



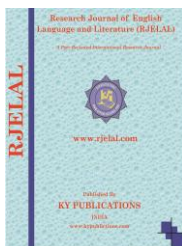
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

PASTORAL REPRESENTATIONS IN SELECT WORKS OF ROBERT FROST

K.R.VIDHYA

Assistant Professor, Department of English, VISTAS



ABSTRACT

Pastoral art of narrative style has played pivotal role in major works of Robert frost. This art of writing emerged a beautiful way of narrative technique to narrate the simple rural lifestyle. Frost art of pastoral technique captives the readers both literally and figuratively, his longingness for nature, modifies his idea of living and surviving. He stressed out that survival or living should be the purest form one could ask for in this world. With all this abundant beauty of nature; human should alter the form of living by endowing with all kindness and honest. This article revived selected poems of frost and his art of pastoral writing and concluding with the idea that emotional attachment of the author's personal life has turned him to believe in nature more than trusting human race.

INTRODUCTION

The word pastoral has been employed to designate a distinct species of literature but when viewed alternately as a genre, mode, or convention in any literary expressions, it refers to the tradition of a lineage of creative works that idealize rural life and landscapes. Thus, pastoral is a mode of literature in which the writer employs various techniques to place the complex life into a simple one.

Paul Alpers in his book *what is pastoral* distinguishes pastoral as a mode rather than a genre, and he bases this distinction on the recurring attitude of power; that is to say that pastoral literature holds a humble perspective toward nature. Pastoral as a mode occurs in many types of literature (poetry, drama, etc.) as well as genres (most notably the pastoral elegy).

Terry Gifford, a prominent literary theorist, defines pastoral in three ways in his critical book *Pastoral*. The first way emphasizes the historical literary perspective of the pastoral in which authors recognize and discuss life in the

country and in particular the life of a shepherd. The second type of the pastoral literature is that it describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban and the third type of pastoral depicts the country life with derogative classifications.

ORIGIN OF THE ART

Pastoral poetry was professed to be a portrayal of rural life; therefore, it is necessary to examine the methods used by various poets in depicting pastoral element. It flourished most vigorously in the age of Theocritus and Virgil among the ancients, and during the Renaissance in modern times. But with the passing of time pastoral poetry lost its naturalness and simplicity, and became artificial and conventional. The unhappy shepherd, the fair shepherdess, the wandering flock, the daisies and violets, the dance on the village green, the flowery wreath, and the oaten pipe, all came to be regarded as the essential part of the pastoral, and were used by one poet after another, as the conventional decor of their poems.

Pastoral literature continued after Hesiod with the Poetry of the Hellenistic Greek Theocritus several of whose *Idylls* are set in the countryside and involve dialogues between herdsmen. Italian poets revived the pastoral from the 14th century onwards, first in Latin then in the Italian vernacular. The fashion for pastoral continued to spread throughout Renaissance Europe.

The formal English pastoral continued to flourish during the 18th century, eventually dying out at the end. During this time period Ambrose Phillips, who is often overlooked because of Pope, modeled his poetry after the Native English form of Pastoral, employing it as a medium to express the true nature and longing of Man. He strove to write in this fashion to conform to what he thought was the original intent of Pastoral literature. As such, he centered his themes on the simplistic life of the Shepherd, and, personified the relationship that humans once had with nature. Therefore, that were used by all the predecessors were either realistic based on observation or idealistic based on imagination.

However, Frost's poetry is entirely free from such conventional and artificial elements. He has succeeded in capturing the simplicity and naturalness of the earliest Greek masters of this form. The greatness of Frost as a pastoral poet has been universally recognized. The bulk of his poetry deals with rural life. One has simply to glance through Frost's *Collected Poems* to form an idea of the importance of rural life in the poetry of Frost.

Born on 26th March 1874, four-time Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Frost is no stranger to even the most casual reader of poetry. The poet immortalized nature, seasons and landscapes in his work. His poetry straddles two different worlds – one that held the traditions of a century gone by and the other, that was about modern views and ways that were infiltrating American poetry at that time. But he was in no rush to embrace the contemporary style of writing. He stuck to what he had tried and found true, albeit with ideas of his own. He wrote both in rhyme and free verse, showing a fondness for the former form.

