter VIII	John Keats	189
Chapter IX	William Cullen Bryant	230
Chapter X	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	246
Chapter XI	Walt Whitman	268
Chapter XII	Ralph Waldo Emerson	283
Chapter XIII	Henry David Thoreau	290
Chapter XIV	Edgar Allan Poe	302
Chapter XV	Emily Dickinson	320
References	335

CHAPTER

I

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY AND CRITICISM

Definition

Poetry is a literary genre in which ideas, experiences, perceptions, and truths are expressed in a unique and powerful way. It is a strictly unified combination of a number of diverse elements, which, though they can be individually analyzed, must finally be considered not as separate and distinct entities but as integral parts of the poem as a whole. Although this unity and cohesion are necessary in all literary forms, they are especially vital to poetry, for a poem's conciseness, its singleness of focus, its tightness of structure demand interdependence and harmony. Everything must contribute to the central theme and impact. Thus an inseparable blend of form and content, of technique and subject, is essential. A poem's meaning evolves from and is implicit in its combination of structure, language, rhythmic and metrical patterns, tone, mood, sound, and symbolism.

Difference Between Poetry and Prose

Poetry differs from prose in several ways. A primary point of

difference is outward form; the poet is concerned not only with finding and arranging the words which will best express his meaning, but also with structuring and organizing these words so that they define, enhance, and even qualify meaning. The choice of sound and order of words, while significant in prose, are ultimately of secondary importance; their value lies almost solely in their function of expressing ideas. In poetry, these considerations tend to be more vital; words, in a sense, not only reveal meaning, but create it. In this respect, then, a poem is a total work of art; it carries abstract meaning but is also meaningful in itself, in its sound, even in its appearance.

Another distinguishing factor is poetry's concentration on communicating a particular perception or experience. Like the short story, the poem usually does not cover a wide range of subjects and viewpoints but reveals one individual's thoughts about an aspect of the human experience. Long narrative epics or ballads may represent exceptions in some cases, but most poetry is limited and specific in focus. This characteristic is related to another of poetry's qualities: its impact, which often tends toward the emotional. Poetry's emphasis on particularization of the abstract, on demonstration rather than on explanation, on specific examples and images, its frequent use of a personal, subjective tone, its stress on beauty and originality of language, all of these factors contribute to a power and immediacy of expression. The reader first of all gains a sense of the poem, a feeling of what it suggests or represents; then, he or she experiences an immediate, subjective reaction.

While prose can in some sense be analyzed even as it is being read, poetry demands an initial grasp of the whole, an overall view such as one given to a painting or sculpture. The reader

then must draw on his or her own associations, imagination and subconsciousness in response to the images and implications of the poem. Finally, he must consider the poem from a somewhat more objective and analytical viewpoint; he or she must examine the various possible levels and shades of meaning and determine the role of each element in relation to the central idea. Only in this way can the reader achieve a full awareness of the poem's significance and value.

Classification of Poetry

Poetry is classified in a number of different ways; by form, by subject, by treatment of theme, by point of view, and by method of expression. Three very general categories of types of poetry are the narrative, the lyric, and the dramatic. Narrative poetry relates events or incidents, frequently from a first person point of view; thus many narrative poems are stories simply told in verse. Traditional examples are the epic (a series of adventures usually centered around one main character who represents a particular culture or national group), the ballad (similar to the epic though less extensive, both in length and scope), the mock, or satirical, epic (a light treatment of this usually serious form), and various types of historical and romantic stories written in verse.

Lyric poetry usually stresses the purely subjective emotions, reflections and attitudes; traditional examples are the ode (an expression of deep emotion toward a particular theme or object), the elegy (a lament and praise for the dead), the sonnet (in which form and content work as a single unit to express an emotion or idea), certain types of ballads (stressing the emotional or mental aspects of adventure), and the idyll (a description of a

pleasant style or aspect of life). Didactic poetry (which strives to make clear a specific moral or lesson), and satirical poetry (which points out some human or societal deficiency or failing with irony and subtlety) are also frequently included in this category. Dramatic poetry is usually presented as a monologue similar to a speech in an actual drama; both narrative and lyric poems can be dramatic as well.

