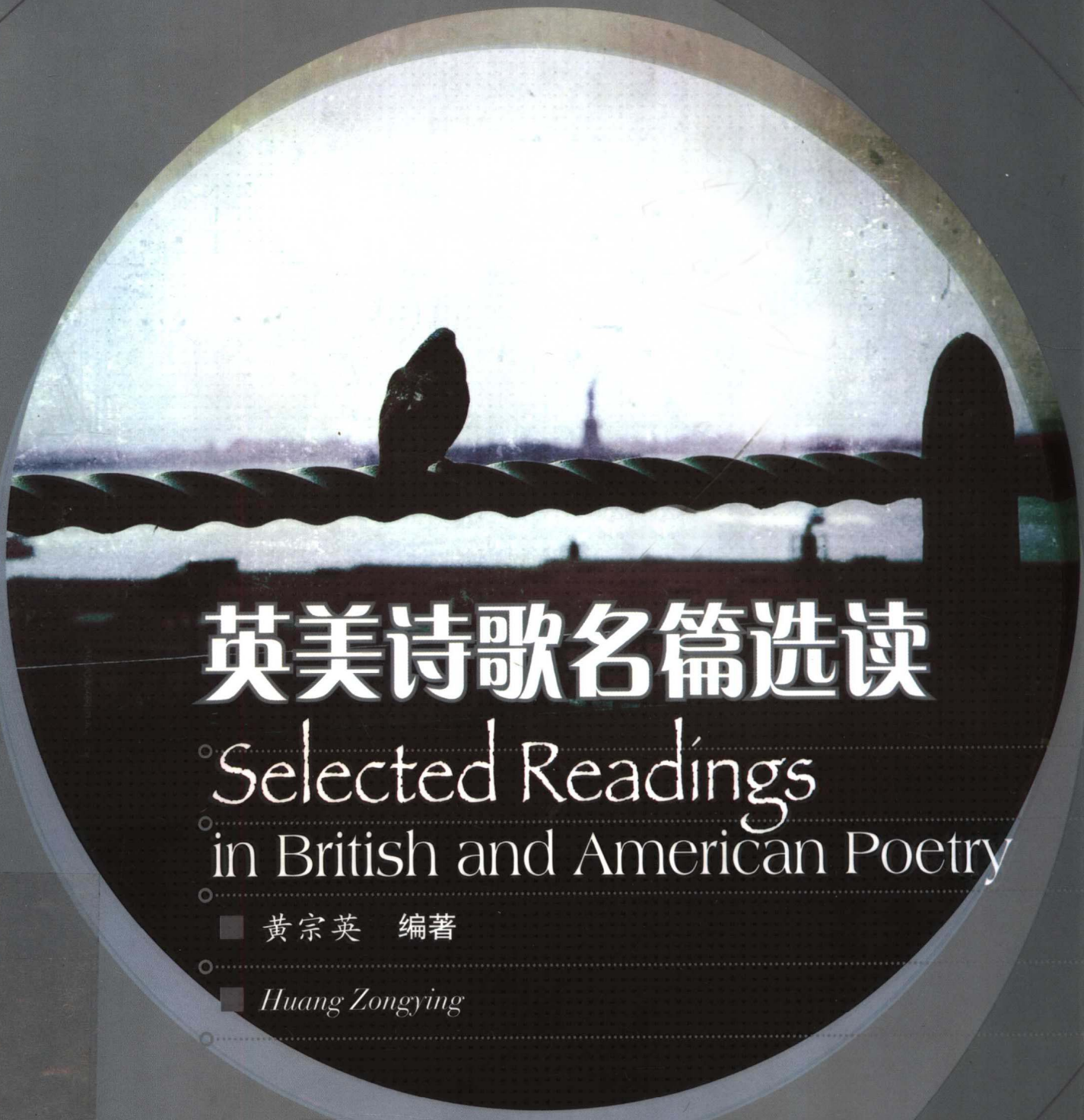

英美诗歌名篇选读

Selected Readings in British and American Poetry

黄宗英 编著

Huang Zongying

高等教育出版社
HIGHER EDUCATION PRESS

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前 言

《英美诗歌名篇选读》是一本为本科英语专业英美诗歌选读课和非英语专业高年级英语素质教育选修课编写的教材。内容选用14世纪以来英美各个时期代表诗人的名作。编者对入选诗人及其诗歌提供了简介、注释及启发性思考题。诗人简介涉及诗人生平、主要成就、创作风格以及英美诗歌史上的主要流派和运动。入选诗歌力争以点见面，坚持艺术性与系统性兼顾的原则。诗文注释涉及基本诗歌体裁（如，十四行诗形式与内容的契合变化）、英诗格律、重点难点、诗篇主题以及诗化主题的各种艺术手法等等。编者在掌握翔实材料的基础上，介绍英美诗歌史上具有里程碑意义的诗歌名篇及其内涵；希望既能够反映英美诗史脉络，又能鞭辟入里地解释一些名诗片段，做到精练而不失其精要，给读者一种豁然开朗又丝丝入扣的认知体验。希望读者通过细读名诗原作，提高对英语语言的感受能力和对英语文学作品的鉴赏能力，从而拓展英语文学与文化知识，增强外语学习的文化意识，陶冶情操，提高综合素质。

北京大学资深教授赵萝蕤博士曾经在一篇随笔中写到："想把英语学好，总得多读点思想性和艺术性都比较好的文学作品，而且还得付出一定的辛勤劳动，把作品读得透一点，不能光想着图快，图省力。……诗歌是一种进一步加了工的语言。……多读文学作品很有必要，不完全是为了'锦上添花'；因为文学作品往往有极丰富的生活内容，而思想性和艺术性好的作品还往往是内容与形式的完美结合，读了不但开阔眼界，增长知识，还能够极大地提高鉴别能力和表达能力；关键在于是否肯费点力气，多用点心，这样日复一日必定会见效果的。"