At the age of ten Frost was brought from San Francisco, his birthplace, to New England, where eight generations of his family had been rooted. Since then New England was his home, and he became its best poetic interpreter. At 19, Frost asked his skeptical grandfather for 20-year apprenticeship to poetry. He was a canny prophet, in that time he published less than 20 poems and earned little from them.

In England, however, he found ready and perceptive appreciation among the Georgian poets. The praise of English reviewers opened American eyes; returning to America at the age of 40, Frost was hailed by Ezra Pound and other sponsors of the 'New Poetry' by editors and by publishers. Since then his steady but unhurried production received its deserved recognition. In 1912 he settled in England with his wife and four children determined to write poetry without further scandal to friends or family.

Following the first two volumes, his most important books are *Mountain Interval* (1916), *New Hampshire* (1923) *West Running Brook* (1928), *Collected Poems* (1930-1939), *A Further Range* (1936), *A Witness Tree* (1942), *A Masque of Reason* (1945), *A Steeple Bush* (1947), *A Masque of Mercy* (1947), *Complete Poems* (1949).

Much of Frost's poetry is a new kind of 'pastoral', versed in country things, with senses alert to the object, builds slowly from observation to symbolic meaning. *Birches* starting with a lonely boy's diversion, tells of the charm of escapism and the needed return to earth; *Mending Wall* tells of tradition bound exclusiveness; *Stopping by Woods on Snowy Evening* sets absorption in the dark loveliness of the woods against the promises that man must keep. *The Cow in Apple Time*, *the Runaway*, and *Mowing* are other examples of precise sense impressions built up to revelations of man. However suggestive, is always separate from man.

To call Robert Frost a pastoral poet is at once to say too much and too little. Frost himself said that "he first heard the speaking voice in poetry in Virgil's eclogues". Virgil's ten eclogues are models of pastoral poetry, dialogues or monologues of

shepherds dwelling in a mythic arcadia, a land of innocence and beauty. Ezra Pound shrewdly called frost's poems modern georgics. He was referring to Virgil's four didactic poems about farm work that form the basis of a tradition that stands in contrast to pastoral; it is a type of didactic poetry extolling hard labor and a scientific approach to nature.

Pastoral is a rich and complex tradition. Not only a genre or set of conventions, it is often a mode by which authors from Theocritus and Virgil to Dante and Milton as well as Wordsworth and Thoreau have explored questions of human equality, man's place in nature, and the nature of faith. If by pastoral one means a mode that emphasizes the beauty and simplicity of country life, then frost's poetry seems decidedly dissonant. But frost's dissonant renewal of this ancient tradition allowed him to explore complex, modern attitudes about democracy, science, and faith.

Pastoral has an important place in American ideology. The puritan pursuit of renewal through rebellion against ecclesiastical corruption often invokes the pastoral longing of perfection through simplicity. Thomas Jefferson's praise of the way of Agrarianism echoes Greek ideals even if his prophetic fear of the destruction of Agrarian life sounded prophetic Hebraic chords. Shortly after his collected poems were published in 1930 (for which he received his second Pulitzer prize), frost affirmed the relationship of his poetry to a fundamental pastoral idea, the praise of rustic over urban life: Poetry is more often of the country than the city.

Poetry is very rural- rustic. It might be taken as a symbol of man, taking its rise from individuality and seclusion. Written first for the person that writes and then going out into its social appeal and use. Just so the race lives best to itself- first to itself, storing strength in the more individual life of the country, of the farm- then going to market and socializing in the industrial city.

The characteristic features of a pastoral poetry are that it is a very ancient genre of poetry. It deals with the loves and lives of shepherds and shepherdesses, and other such country folk. They live far from towns, and spend their lives singing sometimes mourning the loss of a sheep or a fellow

shepherd or a love affair that has gone wrong. The contrast between man and nature is brought out. Though the poets write about nature, the subject is humanity. The countryside is idealized, since writers of the genre are usually city people. Portrayal of average human experience takes place by projecting it into a world remote and district life – Arcadia. There is always a desire to withdraw from the world and human struggle. The language generally used in ancient pastoral poetry was figurative but later the language of the common man came into use.

