

**Part One**



# **Poetry**



## 导 读

了解英诗艺术的基本知识，对理解、鉴赏与评判英语诗作有引导作用。下面五个方面是最基本的。

第一是诗歌的界定。过去对诗歌的界定有多种，是从不同的层面上进行的。从单一的层面界定诗歌，观点容易失于片面，失去对诗歌的本质的把握。

第二是外部要素，如音律与韵式等。英诗音律建立在音节的基础上。音节轻重交错，形成模式，称为音步（foot 或 metre），常见的有：抑扬格（轻重式）、扬抑格（重轻式）、抑抑扬格（轻轻重式）和扬抑抑格（重轻轻式）等。音步决定诗行的音律，诗行律式变化多，短的可以是抑扬格一音步（2 音节），长的可以是抑抑扬格九音步（27 音节），常见的是抑扬格四音步和抑扬格五音步。诗行叠放，构成诗节；诗节的行数多少无定则，依赖于诗人的喜好与习惯。最普遍的诗节形式有：双行体（其中，抑扬格五音步双行体通称为英雄双行诗），三行体和四行体（其中，一三行抑扬格四音步、二四行抑扬格三音步体式通称为民谣体）等。简单的诗节形式复合，可以构成复杂的诗体，如商籁体（四行、四行、四行、双行式，或四行、四行、三行、三行式）。诗韵，是音律的重要内容。英诗韵式按结构分，有单韵（阳韵）、双叠韵（阴韵）和三叠韵；从分布看，有行尾韵、行内韵、行首词韵和交错韵。古典英诗多律韵俱备，无韵诗（五音步抑扬格、无韵）占一定比重；19 世纪末，自由诗取得合法地位；20 世纪散文诗勃兴，成为诗坛一道亮丽的风景线。

第三是诗的内部要素，如诗质、想像、意象、题材和主题等。诗质最为重要，决定一篇作品是否是诗，不是它的形式，而是它所含的诗质；亚里士多德的《诗学》区别诗人和韵文作者，标准便是诗质。想像是内部要素的核心，是诗质产生的心理基础。意象是想象的产物，有感觉意象和非感觉意象；感觉意象包括视觉、听觉、味觉、嗅觉、触觉和动觉意象等；意象交汇，形成通感，通感是诗的一种特殊现象。诗的题材与主题很多，相关题材构成题材圈，相关



主题构成主题领域，常见的有：爱、宗教、历史、社会、自然、战争与和平、生活与艺术、生命永恒性等。诗的主题或许有单一的；好作品的主题却经常是错综复杂的，在单一的时空维度上，任何单个的读者都难穷尽它们，这便是“诗无达诂”。

第四是诗的类式（genres）。诗有两个类式：抒情诗和叙事诗。英诗也不例外。英语抒情诗有民间抒情诗和文人抒情诗两大类，各有一些具体的子类式。英语叙事诗包括史诗、罗曼司和民谣三类，各有民间传播和文人创作之分。英语戏剧诗，介于抒情诗和叙事诗之间；抒情民谣，是华兹华斯的创造，则是两者的结合。英诗中还有一些小类式，如教训诗、书简诗等，不好归类。类式的和体式的概念，在具体的诗式上，经常重合，如商籁诗、民谣等，既是体式（forms），又是类式。国内外通行的文学赏析教科书，通常使用不区分体式与类式的诗式概念，如：史诗、民谣、商籁、颂诗、戏剧独白诗、圣歌、抒情诗、自由诗等。本书按通行的方法组织教材单元。

第五是诗歌分析的路径。韦勒克《文学理论》将文学研究方法归纳为两大类，外缘方法和内缘方法。外缘方法，基本上是从社会背景、作者生平、作者思想背景等入手考察与解释作品，并且把作品看成是社会、生平与思想等诸种外部要素的反映或体现。内缘方法，基本上把作品看成是自在自为的存在物，直接从作品本身入手考察与分析其中蕴藏的各种内容或信息，并进行相应的阐释。诗歌分析与研究，也有外缘的和内缘的两大路径。鉴于中国学生对外缘的方法路径已经十分熟悉，本教程主要采用内缘的，以形成必要的互补。

# I. Introduction

Poetry is a vast subject, as old as human history, and present wherever man is present, to quote from Shakespeare, “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this (poetry), and this gives life to thee.” The introduction intends only to describe in as brief a way as possible certain properties of poetry and of poetic thought.

