



Robert Frost as A Nature Poet: an Ecocritical Perspective

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Abstract

If Emerson's adage, "To be great is to be misunderstood," is accurate, Robert Frost is undoubtedly the greatest American poet of the 20th century. Robert Frost is an exceptional poet, despite his frequent misinterpretations. The question of whether or not he is a nature poet has been the subject of intense debate among critics. This paper examines the claim that Frost is a nature poet from an ecocritical perspective. We will examine *The Tuft of Flowers* to acquire a more profound comprehension. It is uncertain whether he meets the criteria for classification as a nature poet. Writing has been a practice among individuals. Frost has also described landscapes, and poets have written about nature for centuries. Mountains, valleys, rivers, forests, woodlands, flora, creatures, and seasons are all present. He does not describe the seasonal changes, even though his poems elegantly depict them. In this paper, the poet is established as a nature poet who has examined the flora and fauna of the poem.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecology, Nature, Cultural ecology, Rober Fost.

Introduction

Frost was raised at a time when the greatest works of literature appeared to reverse Emerson's dictum that "to be misunderstood is to be great." (Page 1, Faggen, 2001) An era of time marked by complexity and subtleties, the modern period was characterized by artists experimenting with many art genres. a period when artists were driven to "make it new." Writers broke the traditional conventions of narrative, and poets experimented with fragmented poems, complicated illusions and

references, sardonic contrasts, sophisticated and obscure symbols, and irregular poetic forms. Frost rigorously followed rhyme, meter, and formalised stanzas—the elements that have formed the foundation of English poetry from its inception—in contrast to his contemporaries. While being written off as "unmodern" for following the rules, Forst effectively showed that his mindset was quite modern. His poetry captures the sensitivity and suffering of contemporary existence. He depicted the

alienation, dissatisfaction, loneliness, isolation, and despair characterising modern existence.

Robert Frost's poetry is unique because of its universal appeal. The bulk of his writing is small but most of the "mighty lines" have been translated into almost all the world languages which are rarely found even amongst the great poets of the world. Frost relies on simple language, high-sounding philosophy and thoughts portraying the truth relating to life while composing his poetry. Nature is the main inspiration in Frost's poetry which contains ecological consciousness in this ecological-crisis-ridden time. Although Robert Frost is not a high priest of Nature like Wordsworth or a Pantheist like Emerson or Thoreau, he is a person who has a deeper understanding of Nature. Frost saw man becoming more "ego-centric" due to his preoccupation and less "eco-centric". To Frost, Nature was at once harsh and mild. Man's relation to nature, as to his fellows, is both "together and apart". Frost's poems have strains of deep ecology which offers a philosophical basis for environmental advocacy which may guide human activity against perceived self-destruction

Ecocriticism

Robert Frost is celebrated as one of the great nature poets of the 20th century. His poetry is deeply rooted in the natural world, and he often uses nature as a lens through which to explore complex human emotions and societal issues. An ecocritical view of his work examines how Frost's depiction of nature reflects his environmental consciousness and the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. Green studies, ecopoetics, and environmental literary critique are other names for ecocriticism. William Rueckert originally used the word "ecocriticism" in his 1978 essay to examine literary works that observe "something about the ecology of literature." However, the term acquired popularity in the middle of the 1990s with the release of Harold Fromm and Cheryll Glotfelty's book *The Ecocriticism*

Reader. "The study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" is how Barry cites Glotfelty's definition of ecocriticism (Barry, 2020, p. 239). He adds that ecocritics "extend the application of ideas to areas other than the natural world and re-read major works from an ecocritic point of view" (Barry, 2020, p. 254). Ecocritics examines a literary work and brings up several environmental issues, including how nature and the natural world are portrayed, their function, the values they convey, and—above all—how they are envisioned in the work. According to ecocritics, reading literature of this kind might increase public awareness and motivate people to take action against ecological change and the destruction of natural ecosystems. The goal of ecocritics' strong ethical arguments is to help readers understand how people exploit nature.

Robert Frost's Traditional Perspective of Nature: Frost is unquestionably a huge admirer of nature, and his poems are replete with images, sounds, and sights from the natural world. Rivers, forests, flowers, plants, valleys, mountains, animals, birds, seasons, days, and nights are all part of his expansive universe. He gives accurate and vivacious descriptions of nature. The question of whether Frost qualifies as a poet of nature or not, however, divides commentators. Frost cannot be considered a nature poet, according to critics like Alvarez, because his poetry is about country life rather than nature. He sees himself as a pastoral poet who uses his writing to portray the everyday lives of lowly country people. The landscapes that Frost depicts in his poems, according to critics, serve as the poetry's backdrop. Humans are constantly at the core of his poems. Frost himself supports this viewpoint when he states, "I guess I am not a Nature-poet," in a 1952 television interview. There are just two poems I've written that don't feature a human. However, other equally renowned critics, like as Jhon F. Lynen, believe that Nature is so deeply ingrained in his poetry "that one can hardly avoid thinking of him as a Nature-poet."

According to Lynen, "any account of Frost's art must give prominent place to his Nature poetry because it is so excellent and so characteristic." In his article, Marion Montgomery explains that Frost is a nature poet, but not in the Wordsworthian tradition. According to him, "Nature is his subject in a sense, but to Frost, it is never an impulse from a vernal wood." Wordsworth is usually at his best when he is emotionally portraying the natural world's panorama, whereas Frost's finest poetry is on the drama of man in nature.

