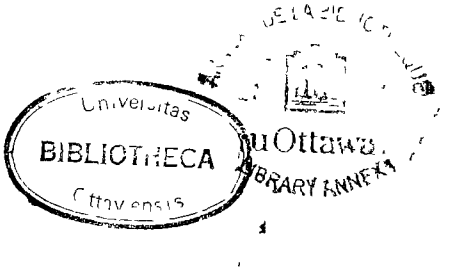
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THE ART AND PHILOSOPHY OF RECONCILIATION IN ROBERT FROST

by Lewis Wesley Barnes

This thesis is presented to the English Department of the Graduate School of the Faculty of Arts for the University of Ottawa. It is presented as part of the requirement for the Ph.D in English.



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Lewis Wesley Barnes, born January 3rd, 1916, Providence, Rhode Island , was awarded the Degree of Bachelor of Physical and Health Education by the University of Toronto in 1949. He was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts by the same University in 1951. The degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon him by the University of Ottawa for his work in the field of English. The title of his thesis for the Master's degree was:"The Elizabethan Note In Christopher Fry."

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A NOTE ON THE PLAN OF THE THESIS

Since this thesis is meant to be a synthesis, the whole of its many parts must be synthesized and reconciled at its conclusion. Part Three, Chapter Ten, is not, therefore, a mere review nor a repetition of earlier material, but it is a blending of these many aspects of the poet to present a clearer and more complete picture of the whole of Frost- Frost, the poet and thinker, rather than Frost, the nature poet, or Frost, the New Englander, and so forth.

Since Chapter Ten is the final reconciliation, the preceding chapters do not end with complete summaries of their contents. These summaries are reserved for fusion in Chapter Ten- where they contribute more logically and clearly to the whole of Frost and to the whole Frost. It is not a summary of summaries; it is a blending into the wholeness of a necessary unity from the essential parts.

A word of warning is addressed to the reader who might consider the first sub-section of each chapter to delay the immediate approach to Frost. In view of the fact that over four hundred articles from many critics, who dwelt on every conceivable aspect of Frost, were studied with a view to synthesis, the first part of each chapter is needed to clarify the sub-sections which follow. It is of interest and importance to note that the writing of the first sub-section in each chapter followed that of other sub-sections.

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the appreciation of form and content in literature, there are four avenues of approach. First, the author is comprehended through his own appreciation, spoken or written, of his own works, or of those of other artists. Second, understanding is gained through the reader's intuitive frames of reference- a somewhat dangerous resort when used by itself. Third, the writer is evaluated from his art by the reader. Fourth, the writer is considered from a comparative standpoint; that is, he is compared with contemporary and past artists in his field- these comparisons rest on the opinions of recognized critics. He is, in all four of these, considered as subscribing to or revolting from established artistic movements. Thus, he may be evaluated from the psychological and philosophical systems of art.

Therefore, careful consideration of the writer and of his efforts must, to some degree, consider all four of these approaches. This consideration is particularly crucial in a work that purports, as this does, to synthesize form and content of an artist's poetic genius.

The purpose then, of this thesis, is to synthesize the poetry and statements of Robert Lee Frost in the light of four highways to artistic appreciation, critical and creative.

In general, I will hold fast to the meaning of the term "synthesis" as being "the combination of parts so as to form a whole."[1]; more specifically,I will hold fast to the meaning, as well, " the combination of separate elements of thought or sensation into a whole."[2]

This synthesis of Robert Frost is held to be necessary because: first, the essays, reviews and books written about this poet and his works have been, for the most part, analyses; second, the addresses given by Frost and the few written statements extant- a few available through the prefaces to his books of poems, some few more the result of stenographic reports on his lectures, and still few more through short articles coaxed from his pen- are not systematized treatments of his own art; and third, what Frost discusses is seldom specifically related to schools of literary thought and to past or contemporary fellow artists. It will be incumbent on this writer to take as many of these various factors into consideration in deriving an answer in terms of a whole. The synthesis will cover the period of his earliest poetry until now.[3]

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[1] G & C.Merriam Co., Websters Collegiate Dictionary, Toronto,Hunter Rose, Ltd., 1941, p.1013.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The last comprehensive treatment on Frost was in 1942 when Lawrance Thompson had his book,Fire and Ice published by Henry Holt and Company.

While this list is not exhaustive and will not comprise every point under consideration in this thesis, the following evaluations of Frost will outline the pressing need for a whole verdict on the New England poet. He is considered to be much like Virgil, nothing like Virgil; he is in the deep tradition of Wordsworth, but fundamentally opposed to him; he is a worshipper of fact, but a devotee to fancy; he is international in spirit, but a hermit; he has the dual aspects of observation and implication; he is a progressive "traditionalist"; he at once is a slave to but a destroyer of custom; he is the master of precise but circumlocutory psychology; he paints his pictures in black and white, but they are, in reality, delicately shaded. He is at once superficial and retiring as well as deep and personalized; he is amoral but moral; he lacks the spiritual quality, but he is Christian in sentiment; he has his feet buried deeply in the soil of temporal reality, but in effect he soars in the strata of cosmic thought; he is the acme of the rational, but movingly irrational; his poetry is prose, and his prose is poetry; he is selfishly generous; he epitomizes both the concrete and the abstract; in short; he is one and its opposite at the same time.

This list represents what Frost has himself stated and what his reviewers have found. If the evaluations are true, paradox exists everywhere in his life and in his works.

Many critics have found this concentrated contradiction to exist in fairly even weighting; other critics have found him to be, for example, "concrete", while others found him to be entirely "abstract." It is not suggested that this paradox and divergence represent the results of poor criticism and of mediocre critics; to the contrary, it will be shown that the criticism, analytical in nature, has come from scholars of no small acumen. Sample criticism has been drawn from such critics and respected artists as the following: Lascelles Abercrombie, Edward Thomas, Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, Wilfred Gibson, James Stephens, Dorothy Fisher, Padraic Colum, Louis Untermeyer, Ludwig Lewisohn, Christopher Morley, the French critics, Feuillerat and Chamaillard and the German critic, Schwarz. Considerable divergence is evident among those named as to Frost's art and meaning.

Together with these critics, above mentioned, who wrote from the period 1914-1947, are associated W.H.Auden, C.Day Lewis, Paul Engle and Edwin Muir. They wrote "Four Prefaces to a Book"[4]; these four, writing opinions on Frost at the same time, also arrived at widely parted conclusions. Finally, there remains the self-critic, Frost, himself, who, oblique in all his statements, never comes back to the same point in his prose explanations of his poetry.

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[4] Robert Frost, Selected Poems, "Four Prefaces to a Book", London, Jonathan Cape, 1936.

There have been two attempts to correlate the matter and style of Robert Frost; not only in terms of his paradoxical statements and poetry, but also in terms of previous criticism.[5] The net result of the acute work has been to derive a series of statements which do not lend themselves to complete synthesis. For example, Louis Untermeyer, in frank and puzzled honesty, concludes that Frost has gone his own way; but, unfortunately, Untermeyer cannot state where that may be. On the other hand, Lawrance Thompson, who produced his book just prior to Untermeyer's popular commentary, concludes that the synthesis may be arrived at from a position called Frost's "Golden Mean." It is both pertinent and relevant to examine briefly this mean, for the idea of synthesis employed in this thesis differs radically.

This mean is a middle position; from this middle position Frost can escape involvement. He can depict reason and desire; he can elucidate on fact and fancy; he can dabble with reason and emotion; he can see the temporal on the one side and the spiritual on the other without being forced to come to any conclusion in which he personally enters. From a middle ground stoicism, he rises to the supreme arbiter, in that a suggestion which happens, for example, to be tipped slightly toward one opposite wins the day for that particular point involved.

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[5] Louis Untermeyer, The Road Not Taken, N.Y., Holt, 1943, and Lawrance Thompson, Fire and Ice, N.Y., Holt, 1942.

At the same time enough emphasis is given to the opposition in any case to hint that at another time and place the issue might be different. This advantage of position, whereby the poet may be in but not of life, gives him a unique position. Among the many contraries that are resolved from this mean, Thompson[6] cites the resolution of the "too-just and the too merciful." Frost's position, detached and objective, permits him to use the concrete fact to establish the border line where justice becomes too severe and where mercy becomes false sentimentality. Thompson goes on to state that Frost has arrived at this happy position through native genius, personal experience, a sense of humor and a philosophic and spiritual skepticism.

Thompson considers, fairly enough, that Frost is unable to prove through intuition or through reason that life can be resolved in diametrically opposed halves- reason and desire, the heart and the mind, and faith and belief. He concludes that Frost settles for the observable fact despite its many acknowledged limitations. Frost enhances his poetic art to hold out the hope to all men that courage to strive and to take life for what it is, in each case, represents man's greatest glory. Thus, man's chief weapon against life is courage in action.

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[6] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere.

It is but fair to state that Frost has, by a few condensed remarks, given credence to Thompson's "golden mean." Thompson's thesis then resolves itself to this: The balance between life's contraries has been reached by Frost who has maneuvered himself into a position of "protected neutrality." He can be on a safe middle-ground of skepticism without giving up faith and without denying denial. By the use of the concrete observable fact he can apportion the claims of both belief and disbelief and make them, if not miscible, at least endurable. It must be granted, too, that Frost has refused, point blank, to choose between two extremes. His refusal has not, however, been accompanied by any elucidation of his position, for he avoids poetic controversies.

Thompson has received some support from Mark Van Doren, who, in his statement defending Frost against lack of will to choose, stated:

> Mr. Frost's place (in the poetical scene) is and always has been singularly central. He has had nothing to do with the extremes where most of our shouting has been heard...Nor is it the way of compromise. There is an ignoble way of avoiding extremes. It is in the way of being nobody and of saying nothing; of never, at any rate being or saying enough to count.... the better way consists in occupying or touching both extremes at once, and inhabiting all the space between.....[7]

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[7] Mark Van Doren,"The Permanence of Robert Frost", in the American Scholar, Vol.5., No.2., Spring, 1936.

In Chapter One there will be contention with the positions of Thompson and Van Doren in order to show that, from the consideration of Frost's whole art and philosophy, both critics, by their analytical treatment, have failed to show Frost's real position. This is one of synthesis by which the often conflicting elements within the individual are resolved into a whole outlook on life.

At the same time the thesis will, in Chapter One, develop the precise meaning of "art", "philosophy" and "reconciliation" as applicable to the thesis. Also, in order to have available the tools and materials for a well-rounded synthesis, a short summary of the poet's life and writing will be presented.

A survey of the principles elucidated by the critics as to the poet Frost's verse will be included in the following chapter. Having developed the intuitive approach, having defined the terms common to this thesis and having stated the position taken by the main critics, the chapter will close with a short statement as to how the thesis will proceed with its treatment of art, philosophy and reconciliation in terms of Robert Lee Frost.

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE

KEY TERMS AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON ROBERT FROST

1- Synthesis by Art and Philosophy of Reconciliation

Van Doren's criticism and that of Thompson, while over a decade old, represent the most organized approach to an evaluation of the poet in whole terms. The poet has dealt more directly with philosophy since their earlier treatment, but their criticism is so weighty that full force and attention must be rendered to it.

In building the foundation for Frost's position in the "golden mean", Thompson isolated several instances- later to be considered in detail- that refer to fragments of philosophic systems for support. In more than one instance the philosophies and psychologies used to buttress that point are fundamentally opposed. It is strongly questionable as to whether or not such a procedure is valid. To choose, for example, a paragraph from Herbert Spencer which suggests that "the streams of everything run away"[8], and, at the same time to select from and to appeal to Kant's idealism as parallels for transience and permanence as observable in Frost, is, at the best, of doubtful validity for a synthesis. The idea finds

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[8] Spencer considered dissolution to be the unhappy epilogue of evolution; Bergson modified this concept to show that while there is a constant move toward dissolution, life is a vital force which struggles against dissolution.

a dreadful parallel in the "Living School" in education today. The disciples of materialistic evolution (Marx, Lunacharski and Watson) denied, consistently enough, if fallaciously, rationalism and action in terms of naturalism; advocates of the rational school, Hutchins and Babbitt, denied naturalism and action (volition) in terms of rationalism; the leader of the school for action and volition, John Dewey, denied the other two sides of this triangle in terms of volition. However, each of these philosophies of life synthesized its position; it was a whole, if faulty, structure.

The living school, fostered by gestaltism and Dalcroze and existentialism (Kierkegaard), stays outside the triangle of materialism, rationalism and volition in a transcendent position. In this position it can deny each and all: its extreme position must be a complete nihilism. To gain this position of omnipotence, Bergson is called on for his aid in placing the strings of manipulation in Frost's hands:

> In Frost's poetry, as in the writings of Bergson, life is a positive force which grows through the very persistence of its desires. And it seems clear that Bergson's images and ideas influenced Frost's images and metaphors; the struggle of life against the constant stream, the undertow, of matter; the stubborn and endless fight of the spirit against the lag and slack of things toward death. 9

Let it be clearly granted that it is not denied that Frost advocates a struggle against the problems of life through action, but it is objected to that one can explain Frost's position of opposites in terms of

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9 Lawrance Thompson,op.citere, p.197

an incomplete reference to, and adoption of, two philosophies as naturally and inherently hostile as those of Watson's psychological behaviorism and Bergson's existentialism.

In returning to the statement by Van Doren[10] in which he concludes that Frost has adopted the central position in such a happy way as to "occupy and touch both extremes at once, and to inhabit all the space between", it is relevant to reflect on the untenableness of any Olympian position for a poet where he, at leisure, may range the physical and supra- physical levels. As soon as he occupies these extremes at the same time and dwells in the space between the two halves, it is no longer a case of "ne plus ultra" alone but also one of quintessence and immanence; there is the autotelic involved as well as the didactic, the intuitive as well as the observable.

The thesis of action implicit and explicit in Frost opposes the idea of synthesis as an additive and separably observable force. The concept of synthesis used in this thesis is one of an integral action by which the poet is involved, not as a catalyst, but as an active and alterable component. The intuitive, the rational and material blend

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10 Van Doren, op. citere, p.8

both quantitatively and qualitatively so as to produce a result that is new and which possesses different qualities from its original constituents.

When sawdust and iron filings are spilled together no new product emerges; the constituents are still the same and remain unchanged. By altering the amount of each item placed in the mixture, one can be weighted relative to the other. This is analogous to the "golden mean" position.

There is another union, organic in nature-a chemical union. Diverse elements are fused, not mixed, so the resultants are different in appearance and qualities from the original substances fused. A slight variation results, not in an altered compound, but in a new substance. Other factors enter: the pressure, the heat and the skill of the chemist are important reconciling agents. Of course, in the hands of the poet,technical skill plays its role.

The poet fuses the denotative and connotative qualities of his material by his skill; a new result emerges which reconciles the poetic art and the matter which went into the poetic laboratory.

This analogy, by the nature of analogy, goes only so far before it can no longer carry the load. It is true that chemistry deals with physical elements which require an activity stimulus from an outside agency before their inherent qualities can react. The chemist provides this activating- together with such elements as atmospheric conditions, heat, pressure and all such phenomena characteristic of the laboratory. Here the chemist does occupy a position from which he can consciously influence and control the product, subject, of course, to the nature of the substances used. In the sense in which Van Doren speaks, the chemist occupies the middle position and the extremes as well. In one way of thinking he produces the compound according to his art of manipulation; however, from the nature of his tools and material, he cannot, himself, prevent that nature from manifesting itself under the proper conditions.

The poet is involved in the process of his poetry; he can, it is true, by his art, direct the reader and his audience, to some degree, to an emotional and/or rational experience, but a part of the poet other than his art is involved in the finished work. That is, it is exceedingly doubtful that the poet observes the hard facts of nature- physical and human- and delivers, through his art, a neutral

picture of an experience which can be separated into clearly defined material, rational and emotional planes. There are two instances when the analogy of the indifference of the chemist might parallel the detached position of an artist. First, if the skills of poetry are the differentiae between poetry and prose,[11] such a condition is ridiculous for a complete chapter in a physics text might be written in Spenserian stanzas; one would not call that poetry. For can anything be called literature, which, stating truth, is liable to be replaced each year by another text giving the same laws in better fashion? To be literature the creation must have, in itself, permanence. Frost, in this instance at least, is a poet; he is not a scientist.

The second intermedium point has its roots in the idea that the poet is merely an organism through which to express truth and goodness. This, of course, postulates a social rather than an individual mind- a fallacy of the "group mind" concept of social psychology. Irrespective of which of the two main streams[12] of poetry theory one may

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[11] Whately, Rhetoric, Part III, Chapter E, Para,3,p.117

[12] These two streams , generally stated are: "Art for,Art's Sake" and "Art for Wisdom's Sake." The former has such representatives as Jonson, Chapman and Poe, among others; and the latter Wordsworth, Emerson and Coleridge.

accept, both do consider that poetry is to be evaluated in terms of emotions and idiosyncratic experiences in terms of the poet. While any one exponent of these two poetic schools will do for the purpose of this thesis, the nineteenth century American poets, Emerson and Poe will be used for discussion. The reason for their selection rests on the fact that Frost has mentioned them in his limited discussion of poetry.

Both Poe and Emerson were thoroughly entrenched in the soil of idealism; that is, in the state which resolves all fact and phenomena into mental states. Nevertheless, Poe's and Emerson's conclusions lead to contrary poetic theory.