## 1. Attempts to Define Poetry

The question what poetry is or does began to pose itself to people as soon as poetry came into being. There have been, ever since, repeated attempts made to define poetry; and definitions supplied vary with hereditary, environmental, and historical factors, that is, to quote from H. Taine, “la race, le milieu, le moment”. There are, however, out of the diverse defining efforts, some common grounds or levels, as highlighted in the following.

The most common is the genological level, at which critics define poetry as a genre of literature, the collective body of compositions termed as poems. At this level, poetry parallels fiction and drama, forming with them the greatest three of the conventional literary categories which divide the pages of popular literary textbooks, such as *An Approach to Literature* (Fifth Edition, 1975) by C. Brooks, J. T. Purser, and R. P. Warren.

Another is the popular typographical level. As poetry is defined all that is printed in the line form on the page, people, including many critics of course, take their cue from the appearance in deciding what is poetry and what is not; and thus, accordingly, they will fail or refuse to recognize the passage below as poetry.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach, when feeling out of sight for the ends of Being and ideal Grace. I love thee to the level of everyday’s most quiet need, by sun and candle light. I love thee freely, as men strive for Right; I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise. I love thee with the passion put to use in my old griefs, and with my



childhood's faith. I love thee with a love I seemed to lose with my lost saints—I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death.

It is not recognized as poetry because it does not look like poetry, as the reader believes that poetry is the way it is or looks. As a matter of fact, the passage is a new typographical arrangement of a sonnet by E. B. Browning.

At the third level, the technical related to the typographical one, poetry is defined, in words from various dictionaries, as “metrical composition”, or “work in or of verse”, or “arrangement of words in verse”, or “rhythmical composition”, or “ouvrage en vers de forme fixe ou libre”, or “metrical writing”, or “writing in verse or metrical language”. With the term verse, there exists a vast system of metrical technology, concerning such diverse aspects as the foot formation, the line structure, the stanza form, the rhyme type, the rhyme scheme, and the syntactical form.

The most significant level is the intellectual, where poetry is defined according to the internal qualities, features, and functions. A list of definitions, with a brief discussion, follows later.

## 2. The Externals of Poetry: Versification and Prosification

This introduction applies the term versification in several senses. It is a great convenience to quote dictionaries for clarification.

- 1) the making of verses; the act, art, or practice of metrical composition
- 2) a. metrical structure    b. a particular metrical structure or style
- 3) a version in verse of something orig. in prose

*(Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language)*

- 1) the act of versifying (versify: compose verses)
- 2) the act, practice, or theory of poetic composition
- 3) the form of style of a poem; metrical structure
- 4) a metrical version (of something)

*(Webster's Dictionary of the English Language)*

- 1) the action of composing verse; the art or practice of versifying
- 2) the form or style in which the words in poetical composition are arranged; the structure of poetry or verse; measure, metre
- 3) a poetical or metrical version of something  
(*Oxford English Dictionary*)

And the term prosification is utilized as an opposite to versification, in systematic antithetic senses.

The externals of poetry fall into two categories: versification and prosification. It will take a full-length book to discuss all the externals of poetry, so attempts will hereinafter be made as general a description as possible of the major ones.

#### (1) Syllable, Syllabification and Stress

A syllable is a phonetical unit which contains a vowel sound or a consonant acting as a vowel. Syllables are metrical notes or elements in verse.

The number of syllables in a line varies with the tonal pattern or the line structure, thus, there is often the choosing and making, the lengthening, and the shortening of words or phrases, in consideration of syllables, hence syllabification.

In a word of more than two syllables, force is usually put on one to make it stronger than the other or others, hence, stress, stressed syllables (O) and unstressed ones (o). For example:

morning    O o  
verbalize    O o o  
tomorrow    o O o

#### (2) The Foot Formation or the Metre Type

Stressed and unstressed syllables in speech or writing, if arranged with regularity, form a stress pattern or stress patterns. The stress pattern in verse is the foot or the metre.