Frost's approach to nature differs from poets of the eighteenth century. His tone, attitude, and answer are genuine, nuanced, and conveyed without sentimentality. He engages with nature and occasionally even clashes with it, but he doesn't provide a positive image. "There is always a bitter-sweet quality, even in Frost's most cheerful sketches," according to John F. Lynen. Frost acknowledges the limitations of man and maintains that man must keep his distance from the powers of nature.

Robert Frost's Eco-Critical Perspective on Nature: Frost's poems both offer and resist a straightforward ecological interpretation. His work is shaped by a more traditional, somewhat classicist sense of versification rather than by remarkable innovation. Frost's poetry is shaped by creative processes that provide a strong ecocultural reading subtext. Frost's poetry outlines the potential and limitations of human autonomy while urging acceptance of man's place in nature and the need for human survival in a life-sustaining ecosystem. According to his ideas, people have a unique role in ecological environments, but they also have ties to broader cosmic and evolutionary themes. All aspects of nature and their connections to human civilisation are prevalent in his poetry. In his poetry, this interplay between human and non-human nature is shown as an interactional field, a site of contact, conflict, and strain, and as an essential location for human self-definition. In his poetry, he frequently and wildly varies the appearance of stars, the moon, day and night,

clouds, snow and rain, the seasons, forests, trees, brooks, fruits, flowers, birds, ants, snakes, spiders, hornets, butterflies, and more. They represent an all-powerful natural presence that is profoundly connected to human existence, despite the fact that it can never be completely contained inside its categories. They are not only a mirror or milieu to human concerns; they are also a part of a shared reality. He uses animals and natural events as metaphors and symbols for human behaviour, feelings, and passions while also defining humans by their similarity to natural processes. Regardless of their size or importance, creatures don't seem inferior; rather, they are frequently altering egos of the persona whose actions, emotions, or even thoughts exhibit striking similarities to human experience to the point where, if not eliminated, the lines separating nonhuman and human beings are greatly blurred. However, non-human existence is acknowledged in all its ambiguity between creative and destructive powers, beauty and cruelty, rather than being idealised in Frost's poetry. Frost's poetics, in which natural and cultural history are inextricably linked and the world—as well as the living things attempting to survive within it—are depicted as undergoing constant adaptation and change, has been influenced by Darwin and the theory of evolution, according to Robert Faggen. According to Faggen (1997), Frost's poetry capture "the romantic sense of change but stripped of endless possibility." Real and irrevocable, change is a result of continual processes of repetition, variation, and transmutation as well as seasonal and generational cycles and evolutionary conflict. In the evolutionary process—and in Frost's poetic universe—established hierarchies are challenged, and "the small, the minute, and the lowly are revealed to have great power" (Faggen, 1997, p. 12).

An important example of this creative process of connecting ecology and man may be found in the poem *The Tuft of Flowers*. The poem describes a time in the speaker's life when

he visits a field that is deserted and has been mowed, in the morning dew, just before daybreak. He feels lonely when he gets there since he cannot find the mower. The speaker in this negative mood makes a broad generalisation about the essential state of human life, which is, in his opinion, to be alone.

And I must be, as he had been – alone,
'As all must be,' I said within my heart,
'Whether they work together or apart.'

And just as the speaker reaches this disillusioning conclusion a butterfly passes him searching for the lost flowers like the speaker before had searched for the vanished mower. The butterfly, personified and humanized by the use of the personal pronoun 'he', draws the speaker's attention to the lively sphere of the natural world, the drama in miniature of loss, crisis, suffering, search, and disorientation through which the butterfly must go because of the utilitarian human intervention in and cultivation of the nonhuman world. The butterfly captivates the poet's attention by his unusual, irregular, desperately circular movements through the air. Just as the speaker wants to "turn" back to his work discarding the butterfly's futile search

I thought of questions that have no reply, and would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

the butterfly himself makes another unexpected "turn," leading the speaker's eye once more away from his intended work to a tuft of flowers by a brook side spared by the scythe of the mower. This completes the circle of ecology in which all, the speaker, the mower, the butterfly and the tuft flower, are interconnected. Frost makes the point that though everything and everyone is apparently apart, in reality, we are intertwined with each other in the grand scheme of things.

'Men work together.' I told him from the heart,

'Whether they work together or apart.'

The visible companionship of the butterfly evokes the speaker's invisible companionship with the early morning mower. Unlike Frost's other poems which are filled with loneliness, this poem talks about the unity between men. The renewed relationship of culture to Nature becomes an inspiration for the renewal of the relationship of human beings to each other. The deeper awareness of and restored relationship to nonhuman life within the text helps to expand and redefine the understanding of human life as well.

Conclusion

The poem highlights how literature and imagination are connected in shaping culture. For Robert Frost, like cultural ecologists, this link was shown in his idea of metaphor. He viewed metaphor as the main part of poetry, which, in a constantly changing world, can only be used for a limited time. The ongoing creation and alteration of metaphors is what makes poetry relatable to life. Metaphors help connect things that are usually seen as separate, like ideas and feelings, thinking and instinct, the mind and the physical world.

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