If we adhere to strict definitions the frost definitely appears out of place: his landscapes are often barren, his shepherds seem to be rather tough farmers, and contemplation always appears threatened and mingled with hard labor. This does not mean that Frost is satirizing the pastorals, if we recognize that pastoral literature has been filled with irony from the beginning and that its ideals of innocence and perfection are often seen through the lens of experience and failure. Frost plays on these old tensions and adds to them in ways that encompass more modern concerns about work, play, class, and gender in the context of a modern democracy.

His poetry depicts retreat, rather than escape from universal chaos as a way to reflect upon and strengthen the self. Frost has so often written about the rural landscape and wildlife that one can hardly avoid thinking of him as a nature poet. *To the Thawing Wind, Hyla Brook, The Oven Bird, Birches, and A Drumlin Woodchuck* -- one could cite such titles by the score. Frost began as a nature poet; *To a Moth Seen in winter, Rose Pogonias, Going for Water* are representative of his work before 1913, and the interest in nature was to persist throughout his career.

Frost's nature poetry is so excellent and so characteristic that it must be given a prominent place in any account of his art. In our attempt to understand this aspect of frost, the idea of pastoral proves useful. Not that the nature poems are to be considered as pastorals in any strict sense -- obviously the two kinds of poetry differ. In pastorals the subject is a special society, or, more generally, a way of life and nature is merely the setting within

which we see this. The pastoralist does not write about nature; he uses nature as his scene, and it is important only in that it defines the swain's point of view.

Nevertheless, Frost's nature poetry is closely related to his pastoralism. One might demonstrate the connection by pointing out how many poems combine both genres. Such pieces as *The Onset*, *Unharvested*, and *Evening in a Sugar Orchard* present vivid pictures of landscape, but in them the Yankee point of view through which nature is seen is as vital to the meaning as the things portrayed. This is not so in all the nature poems: in a great many others natural objects hold the center of interest, and the regional Arcadia with its Yankee characters is absent or unimportant.

The shift in subject is not surprising, for a poet of rural life would find it natural to write about the countryside, but the connection between the two poetic types is more fundamental than this. It consists of a similarity in thought, and hence, in a similarity of poetic design. The basic structure we have noted in his eclogues appears again as the dominant pattern in the nature poems. Both kinds of poetry seem to grow from a single way of looking at reality - the same perspective which creates pastorals when the poet's eyes are directed to rural life determines his vision of nature.

ANALYSIS

The poems that have been chosen for this study are: *After Apple Picking*, *Birches*, *Mending Wall*, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* and *Out*.

Frost makes his New England, the locale of his pastorals, a distinct place and renders truthful but personal observation of pastoral scenes. It is this rural world which provides him not only with the setting but also with the objects, the incidents, the events, and the characters he writes about. His personages are all New Englanders and his poetry is a record of their characters and habits, as well as of the various aspects of their life and activity, their beliefs, ideals, traditions, and codes of conduct. In *After Apple-Picking*, we get a true and interesting

picture of the tired farmer going home for rest after the day's labor of picking apples:

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

Towards heaven still And there's barrel that
I didn'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 scent of apples; I am drowsing off. (1-8)

At the end of a long day of apple picking,

the narrator is tired and thinks about his day. He has felt sleepy and even trance-like since the early morning, when he looked at the apple trees through a thin sheet of ice that he lifted from the drinking trough. He feels himself beginning to dream but cannot escape the thought of his apples even in sleep: he sees visions of apples growing from blossoms, falling off trees, and piling up in the cellar. As he gives himself over to sleep, he wonders if it is the normal sleep of a tired man or the deep winter sleep of death.

In terms of form, this poem is bizarre because it weaves in and out of traditional structure. Approximately twenty-five of the forty-two lines are written in standard iambic pentameter, and there are twenty end-rhymes throughout the poem. This wandering structure allows Frost to emphasize the sense of moving between a waking and dream-like state, just as the narrator does. The repetition of the term "sleep," even after its paired rhyme ("heap") has long been forgotten, also highlights the narrator's gradual descent into dreaming.