Poe decided that the true end of poetry rests in pleasure; if truth and goodness are a part and parcel of the poem, they are so as minor themes. On the other hand,Emerson concluded that the end of poetry is instruction and wisdom through beauty, truth and didacticism. Poe's idealism achieved its effect through a mechanically constructed series of sense percepts; Emerson resolved his problems by employing symbols of things suitable as a fitness of means for the end- which end was the imparting of wisdom in aim of the attainable,the present and the corporeal. While this thesis does not subscribe

to either extreme theory, the definition of synthesis as an integration of parts to produce a new product will be valid for each. A definition by I.A.Richards for "synthesis" may be considered a restatement of this writer's position in defining the operation: " poetry which includes the discordant qualities of an experience, fused together by the power of the imagination, resolving the discords and gaining a larger unity."[13] More specifically, the discordant elements relate to the diverse facts and fancies; the experience is that of the poet; the imagination is that creative element of the poet himself, not his art, that fuses these qualities. The larger unity is the product not immediately forseeable in terms of the original qualities.

Richards' quotation goes well along the path of explaining the term " reconciliation." It may be urged that the term synthesis would have applied equally well. The term would have served, but not, it is submitted," equally well." Not all synthesis, one may argue with Richards, involves contraries and discordant qualities- different, perhaps,but not always discordant and contrary. Let it be urged that "reconciliation" is a special form of pleading for synthesis, adopted and adapted for a special case- that of Robert Lee Frost, who consistently fuses the like, the contrary-the opposites.

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[13] I.A.Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, London, Paul,Trench, Trubner,Ltd. 1945, 295 pages.

Furthermore, in each case this writer holds "reconciliation" to fuse, and not to add together, elements of sense,feeling, tone and intention.[14] As a result of this reconciliation, this thesis maintains that a functional element results; as,for example, a functional metaphor.[15] A central metaphor (diverse element) involves the transfer of a word from one meaning to another; a complex metaphor piles, additively, one comparison on another; the result is a structural or functional metaphor. The same process may be applied to rhythm, metre, alliteration, onomatopoeia and other ornaments of poetry.

In the reconciliation of the meaning or content of the poem the same method is applicable. The material, the cognitive and the connative elements are fused from the central and the complex to an organic whole; this organic whole is much akin to Richards' " poetic meaning."[16] The organic whole is not attained until there is a final reconciliation of structure and texture- the poem then exists. Texture is the result of a reconciliation of functional metaphor, meter, rhythm and all the heterogenous detail other than the meaning of the poem. Structure is the result of a reconciliation of

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[14] I.A.Richards, op. citere.

[15] Brooks considers this to be an integration of the conventional and referential metaphor which produces a metaphor essential to the content of the poem and which has emotive and cognitive elements giving the poem verisimilitude.

[16] See note 13, page 8.

the cognitive, the connative and the sensory. This thesis suggests that therein is found the test for a great poet and great poetry.

Art in this thesis has two meanings. The first denotes the skill of the poet in the technical construction and arrangements of the poem, in the marshalling and use of imagery, sound, rhythm, metre, assonance,personification, irony, versification, allusion, anaphora, analogy,antithesis, chiaroscuro[17],color, enjambement,[18], inversion[19], litotes[20], metaphor, mood, periphrasis,[21]simile, stichomythia[22], substitution, synecdoche, thematic development[23] and wit.

The second meaning of art will refer to an over-all consideration of poetic theory and the problem of language. While beauty is an integral and recognizable part of human experience and, on the whole, unmistakeable in nature,until the time of Emmanuel Kant, it had been placed in an analogous position. Philosophers persisted, and still do, in reducing the experience of beauty into two independent parts.Some

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[17] The sort of writing in which opposites are mingled.

[18] This refers to run-on verse.

[19] The deliberate inversion of natural word order

[20] A variety of understatement for emphasis

[21] A roundabout approach to exposition

[22] Dramatic dialogue to heighten feeling

[23] The relationship of all elements of a piece of writing leading to an understanding of its general idea.

exponents of the objective pole of art subsumed it under the category of imitation, whose principal function is mimetic; art is the imitation of external phenomena. Imitation, a basic instinct, is the fact of human nature. In this theory of art, poetry is but an oral picture, in a photographic sense.

Aristotle, Dryden, and Pope, who subscribed to this theory never intended art to be the automatic mechanical copy of reality in toto. The creativeness of the artist was granted. Having in view the nature of imitation, one can see obviously that any creative power from the artist would be, not constructive, but destructive. For this keen intuitive, creative and spontaneous force of the artist would not yield truth if truth is that exact reproduction of reality!

The principle of "ars simia naturae" can not hold up! the Neo-Classicists suggested that art should make itself an ally of nature in order to correct, modify and perfect. On examining the poetic theory of this school carefully, one deems it just to observe that Aristotle and his followers concerned themselves primarily with finding laws to define the qualitative and quantitative deviations that the artist could be allowed to make from nature herself. Aristotle suggested that for the purposes of poetry every convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility: that is,

the artist should improve on his model.[24] Frost is not in this poetic tradition.

In the field of the aesthetic, Rousseau led the vanguard for the second principal school of art. His extreme position permitted him to postulate art as the "spilling over" involuntarily of the emotions; it was the opposite direction from that of Aristotle. Rousseau's immediate followers included the Germans Herder and Goethe. Wordsworth manifested this position, insofar as poetry is concerned, by suggesting poetry as expressive, not imitative, in that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[25] Whitman, Sterne, Rousseau, Herder, Goethe and Wordsworth failed to see that there were unhappy implications from this subjective pole of art. If they meant what they said, poetry would still be a reproduction, not of nature, but of the inner life of man as evinced through the emotional. It is not difficult to see the pantheism which resulted in the English "Romantic School"[26] in the complete and utter denial of the transcendent,

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[24] Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man, N.Y., Doubleday, 1953, p.179 passim.

[25] William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"(1800)

[26] English Romanticism is herein meant to include the period from Burns and Blake through the second set of romantic poets, Byron, Shelley and Keats.

in the doctrine that God and the universe are identical; that God is everything and that everything is God, "the romantic" would apprehend the universe in terms of feeling. Either the universe is personified to convey and to express by its nature the beauty, truth and wisdom discovered by the poet, or the poet must depend on the emotions caused through the intuition of beauty, truth and wisdom in the universe, perhaps both.

However, Wordsworth suffers from the same dilemma as Aristotle—having defined his position, he must find laws for deviation from it. He came to realize, as did his readers, that emotional expression is not all of art. Thus, in each case, the artist deviated from the poetic theory of his school. In so doing, he deviated from his aesthetic starting point. The classicist became painfully aware of the fact that he could not operate on one point of an artistic triangle and deny the other two; if it may be considered that the points are expression, representation and interpretation. The classicist represented while the romanticist expressed;both were forced, however, to diverge from the original,the initial premise, in order to interpret.Deviation and artificial laws are manifestations of patchwork and patchwork is not integration. Wordsworth and Emerson, to mention two poets,

asserted, first, that art is expressional and completely emotional. They then protested that a poem must be an interpretation of life through the representation of situations from common life expressed in common language. This postulation is as much an additive process, a matter of practical expediency and a contradiction of terms, as practiced by the first school, hitherto considered. Neither has integrated; therefore, without the fusion of the fact, the thought and the feeling, there is no synthesis- no reconciliation.

In considering a phase of reality the fusion of fact thought and feeling, the statement that art discovers reality makes much more sense than a statement that art imitates reality. The unity in a poem is the fusion of the physical, the rational and the emotional into the "mia praxis." Poetry, then, is an intensification of some phase of reality which is interpreted to and by the poet in intelligible terms. Succinctly, a poem, when complete, should make, in terms of human comprehensibility, a phase of life concrete. As reality is that synthesis previously outlined, it is easier and more fruitful to view in retrospect that which the adherents of the imitative and the emotional did not perceive. The Neo-Classicists, unable to dispose of the imaginative and the

interpretive, insisted that they be guided by reason and subjected to its classical rules- the sphere must be the probable. The followers of the second school insisted that other elements must be subordinate to emotion. Both were correct; but unless the parts are reconciled in due functional proportion, the complete unified whole does not result. Fortunately, Wordsworth, Virgil, Dante, Coleridge and Goethe honored the theories more in the breach than in the observance.

If one persists in following the first stream of poetic theory, he will find order to inhere in the rational imitation of nature; if he follows the second stream of thought, he will enjoy the deluge of feeling; but, in the reconciliation of all, he will apprehend, insofar as man's imperfect powers are concerned, reality itself. Subsequent chapters will maintain and reveal that Frost has achieved, through his theory, admittedly not stated in detail, and through his practice- most detailed in exemplification, this reconciliation.

Closely connected with art in the two senses discussed is the question of language. It is not the intention here to develop a philosophy of language. In view of the emphasis which has been placed by Frost on the technique of artistic communication, and in the light of the vigorous concern of the critics with Frost's idiom, this question of language must, however, be considered.

Without developing the assertion systematically we can accept that man's concern with the cosmic world depends on the human world for its interpretation more so than on the material world. Such a consideration and such an interpretation find the phenomena of speech important and central.

As stated by C.K.Ogden and I.A.Richards,"there is no more bewildering and controversial problem than the meaning of meaning."[27]Today, one finds the linguist, the psychologist and the philosopher working on this problem, and, in so doing, entertaining wide and split views. At least one point is conceded. This point, for the artist and for this thesis, is vital. There can be no apprehension of knowledge without an identity between the knowing subject and reality.

Insofar as poetry is concerned, the previous pages have stated the position in this thesis that the fact, the fancy and the thought are reconciled in such a manner as to establish, through the skill of the poet, this apprehension of knowledge and crucial identity.

Granting that there can be no separation of being and thought, one then gives careful consideration of

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27 C.K.Ogden and I.A.Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 1923, 5th edition, N.Y., 1938 (Kegan Paul)(Passim)

language which reveals that, while thought does not have to have a concrete existence in the spoken or written form, certain symbols must occur which establish, at least to the poet, a consistent communication to the world of man. If the individual wishes to communicate with others, certain linguistic symbols must suffice to transfer his ideas by the same or recognizable symbols- otherwise there is complete unintelligibility. Whether or not one is an idealist, realist or something between the two, the above statement is valid; for unintelligibility is the antithesis of communication.

These symbols- name words- are either propositional or emotional; while there are symbols of the propositional nature touched with emotion, and, reciprocally, the human being must and can escape being identified with animal language which, insofar as can be discoverable, is always subjective and expressive of various states of feeling. Human symbols can also be subjective and expressive of various states of feeling, but man is not, and should not be reduced to the gestural and to the emotional language of symbols. The psychologist Koehler[28] agreed that no animal has ever made the decisive step from the subjective to the objective, from affectional

[28] Koehler, Psychologische Forschung,"Zur Psychologie des Schimpansen" (1927) English edition N.Y., Harcourt Brace, 1925, app.E., p. 317.

to propositional language; the purely affectional elements are antipathetic to cultural development.

The integrated experience constitutes, for the artist, some phase of culture. The signs of the "behaviorists"[29] have no place in the artistic portrayal of culture. Symbols cannot be reduced to signs for two separate worlds of communication are involved; a signal is a purely physical aspect of the world of being; a symbol is a part of the human world of meaning. At its best, the animal may have a practical imagination and intelligence; but man has symbolic imagination and intelligence. From these, objective values may be communicated to himself by symbols and to others by the same symbols. The poet is obliged to take cognizance of this point.

Everything has a name and this symbolism of naming is of universal, not of particular significance, because it embraces the world of human thought. Too many of the recent poets, who delight in arbitrary symbols, do not take cognizance of this point. They have trespassed to the alarming degree where, if they can communicate to their knowing selves, they go no further. The so-called experimentalists cannot or will not use symbols of universal applicability. Having in mind that poetry and other forms of art have, as their function

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[29] This term refers to that psychological school of Watson and Pavlov which seeks to explain all behavior in physical terms.

the task of presenting an intensification of reality in a unified whole, one can see that the poet has to set up a system which can justify reality not only for himself but for others. It is a denial of the function and process of reality if he keeps his poetry a secret to himself. There are critics today who realize the necessity for such universal communication; they are trying to invent a new system of symbols to assist in this presentation of reality. In setting up such a system to assist the purportedly "difficult poet" in communication, they are, however, no more than intermediaries. The very process of this intermedium is not one of reconciliation, but one of patchwork.

The principle of symbolism, universally valid and applicable is the key to both the human and the physical world. Even though the sensory apparatus may be defective, the symbols of the human world are vital and sufficient. The cases of Helen Keller[29a] and Bridgman[30] are in point. Both, although deaf, dumb and blind, reached a high degree of intellectual excellence. For, if every idea were nothing but the carbon copy of the first sense data, then the condition of the blind, the deaf and the dumb would, indeed, be hopeless. One would, in theory of sensationalism, find oneself in the unhappy dilemma of being deprived

29a Helen Keller, The Story of My life, N.Y. Doubleday 1902

30 Mary Lamson, Life and Education of Laura Dewey Bridgman, the Deaf, Bumb and Blind Girl, Boston, Houghton, 1881

of the source of human knowledge and exiled from reality. Human culture, differentiated from that of the animal world by symbols,obtains its special character, its cognitive elements, its moral value, not from its material but from its form- the architectural structure.

This form may be expressed in any sense matter. Vocal language has a marked advantage over tactile language, but the latter, although defective, is still essential. If the human being can grasp the meaning of human language, it is not of critical importance how the sense material arrives for assimilation.

Man can build the world of symbols from the scantiest material provided the material can be expressed in symbols, at least consistent to the individual. Universal applicability, because of the phenomena that everything does have a name, is the highest rank in human symbols. Not only is a symbol universal, but also it is variable; for it can have the same meaning in various languages. Furthermore, it may express itself in various terms in the same language. On the other hand, a sign is fixed, unique, rigid and inflexible- as the Pavlov experiments revealed. One difference between religion and art is that , in the former, a thing is most likely what it is called; in the latter various symbols are used in a multitude of ways to express the same wish or thought.

Often a religious rite must be performed in the same invariable way if the rite is to be effective; but again, it is interesting to note that the principle of patch-working comes into play again. Recognizing the various modes by which values are apprehended, one can see that the hymns of various religious denominations reveal universal symbols in various forms. For example, in one case the Cross represents peace and humility, in another, a war-like spirit.[30 a]

The symbols used in poetry show that relational thought is heavily dependent on symbolic thought. In his ability to differentiate relations, man can consider them abstractly; that is, he does not depend entirely on concrete sense data. In short, this system of symbols of which the human mind is capable is an indispensable aid to speech. It is not an object nor is it physical; the system is a general function of the human mind. This pattern of symbols works through reflection, which is the ability of man to isolate from the entire disordered mass of sense phenomena certain recognizable parts; these parts are concentrated and reconciled into a meaningful and functional unity. As a result, this reflection is capable of analysis and synthesis. The consciousness of sleeping and of waking

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30 a An example of the former is the hymn, "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"; an example of the latter "Onward Christian Soldiers."

images is expressed through the reflective, the symbolic aspect of the human world. The expression of this language is by that which we are pleased to call "speech." A variation and combination of speech forms-words- communicate these symbols both to the poet and to his audience. Different races have evolved rules and practices for language communication. The Chinese, for example, change the pitch of the sound to alter the meaning of the words. In drama, not only does the dramatist consider a variation in terms to express the same symbol, but he is also extremely sensitive to the auditory aspects of the "word". This point is worthy of stress because Frost, although not a dramatist, has written his poems in such a manner that most of them have been adapted, at one time or another, to one act plays. It is not without significance that Robert Frost has insisted that careful reading aloud of his poems is essential to their appreciation. The result of stressing the sound of a word in preference to that of another, and the difference in the sound of the same word on the effect of his poems will later comprise a part of this thesis. The sound effect of his poems is a most important element in Frost's art and philosophy of reconciliation.

This constant "cropping up" of the theme of reconciliation finds its justification again when language itself is considered. The division of man and men into dissent is no less the result of speech than the gathering of the individual

and all men into harmonious agreement is one of its effects. "Without speech", states Winslow, there would be no community of man; with it, there is no more serious obstacle to such a community."[31] The reconciliation of opposites is a critical concern of the artist.

In synthesizing these points of view the poet is not obliged to resolve the disagreement, but to show, by his art, that this opposition exists, and to reveal, in one unified poetic experience the degree to which it exists.

The poet can , by his vision and by his art, affect the audience in such a way as to motivate individuals into taking one stand or another. This is an interesting by-product of his stature. The great artist does show, by his superiority as an artist, subject to the limitation that he reveals truth, the degree to which both contraries exist. This may be why T.S.Eliot enlarged the theory of poetic activity to show that:

> the essential advantage for the poet is not to have a beautiful world with which to deal; it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror and the glory. [32]

One might add, with justification, that it is not to be able to see this but to show and to communicate this truth universally.

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[31] Sandor Winslow, Structure and Variety in Language , N.Y, Holt, 1931, p.33ff.

[32] T.S.Eliot, as cited by Louis Untermeyer in Modern American Poetry, N.Y., Harcourt, 1947, p.21.

The final consideration, of a definitive nature, has to deal with the philosophy of reconciliation. This reconciliation of philosophy involves the synthesis of meaning, of content.

It is not my concern here to defend or to refute theories as to man's knowledge of himself or of God. Nevertheless, it is most certain that poetry touches on phases of each and both together. In one way, a poet, as well as a scientist, can view knowledge as that obtainable when a cognitive response is given to a cognitive query.

This is analogous to the Socratic statement that: " a life which is unexamined is not worth living."[33] The poet must first ask the question- in effect it is binding on him to do so- of life. He must then give the answer, both to himself and to his fellow man. This aspect of life stresses the critical and the discerning in a man-centred, rather than in a nature- centred view of life. This assertion of anthropocentrism in the apprehension and communication of reality opposes Christian dogma. For this independence, considered by the artist and the scientist as man's greatest virtue is turned, in the hands of the theologian into serious error and vice. It is this phase of Frost that brings adverse criticism of him for his skepticism and for his alleged dearth of spiritual values.