And stressed and unstressed syllables co-occur or combine in various patterns, hence various foot formations, or metre types. The four principal metre types found in verse in English are illustrated as follows:



i. Iamb (iambic, *adj.*): o O

Shall I / compare / thee to / a sum- / mer's day?

o O / o O / o O / o O / o O

Thou art / more love- / ly and / more tem- / perate:

o O / o O / o O / o O / o O

ii. Trochee (trochaic, *adj.*): O o

Tyger! / Tyger! / burning / bright

O o / O o / O o / O

In the / forests / of the / night.

O o / O o / O o / O

iii. Anapaest (anapaestic, *adj.*): o o O

... the old inn / and the lights, / and the fire

o o O / o o O / o o O

And the fid- / ler's old tune / and the shuf- / fling of feet.

o o O / o o O / o o O / o o O

iv. Dactyl (dactylic, *adj.*): O o o

Just for a / handful of / silver he / left us,

O o o / O o o / O o o / O o

Just for a / riband to / stick in his / coat—

O o o / O o o / O o o / O

Apart from the four principal types, there are such diverse ones as:

amphibrach: o O o

amphimacer: O o O

antibacchius: O O o

antispast: o O O o

bacchius: o O O

choriamb: O o o O

ionic majore: O O o o

ionic minore: o o O O

(3) The Line Structure

The number of feet or metres determines the measure of the line, which is formed in various structures or structural patterns.

A line consisting of only one metrical foot is monometer; of two, dimeter; of three, trimeter; of four, tetrameter; of five, pentameter; of six, hexameter; of seven, heptameter; of eight, octameter; of nine, nonameter. Lines containing more than seven feet do not often occur in English verse.

A line consisting of one iambic foot is an iambic monometer; of two trochaic feet, trochaic dimeter; of three anapaestic feet, anapaestic trimeter; of four dactylic feet, dactylic tetrameter; of five iambic feet, iambic pentameter. And two metre types may occur in the same line. Here enter some illustrations:

**Anapaestic tetrameter:**

The Assyrian came down / like a wolf / on the fold,

o o O / o o O / o o O / o o O

And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold.

o o O / o o O / o o O / o o O

**Iambic pentameter:**

That time / of year / thou mayst / in me / behold

o O / o O / o O / o O / o O

When yellow leaves, / or none, / or few, / do hang

o O / o O / o O / o O / o O

**Iambic heptameter (with anapaestic variation):**

There's not / a joy / the world / can give / like that / it takes / away.

o O / o O / o O / o O / o O / o O / o O

When the glow / of earthly thought / declines / in feeling's dull / decay.

o o O / o O / o O / o O / o O / o O / o O

(4) The Stanzaic Form

A stanza is a group of lines of verse forming one of the units or divisions of a poem. It is usually recurrent, characterized by a regular pattern, with respect to or under determination of, the number of lines, and the arrangement of meter of rhyme.

Common stanza forms include the couplet, the triplet, and the quatrain.



### i. Couplet

Two successive rhyming lines:

For thy sweet love rememb' red such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

The couplet is one of the main verse units in Western literature, and is a form of great antiquity. Chaucer was one of the first English poets to use it, for most of *The Canterbury Tales*.

The couplet composed of two iambic pentameter lines is commonly known as the heroic couplet. It is generally thought that Chaucer developed the form in English.

Two metrical lines whose sense and grammatical structure conclude at the end of the second line is termed as close couplet. Close couplet is like the *duilian* in Chinese.

### ii. Triplet

A stanza of three lines; an individual poem of three lines:

When as in silks my Julia goes  
Then, then (methinks) how sweetly flows  
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see  
That brave vibration each way free;  
O how that glittering taketh me!

(R. Herrick, "The Poetry of Dress", II)

There are specific triplet forms, with specific names.

There is tercet, a stanza of three lines linked by rhyme. Tercet is also one of a pair of triplets which makes up the sestet of a sonnet.

