

## Robert Frost as a Nature poet

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Although Robert Frost is now acknowledged to be a world poet, he is primarily a poet of the rural world, chiefly concerned with his native place New Hampshire. The beauty of New England has a grandeur of its own and it enchanted Frost. He had early picked up the pastoral technique from classical masters like Theocritus. The themes chosen for his early poetry are from the life and landscape of New England. In his first volume — "A Boy's Will" — he gives a vivid description of the varied aspects of New England countryside. The wooded valleys, the wooded hills, the sun rising on the purple main of wild raspberry — all give to the scenery of his native place "a local habitation and a name." In his second volume 'North of Boston' he records not so much the landscape of England as its people holding a farm together, paying off mortgage, breaking under the strain of anxiety, isolation and over work. Both the volumes reveal Frost as a familiar Yankee farmer chatting in verse about simple rural folk, birds and animals and the cycle of seasons. He identified himself completely with Nature as embodied in New England. He speaks of the "Tree at my Window" shares in the life of man.

But it must be understood that he is quite different from Wordsworth in his conception of Nature. He never mystifies Nature. Nature is only a background to him. Isolated from man it is nothing. To Wordsworth, Nature was both 'law and impulse'. To Frost it was just a spectacle of human comedy. Frost is more a poet of man than of Nature. In this respect he resembles Browning, especially in his dramatic monologues whose technique, to a great extent, he borrowed from Browning. Nature according to Frost, is different from man and it is never equal to him. He aptly remarks: "Your head so much concerned with outer, mine with inner weather."

There have been various effects to solve the relationship of Man and Nature. The Romanticists tried to solve it by uniting Nature and man. Tennyson saw Nature 'red in tooth and claw', Frost's mode is different. He prescribed Nature as retreat, but not with one's back on the world to-day. Although he is a regionalist in Nature-painting, he feels that man has pressing engagements and he has no right to stand any longer enchanted by the landscape. In his famous poem, "Stopping by the Woods", he wishes he could stay longer in the company of Nature, but the spell is broken in the concluding stanza which reminds him of pressing engagements.

There is eternal conflict between man's sense of duty and his tendency to escape from the turmoils of life. Frost was never an escapist, nor he wanted anyone to be such. He wanted man to be 'a singer of Birches'. In this beautiful poem (Birches) he suggests that man may withdraw for a moment from the world only to return with a new sense of life:

"Earth's the right for love

I don't know where it's likely to go better"

In another poem entitled 'Directive', he is interpreting Nature. He says that there is no shortcut for retreat to New England. The poem asserts the difficulty of finding a true source of spiritual strength. In this poem, the poet does not present an escape but an exploration. It is not an escape into Nature, but an exploration of Nature.

In another poem entitled 'Mowing',

The poet identifies himself with scythe. In 'Birches' the poet had suggested that the earth was the right place for love, but in mowing the scythe whispers to the ground and says: "for love and labour too". Frost reads nature both as a menace and comfort. Natural disasters are strange and unpredictable. Nature is the mother and home of man, but it is at the same time utterly indifferent to him. This quality of Nature is reflected in the volume of his poem - 'A Boy's Will'. In 'The Vantage Point' the poet announces that he is tired of the trees and wants to see mankind. In another poem the poet hunting after secret. Nature suddenly hears a sound behind him - the mocking laughter of the Demon. Having heard the sound, the poet feels "as a fool to have been so caught." His latter poems have to say much about the helplessness of men in the face of natural calamities.

The woods play a curious part in Frost's Nature poetry. They serve as his symbol for the unexplored country within ourselves, full of possible beauty, but also full of horror. From the wood at dusk one might hear the hidden music of the brook or one might see a buck and a doe looking at one over the stone fence; that marks the limit of the pasture. This is all symbolic. The stone fence symbolises the limits of the world and the buck and the doe symbolises the human love between man and woman. One should not cross the fence except in dreams; and then it is also possible that instead of brook or deer one is likely to meet a strange demon. Hence we, who are of earth, must follow our bodied bliss only within limitations.

In Frost's Nature poems symbolise has also been used to show the validity of science. In this respect Frost may be called a modernist.