[33] Plato, Apology- from Jowett's translation,p.37.

If man persists in this acute form of man-centeredness, the paths of salvation are barred to him. Many artists, more persistent and more acute in their anthropological insistence than Frost, have clashed in mortal struggle with the Church. The critic may be content to meet the artist on any reasonable ground of anthropocentrism; the Church, whatever its creed may be, will not!

Another view of life will wisely and necessarily consider religion to be other than clear and rational. It will conclude that religion and the moral do not intend to erase the clouds of mystery which hover over the temporal and supernatural teleology of man. In other words, this view states "Deus absconditus", thus, his image, man himself, must also be a "homo absconditus." Some poets have occupied themselves with this major view of life. Francis Thompson[34], William Blake[35], and many writers of the Norman-English period[36] have been in this tradition. There have been many poets who have had the view of life which integrates both theories. It is not claimed, in any

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[34] Francis Thompson (1859-1907) English visionist.

[35] William Blake (1757-1827) English seer, poet and engraver.

[36] This period comprises the years of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The poets were largely from the first estate, the Church.

particular, that this synthesis occurred as a systematic attempt on their part; but it is averred that their universal acceptance as poets who stand the test of each succeeding age as communicating universal truths, rests on the ability to fuse both views. As Pascal stated: "Man cannot confide in himself alone. He has to silence himself in order to hear a higher and truer voice."[37] The reconciliation of the truths of intuition and cognition is that which is the mark of the great artist. It will be maintained and discussed, from the general to the particular, that Frost's alleged skepticism is no more, nor less, than his honest consideration that neither theory is sufficient for the artist. Neither will arrive at, because of human error, the best integration of some aspect of reality, occurring, observed and integrated into a whole- in one aspect of space and in one phase of time.

This may suggest that man must, by the tenor of this thesis, meet the happy integration of the parts in order to write good poetry. The only answer in explanation of the sweeping statement is to suggest that past and present criticism of artists is directed at both streams of poetic thought. It is directed at those who attempt to command the parts without recourse to the whole. It is to censure those who insist on making themselves and the radius of themselves the standard for

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37 Pascal, Pensees, edited by Charles Louandre, Paris, 1858, Chapter ix, p.231.

the universe. It is also directed at those who, in claiming the whole, deny the parts- this is the very essence of poetic anarchy and nihilism.

In the light of synthesis of the meanings of life, there is a freeing instead of a confinement. Man is able to burst the bounds of his finite physical universe. Through poetry he can sweep aside the artificial barriers of cosmology and metaphysics. Contrary to the assertion of the claims of the anthropocentrist, the infinite universe does not confine human reason. Instead, it is a great motivator, for human intellect becomes aware of its own infinity through its attempts and failures to measure its powers by the infinite universe. As long as the doctrine of aspiration and courage continues man can, by art, apprehend, subject to the capacity for man to comprehend the infinite universe, some unified experience of reality.

In gaining this reconciliation, the philosophy of the poet Frost is to communicate to himself and to his reader the physical, intellectual and spiritual values man obtains in his relation with the universe of the physical, the resultants of man's experiences with his fellow man interpreted intellectually, and the relation of man with the supernatural forces and elements. These experiences are presented in poems of action in such a way

that the reader may make a decision on any of the planes suggested; how much may be perceived, felt and conceived depends on the stature of the reader. His ability to integrate, to symthesize and to reconcile will be the measure of his success. Before proceeding to the question of synthesis, the phenomena of" imagination " must be considered.

Richards[38] considers that six distinct uses of the word " imagination" are current: First, imagination is used to describe the production of vivid images and visual images; second, imagination refers to the use of figurative language; third, imagination is that quality which is able to reproduce the same emotional state felt by the poet in the reader (and more specifically, in the mind of the critic); fourth, imagination is said to be that quality of inventiveness which is the bringing together of elements not usually connected- the danger of this definition, unless further limited, is that it can include the lunatic as well as the poet; fifth, there is that connection of things usually considered disparate which is exemplified in scientific imagination. This is an ordering of experience in definite ways for a definite purpose. It is usually, but not always, the result of conscious

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[38] I.A.Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism , London, 1945, Humphries, pp.238-244 passim.

planning. This variety of imagination is employed in technical artistic constructions; sixth and last, there is the most important sense of imagination. This sense of imagination is defined in terms of Schelling's and Coleridge's theory:

> ... that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of "imagination..... reveals itself in the balance and reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities.. the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self- possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound and vehement..... the sense of musical delight with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling.[39]

On reflection, it can be urged that the other five definitions do not refute the sixth but rather supplement it. It is true that they are the ways and means by which imagination operates rather than imagination itself. The ability of the poet to synthesize by his imagination often rests in his inherent and acquired qualities; his intelligence, his emotional quotient and the degree of his intuitiveness are most likely inherent; while his experience and his range of acquirable stimuli are pragmatically acquired. The completeness of the response he can make is a fusion of the innate and the acquired.

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[39] Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria", 11, pp. 12,14.

Happily for the rest of mankind, the art and philosophy of the artist are elements of degree with respect to the human world. Because the majority of individuals cannot order the wide range of sense stimuli and ideas,these latter elements are suppressed. Otherwise, they would issue in a state of chaos.

The artist has a superior potential for discrimination and communication. The imagination makes possible the reconciliation of impulses and stimuli selected in terms of a single ordered response comprising an integrated experience of some phase of reality. Imagination suggests the entire creative state of images not perceived in the senses; this state is communicated to poet and reader and apprehended emotionally and reflectively.

Frost not only excels in the use of the imaginative,but also as a consummate craftsman of metaphorical use. When appreciated through the written word, his poetry, at first, appears to appeal primarily to the cognitive; but when it is read aloud, it gains an intense emotional effect from the tonal qualities of the word. The result is different from the alliterative quality of poetry.

In summary, the terms "synthesis by art and philosophy of reconciliation" may be apprehended in the following terms:

"synthesis" is the poetic expression of an experience which fuses by means of the imagination discordant and contrary elements into a larger unity. This is enlarged by reconciliation to include not only the discordant and contrary elements but also similar elements. The reconciliation results in the functional metaphor; while the cognitive, the connative and the physical are fused from divergent meanings to an organic unity.

Art has two meanings: the first is relative to the skill of the poet in the technical construction and communication of the experience by means of figures of speech and ornaments of poetry. The second meaning of art is the over-all communication and reconciliation of the imitative and the purely emotional so that the poem is the fusion of the physical, rational and the emotional into one intensified experience of reality. The use of words by the poet involves the discussion of language and symbols by which truth is shown- the truth which can divide as well as unite the community of man. The overall consideration in art is not the agreement of the reader but the integrated experience available to the artist and his public. The philosophy of reconciliation fuses the opposite points of man-centred, nature-centred and God- centred in order to gain the greatest freedom for the range of form and content.

2. Brief Consideration of the Poet, Robert Frost

Robert Lee Frost, considered the interpreting breath and spirit of New England, was born in San Francisco on March 26, 1875. His father, born in New England, taught school, entered politics and edited a paper. He moved to and lived for some time in San Francisco. Despite his background, he showed sympathy for the South during the Civil War. One sign of this sympathy is shown by the name given to his son- Robert Lee.

On his return with his mother to New Hampshire, young Frost taught school. Before entering the teaching profession, Frost was employed in a series of unskilled labor jobs. In 1892, Frost attended Dartmouth College where he stayed but one term; although his grades were high, he left because he considered the routine of study to be a destructive force to the creative mind. Despite his professed aversion to classical studies and references, his marks in these were high.[39a] From his earliest career, he has shown the"unexpected,"the opposite"and the"paradox!"

After his marriage in 1897, Robert Frost entered Harvard-to please his immediate relatives. After two years during which

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39 a His marks, 94 in Latin and 92 in Greek were the highest in his class.

time his work was considered better than average, he left college, never to appear again in the role of a student. Following his stay at Harvard, Frost taught school, made shoes, edited a newspaper and farmed in New Hampshire for twelve years.

In a startling move, he went, not to another part of the New England countryside, not to another state, but over three thousand miles to England- to a culture far removed from his own. He farmed in England, wrote poetry and enjoyed the company of Abercrombie, Brooke and Gibson. In 1913 he had his first book of poems published. While they were of New England and not of the English scene, his book had an immediate success in England where it was published.

This book, A Boy's Will (1913) was followed by an even more popular and highly regarded book of poems, North of Boston (1914). In both of these volumes, interesting qualities were shown: they were primarily lyrical pieces; the characters were faithful representatives of New England villagers and farmers; the landscape and the nuances of the natural and human character were made to come alive in verse through a brilliant focus on the "fact"; the physical and the spiritual were in stark contrast; humour was both happy and grim; the traditional clashed with the liberal; elements of nationalism were in disagreement with the international spirit; there were bewildering whimsey and satire; dogmatism in customs contended

with the desire to sever the rigid bonds of the past. The rueful aspect is that a good case is made for each opposite. The fact is sharp and incisive in one phase, yet is derived in a slow and roundabout manner in another phase. The colors are at one time sharply contrasting in black and white, yet at another time the most subtle shading exists. The verse is now rough with "slangy" idiom, now intellectual with polish; its range is from the prosaic and commonplace tenor to the highly dramatic and moving. The scope husbands such opposites as realism, idealism, comedy, tragedy, the physical, the human and the supernatural elements.

In 1915, he returned to America to find himself famous in the poetic world; the universities he did not desire to attend- and from none of which he had a degree- vied in conferring degrees upon him. He commenced a career of "professorships-in-residence". He won his first Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1923 with New Hampshire. Included among the thirty grace notes to this book are: " The Runaway", "Fire and Ice", and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." His collected Poems (193) again won the Pulitzer Prize. Each book treats of the same New England scene with its innumerable facets glittering with his revelation of the physical, the intellectual and the spiritual "fact". Integrated into the fabric of the New England countryside is his own

philosophy now expressed seriously, now expressed in a banteringly annoying style. His philosophy is most accentuated in West-Running Brook (1928). This has widened the range to include some poems of an autobiographical nature; some of these refer to his San Francisco sojourn. In these poems, and in the subsequent poetry, there is more lyricism and a wider range of communication.

In 1937, his A Further Range gained the third Pulitzer Prize for himself; in this he has further intensified his ability to reconcile the opposites. His hitherto reserved sense of humour emerges with refreshing spontaneity.

At the age of sixty-five, Frost published the quite extensiwa Collected Poems (1939) showing that his poetic gifts and range, had, like Yeats and Hardy art, increased with the passing years. In 1942, Frost won his fourth Pulitzer Prize, a feat hitherto unaccomplished by any poet. The title of the volume of poetry is The Witness Tree.

Steeple Bush(1947); A Masque of Reason(1945); A Masque of Mercy (1947) and the Complete Poems of Robert Frost complete his later series of poetic publications. The two masques represent his concern with mercy and justice with reference to the supernatural; and they reflect a tendency to concern himself with the sadness that comes from skepticism.

While writing poetry, he has divided his attention and presence to the visiting of New England colleges as well as with a two year stay at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Interspersed with his formal talks with college students and his occasional lectures to them have been the infrequent addresses delivered to the public. The only records of these addresses come from notes taken by the press and by other members of the audience , for he has declined to have his ideas and theories of poetry published.

On March 24, 1950, the Senate of the United States broke precedent to agree on Senate Resolution No.224, part of which reads as follows:

> Whereas Robert Frost in his books of poetry has given the American people a long series of stories and lyrics which are enjoyed, repeated and thought about by people of all ages and callings... and Whereas, these poems have helped to guide American thought with humor and wisdom setting forth to our minds a reliable representation of ourselves and of all men... and Whereas, His work throughout the past century has enhanced for many their understanding of the United States and their love of country... and Whereas Robert Frost has been accorded a secure place in the history of American letters... Therefore be it resolved That the Senate of the United States extend him the felicitations of the Nation he has served so well.

In addition to the pleasure that the lover of arts will get from the recognition of an artist, there is within the citation the heart of his greatness-

wherein a poet, writing on his New England environment can produce a poetry that may be apprehended "by people of all ages and callings" and that "has enhanced for many their understanding" of their country and which has fostered a love for it.

3. Brief Survey of the Critical Work on Frost

It was not until he was forty that Frost had recognition. The first review mentioned the maturity of the poetry in A Boy's Will. He managed to escape the usual stress and strain of criticism directed at the first efforts of the younger artists.

Each succeeding volume of poetry was accompanied with the observation that the strength of the poet was increasing. At the age when one's intellectual vigour wanes, Frost continues to write better poetry.

The earliest critics were the English reviewers who noted the following qualities: faithful representation of the New England scene, controversial prose which becomes poetry and poetry which is suitable as drama. These same qualities are seen by later American reviews and reviewers on his more recent verse.

The English and American reviews of the 1914-1917 period had the better defined North of Boston (1914) for the critical essays and assays; the new features observed were: simplicity and sophistication; loneliness and neighborliness; the necessity for reading Frost's poetry aloud and the importance of silent reading for thought and oral reading for emotional stimulation.

Not until 1918 were the American critics particularly interested; in that year, John Erskine concentrated on the

metaphorical art in Frost by which art he showed the new way to say old things. He was given, in this period, the title of "Poet of the People." Because of six public lectures and through the influence of his visits to the American campus scene, Frost grew in popularity. During the period 1920-1926, the critics fastened to him such epithets as "The New England Poet", "Realist and Symbolist", "The Poet of the Hill Men" and the "New Hampshire Prophet."

Of the eleven theses- which treat of Frost exclusively- whose title are recorded in various college dissertation indexes, eight were written during this period. Seven were submitted in New England and one in California. The Californian thesis (Stanford University) asserted that Frost, through the use of synecdoche, uttered universal truth in the terms of New England soil. The reality of these truths has validity for the world of man and his environment. However, the other seven theses are faithful to a view of Frost as a true poet of the New England soil- exclusively. Happily, the publication of his volume, West-Running Brook (1928) and the work of such critics as Deutsch, Untermeyer and McBride rescued his reputation from the narrower interpretation.

West-Running Brook; heavily tinged with a universal philosophy of doubt and courage, called attention to Frost's inner calm compared with his outer stress, and his outer calm compared with inner stress. Thus, questions of human power,

the power of nature, spiritual aridity in general and human courage in particular, the sad pervading music of life, and the originality of a poet minding his own business arose and came to the fore.

With the coming of the third decade of the twentieth century with its depression, its outburst from the neo-humanists and the screams of the experimentalists, Frost grew in the minds and hearts of the people. He steadfastly refused to take any position in critical poetic controversy; and, for his part, he was not adopted for praise or censure by any particular school of criticism.

Prior to the war, the reviews, mainly from such sources as New England college quarterlies, the Atlantic Monthly, the Times Literary Supplement of England and the New York Times Magazine Supplement were complemented by reviews from college quarterlies over the United States.

During the war years, and immediately after, the trend of criticism was toward his wisdom, his ambiguity,his sound of sense, his double implication, " carpe diem",and his concern with tradition, progress, seeking after higher causes and his love for his fellow man. In the issue of October 9, 1950, Time magazine paid tribute to the distinct idiom and originality of the poet, Robert Lee Frost. Seven of his poems were reprinted over several pages, a

concern for art extending beyond the usual short critical review.

It is not easy to predict whether or not a poet will stand the test of time to arrive at a position of permanence. However, with all the difference of opinion on his art and philosophy, the critics have concurred generally that the prediction made in the Times of London on April 10, 1913 is correct- that this living poet's fame will last. Both books written exclusively on this poet agree as to this prediction. The two books heretofore cited are Lawrance Thompson's Fire and Ice and Louis Untermeyer's The Road Not Taken. Thompson originally wrote his thesis on Frost at Princeton University. The book is adapted from the thesis.

The two hundred and thirty-five page volume discusses poetic theory, his poetry in practice, his attitude toward life and gives, as well, a short conclusion on the poet's general position. For the most part, as outlined previously, the book gives a collective and additive view of his form and content. The poetic output is broken down into lyrics, epigrams, fables and philosophical pieces- all of which he discusses in terms of short available quotes from Frost's own statements. There will be no essential refutation of Thompson's position as far as he went; the main difficulty is that he is content to analyze the poetry rather than to obtain a synthesis.

Louis Untermeyer, in his The Road Not Taken has given a near three hundred page running commentary on the poems of Robert Frost. They are arranged in groups.When Untermeyer treats of Frost's realism, he gives a brief introductory note and follows with four or five poems in which realism is, from the critics' view, well marked and noticeable. The same is done with "folklore", "morality", "didactic verse", "humour", "drama", "the human element", "fact and fancy", "indirection", "sound, sense and meaning", "the Virgilian note", "the epigrammatic", and the "living poetry."

No attempt is professed and none is made to synthesize the poetic art and thought. There is a superb piece of artistry accomplished by the grouping of poems to explain the presence of the qualities ascribed to Frost. Untermeyer succeeds in showing the vast range in which poetry can operate and in revealing the heights of feeling that Frost can attain from the conversational tone.