Apart from tercet, terza rima is worthy of note. It is a series of interlocking triplets in which the second line of each one rhymes with the first and the third lines of the one succeeding, thus: ABA, BCB, CDC, ... Terza rima was adopted first by Dante, then used

by Petrarch and Boccaccio. Chaucer experimented with it in part of “A Complaint to his Lady”, and Sir Thomas Wyatt pioneered its usage in English.

My mother’s maids, when they did sew and spin,  
They sang sometimes a song of the field mouse,  
That for because her livelihood was but thin

Would needs go seek her townish sister’s house.  
She thought herself endured too much pain:  
The stormy blasts her cave so sore did souse.

(Thomas Wyatt, “Second Satire”)

### iii. Quatrain

A stanza or an individual poem of four lines rhymed or unrhymed. It occurs as the commonest of all stanzaic forms in Eastern and Western poetries, and lends itself to wide variation in meter and rhyme. And most rhyming quatrains fall into the following patterns: ABAB, XBYB, AABB, ABBA, and AAXA.

The quatrain with enclosed ABBA rhyme pattern is termed as envelope stanza, such stanza form as Tennyson used in *In Memoriam*:

I envy not in any moods  
The captive void of noble rage,  
The linnet born within the cage,  
That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes  
His license in the field of time,  
unfettered by the sense of crime,  
To whom a conscience never wakes.

(A. Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, 27)

The AAXA quatrain, a stanzaic form of ancient Eastern verse, occurs frequently in



Eastern poetries, especially in Chinese and Persian. The introduction of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* to the English reader between 1850s and 1880s made the form well known to the English world as the Omar Khayyam stanza.

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.  
(E. FitzGerald, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, VII)

And there are some special quatrains referred to by special names, including the elegiac stanza and the ballad meter.

The elegiac stanza, also known as Hammond's meter, heroic quatrain, and elegiac quatrain, is the quatrain of four iambic pentameters. It seems that it has acquired the name from its use by T. Gray in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard".

The ballad meter consists of two iambic tetrameter lines (1st and 3rd), and two iambic trimeter lines (2nd and 4th).

#### iv. Other Stanzaic Forms

A stanza may contain any number of lines, though that consisting of more than twelve is not common. Thus, apart from the couplet, the triplet, and the quatrain, verse readers encounter many other stanzaic forms:

Quintain, a stanza or an individual poem of five lines. It includes such special forms as quintet, and quintilla.

Sexain, or sixain, or sextain, or hexastich, a stanza of six lines. It covers various specific forms, including sextet or sestet, and sextilla.

Heptastich, a stanza or an individual poem of seven lines. It includes septet, and rhyme royal.

Octastich, a stanza or an individual poem of eight lines. Special forms include huitain, ottava rima, octet or octave. "Isabella, or, the Pot of Basil" by John Keats, is in 60 octastiches.

Spenserian stanza, a stanza of nine lines, with the first eight in iambic pentameters

and the last in iambic hexameter, rhyming ABABBCBCC. Edmund Spenser devised the form for *The Faerie Queene*.

Dizain, or dixain, a stanza of ten lines; also an individual poem.

Quinzain, a fifteen-line stanza. It is rare because of its length.

#### v. Sonnet

The ordinary sonnet usually consists of fourteen lines, in iambic pentameters, with considerable variations in rhyme scheme.

Poets have produced various sonnet forms, of which the three major ones are: the Petrarchan, the Spenserian, and the Shakespearean. The attempt here is made only at a brief mention, as detailed treatment follows in Unit Three, Sonnet.

The sonnet, however, is so popular that handbooks and textbooks of literature place it among the conventional poetic forms: the epic, the ballad, the sonnet, the elegy, the ode, etc.

### (5) The Rhyme and Other Sound Devices

Rhyme is the repetition of the same vowel sound in words, including the last stressed vowel and all the speech sounds following that vowel: gay, day, play, may; wall, fall.

#### A. Numeral Types of Rhyme

The rhyme falls into several major numeral types.

##### i. Single Rhyme, or Masculine Rhyme

Repetition of one vowel, either a single vowel, or a diphthong:

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

(P. B. Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind")

##### ii. Double Rhyme, or Feminine Rhyme

Two vowels repeated: