

## Metaphor in English Poetry

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### Abstract

We often find it difficult to understand some parts of English poetry. In fact, the use of rhetoric in poetry is an important reason. Metaphor is a common writing technique in English poetry. Understanding the meaning, types and understanding methods of metaphor can help us understand the author's inspiration expression, improve our reading ability and writing appreciation level.

### Keywords

**English, Poetry, Rhetoric, Metaphor.**

### 1. Introduction

Poetry is one of the oldest literary genres. Its rhythm is clear, the rhythm is rich, and the form is simple. English poetry is expressed in highly concise language, which conveys the author's feelings and views on social and historical events. Rhetoric is a common writing technique in literary works, and metaphor is a kind of rhetoric. Metaphor can be divided into simile and metaphor, and the use of metaphor in English poetry is wonderful. Understanding the characteristics of metaphor can help readers understand the emotional transmission and content expression of English poetry writers better.

### 2. Meaning

Metaphor refers to the use of "is" and other words which describe judgement or use metaphorical words to connect the two images. According to some common characteristics between two things, the author does not directly point out the name of one thing to another, but relies on the reader to understand it. Metaphor has three elements: Tenor (the object of thought), vehicle (another thing used to describe the object of thought) and similarity. Similarity is the basic point of metaphor, on which the vehicle and the subject complete the conceptual replacement. Compared with simile, metaphor is more obscure. Different from simile, metaphor is not expressed by the words "like" or "as". But in a sense, metaphor is a concise simile.

### 3. Several Types of Metaphor

#### 3.1 Noumenon and vehicle are parallel

While this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity, heavily thickening to empire  
And protest, only a bubble in the molten mass

This is the first verse of Robinson Jeffers's poem *Twinkle, a Dying Republic*. In this verse, the subject of metaphor is this America and protest, that is, the object of thought. The vehicles are the mouse of its vulgarity and a bubble in the molten mass. The subject and the vehicle are similar in terms of corruption and explosion. The poet uses metaphorical techniques to vividly compare the corrupt America to the rigid moldy soil. The voice of protest, like a bubble in the plate, has no effect on the thick "empire plate". This implies that man-made power is insignificant, which makes people feel sad.

In short, if the subject is compared to A and the vehicle to B, the basic model of metaphor in this type is A is B.

#### 3.2 Noumenon and vehicle are modification relations

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees

Is my destroyer.

And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose

My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

This is the poem *The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower* written by Dylan Thomas, a British poet known as "crazy Dylan". In this passage, "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower" means "the flower's force". The delicate flower has no power, but the use of its strength to modify the flower gives it great vitality.

In a word, the basic model of metaphor in this type is A's B.

### 3.3 Ontology and vehicle are annotation relations

For example: the motherland - my mother, the motherland compared to the mother, can vividly reflect the love of the motherland. This kind of annotation relationship is mainly reflected by dashes.

In this type, the basic model is A-B.

### 3.4 Noumenon and vehicle are anaphora

This type of metaphor can also be called appositive metaphor, that is, the relationship between the body and the vehicle is represented by the form of multi reference.

For example: Tyrell, the dwarf monster.

### 3.5 Special types

There are many slang idioms in English that can be used as metaphors. One is numeral idioms, whose numerical meaning often loses its specific numerical meaning in metaphor, and is extended to the meaning related to or characteristic of something. 'A hunted to one it will be a failure' which means there is a high probability that it will fail.

The other is metaphorical idioms, which express the meaning through concrete images known to women and children. To teach fish to swim. It means to bite off more than you can chew and show off in front of experts. 'To plow the sand' which means do some work without results.

## 4. The understanding of metaphors in poetry

In order to fully understand metaphors in poetry, we should first distinguish metaphors according to the above classification. Secondly, it is very important to grasp the image in metaphor. Image is the soul of poetry, that is to use specific images to express people's rational and emotional experience, so that readers can get a clear feeling through the senses. As Wordsworth, the great poet, said, "poetry is the natural expression of strong emotions.". For example, in love poems, poets use roses to represent love. Many people will have a rose picture in their mind when they hear the rose. It is because the rose is a concrete object, which can be seen, touched and smelled. Love is abstract. We can't feel it with our hands, but the rose can visualize this perception. Similarly, pigeons are often used to represent peace, birds are used to represent freedom, eagles are used to represent strength, and sheep are used to represent meekness. The poets can use metaphor to create a clear picture, and make the picture detailed, deeply imprinted in the readers' mind.

There are a few lines in Thomas Eppin's *Cherry-Ripe*,

There is a garden in her face

Where roses and white lilies blow;

A heavenly paradise is that place,

Wherein all pleasant fruits do glow;

There cherries grow which none may buy,

Till *Cherry-Ripe* themselves do cry.

Garden is a metaphor for a girl's beautiful face, rose is used to show her rosy cheeks, and white lilies is used to show her fair skin. In this way, with only a few plants, a beautiful girl will appear on the

paper. These flowers not only can show the girl's beauty, but also show her liveliness, because plants symbolize life.

Another example is *The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower* above. "Fuse" is a metaphor for a flower stem. "Explosion" here is a metaphor for withering. These two metaphors give the flower great power, such as lighting the fuse and exploding the bomb. "Green onion" here is also a metaphor, referring to the poet as full of vitality as flowers. This poem uses the power of weapons to metaphorize the power of nature, showing that nature and weapons can bring destruction to human beings. It is pointed out that man and nature should live in harmony.

This requires us to have a certain understanding of the image of the body and vehicle in metaphor. When we mention something, we need to sense its characteristics quickly. For example, in the *Cherry-Ripe*, if we only think that there is a garden on the girl's face because the girl has pasted various petals on her face, we can only see the girl's love for beauty, not her beauty. As a result, the metaphor of this poem will lose its meaning. Just because we are familiar with the characteristics of various flowers, we can know that the poet here is using flowers to metaphor the beauty of girls.

Beyond that, we need to be imaginative. The poet juxtaposes different or related things, asking us to find their similarities and combine them organically. This requires us not only to read poetry with our eyes, but also to use our heart and mind.

## 5. Conclusion

Therefore, in order to understand the metaphors in poetry, we must grasp the images and activate our imagination in order to fully understand the poet's intention and emotion. Find harmony in contradictions and feel the metaphorical beauty of English poetry.

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