Randall Jarrell has recently published a book-reviewed in the New York Times Book Review on August 16, 1953. This book, Poetry and the Age discusses many poets including Whitman, Stevens, Donne, Marvell, John Crowe Ransom,Williams, De La Mere, Robert Lowell and Frost. There are other poets considered more briefly. Two essays in his book reveal the

the purpose of the work; he attacks the obscurity of modern poetry and the over-cultivation of modern criticism.His essays on Whitman and Frost stress the point that a poet can be great and communicable at the same time. Jarrell cannot make Frost into a great poet, for that has already been achieved through Frost himself, but, by a refutation of the one-sidedness of T.S.Eliot, who has dominated literary criticism for a quarter of a century, he can broaden the field of literary appreciation. Nevertheless, it is a tribute to poetic art and content that universal poetic truth will express itself sooner or later despite any artifically narrow bounds and neo-critical "jargon" to confine it.

4. How This Thesis Will Proceed in Art and Philosophy of Reconciliation

The reconciliation will be derived through the consideration of Frost's poetry, through the reader's intuitive frames of reference, by the opinions of recognized critics, by consideration of Frost's statements found in lectures, from extracts of public addresses and from prefaces to his poetry. These will be sifted and synthesized with reference to the standards of the key terms derived in this opening chapter. Each step in this reconciliation will be indicated by the title of each chapter and by its introduction. The chapters will be sub-divided into sections whereby the definitive aspects are first set out; the critics opinions are given; Frost's statements are reviewed; and, finally, considerable attention is devoted to the poetry of Robert Frost.

The boundaries of the thesis are separated, artificially, into three sections; the first has to do with art, the second with content and the third with the entire fusion. It is admitted that it is difficult in synthesis to separate the first two. For the purpose of clarification and facility in handling, the first two sections are made and then synthesized by the third.

The first section, then, comprises a short introduction and three chapters: the first chapter is entitled "Key Terms and Biographical Notes on Robert Frost"; the second is

"Reconciliation Through Rhythm, Rhyme and Verse Forms", and the third chapter is entitled "Reconciliation Through Figures of Speech and Ornaments of Poetry." This latter chapter closes with a general reconciliation of all formal elements.

The second section, which comprises the aspects of thought and content in Robert Frost and his works, consists of six chapters: "Reconciliation of Fact and Fancy", "Reconciliation of the Traditional and the Progressive", "Reconciliation of Observation and Implication", "Reconciliation of Nature and Man", "Reconciliation of the Individual and Society" and "Reconciliation in Terms of Character, Morality and Religion."

The third section consists of the tenth and final chapter, "Reconciliation- The Whole of Frost." In this final section and chapter, Frost and his philosophy are fused with his art into a single judgment of his stature. This is done by integrating the intuitive approach, the opinions of recognized critics, Frostian critics and by his poetry.

In summary, the purpose of this thesis is, by the means and methods outlined, to synthesize and reconcile the artistic works of Robert Lee Frost by, and in the light of, the four roads to literary appreciation and in the key terms so that the whole art and meaning are presented in such a light as to show organic and functional unity.

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER TWO

RECONCILIATION THROUGH RHYTHM, RHYME AND VERSE FORMS

1. Clarification of the Elements of Poetry

Much has been written on poetry; many of the terms used in discussing the art have been given different connotations. This writer will make clear, at relevant intervals, the meaning of each term insofar as this thesis is concerned. This is not to suggest that an arrant arbitrariness will result for the striking note is really the amount of agreement rather than the disagreement with respect to basic terminology.

The term "art" in this thesis, in one sense described, is substantially the same as that of"form". Under this term will be considered rhythm, rhyme, verse forms, figures of speech[1], ornaments of poetry and pace, timing and duration. Under"content",which is the same as matter,will appear thought, associations, imagery and emotion.

The next consideration is to discuss, in addition to what form is, what form does. Form determines; it determines through a choice and through a marshalling the shape that the poetic experience takes. As Gurrey states, it is

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[1] Refer to page 10 of this thesis for a partial list

"as the material stimulus which can be perceived by the senses; and also as the symbol of a complex experience."[2]

In keeping with the general tenor of this thesis, art in the appreciation of poetry is not separable; it is reconciled with content- poetry is one. The question arises as to how it is possible to separate form and content when both are necessary in reconciliation to poetic appreciation. It is, conceivable, but not satisfactory, to understand form without reference to the meaning of the poem.

The answer rests on the fact that the elements of form are objective to the extent that they may be measured, counted and classified. However, while the form may be extracted from the poem, the poem itself, the reason for its being, cannot be appreciated without the fusion of form and philosophy. What is more true is that the usual hard classification of figures of speech and ornaments of poetry do not reveal all of the importance of form.

Form is not studied for itself but in order to ascertain its means to an end. The form is the design of the poem and carries a wave length of its own to which the reader must be attuned to get clearer reception. Alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia- all these are important parts of the

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[2] P. Gurrey, The Appreciation of Poetry ,Oxford, Cumberlege, 1946, p.20.

poem; but they are minor parts of form.

Such is the composition of man, the unit of appreciation, that certain forms are essential for certain degrees of evaluation. For example, the appreciation of the sonnet, with its emotional impact, requires a concentration of thought, imagery and words which would be out of place in the folk ballad and epic. Certain forms impose certain restraints on both the poet and the reader. "Each occasion of experience has its own individual pattern."[3] It is a function of form, not only to attune the poet and the reader to this individual pattern, but also to make itself a part of the poetic experience. In fact, it is to be doubted that the poet creates a first class artistic work-piece without the reconciliation of form in such a manner as to focus cognition, perception and emotion into one design.

There is a more subtle appreciation of form; while the experience is a single unit for the poet and for the reader when the poem is appreciated and reconciled, the time element has intervened for both. By this, the writer considers that the flow of art and content has been interrupted by time. The various elements have arrived, not concurrently but consecutively. The element of form is required to change consecutiveness

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[3] A.N.Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas , London, Cumberlege, 1947, p.16.

to concurrence. This is done by the integration of ideas, images or symbols and rhythm.

In contradistinction to popular comprehension, a poem does not only appeal to the emotions but also it enables both the poet and his audience to express them. Furthermore, and more subtly, form enables the reader to subject himself[4] as nearly as possible to the same elements of the rational, the emotional and the perceptive as the poet. Assuming the honesty of the poet, the reconciliation exists in the phenomenon that under these conditions, the reader has a vision of the beauty received by the poet. The same discipline by the poet will also, by the same logic, secure for him a more intense experience with beauty.

In keeping with the idea of reconciliation, one finds it is now relevant to deny that rhythm, a major element of form, has a separate life. On the contrary, it is a feature, a quality of the poem. As poetry is written with words, and words are only useful to aid in thinking, poetry cannot exist, no more than science can, without a mental reaction to them. That is a crucial point, for the rhythm of poetry is really the rhythm of thought, together with the perceptive elements, the imaginative faculties and the intuitive comprehension. With no rhythm, there can be no recreation of the poem;

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4 It is not contended that the reader will experience the identical experience of the poet.

with faulty rhythm, the poem is a complete failure. Rhythm of form, of thought, and therefore of poetry is not a mysterious element.

Rhythm refers to the time element. In reading, as in creative writing, the images in the poem come in consecutive order, first one idea, an image and so on until the experience is complete. As they cannot be perceived and apprehended simultaneously, a suitable rhythm must exist,through the contribution of form,to experience the slower speed for reflection and not the speed for a rapid flow of images. The whole question resolves itself to one of stress, timing and duration, and finally, pace. It is not so much the analysis of various metres, of a certain number of feet and of rigid adherence to verse forms as it is of a sensitivity to the rhythms of thinking, imagining and perceiving. Frost appreciates the true meaning of rhythm as he upsets traditional ideas in this field and secures rhythmic effects of the highest order.

Frost has found, as well as others, that not only does poetry gain effect through the judicious use of stress, it is often more effective without stress. By stress this writer apprehends the gentle stress ,both smooth and light, to be as important as the regular stress of traditional metre.

Timing is used here to denote the length of time which stresses not the accent on the syllable but the duration

on the word. Often one word serves as a springboard for a lightning-like phrase; as often a word calls for a duration long enough for contemplation.

The pace refers to the tempo; often the pace changes. It is effected and affected by the rhythms of stress and duration. The pace of Spenser's Faerie Queen is slow and gentle while Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacharib" is an example of a rushing impetuous pace. In passing to a consideration of Frost and his rhythm, rhyme and verse forms, the examination will be against the terms as outlined herein.

Frost, many of his critics, and his poetry, proclaims a somewhat radical departure from the traditional devotion to the measured meter, the set rhyme- or lack of rhyme- and the rigid forms for such pieces as the sonnet, triolet and ballad. The next section will be devoted to a reconciliation through rhythm.

2. Frost's Reconciliation Through Rhythm

The experimentalists, in all fairness to them, have been trying, for a half century, to escape from the traditional and to spurn over-conventionalized expression. In the praiseworthy attempts to do the latter they have erred with the former. For there is a difference between traditional ways of expression and traditional subject matter for poetry. However, in considering form, the contemporary artists have sought for new forms; in reality, there is but one form. Frost, in a teasing and bantering way pointed that out in 1935- a period when experimentalism was enjoying its greatest popularity.

In dealing with the misguided emphasis on the "new forms", Frost stated:

> Poetry, for example was tried without punctuation. It was tried without capital letters. It was tried without any image but those to the eye... it was tried without content under the trade name of poesie pure. It was tried without phrase, epigram , coherence, logic and consistency. It was tried without ability... It was tried premature like the delicacy of the unborn calf in Asia. It was tried without feeling or sentiment like murder for small pay in the underworld. These many things it was tried without, and what had we left? Still something.[5]

Beneath this light but sharp banter there is here a keen insight into poetic theory.

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[5] E.A.Robinson, King Jasper, edited by Robert Frost, N.Y., Harcourt and Brace, 1935. 79 p.

"Come what may", Frost is saying," poetry is written with words which have no existence except for the mental reaction which gives them meaning." Poetry, as stated before, cannot exist without this reaction, no more than science can. However, poetic expression intensifies, whereas science classifies reality. The perception of stimuli, the cognitive apprehension and the emotional faculties are expressed through the rhythm of seeing, thinking and feeling. It is form which integrates these elements into one rhythmic whole. Therefore, when Frost explains, in homely fashion, how poetry starts, what it is and how it acts, he reveals a penetrating understanding of thought, of language and its communication in and for the artist.

The "still nothing" that is left is the germ of the experience itself, the poetic impulse which has not come to fruition because of the lack of reconciliation through form. In the light of poetic theory established thus far in this thesis, Frost's definition of a poem and poetry is congruous:

> A poem begins with a lump in the throat; a home-sickness or a love sickness. It is a reaching out toward expression; an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words...My definition of poetry (if I were forced to give one) would be this: words that have become deeds.[6]

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[6] Robert Frost, West-Running Brook,N.Y.,Holt,1929; this statement is found on the dust jacket of the volume.

Whether or not the first perception is of sense material or the memory of some experience, form works through the clothing of the perceptive with the imaginative faculties, through the mental reaction expressed through and by words, all so integrated as to produce an artistic intensification of reality- a poetic experience.

Lawrance Thompson considers that Frost accepts restrictions in poetry which save him from the two extremes- nothing but form and nothing but content. That is, he objects to sound for the sake of sound and meaning for the sake of meaning. In support of this he refers to Frost:

> I had it from one of the youngest lately:'Whereas we once thought literature should be without content we now know it should be charged full of propaganda!(Wrong twice, I told him.) Wrong twice and of theory prepense.[7]

The key words in this Frostian statement do not refer to a balance of content and of art, but to "wrong twice and of theory prepense." The error is in the theory itself, for there is no strict proportion of the elements of form and content; the form must be suitable to the experience or the experience is not intensified and thus not as well communicated. There may be times when through restraint the elements called form are extremely negligible; if so, the need for the didactic is so acute that intrusion

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[7] Robert Frost, "A Meditative Monologue", in the Amherst Graduates' Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 2, issue of February, 1931, pp. 75-85.

of certain elements of form are disastrous; but the poem through form emerges in the rhythms most acceptable to serious reflection. On the other hand, if the experience is one to be apprehended through sensation and emotion, then the form, if correct, provides aspects which set up attitudes. The rhythms, pace, timing and duration are altered from the first case. In one of his lectures, Frost has stated that due emphasis must be given to speech rhythms and the sound of sense both of which involve dramatic voice tones.

Frost has not made direct and systematic statements using art and form to show the importance he places on the integration of these. His one directing theory was made informally and conversationally at Ann Arbor when he suggested that expression to him meant form and not "gaping in agony and writing huge gobs of raw sincerity." However, other minor observations he has made bear out the idea of form as integrative.

Frost concluded that organization, shapeliness and congruity are fitted by form to the philosophy of the poem. Thompson interpreted this to show that before meaning can find its proper place it must be "subordinated"[8] to its proper balance with structure. It would seem as though Thompson's statement should interpret the other way; that is, it should follow

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[8] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere, p.22 ff. (passim)

Frost's original statement that "fitted" would suggest strongly the correct integration of the elements of form to communicate the experience, that intensification of some phase of reality- meaning.

This congruity of communication, the integrative force of and through form might well be called texture.[9] In this thesis texture is held to convey the final fusion of artistic elements in such a way as to produce a medium suitable for the meaning of the poem. Ransom, Tate and Empson go so far as to state that meaning, by a fusion with texture, has undergone a reaction that eliminates meaning and provides a rich experience not translatable in terms of meaning at all. Frost's answer is:"I shall go so far as to state that meaning is the ingredient best able to save poetry from the effete. If there is no meaning,there is no poem- for me.[10]

How does a poet work out a poem? Is it possible to tell? Frost, with warning, gives some description of his skill. This will be considered in some detail later; however, insofar as this section concerns art, the poetic impulse and germinal phrase must be considered in Frost's own idiom;and these terms must be restated. Frost first makes an analogy between

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9 Refer to page 9 of this thesis.

10 "Robert Frost", as reported by Miss A. Allyson, University of Michigan, November 17, 1923.

the course of a true poem and the course of true love. Each commences as Frost states:

> ...as an impulse, a disturbing element to which the individual surrenders himself. No one can really hold that the ecstasy should be static and stand still in one place. It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs the course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life-not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion. It has denouement. It has an outcome that though unforseen was predestined from the first image of original mood.... It finds its own name as it goes and discovers the best waiting for it in some final phrase at once wise and sad- the happy sad blend of the drinking song.[11]

The complete attunement of the reader, as well as that of the poet to the experience of the reconciliation of thought, imagery and emotion is the final stage in the appreciation of beauty- the final clarification of life as stated by Frost. This point is not generally considered by the critics; it is not often understood by the reader. Apprehensions of beauty are not the sole and immediate results of sensory stimulation. For instead of the senses being credited with a monopoly on the perception of beauty, it is important to find that beauty in art is not only discoverable by the eye but also by the force of the imaginative.

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[11] Robert Frost, Collected Poems of Robert Frost, introduction by Frost, "The Figure a Poem Makes", N.Y., Holt, 1939.

The impulse to which Frost refers is that of simple perception; the disturbing element is the second step toward realization of beauty-that of emotional reaction.

The "lump in the throat", and the "home-sickness" are not the first elements in the apprehension of beauty; they are the reconciliation of the simple perception clothed and saturated with emotion. Beauty demands more than the senses can give; it results from what has been attained by means of the senses and what is thought and felt as a result of response to the sensuous which integrates into a whole-by means of which beauty is experienced. There are three supports for this position.

First, consider Frost's statement! A simple perception or a series of perceptions are followed with an initial delight. A recognition follows which is the product of memory and past experience. The percept, the emotion and the mental reaction are accompanied by an emotional force which produces an experience of reality. As a result of this reconciliation the experience is dramatically revealed in full understanding to the poet. If he has disciplined himself to the elements of form insofar as extra-communicability are concerned, some intuition of that beauty may be that of the reader-provided the reader is also endowed with an appreciation of the elements of form and an intellect capable of grasping the meaning.

The more experiences that the poet has had, the wider the range for selection of images and the greater reinforcement of intensity. This is subject to the modification that the wide experiences may be a boomerang if the elements of form are not well appreciated and employed.

In the light of the pfeceeding statements by Frost, and in view of the one immediately following, it can be seen that Frost is not taking a middle position between art and philosophy in poetry but that he views them as an active reaction over time to produce an experience:

> For me the initial delight is in the surprise of remembering something that I didn't know I knew. I am in a place, a situation as if I had materialized from a cloud or risen from the ground.[12a] There is a glad recognition of the long lost and the rest follows. Step by step the wonder of unexpected supply keeps growing. The impressions most useful to my purpose seem always those I was unaware of and so made no note of at the time when taken, and the conclusion is come to that like giants we are always hurling experience ahead of us to pave the future with against the day when we may want to strike a line of purpose across it for somewhere.[12b]

To those who consider Frost as resembling Wordsworth, there is a refutation. Wordsworth

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[12a] The mental set towards poetic endeavor causes a much more rapid emotional reaction on the sense percept than is the case in the non-artist. By mental set one means the general outlook towards which there is always a nervous disposition. For example, a surveyor sees a church tower,not as a symbol of man's reaching toward heaven but as a survey point.

[12b] Robert Frost, op. citere, page 54.

refers to "emotion contemplated in the tranquil", Frost refers to a mental set toward intensification of reality through poetic experience. As a result of the mental set there is a cognitive intensification that reacts dramatically when a sense percept is made which is congruous to past experience. Frost's recognition is heightened through a tension aroused by the mental set. His resolution from that crisis is the poem.[13]

One further point needs clarification. That is the point arising from the use of the word "delight." This word is often varied with "enjoyment and gratification." Frost uses the word "delight" and gives no explanation for its meaning. Thompson and Untermeyer take him at the vulgar interpretation of the word and, without defining it, do not consider its translation as essential.