In some respects, this poem is simply about apple picking. After a hard day of work, the apple farmer completely fatigued but is still unable to escape the mental act of picking apples: he still sees the apples in front of him, still feels the ache in his foot as if he is standing on a ladder, still bemoans the fate of the flawless apples that fall to the ground and must be consigned to the cider press.

Yet, as in all of Frost's poems, the narrator's everyday act of picking apples also speaks to a more metaphorical discussion of seasonal changes and death. Although the narrator does not say when the

poem takes place, it is clear that winter is nearly upon him: the grass is "hoary," the surface of the water in the trough is frozen enough to be used as a pane of glass, and there is an overall sense of the "essence" of winter. Death is coming, but the narrator does not know if the death will be renewed by spring in a few months or if everything will stay buried under mindless snow for all eternity.

Because of the varying rhymes and tenses of the poem, it is not clear when the narrator is dreaming or awake. One possibility is that the entirety of the poem takes place within a dream. The narrator is already asleep and is automatically reliving the day's harvest as he dreams. This explanation clarifies the disjointed narrative — shifting from topic to topic as the narrator dreams — as well as the narrator's assertion that he was "well upon my way to sleep" (15) before the sheet of ice fell from his hands.

Another explanation is that the narrator is dying, and his rambling musings on apple picking are the fevered hallucinations of a man about to leave the world of the living. With that in mind, the narrator's declaration that he has done with apple-picking now has more finality, almost as if his vision of the apple harvest is a farewell. Even so, he can be satisfied in his work because, with the exception of a few apples on the tree, he fulfilled all of his obligations to the season and to himself. Significantly, even as he falls into a complete sleep, the narrator is unable to discern if he is dying or merely sleeping; the two are merged completely in the essence of the oncoming winter, and Frost refuses to tell the reader what actually happens.

He does not idealize the rustic and his life rather he presents him as he is with all his instincts and impulses, jealousies, loves and hatreds, with all the sordid details of the life he leads. The character chosen for this poem is from a rural background executing his day's work of apple picking:

Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
(28-31)

Thus, the above lines assert the traces of pastoral element — a simple life of a farmer.

The next poem for study is *Birches*. In this poem whenever the narrator looks at the birch trees in the forest, he imagines that the arching bends in their branches are the result of a boy "swinging" on them. He realizes that the bends are actually caused by ice storms - the weight of the ice on the branches forces them to bend toward the ground - but he prefers his idea of the boy swinging on the branches, climbing up the tree trunks and swinging from side to side, from earth up to heaven. The narrator remembers when he used to swing on birches and wishes that he could return to those carefree days.

This poem is written in blank verse with a particular emphasis on the "sound of sense." For example, when Frost describes the cracking of the ice on the branches, his selections of syllables create a visceral sense of the action taking place:

Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed
crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow
crust
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
(10-12)

A simple act like that of swinging on a branch is invested with rich symbolic significance. In the poem, the act of swinging on birches is presented as a way to escape the hard rationality or "Truth" of the adult world, if only for a moment. As the boy climbs up the tree, he is climbing toward "heaven" and a place where his imagination can be free. The narrator explains that climbing a birch is an opportunity to: "get away from earth awhile / And then come back to it and begin over" (49). A swinger is still grounded in the earth through the roots of the tree as he climbs, but he is able to reach beyond his normal life on the earth and reach for a higher plane of existence.

Originally, this poem was called "Swinging Birches," a title that perhaps provides a more accurate depiction of the subject. In writing this poem, Frost was inspired by his childhood experience with swinging on birches, which was a popular game for children in rural areas of New England during the time. Frost's own children were

avid "birch swingers," as demonstrated by a selection from his daughter Lesley's journal.

Frost highlights the narrator's regret that he can no longer find this peace of mind from swinging on birches. Because he is an adult, he is unable to leave his responsibilities behind and climb toward heaven until he can start fresh on the earth. In fact, the narrator is not even able to enjoy the imagined view of a boy swinging in the birches. In the fourth line of the poem, he is forced to acknowledge the "Truth" of the birches: the bends are caused by winter storms, not by a boy swinging on them.