[1] 诚然，初读英诗的读者会因为理不顺英国文艺复兴时期斯宾塞、莎士比亚、弥尔顿等伟大诗人诗歌中许多盘根错节的句法结构而感到困惑；会因为英国玄学派诗人笔墨中的"怪诞比喻"而感到百思不解；也会因为现代和当代英美诗人诗歌貌似简单而找不到可以入诗的元素。但是，我们也总会因为最终体悟到斯宾塞、莎士比亚、弥尔顿等诗人名篇中曲中带直的抑扬顿挫而感到欣喜若狂；我们也总会因为最终体会到邓恩笔下的"怪诞比喻"所蕴涵的丰富情感与敏锐思想而拍案叫绝；也会因为最终体察到现代和当代诗人貌似简单的外衣下所隐藏的深邃哲理而感到兴奋不已。每当我们意识到英美诗歌能够让生命意义得以升华的时候，我们学习英语的意义也同时得到了升华。在这一时刻，英语教学中的文化意识问题悄然进入我们的心灵深处；在这一时刻，我们能够发现英语学习不是一种"疯狂"的行为，而是一种心灵的历炼。

在本书的编写过程中承蒙许多专家、学者不吝赐教。我感谢北京大学和纽约州立大学奥本尼分校（SUNY at Albany）对我从事英美诗歌教学科研工作的关心与培养。我感谢北京联合大学应用文理学院领导和外国语言文化系的全体师生对我的信任与支持。我感谢高等教育出版社对该选题的认可与鼓励，感谢刘援社长、贾巍老师的策划与指点，感谢秦彬彬编辑所付出的辛勤劳动。我感谢北京大学孙亦丽教授在百忙中认真审读了全稿，也感谢美国惠顿学院Wayne Martindale教授及其夫人Nita Martindale女士审读了部分书稿。还要感谢北京大学图书馆祝德光、柴振才、杜琼等几位老师多年来对我的支持。本书根据编者从事英美诗歌教学的教案和学习笔记编写而成。书中的诗人介绍与诗文注释参考了许多英美文学选集、教材、作品注释、评论专著。在此对编/著者一并表示诚挚的谢意。