When Frost mentions the "initial delight" he refers to a stage well along in the poetic process. When he remembered something he didn't know he knew,the integration with past experiences has just occurred. At the precise point of remembering and associating, he felt a keen delight. This is different from the happy sight of blooming flowers,from the enjoyment of sound, from the moving of rhythms; it is a part of the reward of the mind more than the result of the senses.

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[13] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere, page 22 of Fire and Ice

The second support for the integrative theory comes from C.D.Lewis. While expressed in somewhat more intellectual terminology, the meaning is substantially the same as given by Frost. Lewis would consider that, today, at least, the poet had a sense percept changed to an image through impression. Lewis admits that he relies on Goethe for this idea. An intellectual reaction occurs when the image has associated itself with abstractions from past experience. The cognitive processes react in selection and rejection of images until the correct proportion is obtained whereby, through the focusing of the emotional, intuitive and cognitive elements, a reconciliation takes place from which emerges the experience of beauty. Lewis uses the colorful Lucretian phrase,"when the sleeping images of feeling have moved into the light."[14]

The third support for this position comes from Dr. Alexander[15] in his discussion on art. In denying that beauty resides intrinsically in the object which is supposedly merely observable or discoverable by us, he states that the printed words of a poem are no more than black marks on the page—sheer signs and symbols. The reader perceives, feels, thinks and imagines in a way which is governed by the selection and arrangement of the symbols, the result obtaining that the reader has a unified experience in which thought, imagination

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[14] C.Day Lewis,The Poetic Image, p.47.

[15] A.R.Alexander,Ph.D., Beauty and Other Forms of Value, a paraphrasing of pages 16-34.

and emotion all play a proportioned part, and which from the first word to the last, develops with rhythmic and continuous progress. That is, however the poet may " mean", whatever meaning there is in the poem is brought into existence by the reader and given life in his mind. These things--meaning, emotion and rhythm--cannot be perceived, known or imagined except insofar as they are created by the mind. The same results for the poet; he does perceive the original stimulus either in the memory or in the world of the physical.

For the poet, as for the rest of mankind, the perception of anything, material or immaterial, is achieved only through the apprehension of its characteristics. Whether the poet considers some perceptual phases of the world or whether the layman looks at a work of art, the qualities perceived have their existence in the mind; they become reality through perception, emotion, intellectual reaction and imagination. Because the external material object has made one apprehend these qualities, it is felt that the object has these qualities. That is, one lives his whole life giving meaning and reality to life about him on the assumption that what the senses give is objective reality.

This view enables one to regard the physical as capable of being made into symbolic forms, images, and to be

able to characterize the poet's thoughts, his imagination, his concepts and his intuitions. The striving for this glimpse of reality gives man's conscious self an immaterial entity by which to make itself concrete. By the belief that physical phenomena can represent what is thought and what is imagined, one can make matter express the experience of the mind. Thus, in Frost, with his alleged devotion to the fact, the physical facets of the perceived world evoke a reaction which enables the poet to foist through them, the experience of the mind.

In summary, Frost reconciles an objective matter as real as well as expressive of feeling, thought and intuition, culminating in an experience of beauty. One advantage of believing that physical phenomena" is endowed with the qualities and activities of our own minds "[16] is that the mental states may be preserved and repeated. It is through this practice that Frost can have the particular as represented by the fact stand for the universal as engendered through the fancy.

Likewise, rhythm is the integrated tempo by which the poet, intellectually, perceptually and emotionally realizes his experience of reality. The tempo is a part of form, which through its elements of rhythm, verse form and figures of speech enables the reconciliations to take place so that an experience of beauty results.

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[16] Viscount Haldane, The Soul of a People ,London, Metheun, xxi, 235 pages, p.17.

Finally, the poem is worked out through the emotionalized perception, intuitively and imaginatively apprehended for a concentration and intensification. As a result of the cognitive reaction, the poet receives a dramatic experience of meaning in terms of a whole experience. Frost, through his statements, places himself in the school whereby there is a reconciliation of objective matter,as real,with the subjective view that the qualities of the mind are perceived as existing in objective phenomena,although beauty is intrinsically in the subjective mind of the poet and of the reader.

3. Further Statements By Frost on Poetic Form and Theory

In answer to a complaint that the world, the people and the language were jaded, Frost replied:

> Poetry is the renewal of words forever and ever. Poetry is that by which we live forever and ever unjaded. Poetry is that by which the world is never old. Even the poetry of trade names gives the lie to the unoriginal who would drag us down in their own powerlessness to originate. Heavy they are but not so heavy that we can't rise under them and throw them off.[17]

Frost is proclaiming not only the fact that words can make new expressions of old themes, but that also poetry exists in the experience of the individual ad infinitum. The question to be resolved is that of utilizing a new arrangement of elements to give freshness, vitality and action whereby physical and nooscopic perceptions are made into stimulating images with enough life to reinfuse the vigour of the poet himself. In short, no other way is possible to gain the reality by which man's conscious self can glimpse reality through making the immaterial concrete.[18] As Frost stated to the poet Coffin: "All human beings, from the cradle, crave to be understood."[19]

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[17] Robert Frost, quotation from a letter to R.P.T.Coffin,1936

[18] Refer to the discussion on beauty on pp 61 ff of this thesis

[19] Ibid. footnote 17 above cited.

For a poet to receive a complete vision of beauty, his entire creative range must be employed together with the critical elements of form. No half measures will suffice.

All the elements of the mind are participating in the experience to the utter exclusion of self. This is a point of the utmost importance; the poet has no aspect of the intellect free by which to consider himself- "the self." T.S.Eliot has stated this point well: "that excitement, that joyful loss of self in the workmanship of art, that intense and transitory relief which comes at the moment of contemplation and is the chief reward of creative work." [20] Carried further, if the poet makes himself the object of contemplation, he will experience feelings of self-interest but will not glimpse the reality of beauty. Like many of the knights of the Grail legends, he will carry with him the veil which keeps him from viewing the chalice he seeks.

Frost speaks directly on the same point. In another letter to a close friend, the New England poet, Coffin, Frost complained, with justice on his side:

> The experimentalists have turned to a private kind of poetry, much of it about themselves. Their words are not oratory. They do not try to convince people of anything. They have shut themselves up in introspection

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20 T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry, "Essay on Arnold."

> in the dark, in unintelligibility, in moodiness and in contempt of people. That is why so many of them are jaded and bored men or men of despair. They have used their words against themselves. They have lifted up walls around them. For such men language is jaded, for it has lost its reason for being.[21]

In other words they have not had the ability nor the inclination to attain the artistic distance without which no words will suffice for the experience.

Frost succeeds because of his range of experiences. Interestingly enough, his range of experiences comes from three sources; first, a scientific observation of the particular; second, the observations of many particulars and aspects of one small area; and third, an intimate knowledge, through experience, of the physical and human factors observed. When, for example, his view enables him to regard the physical as capable of being made into symbolic forms, he has observed such a variety of physical facts from so many observable angles that he has a wealth of material available for the poetic reaction. The material is so well catalogued in precision and clarity that the intellectual and emotional sorting-out process provides a sharper and deeper intensification of the final picture. Of course, it is essential to stress Frost's uncanny ability to integrate the formal elements to the content of the experience. When Coffin states:

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[21] Letter to Coffin from Frost, op. citere page 65.

> ..... Frost's particulars everywhere run out to great universals. A man cannot cut a small crop of hay without bringing into his barn something that is dusted with the great laws out in interstellar space.[22]

he is repeating in this quotation that which was elucidated earlier[23]- the belief that physical phenomena can represent what is thought and imagined; one can make matter express the experience of the mind.

Much more attention has been devoted by critics to Frost's meaning rather than to his art. If there is any perceptible emphasis on either, it is probably true that as a result of the conversational tone, the common idiom and the hard physical fact, the earlier critics did concern themselves with the formal side of his art but little and put the weight of their attention on his philosophy.

Van Doren, who elaborated on his theory of Frost's "golden mean" made a significant comment:

> He deals, that is to say, in indirection. The thing he seems to be talking about is never quite the thing he means to be talking about. He selects an object, an animal, a person, a life, or whatever other thing he likes, and makes it a symbol of something else which is larger and deeper than itself, so that as we read him we seem to see behind or through his subject matter and derive a pleasure from so doing. [24]

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[22] R.T.Coffin, New Poetry of New England, p.60

[23] Refer to, op. cit., pages 61,62 of this thesis

[24] Mark Van Doren, "The Permanence of Robert Frost", from the American Scholar , Vol. 5., No. 2, Spring, 1936, pp. 190-198.

Van Doren seems shocked that this should be accomplished by such apparently easy effort. It has been claimed in this thesis[25] that there is a reconciliation of objective matter as real with the subjective view that the qualities of the mind are perceived as existing in objective phenomena , although beauty is intrinsically in the subjective mind of the poet. From this point of view what Frost seems to be talking about would not be what he means to be talking about; the physical fact, for example, of a birch tree would not be the poet's apprehension of its characteristics in a physical sense, but the reaction which enables him to communicate through the object, the experience of the mind. That Frost can represent through this birch tree something larger and deeper than itself is the same as stating the critical truth that the physical phenomena, the tree,can represent what is thought and imagined; that it can express the experience of the mind- as the whole self of the poet has been in the creative reaction, the communication is of the universal.

Lascelles Abercrombie fell into the same error of interpretation of Frost's form in an early (1914) review.

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[25] The key terms on this point are defined on pp.61,62 of this thesis.

Stated Abercrombie:

> It is apt to treat of the familiar images and acts of ordinary life much as poetry is usually inclined to treat words- to put them, that is to say, into such positions of relationship that some unexpected virtue comes out of them; it is, in fact, poetry composed, as far as possible, in a language of things. [26]

On the first count, there is no argument, rather one could agree entirely that the positions of relationship subscribe to Frost's excellence of form, but to say that the poetry is a language of things is to mistake a physical change for a chemical-like reaction which actually takes place through reconciliation. It is also the failure to see that the "thing" is to represent the experience of the mind- what is thought and imagined.

A long review by Edward Garnett was the first to grasp at the idea of reconciliation of Frost's art. In a sympathetic and understanding twenty page survey, Garnett considers that Frost meets Goethe's demands that the poetry of a true,real and natural vision of life demands descriptive powers of the highest degree,rendering the poet's pictures so life-like that they become actualities to every reader.[27]

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[26] Lascelles Abercrombie, an unsigned review of North of Boston in the Nation of London, Vol.15., No.11, issue of June 13, 1914, pp. 423-424.

[27] Edward Garnett, "Robert Frost", article in the Atlantic Monthly, Vol.116, No.2, issue of August 15,1915, pp.214-224.

Nothing is barred to the poet who has vision. The vision is the result of an acute penetrating observation of the fact. The descriptive power of the highest degree is that reality seen by the poet through making the immaterial concrete and which is then expressed through the physical fact.

Amy Lowell[28] emphasized the misapprehension of her colleagues. Particularly flagrant is the remark that Frost has a photographic mind and that what goes in comes out unchanged by any mental process. Miss Lowell considered that he describes in detail what he has seen exactly as he has seen it. Both of these statements are to deny, completely, the creative process. The truth is that he has the ability to communicate to a high degree what he has seen in terms of how he means. Between the acute powers of observation and the poetry leading to the communication of values through what he has seen, there comes the intellectual, the imaginative and the intuitive reconciliation.

Another critic claims that Frost cannot be understood if his meaning is restricted. The following statements show the same lack of understanding of Frost's poetic theory; they also show how the same misapprehension arises and how

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[28] Amy Lowell, review in New Republic, Vol.2, No.16, issue of February 20, 1915, pp. 81-82.

the critic will find something new to add as a reason for lack of understanding:

> The key to Frost lies here. You will never understand him if you confine his meaning to the obvious. Often when he says one thing he means another.Often when he says one thing, he means two. Often when he is speaking satirically, he is really gentle.Often when he seems most obvious he is fullest of hidden meanings...The man is a born tease. He loves to play with his reader, to lead him among the pitfalls...[29]

The introduction of the trap, the pitfall and the tease appelations to the art of Frost shows a rather inept grasp of the poet's genius. The introduction was unfortunate, for even in the last ten years, echoes of these phrases still find their way into the critical work on Frost. The theory on which the thesis relies is the answer to the objection of his saying one thing and meaning another. The answer to the new objections must be that the whole range of his art belies such absurd objections unless the use of the particular for the illumination of some part of universality is in the category of traps and teasing. Indirectly it is an accusation of incommunicability, but something must be left for the creative processes of the reader.

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[29] Cornelius Weygandt, from the White Hills , N.Y., Holt, 1934, p.187ff.

4. The Nature of Rhythm

The fusion of form in art is shown by the fact that while expression shows striking qualities of an emotional reaction, the discipline and restraint by which an artist achieves form is in itself a form of expression. This is to say that the emotive combined with the perceptive is, by form, given expression.

Form, though it can be arbitrarily postulated in terms commonly called figures of speech and ornaments of poetry- all expressed in metres and verse forms- is intuitive in its origin. It is the innate direction of emotion; this direction is manifested through rhythm, sound and verse forms. It is vital to note that one sees what form is through what it does. Rhythm, sound and verse forms are visible and audible symptoms of the formal side of the poem.

That form is an ordering element is obvious; without form the result would obtain in verbal chaos and confusion. Is there some quantitative limit to form, intuitive in nature? There is a universal application, both in art and in nature to harmony and proportion. This is expressed in the formula: "To cut a given straight line so that the rectangle contained by the whole and one of the segments is to the longer part as the longer part is to the whole." [30]

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[30] Euclid, Book II, Proposition 11.

This results in such proportions as five to eight; eight to thirteen, and thirteen to twenty-one and so forth. But, it is important to note, never precisely in those proportions.

There is some instinctive, some intuitive, some irrational apprehension of a proportionate harmony; this is resolved in and through the expression of the artist to a high degree and through the layman to the lesser degree. The phrase, "never exactly in those proportions" suggests why perfect regular metre and rhythm in verse become monotonously revolting to the reader. Good poets take considerable liberty with measured elements; feet are reversed-trochee for iambic- and more beauty may be attained through counterpointing of rhythm.[31]

Departure from the geometrical depends on the artistic sensibility of the poet, who, within certain limits, has considerable freedom of expression. It would seem a fair analogy to compare these limits to a distillation process in organic chemistry. Only at a certain temperature and pressure can the precise quantity and quality of a product ensue; if the point wherein the elements integrate for a reaction is not correctly assayed, the desired product is not obtainable.

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[31] A melody added to a given melody as an accompaniment; in one's parallel, the example of the use of the instruments in Dryden's "Alexander's Feast" would apply; another example would be the counterpointing of human nature and physical nature in the poetry of Wordsworth.

Form, while taking certain proportions from its innate nature (concretely expressed in rhythm,rhyme, sound and verse forms) does not, by any means, demand a fixed and rigid proportion. Read states the matter,clearly and colorfully:

> We speak of the form of an athlete and we mean very much the same when we speak of the form of a work of art. An athlete is in good form when he carries no superfluous flesh; when his muscles are strong, his carriage good, his movement economical. We might say the same of a poem.[32]

A poem is in good form when its time and movement are congruous with the experience. Rhythm is the quality of movement.

Rhythm does not exist apart from some activity no more than an action is independent of a thing; it does not exist in a vacuum. That leaves one resolution; rhythm and movement are perceived and apprehended by the human senses and mind; they are conceived subjectively. If rhythm is a quality of movement[33], how can poetry, an aesthetic experience, have rhythm? This would leave one to believe, that in poetry, real things are involved.

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[32] Herbert Read, The Meaning of Art, London,Cumberlege, 1953, p.33

[33] Rhythm is not only a quality of movement but movement has its unique rhythmic pattern as observable in birds flying, crews rowing and in the harmonic execution of complex skills integrated in a physical activity.

One aspect of this has been resolved in considering that there can be a reconciliation of objective matter as real as well as expressive of feeling, thought and intuition culminating in an experience of beauty. [34]

The other aspect of the question which has been considered in some detail is summarized as follows: poetry is inseparable from words which are only effective when used in thinking. Words exist restated only in the reaction of the mind to spoken or written symbols. Thus poetry is the rhythm of thinking. For the poet, rhythm is the intrinsic time and movement by which sense objects are perceived as real and by which the integrated experience is expressed through them. For the reader, rhythm is a characteristic of the movement by which he apprehends, through recreation, the experience of the poet.

To the poet, as well as to the reader, ideas and images occur in succession of time. To these there must be a response which demands, in the"Coleridgian" sense[35]the activity of attention; this cannot be done simultaneously nor with the same degree of speed. The rhythmic response of the mind reacts in proportion to the material at its disposal.That is why a rapid reading of a reflective poem gains no desirable

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[34] Refer to pages 61,62 of this thesis

[35] Coleridge, op. citere.

result, that is why the poet cannot "dash off" a lyric. When the thought and imagery are simple and thin, the mind can, without effort and without excitement, be carried through the work quickly- the rhythm will be easy, of not much import. If the thought and imagery are bold and significant, the rhythm will be slower, more variable and more exciting. For example, the"Homeric Simile" held the surge of dramatic action in check in order to secure a grander rhythmic conception; while the monologues of Browning and the dialogues of Frost compel the reader to yield to an imagery that may yield the excitement of intellectual conflict or the exhilaration of an emotionalized event. Thus perception, imagination and thought of the verbal conform, if the reader and poet are to experience beauty, to poetic rhythm. The rhythm of the poem is the response rhythm to words- that is, the quality of the poem is the rhythm of response to words, the whole response to sound, imagery,emotion and thought.