Significantly, the narrator's desire to escape from the rational world is inconclusive. He wants to escape as a boy climbing toward heaven, but he also wants to return to the earth: both "going and coming back." The freedom of imagination is appealing and wondrous, but the narrator still cannot avoid returning to "Truth" and his responsibilities on the ground; the escape is only a temporary one.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is almost earnest in its simplicity, though close attention to the text shows it to be craftier than at first it appears. For example, as is often the case in Frost's first-person lyrics, the speaker of the poem is not to be mistaken for the poet himself, nor is the "I" in a Frost never forgets for long the "wearisome condition of humanity", the hardness and bitterness of rural life, as well as of life elsewhere. Misery, disillusionment and frustration, and emotional isolation are facts, and the poet does not shut his eyes to these unpleasant aspects of life.

His rural world is not only a conventional Arcadia, or a dream world, into which one may escape for a time from the sorrow and suffering of life. Rather, this rural world is a microcosm of the macrocosm, a symbol and representation of life at large, with its joys and pleasures, but also with its heart-aches, fever and fret and weariness. It is a world in which hired-men neglected and isolated, 'come home', to die, and in which the death of a tender child leads to quarrels and alienations between husbands and wives. It is a world in which

man lives in a hostile environment and suffers and struggles against heavy odds.

He may occasionally forget the hard reality, and fly into a realm of fancy, but such flights are only momentary, and the poet is soon back to earth. Earth is the proper place for him, for love, as well as for work. And it is this realism which imparts such universal significance and appeal to the poet's treatment of life in New England countryside. Frost's poetry appeals even to those who are not familiar with New England, are not interested in New Englanders, only because it deals truthfully with hard facts, facts which are common to life in all ages and countries. Frost's lyric always credible or aware of the complexity of his reflections.

Thus, in this poem, the speaker indicates that his horse thinks it "queer" for them to stop, though it is evident that whatever the horse may think or feel, it is the speaker who projects his own anxiety onto the horse. The poem is constructed as the speaker's reflections of the event, and the first line indicates the speaker's sense that the woods are owned. Thus, some nameless feeling of impropriety or perhaps social violation keeps him from his ease.

Consequently, his abrupt dismissal of the wood's allure and his lofty response that he has "promises to keep," (14) though idealistic and possibly true, sounds like a dodge. One must work, one must do one's duty, one must keep one's promises, for it is only in such work that real happiness is to be found. Momentarily he might be lost in dreams, the lovely woods may enchant him for a while (*Stopping by woods on a Snowy Evening*) but the charm is soon broken, and he remembers:

But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep. (13-16)

To read *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* as simply a story about a weary traveller longing for the comforts of home, or even to allegorize it as the journey of Everyman, is to miss the subtle qualities that identify it as a Frost lyric. For one thing, Frost balances the onward rhythmic pull of the verse against the obvious stasis of the

poetic scene itself: The speaker never arrives, nor really leaves; he is simply always stopping.

Frost also arranges the natural scene so as to heighten the drama of the encounter and to reveal its symbolic density. Finally, Frost's sense of dramatic and contextual irony undercut the simplicity of the narrative. After all, despite the speaker's confident assurance about where he is going and the miles he has yet to go, his restiveness (projected onto the horse) and the vagueness of the future "promises" he must keep reveal his assurance to be, in a word, a fiction. This is an important point for Frost. Frost celebrated the necessity of imaginative extravagance in human affairs, but he knew well enough that the imagination traps as well as frees.

Mending Wall is another famous poem which highlights the pastoral element. Every year, two neighbours meet to repair the stone wall that divides their property. The narrator is sceptical of this tradition, unable to understand the need for a wall when there is no livestock to be contained on the property, only apples and pine trees. He does not believe that a wall should exist simply for the sake of existing. Moreover, he cannot help but notice that the natural world seems to dislike the wall as much as he does: mysterious gaps appear, boulders fall for no reason.