黄宗英

2007年元旦

于北京西二旗智学苑

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1 赵萝蕤《我的读书生涯》，北京：北京大学出版社，1996年11月，第236页。

CONTENTS

Part One

Experiencing British and American Poetry

1.1 Poetry Delights and Instructs

Aristotle rightly announced that "poetry tends to express the universal" (Aristotle, 53). In all ages and in all places people have been writing poetry, and poetry has been eagerly read and listened to by all people, of whatever race, age, or gender. In all ages poetry has been an especial concern of the educated, the intelligent, and the wealthy, yet it has also appealed, perhaps in its simpler forms, to the uneducated, the unintelligent, and the poor. Why are so many people interested in poetry? Perhaps we all know the answer because poetry gives us both pleasure and instruction. Roman poet Horace (65-8 BC) said in his essay "Art of Poetry" that "He [the poet] has gained every vote who has mingled profit [usefulness] with pleasure by *delighting* the reader at once and *instructing* him" (Adams 73). Twentieth-century American poet Robert Frost (1874-1963) said in his essay "The Figure a Poem Makes" that "It [a poem] begins in *delight* and ends in *wisdom*" (Barry 126). Poetry, therefore, makes our life more colorful and more meaningful. Poetry in all ages has been regarded as significant, not simply as one of several alternative ways of entertaining ourselves, as one man might choose basketball, another ping pong, another music, and another poetry. Rather, poetry has been regarded as something essential to our existence, something having unique value to our fully experienced life, something a person is better off for having and spiritually impoverished without. We read, listen to, or even recite poetry because it gives us enjoyment and offers to take us a step closer to the true meaning of life.

We know that a poet attempts to communicate some aspect of experience through language. The language of poetry, however, is more compressed than the language of fiction. We need to give ourselves willingly to the understanding of poetry. The pleasure of reading poetry derives from the beauty of the language, the delight of the sounds and the images, as well as the power of the emotion and the depth of the insight conveyed. Poetry may be difficult, but it can also be intensely rewarding. Poems are written to bring us a sense of life, while widening and sharpening our contact with human existence. We all have an inner need to live more deeply and more fully and with greater awareness, to know the experience of others and to understand better our own experience. The poet from personal feeling, observation, and imagination observes, selects, and combines human experience. Poets create significant new experiences for the reader, producing a greater awareness and understanding of the world. Poetry broadens our experience by acquainting us with a wide range of experiences we don't often have in our ordinary life. It also deepens our experience by making us feel more intensely and with more understanding the everyday experiences we have. Poetry, therefore, delights and instructs.

1.2. Poetry Communicates Experience

The American poet and critic Ivor Winters was fond of stating that poetry is a statement in words about a human experience. Many poets, for example, attempt to communicate the experience of love and are themselves speakers in their own poems. We know quite readily that love is the subject or the occasion of many poems. But we must also ask about the purpose behind the speaker's presentation of his or her experience. The purpose might be to offer definition, to express an emotion, to describe something objectively, to reveal something about human nature, or to project an idea or attitude. By establishing the central purpose of the poem, we move closer to understanding the experience a poet is communicating. But how does a poet communicate the experience? Laurence Perrine says in his *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry* that experience comes to us largely through the senses. Our most direct contact with reality starts with what we call an image. An image conveys a piece of news from the external world or from our own bodies that is brought into the light of consciousness through one of the senses. An image may come through the eye as color, through the ear as sound, through the tongue as taste, through the noses as smell, or the skin as touch. Our experience of a spring day comes first and foremost from what we sense, or from a cluster of sense impressions. Our sense impressions of a spring day consist of *seeing* blue sky and white clouds, budding leaves and flowers; of *hearing* birds singing in the early morning; of *smelling* blossoming flowers; and of *feeling* a fresh wind against our cheeks. The language of poetry must be sensuous (appealing to the senses) and full of imagery, which is the representation through language of sense experience. Poetry appeals directly to our senses through its music and rhythm. But indirectly, it appeals to our senses through imagery. Robert Browning's "Meeting at Night" for example, is a poem about love. But the poet does not even use the word "love" in his poem. His business is to communicate experience, not information:

Meeting at Night

I

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,

And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each! (Abrams 1247-48)

The poet here, on the one hand, presents us with a specific situation in which a lover goes to meet his sweetheart. On the other hand, he describes the lover's journey so vividly in terms of sense impressions that the reader not only sees and hears what the lover sees and hears but also shares his anticipation and excitement. In fact, every line in the poem contains some image, some appeal to the senses "the gray sea," "the long black land," "the yellow half-moon," "the startled little waves" with their "fiery ringlets," "the blue spurt of the lighted match" — all appeal to our sense of sight and convey not only shape but color and motion. The "warm sea-scented beach" appeals to the senses of both smell and touch. The "pushing prow" of the boat on "the slushy sand," and the "tap at the pane," "the quick sharp scratch" of the match, and the sound of their "two hearts beating each to each" — all appeal metaphorically to the sense of hearing and touch (Perrine 46-48).

1.3 Poetry Is the Art of Saying Much in Little

Robert Frost's poetry has an honest attitude toward the reader, a willingness to allow the reader to understand and feel what he is presenting. This quality first expresses itself in the plain and simple language of his poems, especially in a diction that "I [Frost] dropped to an everyday level of diction that even Wordsworth kept above" (Thompson, *Letters* 83-84). Second, in "the sound of sense," "a speaking tone of voice" that is as easy and spontaneous as it sounds yet is almost always full of artistry. Since Frost enjoys "the straight crookedness of a good walking stick" in his metrical design (Cox 19), the dramatic constructions of phrasing, intonation, and word stress always parallel the art of poetic meters and their substitutions in his lines. Third, well known as a poet of nature, Frost finds in nature images of many kinds and proceeds to read and analyze nature as a book. Frost's nature lyrics, therefore, enjoy a philosophical depth in which the poet digs beneath their seemingly simple surface. No matter how pure and simple Frost's poems may appear in form, their implicit meanings are almost always intricate.

In order to illustrate my way of reading poetry and demonstrate in miniature what I do in poetry reading classes, I will present a detailed analysis of Frost's eight-line lyric "The Pasture":

The Pasture
I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long. — You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf 5
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I shan't be gone long. — You come too. (Lathem 1)

The poet's preference for simple and unliterary poetic words is obvious. Out of the 66 words in this poem, there are only 10 words consisting of two syllables, while the others are all monosyllabic. Significantly, as a physical description of a pastoral scene, all the nouns Frost uses here are physical, concrete nouns: *pasture, spring, leaves, water, calf, mother,* and *tongue*. We may notice that almost all the concrete nouns refer to pastoral features of a New England farm. Moreover, instead of emotive or evaluative adjectives, the poet only uses two purely descriptive adjectives: *clear* and *little*. Further, almost all the verbs are dynamic, referring to definite physical acts: *clean, stop, rake, wait, watch, fetch,* and *lick*. As a result, Frost seems successful here in pursuing a poetic diction which is absolutely unliterary. Syntactically, the sentence is simple. The average sentence length is less than ten words. The poem contains only two complex sentences (lines 5-7), but even in these two complex sentences, we see no striking variety of complexity from one to the other. His dependent clauses do not precede the subjects of main clauses. His sentences, therefore, balance well and look short and simple. Thematically, what is depicted in this short lyric is nothing more than a simple and physical description of an invitation from the farmer-poet. The first line presents the background of the farm and the man who cares for it. The speaker is going forth by himself to clear a spring of water. He says that his work will be fairly brief, but he asks the addressee to go with him. In the second stanza, the subject switches from the spring to a little calf, which is so young that it stands tottering beside its mother. Again the speaker asks the addressee to go with him to fetch it. We can easily reconstruct the whole scene in our mind's eye. However, the two small quatrains show how the least may mean most, offering writer and reader alike the delight of saying an ordinary thing and discovering that it is art.