Poetry has rhythm, but prose has rhythm as well. Why introduce prose into a thesis concerned with a poet? The necessity is imposed by the nature of Frost's poetry. He has been called, as shall be considered later, a conversational poet- a poet who talks in the ordinary every day form and fashion of the New England farmer. Add to this Frost's

statement as to the importance of the oral rendition of the poem, as to the dramatic elements of the poem, and then find the perplexing problem of resolving rhythms in such a context.

The rhythm of good prose tends toward a variety, a rise and fall according to action, to tone and to expression; while that of the poet tends to the more regular, the proportionate and the harmonious. Nevertheless, the dividing line is flexible. While each poet has his own line of demarcation and deviation, it is nevertheless clear that the step from prose to poetry leads to a more emotional, a more musical and a more intense appreciation.

The line varies according to the reader. The temperament and intellectual excellence of both reader and artist as well as the artistic sensitivity of both are important factors. One critic, whose frame of reference stems from the intellectual may insist on a clear cut division of prose and poetry on a rigid basis of form. On the other hand, a poet of considerable intuition, for example, Wordsworth, may have a frame of reference by which he would adjudge Dryden's work to be prose, although there is a considerable degree of poetic rhythm in Dryden. In going to the critic for evaluation on the points of prose and poetry, it is not only mandatory to discover the critic's

standard but to evaluate the standard for the age. Each age has its own "zeitgeist." There has been, over the past century, so much stress on regularity in poetry that two events have militated against verse. First, the experimentalists have managed to make poetry somewhat incommunicable. Second, the imaginative aridity and the artificial unnaturalness have enabled prose to replace much that was formerly the province of poetry.

Frost has achieved the happy point of reconciling through his speech rhythm a variety still consonant with rich poetic expression. This variety, hitherto not often met in the last one hundred years of poetry, has a true original flavour. Frost can impart to the prose of conversation the intensity of poetry. Suffice it to say, then, that while prose and poetry have a flow of accented and unaccented syllables, the differences between the two are: first, a question of variable patterns of syllabic accentuation from the prose point of view; and, second, the intense emotional element that inheres in poetry. This emotional element tends to express itself in an innate proportional pattern.

The actual rhythm of words, as uttered conversationally differs greatly from that which is expressed in traditional metrical form. This may be elucidated from a line from Hamlet:

To be or not to be; That is the question[36]

The traditional approach might be to give this line a strict iambic scansion as:

ᵘ ' ᵘ ' ᵘ ' ᵘ ' ᵘ '
To be or not to be; that is the question

In such a conventional scansion there would be, in the quoted line, eleven syllables; the first ten are iambic pentametric; the last and falling syllable would be extra, or there might be alloted an iambic tetrameter and one amphibrach interpretation in the scansion. Not only would there be unnaturalness and lack of emotion to scan the line this way, but there would be little poetry. The true rhythmic value from the spoken and Frostian point of view is:

ᵘ ' ᵘ ' ᵘ ᵘ ' ᵘ ᵘ ' ᵘ
To be or not to be that is the question.

Superimposed on the iambicity of the conversational tone there is the poetic intuitiveness which modifies the expression to appeal to emotion through a congruous rhythm. If the line is spoken with the emotion which comes from the apprehension of this reality, there is a stirring pleasure from this line. What do the critics of Frost have to say in this matter of rhythm?

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[36] Shakespeare, Hamlet, III,i

Robert P. Tristram Coffin[37] wrote, concerning Frost and Edwin Arlington Robinson[38]:

> These two poets brought a new simplicity,new plainness and bareness, almost into the wording of poetry. It is a language very close to what men speak now, a language without gestures and without intonations, whether of grandeur or pathos[38a]

later he wrote:

> He went on writing the language he had always written, severe, plain and at times rising to a new sudden shining phrase, doubling back with modest doubt, with much of the sound of the human voice in his words and more of the sound of the human brain when it is at the intricate process called thinking. [38b]

The contradiction, indicative of a lack of comprehension concerning the true rhythm of Frost's poetry exists in suggesting " the sound of the human voice in his words," -this point is readily granted- yet, at the same time asserting, in the first quotation, that "it is a language without gesture and without intonation." Frost does use language with a rhythm that conveys the intonation of the speech men use in their quiet and in their dramatic moments.

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37 Coffin, minor New England poet and critic is a close friend of Robert Frost. The latter wrote frequent letters to Coffin and disclosed fragments of his poetic philosophy.

38 a,b Coffin,opcitere, page 67.

39 Edward Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) New England transcendentalist and poet who resembled Hardy in philosophy- toward the end of his life. Coffin's criticism on Robinson insofar as intonation and gesture is concerned is as deficient as his criticism of Frost.

Lascelles Abercrombie, in an unsynthesized observation on Frost, seems to have grasped the correct perspective of Frost's rhythm-stress, duration and pace.

> It is poetry which is not much more careful than good prose is to stress and extract the innermost values and suggestive force of words; it elaborates simile and metaphor scarcely more than good conversation does. But it is apt to treat the familiar images and acts of ordinary life much as poetry is inclined to treat words- to put them, that is to say, into such positions of relationship that some unexpected virtue comes out of them.[40]

The two observations are pertinent; good prose does get a tremendous force and value from the virile word, and if poetry can elaborate simile and metaphor as well as good conversation, it is good poetry indeed. The same familiar acts and images of ordinary life, through poetry, do become, emotionally comprehended, the words of the poem. If they are apprehended as beautiful, if they are an intensification of reality, they are suitable for poetic expression as any unusual phenomena may be. There is no particular virtue residing in an unfamiliar sense perception that may be denied to the familiar.

Frost is able to synthesize art and philosophy- form and content- so that any percept that eventually leads

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[40] Lascelles Abercrombie, op. citere, page 70.

to the vision of beauty finds the vehicle most suitable for the poetic reaction. If the percept comes precisely, as many of his do, because of his scientific apprehension of the human and the natural world, and if these percepts come from what one is pleased to call the common and the ordinary, then the language, suitably adequate for its communication in terms of an aesthetic experience, is the language for the task. If the language is incongruous, then it is likely that the two events will not occur:the poet will not get his vision clearly defined; the reader will be denied an opportunity to recreate the experience.

Edward Thomas plumbed the true elements of this form when he wrote:

> He sympathizes where Wordsworth contemplates... The language ranges from a never vulgar colloquialism to brief moments of heightened and intense simplicity. There are moments when the plain language and lack of violence make the unaffected verses look like prose, except that the sentences, when spoken aloud are most felicitously true in rhythm to the emotion.[41]

It is not required that poetry must be read aloud to be appreciated; nevertheless, if the poet finds his experience of beauty is apprehended through verbal utterance, the reader is expected to play the game.

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[41] Edward Thomas, an unsigned review in the English Review, Vol.18, No. 1, issue of August, 1914, pp.142-143.

Edward Garnett dealt further with the prose-poetic query in answering " why put it in poetry and not in prose?"

> It comes with greater intensity in rhythm and is more heightened and concentrated in effect thereby. If the reader will examine closely he will find that a prose rendition would cause a loss of distinction. Yet so extraordinarily close to normal everyday speech is it that I anticipate some academic person may test its meter with a metronome and declare the verse often awkward in its scansion. No doubt. But so also is the blank verse of many a master hard to scan if the academic footrule be not applied with a nice comprehension of where to give and when to take.[42]

Without the knowledge of when to give and when to take, there can be no real communication; there is no rhythmic empathy; the artistic sensitivity is blunt.

Ezra Pound, sensitive as a poet, at any rate, wrote:

> He will perform no monkey tricks. His stuff sticks in your head. Not his words, not his phrases, nor his cadences, but his subject matter. You do not confuse one of his poems with another in your memory.[43]

Pound found that he was able to recreate more than one of Frost's experiences; apparently the true test of communicability has been met when the elements of form have served their essential use, not for admiration for themselves, but in the

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[42] Edward Garnett, op. citere, p.70

[43] Ezra Pound, review in The New Republic , Vol.3, No. 16, issue of Feb. 20, 1915, pp. 81-82

subordination at the critical time, to the content of the poem.

John W. Haines, a personal friend to the poet Frost wrote of one of the conversations resulting from visits to the Frost cottage:

> He poured forth his views in a steady stream of unforgettable eloquence; for just as his verse, as was his boast, had in it all the conversational tones of natural speech, the unmistakeable ring of poetry and the knowledge of and the power to create the beauty that can be wrought from words came from his actual speech. He could never write and talk seriously in the tones and cadences of the traditional poet.[44]

There is little value in attempting to measure his verse in the classical tradition of metre.

However, W.H.Auden was the first to seize and to hold the conception of Frost's reconciliation through rhythm when he saw that the word, the phrase and the line were not sufficient for appreciation of Frost:

> The bulk of his work consists of monologues or dialogues written in an even, colloquial blank verse. The effect is cumulative, the poem as a whole, rather than any one line; which makes him a difficult poet to quote from...the texture contains a rhythm that demands a rational grasp of the understated theme for though this reason is an uncertain guide, it is the light by which man must live. [45]

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[44] J.W.Haines, Gloucester Journal, "The Eloquence of the American, Robert Frost ",(no volume), (no number) issue of Feb.2, 1935.

[45] Robert Frost, Selected Poems , "Four Prefaces to a Book", pp.21-24.

While Auden does not clarify what he means by "rational grasp" of poetry, he is clear enough on the point that the texture of the poem is such that its rhythmic qualities demand a whole consideration.

C.Day Lewis feels that Frost has a "remarkable affinity with Wordsworth in the tempo of his verse"[46] and that this makes, by his avoidance of passages of verbal decoration, his texture consonant with the conversational tone. Edwin Muir has also, like Auden, decided that rhythm as treated by Frost will not reveal the experience cumulatively and additively but that revelation comes through the entire movement.[47]

Gordon Bottomley, friend to both Edward Thomas and Frost strikes to the heart of the matter:

> He talked oftener than he sang, and in the conversational aspect of his verse achieved singular, half-concealed novelties of metrical effect...When a man writes so that his skill becomes instinct and carries him beyond the domination of verse mechanism,his own speech tunes and phrasings in daily life will control his use of metrical patterns. The latter will be a constant, felt rather than exhibited, and the actual words will go over it like a counterpoint. In the end the poet's own voice and cadences will be heard through his personal vocal rhythms. [48]

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46 Ibidium with note 45. pp.24-28

47 Ibidium ,pp.29-35.

48 Gordon Bottomley,"A Note on Edward Thomas" as reported by Louis Untermeyer,The Road Not Taken , p.163

Thompson who, to date, has made the more detailed analysis of Frost's poetry considers that Frost, from a middle position, arrives at his rhythmic element of form by resolving sound on three planes. The first plane is that of a rigid basic iambic metre which Frost reduces to loose iambic meter. The basic rhythm is reduced so that it suits a variable structure of the line and offers a foundation for words and phrases. The second plane is the plane of sound derived from words and phrases as pronounceable without regard to meaning, without regard to context. The third plane derives from voice tone which gives particular shades of meaning to words when spoken as units in their contexts of phrases and sentences. The three planes can be named the metrical, the word sound and the sound sense; these are actually blended in performance.

Thompson further points out that there have been two schools; the one representing exponents of strict metrical device, and the other representing complete irregularity of speech rhythm. From his"middle position", Frost, avers Thompson, is freed from adopting either extreme.[49] This statement must be considered.

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[49] Lawrance Thompson, Fire and Ice, pp.65-92 passim.

Strict iambic meter would be nearly as inappropriate for poetry reflecting the conversational tone, with its mild rising and falling action, as other metres. Conversational tone refers to the language the speaker might be expected to use and the tone in which it would be used in everyday life. With this qualification, it is asserted that iambus does follow the occidental speech pattern more closely than other metres. For this reason, the basic pattern of the iambic is generally employed in elements of reflective poetry. In emphasis, the speech pattern is very likely to turn to trochee and to spondee. More often, the rise and fall of speech tones, poetically expressed, is amphibrach (u ' u). Emphasis is often the quintessence of emotion held in tight verbal rein. The emotion that is uncontrollable results in sheer chaos, unexpressible in rhythmic forms- a mad torrent of trochees, dactyls, spondees and anapests.

That which keeps prose from becoming poetry is a variability of expression; on the other hand, the two factors which ensure the result of poetry are the tendencies toward the proportionate and the emotional intensity. It would be appropriate to state that these stringently divided planes do not warrant such separable and additive interpretation

because the conversational tone, poetically rendered, automatically adopts a basic iambic trend upon which the emphasis demanded by emotion works out its own patterns according to the stress requisite. The emotion carries its own rhythm. As the meaning is aporehended in an unrolling of the words, a line arrangement is needed only insofar as the formal arrangements make for order, not confusion. In other words, while there seems to be different metrical arrangements congruous to certain types of expressions, lengths of lines and to time, stress and duration, these arrangements are formally manipulated insofar as they are necessary for an intensification of the poetic experience.

The question of a middle point, a point of compromise or an additive alternation of parts is not relevant. It is not so often a matter of "how much" but of "when." In a poetic expression of grief, a series of spondees may be demanded, nothing else will do. In a mad, sweeping and tempestuous rushing of passion nothing but the anapest might suffice; in a delineation of a painful and agonizing experience there appears the expressed rhythm of amphimacer (' u '). In an emotional apprehension of reality, Frost brings to bear

his sensitivity expressed in the rhythm, for the most part innately derived, best adapted for his purpose and for those of the reader.

Concerning the question of Thompson's second plane, the sound of words and phrases as they might be pronounced without regard to meaning, without regard to context, there is the salient question, "With regard to what, then?" Does Thompson (he does not develop the point) refer to the fact that a series of words may be apprehended according to their consonants and vowels, a sort of alliterative or assonantal effect? Certain letters or combinations of them may be studied, conceivably, in terms of being the verbal expression of some quality. For example, "l's", "w's" and "m's" often appear in words which singly or collectively express,in sound effect, the emotion of sadness. No doubt the artist takes advantage of these letter sounds, as to strengthen his communicable elements he would naturally take advantage of any other such auditory phenomena. Frost does, for the whole ,sparingly, use assonance and alliteration but not to yield the contemplation of sound for its own sake.

If Thompson implies that every meaning has a particular series of sounds and that each person is

acquainted with many of these, one must rush to concur; but the answer should be free from the frame of reference that in order to communicate the meaning it is necessary, ab initio, that its formal expression should be made manifest in terms, be they sound or not, that are intelligible to the reader. Frost has found sound sense essential in his poetic art, but it is a synthesized and natural onomatopoetic effect.

The next section will concern itself with Frost's statement on rhythm. His quotations will bear out his insistence that his rhythm is not to be interpreted in the usual manner of rigid metric forms, rhymes and verse patterns.

5. Frost on Rhythm

The poetic elements of Frostian conversational tones are dramatic. "Drama" states Frost," is the capstone of poetry."[50] Again,he states: "Everything written is as good as it is dramatic."[51] In his address to the Plymouth Normal School (New Hampshire), these were his opening remarks. Further along in his address he stated, in somewhat colloquial language:

> 'A least lyric' will, alone,have a hard time, but it makes a beginning. Lyric will be piled on lyric in rhythmic counterpoint until all are easily heard as sung or spoken by a person in a scene. By whom and where and when is the question? Well, in the lyric the dramatic give and take is within oneself, and not between two people. A dramatic necessity goes deep into the nature of the sentence. Sentences are not different enough to hold the attention unless they are dramatic, no ingenuity or varying structure will do. All that can save them is the speaking tone of voice found emotionally tangled in the words and fastened to the page for the ear of imagination. [52]

It might well be that Thompson would have altered his conception of the three planes of sound as a rhythmic sum in view of this statement, for, as one can see, the emphasis, the emotion of the dramatic as reflected through the spoken accent deny the importance of the syllabic and the word except as emotionally interpretive

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[50] Robert Frost, "Lecture Notes from Frost Speech to New Hampshire State Normal School as reported by Robert S. Newdick in the New England Quarterly ,Vol.10,No.2, issue of Spring,1937,(no pages)

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

of the sentence. By sentence, Frost undoubtedly means the complete meaning ensuing from a complete statement. The use of sound and meaning in achieving the rhythms is reconciliatory in the sense that it completes, for the ear of imagination, the pattern of experience.

In the few statements made by the poet on rhythm, the references are indirect. His keen desire to avoid technical controversy has influenced him in this regard. In the closest direct approach he has made to the question of rhythm, he states:

> I have known for sometime that I can write in the absolute rhythm pattern demanded by the classicists, as I am a good Greek. Although indifferent in this respect, I might be said to use a flexible rhythm. I admit both these rival factors, but I am not a subject to either. If I start out with iambic pattern, I shall most likely depart from it in line to line with no apologies, but there is nothing for us to worry about... the rhythm will still be there. I don't think there is anything new in this idea. Some pretty good poets have set me an example. Read the first few lines of "Thanatopsis" and then gaze at "The Princess." Provided I say what I want to say and get and give pleasure from it, I let the spoken word and the verse pattern fight it out, but there is still rhythm with a capital R...[53]

In these apparently simple utterances, one can see the reason for synthesis of Frost rather than an analysis into separable parts; for the analytical approach leads away from rather than to

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[53] Robert Frost, as quoted from his address to the Michigan Teacher's College at Kalamazoo on February 18, 1925. Recorded in stenographic form by Allan West.

the comprehension of Frost's oblique approach to life. There is a tortuous subtlety behind the apparent colloquialisms "provided I say what I want to say" and "get pleasure from it." They represent the aesthetic enjoyment of an integrated poetic experience.