These categories, basically arbitrary, frequently blending and overlapping, provide nothing more than a rough guide. This is especially true with respect to contemporary poetry, much of which defies orderly and rigid classification by either type or form. General categories of form are continuous, or an uninterrupted flow of lines. The three basic poetic forms are stanzaic, blank verse, and free verse. Stanzaic is the form, in which the poem is divided into sections, each of which usually contains the same number of lines and the same metrical pattern and rime scheme, and in which the whole or fixed form never varies in number and arrangement of lines. The commonly recognized stanza forms are ottava rima, quatrain, rhyme royal, and Spenserian stanza. Ottava rima is a stanza consisting of eight lines in iambic pentameter rhymed *abababcc*; quatrain is a stanza consisting of four lines which may follow a variety of rhyme schemes; rhyme royal is a seven-line stanza in iambic pentameter with the rhyme scheme *ababbcc*; Spenserian stanza is one of nine iambic lines rhymed *ababbcbcc* (The first eight lines are pentameter, but a sixth foot is added to the final line, making that line an alexandrine). Blank verse is the term limited to unrhymed iambic pentameter. Free verse lacks regular meter and line length, relying upon the natural speech rhythms of the language, the cadences which result from the alternation of stressed and unstressed syl-

lables.

Poetry is not a static literary form, though its basic purpose, the communication of experience and perception, has not changed, and its modes of expression are constantly evolving and adapting to new conditions and circumstances. Structure, form, language, and tone are modified to correspond with new conceptions of reality, with new attitudes toward communication of ideas. Some traditional poetical conventions are eliminated or replaced; others are revitalized and applied in new ways. This adaptability enables poetry to retain its position of power, but, perhaps, an even more significant source of this power is poetry's essential timelessness. A good poem, regardless of its historical era, appeals to and affects the emotions, imagination, and intellect of its readers; the harmony, unity and balance inherent in such a poem shape the reader's various levels of response and implicitly reveal the central purpose. Individual consideration of theme and idea, metrics, figurative language, imagery, tone, and symbolism may give further insight into the nature of poetry, particularly into the way in which each of these elements reflects and contributes to the poem's totality of meaning.

Criticism to Poetry

In order to understand and appreciate a poem fully, the reader must examine it at various levels and approach it from a number of angles. His or her main concern is to grasp and evaluate the poem's theme or idea; but, in order to reach this understanding, he must first consider all of the poem's other aspects. The theme, and the poet's attitude toward it, are inevitably connected with and revealed through the poem's style, tone, language,

form, metric patterns, imagery, and symbolism. These elements not only reveal and clarify the theme but also develop and shape it to some extent. These elements work together to produce a certain idea; they can be abstracted and considered individually, but they must finally be seen in context with each other, as parts of a whole, for poetry demands a unity and cohesion of parts even greater than that which is necessary in other literary genres, such as short stories.

What the poet is saying is in a very real sense inseparable from how he or she says it. Content and form can not be evaluated individually. And their relationship may differ greatly from poem to poem; ideas may be ordered and arranged in order to fit a specific form, such as the sonnet, or the form may be developed out of the expression of ideas. In any case, content and form are so intertwined and mutually dependent that, in the final consideration of the poem they create, they are indistinguishable; one cannot have any real existence without other. Generally speaking, the analysis of a poem involves the following aspects:

Ideas, theme, subject Analysis and interpretation of the theme and meaning involve consideration of the poem at two levels: literal and figurative. Literal interpretation involves the poem's facts, its obvious, surface meaning. At this stage, a paraphrase, a prose summary of the poem, is often helpful. By concentrating on the essentials needed for a prose translation (the speaker, situation, setting, conflict, action, and so forth), the reader sorts out and asks questions that lead analysis on a deeper level. In examining the poem's literal meaning, one should consider diction, the selection and use of words, syntax, the arrangement of words, their grammatical and sense relationships, and finally denotation, the word's literal meanings or dictionary

definitions. This type of literal analysis may serve to clarify the poem's basic facts and explicit ideas and may provide a basis for further examination.