1.4 Deceptive Simplicity

If we move a step further, we can reach different levels of meaning hidden under the poem's simple surface. On the first level, if we take the speaker ("I") as a farmer, the whole poem will prove to be a picture of vigorous farm life in early spring. At this time of year, farmers are making preparations for the growing season. In this case, the spring-time clearing of the dead leaves left over from the winter may suggest the rhythmical continuity of life and death in nature. Besides, an unhurried life is implied by the speaker's casual tone of voice, especially in the third line. Frost is deft in writing the first three lines of neat iambic pentameter and in using the device of heavy alliteration in the third line to depict rhythmically the incidental activities of the farmer. He can either stop to clear up the water or wait to watch the water clear

by itself. The rhythm of an unhurried life in the pasture, therefore, is united with the rhythm of the changing seasons. Then, in the second stanza, a tottering calf beside its mother in early spring images a future full of promise.

On the second level, the speaker ("I") may also be seen as a worker, a caretaker of growing things, who assists God/Nature in making things happen. Since human life is a limited span, so is his every action. In contrast with the eternal image of the timeless cycle of seasons and the limitless universe, each limited span of each action by humanity comprises in its temporality something of eternity. So the farmer's actions, either of cleaning the spring or of fetching the little calf, are only finite representations of an infinite or timeless reality, but they can be repeated year after year, one generation after another. Frost thus unifies finite, earthly limitedness with the universal infinitude. However, whether we see the speaker ("I") as a farmer or the Master, the meaning of the one-line refrain is ambiguous. The speaker promises a quick return, but he bids the addressee to join him. We can take this simply as an invitation to join farm activities. But a tension is also suggested here between departure, return, and accompaniment by the poet's use of a metrical caesura through a comma and a hyphen, thus adding a note of hesitation to the leisurely pastoral life.

On the third level, since Frost makes this lyric an introduction to his poetry, the speaker ("I") can be regarded as the poet himself, in which case the poem might seem to be a manifestation of the poet's thought about his poetics and poetry. The dead leaves he wants to rake away in the first stanza may suggest the old-fashioned versification of the nineteenth century, with which he wants to break, while the little calf, struggling to stand by itself, symbolizes the kind of new poetry he has written.[1] The invitation, therefore, can be seen as the poet's invitation for the reader to appreciate his poetry. It stands not only as an invitation to his poetic world but also presents the figures that are central to that world: the poet, the reader, the natural setting, and the animals. In this way, Frost has very artfully drawn us into complexity.

1.5 Human Subjects Through Natural Objects

Apart from the thematic depths illustrated by the stylistic analysis, a close examination of the title of the poem commences an allusive symbolism in this poem. Although the word "pasture" means nothing more than "ground suitable for grazing," the special value of this word in the poem lies in its embodied ironic contrast. On the one hand, the title "The Pasture," may immediately bring up the reader's association of such conventionalized pastorals as Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar* or John Milton's *Lycidas*. The content of Frost's poem, however, turns out to be quite another matter, nothing elaborate, but very simple, indeed, since its materials are only a few casual incidents of farm life presented with little poetic virtue. This ironic

1 Actually, Frost did refer to himself in the 1890s as a calf in his letter dated May 4, 1916, to Louis Untermeyer: "...The poet in me died nearly ten years ago. Fortunately he had run through several phases, four to be exact, all well-defined, before he went. The calf I was in the nineties I merely take to market. I am become my own salesman..." (Thompson, *Letters* 201).

overstatement in his title forms a striking contrast with Walt Whitman's understatement in his *Leaves of Grass*, with which he entitles his monumental life-long work, and under which title Whitman, with an expansive oceanic vision and urgent desire, tries to incorporate the entire American experience into his poetry. A pasture suggests a rustic, humble, and primitive existence. This is the manifest world Frost presents in his poetry. The reader of the modern world enjoys the portrayal of the pasture as a world better than the present one precisely because it is more natural and meaningful. He may even suffer from the actual world Frost implies in his poetry, which is sophisticatedly modern, inhuman and corrupt. Thus, we may say that the contrast between the manifest reality and the actual one is ironically embodied in the title. It is from this implied contrast that the poem's lucid symbolism grows.