The neighbour, on the other hand, asserts that the wall is crucial to maintaining their relationship, asserting, "Good fences make good neighbours" (45). Over the course of the mending, the narrator attempts to convince his neighbour otherwise and accuses him of being old-fashioned for maintaining the tradition so strictly. No matter what the narrator says, though, the neighbour stands his ground, repeating only: "Good fences make good neighbours." (45)

This poem is the first work in Frost's second book of poetry, *North of Boston*, which was published upon his return from England in 1915. While living in England with his family, Frost was exceptionally homesick for the farm in New Hampshire where he had lived with his wife from 1900 to 1909. Despite the eventual failure of the farm, Frost associated his time in New Hampshire

with a peaceful, rural sensibility that he instilled in the majority of his subsequent poems.

Mending Wall is autobiographical on an even more specific level: a French-Canadian named Napoleon Guay had been Frost's neighbour in New Hampshire and the two had often walked along their property line and repaired the wall that separated their land. Ironically, the most famous line of the poem ("Good fences make good neighbours") was not invented by Frost himself, but was rather a phrase that Guay frequently declared to Frost during their walks. This particular adage was a popular colonial proverb in the middle of the 17th century, but variations of it also appeared in Norway ("There must be a fence between good neighbours"), Germany ("Between neighbour's gardens a fence is good"), Japan ("Build a fence even between intimate friends"), and even India ("Love your neighbour, but do not throw down the dividing wall").

In terms of form, *Mending Wall* is not structured with stanzas; it is a simple forty-five lines of first-person narrative. Frost does maintain iambic stresses, but he is flexible with the form in order to maintain the conversational feel of the poem.

In the poem itself, Frost creates two distinct characters that have different ideas about what exactly makes a person a good neighbour:

He is all pine and I am apple orchard
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell
him.

He only says, 'good fences make good
neighbours.' (24-27)

The narrator deplores his neighbour's preoccupation with repairing the wall; he views it as old-fashioned and even archaic. After all, he quips, his apples are not going to invade the property of his neighbour's pinecones. Moreover, within a land of such of such freedom and discovery, the narrator asks, are such borders necessary to maintain relationships between people? Despite the narrator's sceptical view of the wall, the neighbour maintains his seemingly "old-fashioned" mentality, responding to each of the narrator's disgruntled questions and rationalizations with nothing more

than the adage: "Good fences make good neighbours." (45)

As the narrator points out, the very act of mending the wall seems to be in opposition to nature. Every year, stones are dislodged and gaps suddenly appear, all without explanation. Every year, the two neighbours fill the gaps and replace the fallen boulders, only to have parts of the wall fall over again in the coming months. It seems as if nature is attempting to destroy the barriers that man has created on the land, even as man continues to repair the barriers, simply out of habit and tradition.

Ironically, while the narrator seems to begrudge the annual repairing of the wall, Frost subtly points out that the narrator is actually more active than the neighbour. It is the narrator who selects the day for mending and informs his neighbour across the property. Moreover, the narrator himself walks along the wall at other points during the year in order to repair the damage that has been done by local hunters.

Despite his sceptical attitude, it seems that the narrator is even more tied to the tradition of wall-mending than his neighbour. Perhaps his sceptical questions and quips can then be read as an attempt to justify his own behaviour to himself. While he chooses to present himself as a modern man, far beyond old-fashioned traditions, the narrator is really no different from his neighbour: he too clings to the concept of property and division, of ownership and individuality.

Ultimately, 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 a

Mending Wall pictures an incident from rural life, but in reality, it is highly suggestive.

The wall symbolizes all kind of barriers which divide man from man. Racial prejudices, conflicts between nations, religious and economic quarrels, are all suggested in this way. Thus, does the poet suggest values and ideals which lie much beyond the rural life, and which characterize life on different and higher planes. It all deal with incidents and characters taken from rural life, but these events and characters are invested with a rich symbolic significance. The rural world holds the centre of his attention, but it is made to imply and suggest much more.

In the poem *Out Out*, Frost portrays young man putting firewood with a buzz saw in New England. Near the end of the day, the boy's sister announces that it is time for dinner and, out of excitement, the boy accidentally cuts his hand with the saw. He begs his sister not to allow the doctor to amputate the hand but inwardly realizes that he has already lost too much blood to survive. The boy dies while under anaesthesia, and everyone goes back to work.