The figurative or symbolic level or levels (many poems contain a number of possible symbolic meanings) of interpretation involve consideration of symbols, connotation, and tone. At this level, the reader attempts to discover not only what the poet is saying, but what he or she really means and what the implications of this are. Symbols, which give the poem its richness, depth, and complexity, can be discovered by determining how a word or phrase is used, what it actually means, and what it suggests or implies. Such involves connotation, the inferences, and implications of words, phrases, and images. At this level, the reader must be concerned with mental associations, with the meaning of words in a number of contexts. Connotation directly involves the reader's mental images, reactions, experiences, emotions, imagination, intellect, perception, and memory. It is a mixture, a balance, of general, universal conceptions and personal interpretation. Thus, the reader must consider the possible meanings of words and phrases, the relationships between these meanings, the context in which the meanings appear, and the associations with other words and ideas which they inspire.

Tone is another important aspect of symbolic interpretation: irony (a statement or appearance contrary to real meanings), ambiguity (double meanings or uncertainty), ambivalence (conflicting and contradictory attitudes towards the same objects), hyperbole, exaggeration or overstatement, and understatement are all elements of tone that play an important role on the figurative level. The manner in which an idea is expressed not only modifies that idea but sheds light on the poet's attitude toward his or her

subject, intentions and purpose.

Metrics Rhythm, or measured motion, is an essential part of the structure of poetry; it also, of course, influences the content. Because poetry is the literary genre most often read aloud, sound is a crucial factor.

First of all, sound patterns involve recurrence, the alternation between accented and non-accented syllables. Meter means, basically, organized recurrence; in other words, accents occurring at equal intervals. This is one element that distinguishes verse from prose. An accented syllable is one that is given greater stress and prominence than its neighbors. Stress means basically the same thing as accent, though it often refers mainly to the force of utterance, to the duration and pitch, and to the transition between sounds.

The accent patterns may be determined by etymological requirements (based on the language used), rhetorical requirements (based on the relative importance of each part of the poem), and metrical requirements. Time intervals are designated by unstressed syllables and pauses.

Meter is measured by the foot, line, rhyme and stanza. A foot consists of one accented with one or two, occasionally three or four, unaccented ones. The main types of feet are the iamb, trochee, spondee, anapest and dactyl. Iamb is a foot of verse consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one; trochee is a foot of verse consisting of two syllables, the first stressed, the following unstressed; spondee is a metrical foot of two long or accented syllables; anapest is a metrical foot consisting of two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable; dactyl is a metrical foot consisting of three syllables, the first stressed, the other two unstressed.

The line is determined by the number of feet; beginning with the one-foot line, they are called the monometer, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter, and octometer. Caesurae are lines of eight or more syllables divided into units corresponding to natural speech patterns; if placed after a stressed syllable, a caesurae is called masculine, after an unstressed syllable, feminine. An end-stopped line is one in which the end corresponds with the end of a natural sentence or phrase; a run-on is a line in which the main idea extends into the next line.

Rhyme is the repetition of similar or duplicate sounds at regular intervals, usually the repetition of the terminal sounds of words at the ends of lines of verse. There are a number of types of rhyme; end rime, in which the final word of a line rimes with the final word of another line in some sort of regular pattern; internal rime, in which the line is divided into two parts, the last word in the first half riming with the last word in the last; beginning rhyme, rhyme at the beginnings of lines; inexact or slant rhyme, also called half-rhyme, in which the words rhymed sound similar in some way but are not really rhymed; and true or exact rime.

A stanza is a group of lines whose metrical pattern is repeated throughout the poem; the number of lines varies greatly from poem to poem. Stanzas generally range from two to nine lines; they are called the couplet, tercet, quatrain, quintrain, sester, seven, eight, and nine-line stanzas. Series of stanzas are described in terms of stanzaic form, of which the main considerations are the rhyme scheme, position of the refrain, if any, metrical foot prevalent, and the number of feet in each line. Lines without stanzas are said to be in continuous form.