Frost uses symbolism in this poem as a device to effectuate its artistry — to aid in the expression of what otherwise would be faint and remote, so as to frame the reader's emotional reactions. When we read the first two lines of this poem, we notice two contrasting images emerging in our minds: "the pasture spring" which represents life, the source, and simple, pure, innocent beginnings of things, and "the leaves," the dead leaves, of course, which indicate death, the aged, the inactive, and the useless. So we see that the contrast embodied in the title has been symbolically developed into the body of the poem and has been further vivified as a thematic contrast of life and death images. Actually, whenever Frost is writing about natural objects, his subject matter is almost always humanity. For Frost, just as for Emerson, natural objects tend to be presences, not merely objects. They are almost never purely physical or random; they seem to have been put there as signs or messages for the human observer. For instance, the frozen-ground-swell undermining stones and mortar is taken by the speaker in Frost's "Mending Wall" to be evidence of "Something" in nature "that doesn't love a wall"; it "makes gaps even two can pass abreast," as if hinting broadly that it favors not artificial barriers between persons, but human fellowship. Symbolism, therefore, means to Frost not only a device to animate ideas remote and faint, but also the suggestive powers of poetry.

1.6 The Sound Must Seem an Echo to the Sense

Besides irony and symbolism, Frost uses the principle of "the sound of sense" in this poem to make it sound more dramatic. Taking the sound as the main thing in writing poetry, Frost argues that "the sound is the gold in the ore" (Barry 125). Here in "The Pasture," there is certainly musicality of a traditional kind: assonanced words like *going...only; clean...leaves; gone long; You... too*; alliterated words such as *clean...clear; wait...watch...water*. But already in this early poem musicality has been modified and enlivened by dramatic intonations and cadences of everyday speech. The poem can be scanned like this:

v – v – v – v – v –
I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
v – v – v – v – v –
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
v – v – v – v – v –
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
v – v – – – v –
I shan't be gone long. — You come too.

v – v – v – v – v –
I'm going out to fetch the little calf 5
v – v – v – v v – –
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
v – v – v – v – v –
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
v – v – – – v –
I shan't be gone long. — You come too.

The scansion demonstrates the poem's simple meter. Five (1, 2, 3, 5, 7) out of the 8 lines in it are perfectly regular lines of iambic pentameter. The only metrical substitutions come into the poem in the last two feet in the sixth line and in the refrain lines of abbreviated iambic tetrameter. It is in this sixth line, however, that Frost thoughtfully puts a spondaic substitution with a pyrrhic, which prepares for the spondee, as if by withholding a stress from the expected metrical context, the reader will desire two in succession all the more (Fussell 44). The spondaic substitution here is used to emphasize the freshness and immaturity of the little calf. Moreover, the most expressive and dramatic metrical variation in this poem can be seen in the lines 4 and 8, wherein Frost abbreviates a line of expected iambic pentameter to a line of tetrameter with subtle metrical substitutions ("I shan't be gone long. — You come too"). In this way, the poet provides the reader with much more space for metrical association. The first two feet can be regarded as regular iambs, since this abbreviated word shan't manifests three (pitch, loudness and timbre) out of the four phonetically prominent elements (pitch, loudness, length, and timbre or quality) of an accented syllable (Fussell 8). Then, by making the expected iamb in the third position an elisioned trochaic substitution with an underlined ceasura indicated by a fullstop and a dash, the poet brings about the delicate resonance of "gone long." This brings two stresses together and establishes a semantic contrast with the spondaic substitution of the last two words "come too" in this line. Therefore, the conflict between the speaker's intention of departure and his hesitation in inviting the addressee to come with him is metrically foregrounded. Fewer in syllables and more disrupted in rhythm than the rest of the poem, this line is worthy of our special attention.

To Frost, "the sound in the mouths of men ... [is] the basis of all effective