Frost spoke pointedly on his general, but unqualified, opinion as to metre, the specialized form of rhythm:

> All that can be done with words is soon told. So also with metres- particularly in our language where there are virtually but two, strict iambic and loose iambic. The ancients with many were still poor if they depended on metres for all tune.. The possibilities for tune across the rigidity of limited or unlimited meter are endless.[54]

The reflections on the physical fact, the elements of human thought and emotion, imaginatively clad, have a texture of form which appeal to the "element of surprise", the "element of the expectant" and to "the congruous." By "expectant" one refers to the fact that, from the tenor of the poem tone, one expects certain emotional, certain rhythmic and certain logical sequences. By "surprise", one refers to the element whereby the poet and the reader are surprised at experiencing the expectant in a different, unusual and emotional setting.

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[54] Robert Frost, "Collected Poems of Robert Frost ,Holt, N.Y., 1940, the prose introduction by Frost entitled "The Figure a Poem Makes."

As Frost portrays the fact, known and commonplace, the element of expectancy is in the ascendant; however, in portraying some aspect of the expectant, he experiences and offers an emotional surprise element. That which he has thought he knew so well has offered something new and delightful to him- and to the reader!

The " congruous" refers to the element of timeliness in that the language, the thought and the emotion are synthesized, experienced and communicated in images that live. The harmonic reaction of surprise, expectancy and congruency- whose texture is rhythm- represent a true synthesis, a reconciliation of rhythm. The reconciliation is expressed in form which carries the elements of living poetic truth; for"the greatness of a poet is measurable by the real significances of the resemblances on which he builds, the depths of their roots in the constitution, if not of the physical world, of the moral and emotional nature of man reconciled to known ways of life." [55]

This statement is important for itself and because it may be reconciled with Frost's generalized statement of his formula to explain different types of writing. He concluded that there are four recognizable types:

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[55] H.J.V.Grierson, "The Living Image", Edinburgh, Revell, 1946, p.33.

uncommon in experience and uncommon in writing; common in experience and common in writing; uncommon in experience and common in writing; and common in experience and uncommon in writing. The last, Frost insists, is for him, the proper material and method for literature.

By common in experience, Frost does not refer to a dull experience of an aspect of natural or human beauty. He does, however, mean common in experience in the same manner described by H.J.Grierson[56], which is the observable and intuitive elements apprehended by a formal and philosophical reconciliation which has its roots in the order of man's experienced physical, emotional and moral existence. This is the common experience lit up, irradiated and communicated by the uncommon writing.

Frost , on the other hand, considers that uncommon in experience and uncommon in writing lead to unintelligible intellectualism or to an unvirile aestheticism; the common in experience and the common in writing result in degradation of the artistic; while, finally, the uncommon in experience and the common in writing is an artistic crime. [57]

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[56] Op. citere, page 95.

[57] Rita Brenner, Ten Modern Poets , "Common in Experience"- the author's quotation on Frost is from her record of Frostian quotations- N.Y., Harcourt, 1932,276 pages.

The common in experience includes not only the subject matter but also the mood, tone and words. They are uncommonly apprehended through the "word" delivered in an emotional and cognitive integration expressed through a rhythm expected, surprising and congruous.

A concluding statement clarifies Frost's general formula for writing:

> Modern poets must create their own poetic diction and must reject those words which poets have made poetical in the past unless those words stand the test of time by meaning something to every age...alien words should not be used in poetry. I must go further to protect the individual poet. Since Keats wrote,' she stood in tears amid the alien corn', no poet has the right to use that word except in connection with Ellis Island. I must be bold and go all the way, no poet could use that word like Keats. 58

The next consideration is that given to rhythm, metre, rhyme and verse forms. A synthesis will be derived for these terms by direct reference to Frost's poetry. References to his poetry will be in terms, not of a few lines from a poem but from as much of the poem as may be conveniently possible in a limited section on this phase of his art. The quotations are more extensive in length because the art and meaning gathers from such a whole consideration.

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58 Robert Frost, as quoted from The Charles Eliot Norton lectures on poetry reported and reviewed by John Holmes in the Book Section of the Boston Transcript issue of March 21, 1936, pages 18-21.

6. Rhythms: Inner and Outer Form in Frost

Frost delivered a lecture to one of his classes on the "Persistent Cat." He presented it as the resultant of an adherence to the strict iambic pattern:

u ' u ' u '
The cat comes in the room
u ' u ' u '
I put the cat out then
u ' u ' u ' 59
The cat comes in again.

After this, Frost wrote the poem in his own rhythm:

"There's that cat again.
Get out, you cat! "
"What's the use?" 60

These lines may be the objects of a variety of stresses; the duration on each syllable may be longer and the timing different according to the"type" of person experiencing the "persistent cat" and according to the emotion the cat arouses- both in the poet and in the reader. By"type"of person there is included age, sex, personality, mental set and character. The emotions may range from admiring feminine amazement at the antic of the feline down to a brusque masculine disgust and annoyance with the animal. The experience is not completed until the last line of the

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59 Frost, "Lectures at Plymouth Normal School", see page 92, footnote 50.

60 Ibid.

Frostian revision. The stress, duration, time and metre are not explicit until the poem is completed. Yet, there is a basic emotional and metrical pattern. The elements of expectancy are interspersed with surprise.

Now consider the poem, "Mending Wall", a poem which unites and reconciles such opposites as "fact and fancy", the "international and nationalism", "tradition and progress" as well as the "extrovert and the introvert; the poem is a forty-five line poem, basically iambic pentametric in the external aspect of rhythm.

The poem will be considered as a whole and the rhythm will be so fused with the meaning as to convey the latter in terms of expectancy, surprise and congruity. Metre, one of the visible and auditory aspects of the rhythm will be shown to be considerably modified in terms of the conversational emphasis of emotion so that the meaning will be derived in dramatic and emotional tones.

The traditional approach to poetry would invite the reader to observe the ten syllabic line -decasyllabic- on an iambic frame. However, if the poem is spoken orally to or by the reader, the emotional and communicative elements would be vitiated by an attempt to render it from the iambic intonation. The common experience would be kept from maturing as a poem by mistaking external aspects of rhythm for the real rhythmic core. This inner core is considered

to be expectancy, surprise and congruity; the outer core is revealed in the light of stress, duration and pace. The whole rhythm gives to and receives meaning from the whole poem:

" MENDING WALL "

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing;
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have not left one stone on stone,
But they would have the rabbits out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And once a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh! Just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side, it comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am all 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 neighbors.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it

Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.I could say 'Elves' to him,
But its not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again,'Good fences make good neighbors.'[61]

As the whole rhythm gives to and receives meaning from the philosophy of the poem, a consideration of the formal elements apart from the content is not entirely satisfactory; however, insofar as this section is devoted to form, the emphasis on meaning will be reduced to a minimum.

The total reconciliation of the poem rests on an observable order in both the physical and human world. This observable order,this phase of experience to Frost, is that there is a determinism in nature which shows itself in a disruptive order; the same element of determinism exists in the order of human nature in that forces seek change and forces resist change. Whether these are aspects operating in variable degree in each individual by the nature of his being

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[61] Robert Frost, North of Boston , "Mending Wall"

he does not say directly; but if the essence of a man is deducible from his invariant actions, then the reader must conclude that the forces are going on concurrently in human nature. Nature, in its unreasoning way bursts and settles back in no predictable manner, but this erupting and settling back is observed and interpreted by man.

The forces expressed by human nature may be discussed by man who can reason, choose and influence, yet he cannot absolutely make himself the master of the physical and human phenomena.

Frost does not indicate whether or not this may be a good thing; or whether or not this interaction and living through opposition is to be desired, nor yet again how it may be changed. He has perceived, felt, thought and clothed his observation in imagination which informs intellectually and which moves emotionally.

In showing these forces,the inner elements of rhythm, expectancy, surprise and congruity are fused with the external formal elements, meter, rhyme and v erse form. Imagery, metaphor and other elements more closely identified with content will be considered in later chapters. It is important to keep the content in mind on the synthesis of "Mending Wall" to the extent that the reader notes that Frost is using nature to develop a parallel with human nature. He

has used his extremely sensitive perception of the fact to interpret it fancifully, yet convincingly- through a living incongruity.

Having derived the philosophy of the poem, how has its communication been made more effective? Having derived the general idea through a reading, oral or written, the re-reading with emphasis on the structure, according to the emotion experienced, will reveal a keener and more intense appreciation of the poem.

The poet, as well as the reader, may experience a variable emotion and comprehension from the original; but these will increase in intensity. Then too, no two readers are likely, through differences in age, sex, mental set, environment and personality to get precisely the same poetic effect. Nevertheless, the basic pattern, the congruity of the language and formal elements do provide a channel so that intelligibility,in a poetic sense , is assured to the enlightened reader.

Going back over the poem, one can find explanations for the poetic channeling from the first few lines. The observable fact that something doesn't love a wall is not the innocuous prose line that it may appear to be; for the observable fact of destructibility of walls loses its neutral note with the introduction of the emotional yet intellectual compelling "love." The intellectual consideration of love

gives the element of surprise to the commonplace consideration of the rebuilding done each spring. "That sends the frozen ground swell under it" is the observable fact expectant now in terms of "frozen ground" and congruous to its theme.

Then comes the integration of the emotional, the element of surprise caused by "swell" for while this is translatable in common parlance, the emotional impact of a "swell" of nature stimulates feeling. "And spills the upper boulders in the sun" maintains the expectant observed fact in the same manner; but the rising intensity of surprise is shown by the employment of the act of spring in the turning up of the ground by nature so the rocks may face the sun; one can see the dark cold bottoms of the boulders spilling over and reaching for the light. One can touch the warm tops of the rocks and shudder with chill at the stimulation of the icy bottoms. The folding of the reader close to the observable fact and the sudden word of emotions which surprise the reader are closely harmonized with the congruity of the event.

Gaps in a fence are a very real thing to a farmer; a gap that two can pass abreast is a very large gap; the gap element is easily apprehended by the reader but before he knows it, he, as a human being, is involved in the experience as soon as the surprise "two" enters.

The almost fascinating web continues with the lines:

I have come after them and made repair
Where they have not left one stone on stone,
But they would have the rabbits out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs .....

The hunting scene is the observable fact made doubly effective by the detail of the rabbit and dog. But, there are key words, emotional tones and surprises which cause the reader to become personally involved; the words "I", "one", "please" and "yelping" convey an intense emotional feeling beyond the observable fact and are the objects of dramatic tonal emphasis. The reader has now obtained the poetic picture of an event on which he has been compelled to take an emotional stand- to adopt an attitude.

It must be remembered, of course, that the external elements of rhythm have at the same time come into play. The strong accentuation on "something", "frozen ground swell", the deliberate timing and the long duration on the expectant words focus the reader attention. The light stress, the delicate timing and the long duration on the word "love" have served an emotional purpose; "sun" also receives the same external rhythmic treatment. The short duration, the quick timing but the sharp bitter stress on "yelping" serve to turn resentment at the hunters to a fiercer and more flaring anger. The important

point made here is that the outer and inner elements of rhythm are acting interdependently; there can be no true reconciliation without them.

The philosophic picture does not emerge until later readings; it depends largely on the general frame of reference of the reader. It is not necessary that all the meanings be derived by each reader for he will undoubtedly experience his pleasure in terms of his background and environment.

Nevertheless, if the dramatic elements are evoked by oral reading, then the poem will yield its story in terms of a deeper philosophy as well. For in the first ten lines there is more than the observable fact of farming reacted to by human beings who have experienced the phenomena common to rural areas.

In the first two lines "love" and "swell" are in opposition to "frozen" and "ground"; the latter two represent the elements which conserve, which are traditonal; the first two represent the elements which move outward, which tend to burst the static bounds, which are liberal and expansive; they spill over the dam of the prosaic and move into the light and warmth of the sun.

Yet, as shown in the next few lines, such pioneering excursions make "gaps" in the customs and mores which are the human rocks of ages. These innovationists not only change but destroy; they do not leave "stone on stone" . The tragedy

is that not even a landmark is left for human guidance. Here the reader and the poet are dealing with oppositions on a higher level, in terms of a philosophy of life.

Returning to a first reading, walls that are broken down must be replaced; the cattle that go out in the spring for freedom from confinement in the barn, must, paradoxically, have an artificial barrier set up in nature- the walls and the fences.

Such words as "setting" and "keeping" are congruous and expected, but the surprise and twist in the thought come with the repetition of the words "between us"- walls that not only bar intrusion of nature but which also keep a barrier between men. The repetition of the word "each" in "to each the boulders that have fallen to each" carries an emotional impact.

The accent has shifted from the emphasis on the physical fact to one on the human level. The surprise elements strengthen in the next two lines when the neighbors blend into unity rather than differences as the stones are playfully called "loaves" and "balls." Yet, the experience is common, and there is the air of expectancy and verisimilitude; for few people have not found physical objects resembling the objects moulded by the human world. Even the entire surprise line that follows: "Stay where you are until our backs are turned" is still

congruous text for Frost is doing nothing more than bringing up from and to memory the not-so-childish habit of speaking, in human terms, to an inanimate world.

The following three lines:

> We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
> Oh! Just another kind of outdoor game,
> One on a side, it comes to little more:

drop the intense level of surprise and emotion to a more ordinary keel. The unity that has been achieved is now deprecated. The next two lines commence an emotional swell on the human level based on physical analogies. In:

> There where it is we do not need the wall
> He is all pine and I am all apple orchard.

the surprise words, intensely congruous to the previous tenor are "not need." Time, stress and duration would be properly shown by spondee.

> My apple trees will never get across
> And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.

is a clarification of the "not need" in the opening of new thought. "Never", "his" and "I" are emotional and intensified stresses. "I tell him" is now expectant in the sense that there is another point of view soon to emerge.

At the end of "He only says good fences make good neighbors," the reflective reader will, stimulated by the surprising emphasis on human elements, obviously supported by the physical fact, be forced to try to resolve the problem in terms of ethical abstractions such as neighborliness, kindness, sympathy, reserve, loyalty, brotherhood and charity. While the neighbors meet to do a necessary task, cooperation in life to avoid out and out conflict, to each must rest a responsibility to each. One may hope, childishly, but reasonably enough, that order will remain long enough to allow one to afford to " turn his back".

It seems ridiculous to wear one's fingers to the bone merely for the sake of order; as each individual is so different, it is not likely, that each going his own way, should need to set up a barrier in life against the other man. But the responsibility of the conservative, the unreasoning, the indomitable and the traditionalist is to his creed: "Good fences make good neighbors."

The simple terse statement of the conservative: "Good fences make good neighbors" in its stressed and slow intensity marks the usual response of the dogmatic, insulated and insular mind. As the traditionalist does not talk in a

reasonable and discursive manner, his point of view is given in tone and rhythm appropriate to his nature. This is the very essence of congruity. The form is suitable to the expression of the meaning; in fact, any other form would have contained the meaning keeping it unintelligible.

> Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
> If I could put a notion in his head:
> Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
> Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
> Before I build a wall I'd ask to know
> What I was walling in or walling out,
> And to whom I was like to give offense,
> Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That wants it down. I could say 'elves' to him,
> But its not elves exactly, and I'd rather
> He said it for himself.

In the reasonable argument of pleading, not for the abolition of a wall, but for the consideration of the necessity for a particular wall,Frost gives an argument from the point of view of any farmer. The argument extends to the universal truism that there should be a reasonable consideration and review of time honored rules and customs.

On first glance, the eleven lines appear to be little more than well developed and logical prose arguments. However, when apprehended through inner and outer formal elements, stress, duration and pace lend a different concept. The word "mischief" introduces a mysterious and emotional element to his idea of putting " a notion" in his head.

"Walling in" and "walling out" together with "offense " brings the argument a complete new exhilarating reversal from the first line of the poem and the line which follows, "And to whom I was like to give offense." They are both the same, but there is a quicker timing, a lighter stress on the beginning elements and a rush of anger and accentuation resulting in a pausing on "love", and " that wants it down."

The turning point of the poem comes in the wonderful world "elves". One leaves the physical cause, frost; the human and animal causes, hunter and dogs, to come to a mysterious faery-like unrealistic "elves " yet "not elves exactly."

The reader perceives that Frost has left the world of the physical and intellectual to fuse both arguments for the leaving off of barriers in a rhythm of life he calls "elves." It is the something that doesn't love a wall, call it progress, freedom, liberalism, morality, call it God, but the power is not, in this poem, resolvable other than in some intangible. The power is such that Frost cannot give the argument for the other man; he must do it for himself.

The final few lines gives the answer from the other side:

I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand like an old stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

The emotional content, penned up, grim and rationally expressed in "firmly", "old stone savage armed", "darkness", "fences" and "neighbors" both surprise and frustrate the reader of liberal tendencies.

The remarkable phenomena is the magnificent use of the emotional elements to show a dogmatic and rigid point of view on both sides. The lightly stressed overflow of emotion from the liberal member of the pair is in contrast to the stern, harsh restraint of the advocate of the "status quo." Emotion is in the latter, yet held in leash. Frost's tone yields the idea that opposition to the mores, the habits and the rigid cognitive organization of the traditionalist would result, under pressure, in a violent outburst.

Frost uses his art to depict in physical terms, in intellectual manifestations and in emotional content the opposing elements in life. He does not resolve them; he observes them through the knowledge of past experience. His oblique references give the reader the task to conjure up a point of view. The implication is evolved through a tonal quality derived inwardly from expectancy, surprise and congruity and externally from stress, pace and duration. If the reader will approach Frost's poetry from this concept of inner and outer rhythm, form and content in their fusion will reconcile to give him an experience of beauty.