Other terms involved in discussing sound patterns include blank verse, which is unrhymed iambic pentameter; free verse, which contains no metrical patterns or restrictions (the difference between free verse and rhythmical prose is that the former is structured in lines, the latter is not); parallelism, the repetition of syntax used to add information and increase significance of any particular part of the poem; and various sound devices.

Onomatopoeia is the condition in which sound suggests and reflects meaning; through poetic intensives, through stressed and under-played words, sounds, and phrases, through use of euphony (pleasant, harmonious sound combinations) and cacophony (discordant sounds), meaning is implied, sometimes subtly, sometimes quite obviously. Assonance is a term meaning repetition of similar vowel sounds within the same word, phrase or line; alliteration means the repetition of similar or identical consonant sounds at the beginning of syllables; consonance is the repetition of two or more consonant sounds within the same word or groups of words.

At its best, meter can underline and re-force meaning; as an integral part of the poem's form, it can complement and enrich the content. The difference between the poem's two essential rhythms, that which is expected and that which occurs, may contribute greatly to the excitement, originality, and smoothness of expression; a successful balance between the two will benefit any poem. The type of metrical patterns used naturally has some effect on the message conveyed. Tone and mood are especially affected by sound patterns; happiness, grief, sobriety, and frivolity can all be expressed by certain types of rime, meter, and sound devices. The poet can create a hard, clear, cutting sound or a soft, flowing, languid one; the sound patterns, choppy or

smooth, lively or somber, can greatly influence the reader's reception and interpretation of the poem. The poet can create an ironic effect by introducing an obvious discrepancy between the meter, rhythm, and the sound pattern and the message they convey.

Poetry demands harmony, integration, and balance between unlike elements; it demands that the message be successfully coordinated with the means of presentation to achieve the best possible effect. The major importance of any poem is, of course, its guiding theme, or idea, but the impact of this idea depends on skillful presentation; a good metrical arrangement is vital to a good poem.

Figurative language Poetry involves description; analogies, contrasts, and comparison are the best means to describe people, objects, feelings, and moods. Figurative language must not only be descriptive, it must be fresh, imaginative, and exciting. It must describe familiar things — ideas, objects, states of being — in new ways; and it must effectively convey new perspectives and insights. Figurative language, then, expresses the poet's ideas in a unique style, intensifies the meaning of the poem, and provides beauty and interest.

The basic forms of figurative language, or figures of speech, are the metaphor and the simile. Other terms are analogy, synecdoche, metonymy, personification, antithesis, allusion, and apostrophe. Rhetorical devices, used to create the tone of a poem, are often considered under the general label of figurative language, as is irony.

The metaphor and simile belong to the class of figures of comparison; the simile makes comparison between two things, people, and moods, conditions, and so forth — something is *like*

something else. The metaphor, the stronger of the two, eliminates the term of comparison — something *is* something else; this term, of course, is not used in any literal sense. The simile is solely a descriptive device, while the metaphor is a means of describing in absolutes, without compromising terms reminding us that the thing being described is *not* really a flower, sunset, and so forth, but merely resembles one. Almost all poetry makes use of these two figures of speech — they are, in fact, the basis of poetic language.

An analogy is simply a resemblance between two unidentical things; this category includes the figures of comparison, the metaphor and simile, and the figures of association, the basic two being the synecdoche and metonymy. The synecdoche is a descriptive term which substitutes a part for the whole or vice versa (for example, ten sails for ten ships, and a creature for a man); the most common type of synecdoche is that which substitutes some aspects or part of something for the thing itself. The metonymy describes or labels something by referring to an attribute of, or something closely connected and associated with, that thing (for example, the crown for king or queen); it expresses something or concept related to or inherent in but not identical to the thing being described.

Personification means endowing non-human things with human characteristics. Whether the thing described is a bird, a tree, a house, or an idea, giving it qualities normally associated with humans is considered personification. This device, a mainstay of allegory, is also useful in approaching familiar things from new perspectives.

Antithesis means connecting drastically opposing ideas, either within the same line or the same sequence of lines, creating a