

Modernity in the Poetry of Robert Frost

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ABSTRACT

Robert Frost is known as a poet of modern age as all his poetry works revolve around the problems of human living in the world conquered by information technology. He understood the feelings of modern people. He knew that modern people were suffering from loneliness and a lot of stress and depression. This stress could be of any type; either due to love or work-life. Although critics never considered him as a modern poet and they badly criticized his style of writing. Some poems of Frost visualized the effects of nature on human as modern human are going far away from the nature. The current article highlights the modernity in the poetry of Robert Frost.

1. Introduction

In fact, Frost's poetry portrays the disintegration of values in modern life and the disillusionment of the modern man in symbolical and metaphysical terms as much as the poetry of great, modern poets does, because most of his poems deal with persons suffering from loneliness and frustration, regrets and disillusionment which are known as modern disease.

In "**An old Man's Winter Night**", the old man is lonely, completely alienated from the society, likeness, the tiredness of the farmer due to over work in "**Apple-Picking**" and as a result of it his yielding to sleep:

*For I have too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of great harvest I myself desired*

In his nature poems, Frost has also commented on the misery of the modern man which due to his going away from nature.

His metaphysical treatment of the subject in some of his poems is also an evidence of his modernity. In "**Mending Walls**", Frost juxtaposes the two opposite aspects of the theme of the poem and then leaves it to the reader to draw his own conclusion. The conservative farmer says:

Good fences make good neighbor

and the modern radical farmer says:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

According to J.F.Lynen the use of the pastoral technique by Frost in his poems, does not mean that the poet seeks an escape from the harsh realities of modern life. He argues that it provides him with a point of view.

Frost uses pastoral technique only to evaluate and comment on the modern lifestyle. His pastoralism thus registers a protest against the disintegration of values in the

modern society and here he is one with great poets of the modern age like T.S.Eliot, Yeats and Hopkins.

Another poetic technique adopted by Frost which makes him a modern poet is symbolism. "**The Road Not Taken**" symbolizes the universal problem of making a choice of invisible barriers built up in the minds of the people which alienate them from one another mentally and emotionally thought they live together or as neighbors in the society. Similarly the Birch trees in "**Birches**" symbolize man's desire to seek escape from the harsh suffering man to undergo in this world.

Unlike Romantics he has taken notice of both the bright and dark aspects of nature as we see in his poem "**Two Tramps in Mud Time**". Beneath the apparently beautiful calm there is lurking turmoil and storms:

*Be glad of water, but don't forget
The lurking frost in the earth beneath.*

In fact the world of nature in Frost's poetry is not a world of dream. It is much more harsh, horrible and hostile than the modern urban world. Hence his experience of the pastoral technique to comment on the human issue of modern world his realistic treatment of Nature, his employment of symbolic and metaphysical techniques and the projection of the awareness of human problems of the modern society in his poetry justly entitle him to be looked up to as modern poet.

2. Modernity in the Poetry of Robert Frost

Granville Hicks while discussing the modern elements of Frost Poetry Says:

"Frost has bound himself to a literary tradition that is out of fashion and has lost its meaning in modern context."

There is an another observation of a critic about the traditional attitude towards poetry.

Yvor Winters Says:

"Frost insists that man is a creature of impulse not of reason and that attitude is aliens to modern thought".

He proves his point by taking the example of Frost's Poem "The Bear", in which Frost ridicules the idea of man as a reasoning creature and this is in marked opposition to modern thought. There is another group of critics which is willing to accept the views. They advance and advocate vigorously, the view that frost's poetry essentially modern critics like Cleanth Brooks, Lionel trilling and John Lynen are most eager and ready to put frost in the fore most position of modern poetry.

Frost alike T.S. Eliot is a great advocate of modernity. He portrays the disintegration of values, disillusionment of modern man. His poem deal with characters who suffer from frustration, loneliness, helplessness, homesickness, etc. which are knows as modern evils and ills. Moreover, his poetry is modern in the accepted sense of the term both at the level. Though his depiction of literary conventions and traditions of the past proves that his poetry is the epitome of modernity.