Frost uses the method of personification to great effect in this poem. The buzz saw, though technically an inanimate object, is described as a cognizant being, aggressively snarling and rattling as it does its work. When the sister makes the dinner announcement, the saw demonstrates that it has a mind of its own by "leaping" out of the boy's hand in its excitement. Frost refuses to lay blame for the injury on the boy, who is still a "child at heart."

In addition to blaming the saw, Frost blames the adults at the scene for not intervening and telling the boy to "call it a day" before the accident occurred. Had the boy received an early excuse from the workday, he would have avoided cutting off his hand and would have been saved from death. Moreover, a mere half-hour break from his job would have allowed the boy to regain part of his childhood, if only for a moment.

Frost's emphasis on the boy's passivity and innocence in this situation is particularly significant in the context of the time period.

After the boy's hand is nearly severed, he is still enough of an adult to realize that he has lost too much blood to survive. He attempts to "keep the life from spilling" from his hand, but even that is only an attempt, since nothing can be done. Above all, though, the boy hopes to maintain his physical dignity in his death, rather than die with a missing hand. Again, Frost channels the horrors already occurring on the battlefields in Europe, where death from enemy shells was automatically devoid of dignity.

By the end of the poem, the narrator no longer has anything to say about the tragedy of the boy's death. While the first twenty-six lines contain elegant metaphors and descriptions of the scene, the final eight lines are detached and unemotional. The narrator's "So" and "No more to build on there" reveal that even the narrator is unable to find any explanation for why such a young boy had to die. Though the subject of the poem ends on a serious note, Frost yet presents rural objects, like the buzz saw highlighting the pastoral essence in the poem:

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard

And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood (1-2)

He draws a realistic picture of the sound and working of the buzz saw:

And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled, As it ran light, or had to bear a load. (7-8)

In the last line of the poem, the narrator enters a state of complete detachment, almost as if indifference is the only way to cope with the boy's death. Just as soldiers on the battlefield must ignore the bodies around them and continue to fight, the people of this New England town have nothing to do but move on with their lives. Frost presents rural characters and errands in his pastoral poems. Thus, Frost's universality arises from his study of the essentials of the human predicament as seen in a rural setting.

CONCLUSION

In Frost's representations of pastoral and nature, of course no modern nature poet will be able to free himself completely from the Romantic

way of treating nature, and in Frost there are many reminiscences of Wordsworth, Keats, and others. But what Frost has derived from tradition is adapted to his own quite different purposes. One may hear the Romantic harmonies in his work, but they reverberate within a world quite changed.

This is not an ironic rejection of the Romantic attitude; Frost simply does not look at nature through the same eyes. Though critics have pointed out his eminently reasonable view of nature, his farmer's sagacity and unwillingness to go beyond brute facts, have failed to see the essential difference between his nature poetry and that to which the nineteenth century has conditioned us.

Frost's poetry is apt to be lost in such an extent that he may ignore the realistic aspect of his poetic vision and sensibility. Pastoralism usually takes resource to romantic treatment; everything is idealized and glorify and even the common place scenes and aspects appear to be bathed in the glow of imagination. With all his love of pastoralism Frost adopted realism as the basis of his art, and thus projected all his poems with pastoral features.

WORKS CITED

Primary Source

Barlow, Adrian. *Robert Frost Selected Poems*. New York; Oxford University Press, 1998.

Stern, M.R. Gross, S.L. *The Twentieth Century American Literature Survey*. New Delhi; N. Gopinath Light and Life Publishers, 1975.

Secondary Source

Alpers, Paul. *What is Pastoral?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Faggen, Robert. *The Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Gifford, Terry. *The New Critical Idiom*. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.

Hilther, Ken. *What Else Is Pastoral? Renaissance Literature and the Environment*. Cornell; University Press, 2011.

Thompson, Lawrence. *Selected Letters of Robert Frost*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.

Lynen, J.F. *Nature and Pastoralism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960.

Oliver, Egbert.S. *An Anthology American Literature 1890-1965*. Eurasia Publishing House, 2008.

Patterson, Annabel. *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.

Poggioli, Renato. *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal*. Harvard University Press, 1975.

Virgil. *The Eclogues*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

WEBSITES

<http://neoenglishsystem.blogspot.com/2010/12/write-essay-on-pastoral-art-of-robert.html>.

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/robert_frost.