



Robert Frost and His Old Fashion Way to Be New

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Abstract

Robert Frost is one of the Modernist poets, famous for being a “regional poet.” Although he belongs to the period of great poets such as T.S Eliot, Ezra Pound, Carlos Williams, and E. E. Cumming, he avoids using the sophisticated diction of those self-declared Modernist poets. The clarity of Frost’s diction, the colloquial rhythms, the simplicity of his images and above all the folksy speaker, are intended to make his poems look natural and unplanned. In the context of Modernist movement, however, they can be seen as a thoughtful reply to high Modernism’s fondness for obscurity and difficulty. Though Frost’s ruralism affirmed the Modernist distaste for cities, he was writing the kind of traditional, accessible poetry that Modernists argued could no longer be written. Through this traditional form and simple language he could express the same themes and problems of modern life that Eliot discussed in his really difficult poems. This article tries to discuss about the fact that against the comments on his style as being traditional in modern era, Frost was a real Modernist but in his old fashion way.

Keywords: Frost, regional poet, pastoralism, traditional formalism, isolation, alienation

Introduction

Robert Frost is one of the most well-known and beloved American poets of the 20th century. His poems, which are often about woods and farms of New England and are written in rural, every day language, constitute a body of writing that looks a good deal like folk wisdom. Frost was born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874. After the death of his father, a journalist, he moved with his mother and sister to eastern Massachusetts near his paternal grandparents. He wrote his first poems while a student at school. He became interested in reading and writing poetry during his high school years in Lawrence, enrolled at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, in 1892, and later at Harvard University in Boston, though he never earned a formal college degree. Frost published *A Boy’s Will* in 1913 and *North of Boston* in 1924. By the 1920s, he was the most celebrated poet in America, and with each new book including *New*

Hampshire (1923), *A further Range* (1936), *Steeple Bush* (1947), and *In The Clearing* (1962) his fame and honors (including four Pulitzer Prizes) increased.

Frost has been regarded as a “regional poet”. His region was New England of two best states in the U.S.A. He never felt the slightest desire to include all America within the scope of his poetry. His regionalism resembles Emily Dickenson’s. The New England provides him the stories, attitudes, characters, which are appropriate to his needs. He falls in love with the New England tradition and it gives him strength.

Frost holds a unique and almost isolated position in American letters. For literary historians of twentieth century, the major problem in placing Frost on a literary landscape dominated by modernists is- what Robert Faggen has discussed as the question of Frost’s “pastoralism”- his interest in the rural world, and his avoidance of the most typical of modernist arenas, the city and the urban world in general. According to James M. Fox “Frost stands at the crossroads of 19th century American poetry and modernism though his career fully spans the modern period and though it is impossible to speak of him as anything other than a modern poet, it is difficult to place him in the main tradition of modern poetry.” (qtd. in Belinda Jack’s representation). His interest in rural life makes everyone consider him a kind of neo-romantic lover of countryside, a poet working and thinking about the countryside as the domain of simple pleasure and honest values. But the world that Frost has created in his poems is neither simple nor idyllic. Frost is a modern poet in his rural, working class persona, his traditional, metered voice and use of colloquial phrases, as well as the mundane subjects of most of his poems.

Discussion

Frost’s relationship with modernist movement in American poetry was a rather distance one: his friendship with Pound lasted only a few weeks and he hardly knew Eliot or Williams. According to Christopher Beach “Frost ridiculed the rout of modernist experimentation followed by Pound, Eliot, Williams, and Cumming, preferring to adhere to more traditional forms of poetry.” (14). Frost’s personal attitude, which probably contributed to the