Frost's poems are liked for their modernity which implies a broad outlook, a fusion of the metaphysical and the symbolic. His portrayal of the Disillusionment of modern man is a clean cut indication of his modernity. Diseases of modern life are portrayed in his poem in the poem "The Hill wife", Frost has portrayed the cumulative sense of fear, loneliness and marital estrangement of an isolated women who is also misunderstood by her husband. In his poem "The Road Not Taken", he depicts the confusion prevailing in modern life and it is difficult for the man to make a choice among two:

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less travelled by and that has made all the difference".

The tragic view of life that emerges in so many of frost's poems is modulated by his metaphysical use of detail. As frost portrays him, man might be alone in an ultimately indifferent universe, but he may never the less look to the natural world for metaphors his own condition. Thus, in search for meaning in the modern world, frost focuses on those moments when the sees and the spiritual intersect John T. Napien calls this frost's ability "to find the ordinance a matrix for the extraordinary."

The poem "Birches" is an example it contains the image of slender it contains the image of slender trees bent to the ground temporarily by a boy's swinging on them or permanently by an ice-storm. But as the poem unfolds, it become clear that the speaker is concerned not only with child's play and natural phenomena, but also with the point at which physical and spiritual reality merge. He says:

"When I see brightness bend to light and right. Across the lines of straighter darker trees. I like to think some boy's been swinging them."

However, "Birches" shows his realistic attitude to life and it also tells us that man constantly aspires for things beyond the world.

3. Discussion

Frost suggests that one should not do it rather one should know and love the things of the world and let the afterlife take case of its self, so the Speaker says that:

"Earth's the right plans for love. I don't know where it's likely to go better."

Frost uses the Method of indirection as used by many modern poets like T.S. Eliot and others. In his poetry he juxtaposes rural and urban. In mending wall Ancient world is juxtaposed with modern one. The necessity of fences is emphasized, implicitly criticizing the craze for pulling down fences and imposing brotherhood.

"And some are loaves and some of nearly balls, we have to use spell to make them balance."

Frost thought the depiction of modernity in nature depiction his interest on nature. According to frost the world of nature is not world of dreams but is much harsher and demanding than the urban world. His poetry emphasizes the otherness of nature. His approach towards nature is scientific, rational and objective. He presents both bright and bleak aspects of nature. He proves his point by giving the example of his poem stopping woods in a snowy evening:

"Woods are lovely dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
A mile to go before I sleep:"

He puts another example of his poem 'After Apple Picking' where he gets bored with his routine and mundane job. There is no more interest in apple picking. The poet seems to be feeling tired with his busy life and feed up with the task of apple picking; he says:

"But I am done with apple picking now."

In his poem "Two Tramps in Mud Time", beneath the apparently beautiful calm there is lurking turmoil and storms.

"Be glad of water but don't forget. The lurking frost in the earth beneath."

Hence his comment on the human issue of modern world his realistic treatment of Nature, his employment of symbolic and metaphysical techniques and the projection of the awareness of human problems of the modern society in his poetry as the epitome of modernity.

Frost is depicting modernity by using pastoral technique in his poetry. His Pastoralism:

"an exploration upstream, past the city with its river side factories and shipping or against the current of time a change to the clean waters of the source".

4. Conclusion

One thing which also proves modernity of his poetry is his psycho- analytical approach towards the depiction of

characters in his poetry psycho – Analysis is one of the features of modernity. His poem 'His Burial', the over wrought mother who is cracking up under a burden of grief over her child's death. In this way his poetry is the true depiction of modernity.

Therefore, his poetry reveals the aspect of modernity to a great extent. The terrifying nature of some of his poem is one of the aspects of modernity. Lionel Trilling calls him 'A terrifying Poet' and says that "The Universe that Frost conceives is a terrifying universe".

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