

Man-Nature Relationship in Frost's Poetry

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Abstract

Robert Frost is a prominent poet of American Literature. He is known as a decipherer of nature and humanity. His poetry reveals that he is somewhat different from his predecessors. Nature is a crucial element in Frost's poetry. He accentuates human beings and their relation to their surroundings. He elucidates man-nature relationship in a realistic term. He depicts ambivalent view of nature. Unlike romantics, Frost witnesses nature's conflicting relationship with man. His treatment of man is significant. He insists on man's superiority over nature. His treatment of both nature and man is free from romantic excess. Thus he proves to be a distinct type of poet who presented man-nature relationship in authentic terms.

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Robert is one of the greatest American poets. He is called the interpreter of nature and humanity as a whole, for his poetry shows that he is a close observer of the both nature and people and he portrays their fundamental elements. Frost once said "there is almost always a person in my poems" One early critic Lawrence Thompson stated that Frost, Primary concern is with the inner strength and worth of the individual. ¹

some critics agree that he considers is man's inner strength important in his perpetual struggle with his surroundings There seems to be no doubt that frost; characters although identified or residents of a specific locale are also representative of a specific locale, are also representative of universal human nature.

Nature, however is not the most important element in frost poems. He emphasizes human beings and their relation to their surroundings people are the focal point in the poems that show them with nature as a background for their actions.

He does not obscene nature as heal-all or the perennial source of solace. But unlike romantics he witnesses nature's contradictions with man on various levels. Frost not only deals with healing side of nature like Wordsworth but also depicts the darker side of nature that could neither cure nor console .Let Shakespeare look for "sermons in stones books in running brooks" and "good in everything" let Wordsworth wander lonely as a cloud over the acres of daffodils but the skeptic and the realistic Frost cannot but locate in nature "a dark design appall."

He illustrates man-nature relationship in a realistic term. For him, nature has two sides i.e good and evil among which evil or darker side plays a crucial role in resolving the plans and style of human life. Frost at times realizes there is not any kind of kinship between man and nature. Always to Frost, man differs essentially from other features and objects. Marian Montgomery says:

The immediate natural world even seems to be moving towards chaos, intending to take man along with it if he isn't careful. ²

'*Guest House*' is an apposite exemplification of Frost as a poet of man and nature. In the poem, a lonely abandoned house is shown which is covered with vines and creepers and is occupied by birds. Nature has been depicted as overpowering the work of man. The poetic persona finds his comparisons in the grave stone under a tree. Non human forces reclaim and absorb man's efforts staking out a claim for order and survival.

He realistically predicts the conflict between man and nature and man's resistance to the unfamiliar environment. He is cognizant of the real quandary of man in the natural world where man has to struggle with natural aftermaths on the one hand and man-made problems and others. Salamathullah Khan realizes:

" Frost world of nature shorn of all sentimentality is a continuation of the same age old tradition of man finding himself face to face with the indifferent cosmic order, insensitive to human existence and of which the back, with its muscular animality and vigour is the embodiment in Frost's poem *The Most of It*." ³

Love And A Question is a poem by Frost in which he portrays the nature's cruelty on human peace. The poem tells us how the wintry aspect of

nature prepares a stranger to knock at the door of the persona to meddle with his bliss of private life.

There is a pronounced ambivalence in the view of nature, Frost portrays in his poetry. In one poem he may present nature as actively hostile, in another as merely indifferent and in a third as warmly benevolent. At some places he depicts man as an indispensable part of nature whereas at some other places both are shown apart from each other. Though according to him nature renders an essential background to delineate man's life, man should always reconcile himself with the nature. He should never surmise any emotional solace from it. Frost neither undervalues the possibilities of man seeping well in nature, nor does he idealize nature as man's mother or teacher. Nature, Frost believes should serve man as an open book to read and learn lessons of tolerance, self-confidence and gratification. Unlike romantics, Frost witnesses nature's conflicting relationship with man on various levels. At the same time, he does not repudiate the beauty of nature where realization can lead to man's arrival at some divine position. It presents a critical analysis of his characters of his use of nature as variable background and of the inter-relationship of man and nature.

His poem *Mending Wall* shows transformation of human psyche from innocence to experience. The poem depicts a conflict between nature's nature to break the wall and man's stubbornness to make it and mend it, so it always stays Samuel Coale makes a study of their encounter between man a nature:

In Mending Wall..... man pits his own mending power against nature's disruptive powers. He mends the wall not from any love for it but because to mend it is to combat, to counter nature's force. The very mending itself exemplifies that encounter between man and

nature, that momentary says against confusion cleverly pitting Frost against Frost. ⁴

The presence of the wall between the properties does ensure a quality relationship between the two neighbours. By maintaining the division between the properties the narrator and his neighbour are able to maintain their individuality and personal identity as farmers: One of apple trees and one of pine trees. Moreover the annual act of mending the wall also provides an opportunity for the two men to interact and communicate with each-other, an event that might not otherwise occur in an isolated rural environment. The act of meeting to repair the wall allows the two men to develop their relationship and the overall community far more than if each maintained their isolation on separate properties.

After Apple Picking represents a real experience. It is symbolic of man's routine life, daily activity of which he is addicted and get exhausted. The persona who is a farmer feels that he is 'overtired' of picking apples standing on a ladder. That is why he ponders to get tired to this activity and says that 'he is done with apple picking now'. He feels momentary stay against dilemma by dreaming of eternal sleep. On his ladder, he had transcendental experience.

"My long two- pointed ladder's sticking through a tree.

Toward heaven still"

He is contented and longs for long sleep:

And there's barrel that I doesn't fill

Beside it, and there may be two or three

Apples I didn't pick upon some bough

but I am done with apple – picking now

Essence of winter sleep is on the night.

The poem seems to be simple demonstrating the beautiful scenes, sounds and scents of nature, yet it is symbolic. The desire to 'sleep' symbolizes to stop all intellectual pursuits in favour of peace and calmness, which come to an individual after the cessation of thoughts. Here 'apples' stand for 'nature' while sleep stands for transcendental happiness or the pleasures of the soul. Here, in the poem, the poetic persona is tired of nature and rejects it in favour of taking resort to spiritual happiness. Thus it is an anti- wordsworthian description of man- nature relationship.

Frost reconnoiters natured activities of common people. At the same time, he deals with the inner conflict of human psyche in face of choices and unknown paths of life. In the poem *The Road Not Taken* the traveler chooses the road less travelled by. It suggests his quest and adventurous spirit. The poet states:

Two roads diverged in a wood and I

I took one less travelled by

And that has made all the difference. ⁵

Frost observes the complex inter independence of man's view of nature and its effects on him. He is speaking ultimately of universal nature and of universal man no matter in what part of the world the natural elements present the same faces toward man. No matter what nationality is observed, human beings may be classified into the two general types, the strong, self directed and the weak, controlled by fears of external forces. He recognizes that nature is a non-reasoning, insensitive creation that does not and can not have any interest in mankind, but when observed subjectively by various people under differing circumstances, it can take ambivalent characteristics. Some see their surroundings as a place of peace and pleasure, while others perceive a world of active antagonism.

His treatment of man is significant. He gives humanity a better place than nature in his poems and insists on man's superiority over nature. Nature is poised against humanity, he does not glorify nature nor does he idolize men. His treatment of both nature and man is free from romantic excess. He does not attribute human emotions or soul or personality to nature as Wordsworth did.

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