

Style of Writing and Perspective on Nature – A Perusal on Robert Frost

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ABSTRACT

This research paper has attempted to explore the writing style of the pre-eminent American poet, Robert Frost and his perspective on nature. The poet has bestowed through his words, a culmination of traits that identifies him as a poet with ardent passion towards humanity and nature. His combination of simplicity in language while evaluating the complexity in human life is analyzed, with respect to his inspiration, and the specific features as well as attitudes, he adorns his poems with, in which his perspective on nature is truly evident. The deeper meanings he unfolds through the revelation of connections between nature and mankind are illustrated through selected verses from Frost's poetry that further portrays the duality of nature which transcends time.

Keywords: Duality, Nature, Pastoral, Simplicity

INTRODUCTION

A celebrated American poet, Robert Frost showcases a writing style that is unique in its amalgamation of words that are simple yet embedded in meanings which illustrate the deep connections one shares with nature. His writing style is a combination of his personality which is a blend of seriousness and wit, comprehending the significance of the perennial nature and the temporal human beings. He puts forth the various characteristics of nature as a teacher, philosopher, guide and a medium to convey his thoughts. He sets himself apart from nature poets and identifies himself through his works as a pastoral poet, penning the deep cords between humans and nature, which makes his poems evergreen, rooted in the themes that are evergreen, imparting wisdom to man, regardless of age, retaining freshness even today by combining both terror and beauty.

Writing Style of Frost

Style of writing throws insight to the writer's character, experience and life. Frost's style brings together the boldness, wit and caution he often displays as a writer. His assertion on style can be perceived from his letter to his friend and advocate, Louis Untermeyer, published in the *Collected Poems, Prose and Plays*, in which he states that style of writing of a writer showcases himself and his opinions. John F. Lynen, author of *The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost*, in his work asserts that "Frost stands apart from other poets in the modern era that his sentences are clear, his verses form traditional, and language similar to everyday speech" (Lynen 2). Hence he employs plain usage of language which is neither complex nor incomprehensible. However the simplicity disappears when eyes are opened to deeper meanings that are concealed in his uncomplicated words.

Seriousness and self-effacing wit are combined in rhetoric and tone by Frost. His virtue was to write for the general reader. His phrasing is both colloquial and intimate. He pictures the task he has set for himself, neither in terms of money nor of fame but as a challenge to be judged outside a limited realm of self-approving literati. This is evident in his letter published in *Collected Poems, Prose and Plays*.

You mustn't take me too seriously if I now proceed to brag a bit about my exploit as a poet. There is one qualifying fact always to bear in mind: there is a kind of self-esteem and it butters no parsnips. It means a success with the critical few who are supposed to know. But really to arrive where I can stand on my legs as a poet and nothing else I must get outside that circle to the general reader who buys books in their thousands. I may not be able to do that. I believe in doing it – don't you doubt me there. I want to be a poet for all sorts and kinds. I could never make a merit of being a caviar to the crowd the way my quasi-friend Pound does. I want to reach out, and would if it were a thing I could do by taking though. So much by way of depreciation before I begin. (667-68)

Robert Frost resided in a farm at Derry, New Hampshire in the first decade of the twentieth century before he moved to England, during which he wrote many of his best-known poems, made outlines and took notes observing the complex cycle of the seasons. In a letter to Robert Chase in 1952, he summarizes the effect that place had bestowed upon him which had a tremendous impact in his writing career, that is evident in his representation of the various aspects and seasons of nature in his poetry.

I might say the core of all my writing was probably the five years I had there on the farm down the road from Derry village toward Lawrence. The only thing we had plenty of was time and seclusion. I couldn't have figured in advance, I hadn't that kind of foresight. But it turned out right as a doctor's prescription. (Thompson 552)

Though Frost endows his poetry with natural images, he cannot be classified as a nature poet. His nature poetry is closely related to pastoralism as a pastoralist does not write about nature but employs it as a scene to throw insight to the subject that is special to the society or more generally, to a way of life whereas nature poets describe solely about nature. He himself has put forth in an interview in 1952, "I guess I'm not a nature poet. I have written only two poems without a human being in them" (Grenier 207).

Frost conceives nature as a wild-life Arcadia invoking paradoxical attitudes: on one hand, it is a realm of ideals where the essential realities are found in their pristine forms; on the other, it is an inferior plane where life is crude, insensate and mechanical. Nature is viewed as separate and independent, away from humans yet forming the core of human existence. Hence, according to Frost, it is at once 'together and apart' and this unflinching honesty in revealing the facts between man and nature becomes the recurrent theme in his poetry.

On comparing with the American transcendentalists, Emerson and Thoreau, Frost's poetry is varied from theirs due to his method of approach to nature. A similarity can be inferred between him and Thoreau in their view of nature. The latter's poem "Smoke", abundant with natural images is a reminiscent of many poems of Frost. A closer inspection reveals that unlike Frost, Thoreau's poems lack the presence of a human being. Frost endows nature in his poetry completely with what it has, encompassing its friendly and unfriendly aspects. Frost was far too much like Emerson, visualizing man always cradling within nature, completely immersed in the environment.

Frost's Perspective on Nature

Frost embraced nature as an open book rendering lessons of mutability which is taught by repetition of days, seasons and years in which man acquires his lessons of limitations and survival, at times, however, trying to break the decreed limits of nature out of his unquenchable thirst. In his poem, "There are Roughly Zones", he enlightens the value of refusing to learn the obvious natural lesson of caution. He feels that man is inevitably guided towards his destination by some force that persistently acts on him. This inescapability is brought out in his poem, "The Road not Taken" in which the traveler recognizes to his sorrow that he cannot travel through both roads and not only learns that choices must be made but also that his decisions will prove irrevocable. In "After Apple-Picking", Frost brings forth a harvester who finds himself blocked from success before his plan is carried out due to winter's approach and weariness. "For I have had too much/Of apple- picking: I am overtired/ Of the great harvest I myself desired" (Frost 88).

Hence nature imposes her zones dragging obstacles across man's path. He imbibes as a result of his failure, painful lessons from the former. If he is willing to accept the lesson and gain profit, he will obviously experience moments of happiness and rejoice as illustrated in his poem, "Unharvested".

May something go always unharvested!
May much stay out of our stated plan,
Apples or something forgotten and left,
So smelling their sweetness would be no theft. (400)

Frost uses images of nature as a medium to convey his thoughts and emotions. One can find trees, forests, the turning of seasons and woods common in his poetry bringing forth the nature of New England. According to him, there exists a natural barrier between man and nature preventing mankind from penetrating the mysteries of the natural world. He illustrates 'human isolation' in most of his poems, viewing man as a stranger in the world. He often emphasized in his poems the contrast between man and nature and the conflicts that arises amidst these two entities. Though being an ardent nature lover, he also illustrates its destructive capability. He looked into the harsh facts of the natural world and viewed these opposites as simply variant facets of reality. He saw nature as an alien force capable of destroying man and his struggle as a 'heroic battle'.

Man's physical needs, the dangers facing him, the realities of birth and death, the limits of his ability to know and to act are shown in stark outline by the indifference and inaccessibility of the physical world in which he must live. (Lynen 150)

Nature is essentially considered by Frost as a symbolic philosopher and guide, disseminating subtle and secret lessons of life to mankind. His verses thus put man to bring out his true greatness. His poem, "To Earthward" showcases this feature whereas in *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, Frost mirthfully chats about the genial April weather but intervenes in between to offer advice of the danger that persists. Frost's poetry manifests this duality in nature which is claimed by the American author, John F. Lynen through his words, "you cannot have one without the other: love of natural beauty and horror at the remoteness and indifference of the physical world are not opposites but different aspects of the same view" (Lynen 7).

Frost's essay, "The Figure a Poem Makes" renders his often-quoted words that provides a nutshell of his stance in poetry, "It begins in delight and ends in wisdom" (Frost 18). Hence a poem initiates in sensuousness, taking the hand of the reader for a journey, the mystery of which unfolds step by step. The initial delight for Frost is the surprise of remembering something he didn't know he knew. He feels, he is in a place, in a situation, which had been materialized from cloud or risen out of the ground. There is a glad recognition of the long lost and the rest follows gently. Gradually the marvel of unforeseen supply builds. The impressions most useful to his purpose, he observed, seem always he was innocent of.

CONCLUSION

Frost's poetry evidently showcases the connection between the worlds of nature and human beings, manifesting underneath the plain lucidity, the complex emotions of life through a writing style that is unique in its beauty. His observation of nature is attributed to something significant to the human race throwing light to the psychological struggle with everyday experience. He describes a natural object and leads the reader to comparison of it with human conditions, paving way to insight through analogy and symbol throwing light to the mysterious connection of human emotions with nature through simplicity and wit. Frost feels the originality of a poem lies in its freshness in transforming from delight to wisdom. His works are indeed a testimony to his words, whose beauty transcends all barriers, enhanced with the deceptively simple style that bestows a revelation to kindle one's heart at the end, encompassed with the elements of nature.

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