7. Frost on Rhythm, Rhyme and Verse Forms

Thirty of Frost's poems are written in the form of heroic couplets; their use is more in the Dryden tradition than in that of Alexander Pope for there is an appreciable use of enjambement. Nevertheless, Frost manages to achieve a considerable freedom within the framework of the poem by the frequent use of anapestic and trochaic feet.

The thought content is not arbitrarily compressed whereby each pair of lines tells a story; remarkably enough, the use of the heroic couplet is dispersed among the lyrical poems as well as among the satirical pieces.

An open line lends speed to the action and is more suited to the conversational tone of the New Englander. Frequently one finds a single line sentence which connects the last two couplets; this one line concentrates the thought of the preceding couplet, and either lends it support or gives it contradiction. So much of the technical craft becomes obvious to the reader.

There is much more beneath the surface; his use of expectancy, surprise and congruity for the inner texture of the poem; his use of metre, rhyme and verse forms for the external aspects of rhythm as the recognizable effects of stress, timing and duration is such as to make virtually

every type of verse adaptable to his needs. It would, however, be admitted cheerfully that every type of verse form rigidly used for the poetry would fail. In fact, any one recognized verse form in its most perfect form would fail Frost, and he, in turn, would fail it. Have these time-honored forms value? Yes, within wide channels, they are adopted by Frost. For instance, in his use of the heroic couplet, he combined feminine rhymes to escape monotony and to ensure that his inner rhythm has full play. Furthermore, the rhyming words show an impressing array of vowels, which, associated with the consonants "m" and "n" serve to strengthen the onomatopoetic effect. Together, they influence the whole tonal quality. This onomatopoetic effect, achieved by the dramatic use of voice tone, is supported by a strong "sound sense." This sound sense, as will be expanded on in the next chapter, is congruous with the spoken voice tone. That is, the technical manipulation of sound effects is to help guide and to help intensify the oral rendition of the poem.

For Frost has said that he hears every phrase and sentence of his poem as though they were cried aloud before he wrote them down.[62] He has deliberately written some lines without punctuation in order to clarify his dependence on

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62 Robert Frost's address to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at William and Mary College, December 5, 1941.

the tone and manner of the spoken phrase,clause and line. His illustration on this point was:

> Afterward I went past what you had passed
> Before we met and you what I had passed.[63]

Until the correct tonal effect is adduced, the two lines are impossible; when the emphasis is correct as to stress, timing and duration, it is obvious that "before we met" is the phrase which should be set off.

The best interest of truth would not be served to state dogmatically that Frost wrote lyrics in heroic couplets and satires in sonnet form merely to prove that the time-cherished ideas of versification were erroneous and greatly over-emphasized. Nevertheless, it is strongly suspected that another form than the heroic couplet might well have served his purpose in writing lyrical pieces. Some of his sonnets are of fifteen lines, some the traditional fourteen and other of thirteen lines. From what can be deduced from his statements and from some of his poetic verse forms, it can be stated, firmly, that he considers the dramatic emphasis of the voice, stress, duration, timing, expectancy and surprise together with congruity vastly more important than the outward trappings of poetry.

Numbered among the poems written in the heroic couplet style- iambic pentameter rhymed- is the dramatic lyric from

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63 Op. citere, page 115.

New Hampshire, "The Onset". This twenty-three line poem is divided into unequal stanzas in which there is a transition from an indirect approach to a philosophic consideration of the snow fall.

The general mood of despair which is indicated in the opening eleven line stanza is in keeping with the general treatment of the storm rather than with the specific physical aspects. The closing stanza, philosophic in nature, paradoxically enough, has universal terms identified from specific physical facts.

Outweighing the various techniques is the same reconciliation of philosophy and art which characterized "Mending Wall."

" The Onset "

Always the same, when on a fated night
At last the gathered snow lets down as white
As may be in dark woods, and with a song
It shall not make again all winter long
Of hissing on the yet uncovered ground,
I almost stumble looking up and round,
As one who overtaken by the end
Gives up his errand and lets death descend
Upon him where he is, with nothing done
To evil, no important triumph won,
More than if life had never been begun.

Yet all the precedent is on my side:
I know that winter death has never tried
The earth but it has failed: the snow may heap
In long storms an undrifted four feet deep
As measured against maple, birch and oak,
It cannot check the peepers silver croak;
And I shall see the snow all go down hill
In water of a slender April rill
That flashes tail through last year's withered brake
And dead weeds, like a disappearing snake.
Nothing will be left white but here a birch
And there a clump of houses with a church.[64]

On first inspection the poem presents the following rhymed pattern:

U ' U ' U ' U ' U '
Al ways the same when on a fa ted night
U ' U ' U ' U ' U ' U '
At last the gath ered snow lets down as white

However, the application of internal and external rhythm modify the basic iambic pattern appreciably. The congruous expectancy of "always the same", rendered apparent by the long stress, timing and duration given each syllable is reinforced by " fated night" and " gathered snow" and " dark woods." The light rushing effects of " with a song" and "all winter long" and of "hissing" make the surprise intrusion of these ideas, contrasted with the ominous gathering of a dread snowfall, of prime importance. They serve to give the idea of the unusual as well as the intimate sound of that which is barely audible. The rhythm pattern is assisted by the use

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[64] Robert Frost, New Hampshire, "The Onset"

of rhyme. In each case "night", "white", "song" and "long", while in ejambement, have a length- a duration- which causes the reader to give a longer reflective pause than would otherwise ensue.

In fact, the entire first eleven lines create the effect by the rather accentuated external elements of rhythm, strongly allied with the drawn out rhyming words, of a wonderfully intellectual recall of a past experience in which the fact is paralleled with a long simile treating of pessimism.

There is a parallel in form, as in meaning, between the gathering snow which finally has to fall, to let go as a blanket of white, on the one hand, and the wayfarer in life who yields and gives up his errand. The clause " as may be in dark woods" is likened in form and content to " and let death descend upon him where he is." There is a definite impotence conjured up by the word "hissing" and the futility of "hissing on uncovered ground" which is aptly compared with " nothing done to evil", and " no important triumph won." Although this section is not concerned, primarily, with philosophy, the form and content in Frost's poetry are so intimately reconciled that consideration of the one is inextricably bound up with contemplation of the other. The parallels cited above not only resemble each other in meaning but the formal

phases of rhythm, rhyme and meter are paralleled. Because of the parallel, the connection between the fact of nature and the fact of life, in the first eleven lines, is rendered the more striking.

The second stanza, of twelve lines, answers the indirect approach to the problem posed in the first stanza; there the first is general, the second is specific. The overall iambic pattern is present; but, again, the true rhythmic essence appears in the spondee and the few anapests present.

The deliberate and the congruous approach noted in the first two lines of stanza one is present at the start of the second verse:

> Yet all the precedent is on my side
> I know that winter death has never tried
> The earth but it has failed:

"All the precedent" is as sweeping and inclusive as "always the same"; the same predictable tenor runs its course until the accented " my side", deliberately stressed, changes, through surprise, the short range view of life to a longer one.

Line by line, each of the first stanza has a parallel, not only in philosophy, but in all the aspects of rhythm and rhyme, so that, while one stanza could exist as separable, technically, from the other, no reconciliation is possible

except in terms of both. The final reconciliation is effected, by the use of the line " yet all precedent is on my side." For, while the first stanza reveals that the traveller faces death with no clear cut victory over evil, Frost hastens to state by the deliberate use of "precedent on my side" that winter death, symbol of evil, has "never tried the earth but it has failed."

This line is much likened to the line or lines which indicate the crisis of a play. Keeping in mind the dramatic qualities of Frost's poetry, one must appreciate how important the artistic texture is in elucidating the critical thought and emotion. The thought would be apparent without as much emphasis on expectancy, congruity, surprise, stress, pace and duration; but the emotional quality would not. Drama requires that tension be created and relieved. The three lines commencing stanza two strike to the very depths of feeling of relief and compassion.

Once the path is indicated to the reader-the path which holds out the hope for life, through the example of the unconquerable earth, the remaining few lines give specific examples of the ways in which winter death has failed. In the relieved tension, the speed of the lines is breath taking. Much like the use of traffic lights which show the red warning on one way streets to slow down the traffic rush, Frost checks

the speed and leaves some time for thought. The speed of:

> the snow may heap
> In long storms an undrifted four feet deep
> As measured against maple, birch and oak...
>
> is checked succeedingly

by "maple", "birch" and "oak" until the latter brings the reader to a complete stop. The traditional sturdiness suggestive of "oak" in the reader's mind is employed by Frost when he uses the word as the last of a series in diminishing the reading speed. The long "o" and the abrupt consonantal harshness of "k" force the reader to stop and to consider the effectiveness of thought.

The measured stress is carried on, congruously in "it cannot check." Having given the reader time to re-orient himself, Frost rushes on to the specific examples which defy winter:"... the peeper's silver croak","and I shall see the snow all go down hill in water of a slender April rill that flashes tail through last year's withered brake." With the word "brake", he brakes the speed of the anapests to prepare for a deliberate consideration of his philosophy by the reader. The line " and dead weeds like a disappearing snake" with a series of "d's" and "p's" and the "k" bring the reader to a halt. The remaining two lines, one of nature and one of the man, have

parallel stresses and surprise words. "Nothing will be left white" is what the reader expects in view of the previous four lines, but the word "birch", although commonplace, is surprising, something that the reader knew in his experience; but it came as a fanciful surprise in the context. In the final line, relating to the human world, "and there a clump of houses with a church", the use "church" as white is not, in itself, surprising, but the whiteness of the church immediately invites a contrast with the deathly whiteness of the snow; the former represents love, hope and faith, the latter, despair and death.

In this dramatic lyric, whose terms, except for "precedent" are homely, common and short, the major success does not stem from the imagery, the metaphor and the sound as much as it evolves through the inner and outer elements of rhythm.

In many of Frost's poems, as in many of Dryden's lines, the end rhyme words are feminine and light of stress so as to enable the reader to grasp the meaning but still to move on. In this particular poem, the rhyming words are used as brakes to cause the reader to feel and reflect, but, at the same time, the brake is released to enable the reader to procede logically.

Twenty-five of Frost's poems are sonnets which vary from the traditional Italian and English forms: the variance stems primarily from Frost's arbitrary deviation from the standard fourteen lines. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, the sonnet has been a tool for the poet who wished to condense some aspect of life which interprets the beautiful in nature and the lofty in mankind.

The Italian form, the more rigid, falls into the "octave" or "octet" which is rhymed abbaabba and the "sestet" which consists of a rhymed series cde cde or cdcdee. The first eight lines pose the question, and the last six,given the first eight for development, yield the answer. The Italian form has lent itself to economy of expression, for this reason certain of Frost's sonnets are based on this model.

Because the English language is comparatively poor in rhymes, the octave of the Italian model offers some difficulty; therefore Wyatt[65],Surrey[66] and Shakespeare[67] invented what is variously called the "Elizabethan" or Shakespearian Sonnet." The rhyming scheme and verse form calls for three quatrains and a couplet. The final couplet

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[65] Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

[66] Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey,(1517-1547) contemporary lyric poet with Wyatt. Both had works included in Tottel's Miscellany .

[67] William Shakespeare (1564-1616) composed over one hundred and fifty sonnets.

condenses the thought inherent in the first twelve lines. This makes the last two lines epigrammatic in nature. This last feature has attracted Frost.

Lawrance Thompson has dwelt with considerable detail on Frost's use of the sonnet. He calls attention, with accuracy, to the fact that Frost employs sestets followed by unrhymed couplets; he is concerned that Frost has taken liberties with the traditional rhyme and line scheme.

There is no pressing reason why a rigid adherence akin to that which has characterized the past employment of the sonnet should be employed on every present and future occasion. If the sonnet is catalogued as a condensed resolution of a lofty idea and ideal, derived by a question and answer pattern, the problem of quatrains, sestets and octets is not a vital one. To insist on such rigidity and to apologize for taking the less travelled road is to stress and harp on a minor theme.

The real questions are: First, does the theme warrant sonnet treatment? Second, does Frost's handling serve to delight in its art and instruct by its philosophy? And, third, does his individual variation on the sonnet theme strengthen or weaken his performance.

Thompson, Untermeyer and Van Doren, as well as the poet Coffin considers that Frost's sonnets rank high with his art.

Thompson, the only critic to dwell on the Frostian sonnet declares:

> ...nevertheless, they all represent in a new manner the poet's pleasure in showing deference to established forms, even when he takes bold liberties with metrical patterns or rhyme.[68]

Unlike C.Day Lewis, I.A.Richards, P. Gurrey, and the art critic, Alexander, all hitherto cited, Thompson has approached the study of Frost's art from the traditional stress on the outer trappings of poetry, the minor themes. These minor themes are exact rhyme schemes,precise metrical patterns, onomatopoeia and assonance, together with the numerous variants of poetic figures of speech and ornaments of poetry. He has defended Frost's departure from the normal forms of versification by asking the reader to believe that the New Englander does succeed despite his errant poetical behavior. The very apologetic tone indicates that he is not able to make the reconciliation of art and philosophy for Frost. Accommodation, yes! Reconciliation, no!

In discussing one of Frost's sonnets,Thompson apologizes:

> Many lines are crowded with substitutions and extra metrical syllables which are so balanced with the iambic pattern that no difficulty occurs when it is read aloud... It may well be that he has gained added flexibility. If the extra line seems unconventional in some of his sonnets, in other sonnets he returns to the pleasurable restrictions of rhyme schemes. [69]

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[68] Lawrance Thompson,Fire and Ice , pp.76-78 passim.

69 Ibidium, pp.83-87.

Thompson has neglected to seek the comfort which comes not from a pleasurable restriction but from an enjoyable freedom of utterance. If thirteen lines suffice to postulate a query and to answer the problem, then the fourteenth, for art's sake, may be an example of impotence in the school of "art for art's sake." Likewise, when Frost deemed it essential to place fifteen lines to his sonnet "Hyla Brook", it may well have been that fourteen were not sufficient to render his sonnet strong and complete.

The evaluation of his art in the writing of the sonnet reverts to and depends on the question of reconciliation of art and philosophy. Both must mutually support each other through integration. In treating of expectancy, surprise and congruity, which represent the inner core of rhythm, and stress, duration and pace, which are manifestations of the outer core of rhythm, the intellectual elements revealed through the inner core are integrated by the dramatic voice tone with the outer core.

With the sonnet, Frost employs the intellectual and the emotional appeal to yield up the lofty, the restrained and the condensed elements common to the theme of the sonnet. The accuracy and economy of his art stand him in good stead. It must again be emphasized that Frost asserts that the dramatic element in poetry is the highest form of art. There is an

emphasis of implication in the dramatic force of literature; a set "sing-song" is inimical to dramatic development. As Vernon Blake states:

> To suppose that because a poem has a predominating rhythm, or to suppose that the best poetry has an unvarying rhythm throughout, is an obvious yet prevalent error, for a tidy and unvariable form chosen once for all, a studied uniformity in which the pseudo-changed repeat themselves at expected intervals becomes fatiguing and hypnotic... and to insist on regular stresses when poets give lines with no regular stress is to neglect the great rhythm...[70]

Yet, as revealed by the study of the poems, "Mending Walls" and "The Onset", Frost subjects himself to order and direction in form to the extent that congruity, expectancy and surprise demand an intense intellectual and emotional appeal.

The sonnet for study in this section is the fifteen line "Hyla Brook" from Mountain Interval (1916). The last line is used to condense the thought behind the other fourteen. This sonnet commences in the Italian manner, and then it breaks the traditional bounds to employ the rhyme scheme abb acc add eef gf g. The fancy of the idea of a brook flowing one moment and disappearing the next moment is built up in the first nine lines- one more than the Italian octave, while in the

next five lines give the matter- of-fact evidence as it appears to the eyes of the scientific observer. The last line gives the solution to the one who wonders at the loss of the beautiful and who then becomes pessimistic over its disappearance. The last line, if proceeding from the general to the particular could have been placed first; however, while the sonnet would have been lovely as a meditative lyric, it would have lost its dramatic effect and would not have been in the lofty realm of the sonnet.

Although the poem poses and answers a question, the first fourteen lines do build up one single image as shown by the growth fusing into decay with death of beauty. The fifteenth line is as dramatically effective as the last line of Milton's "Sonnet on His Blindness."- "They also serve who only stand and wait."

In "Hyla Brook", thinking, imagining and perceiving the verbal effects conform to the rhythm of the poem more so than in the previous examples given. If it is true that many words of the finest poetry have been disembarrassed of their usual conversational force in order to express in sound more precisely the conceptions of the human mind, it is also true that the finer poet may use the conversational force to gain the universal appeal that depends so much on the expectant and the congruous. In the poem,"Hyla Brook"

the conversational tone is used, but it is the smooth and light enunciation that results from a man's talking aloud to himself in a meditative strain.

Many of the lines are so light and fine of texture that the attempt to place the stress according to strict pattern will obliterate the power of the poem. "Hyla Brook", quoted below, will be considered:

> By June our brook's run out of song and speed
> Sought for much after that it will be found
> Either to have gone groping underground
> (And taken with it all the Hyla breed
> That shouted in the mist a month ago
> Like ghost of sleigh bells in a ghost of snow)
> Or flourished and came up in jewel-weed,
> Weak foliage that is blown upon and bent
> Even against the way its waters went.
> Its bed is left a faded paper sheet
> Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat-
> A brook to none but who remember long.
> This as it will be seen is other afar
> Than with brooks taken otherwhere in song.
> We love the things we love for what they are.[71]

Ostensibly, on superficial analysis, the poem follows the iambic pentametric versification:

> u u u u u
> By June our brook's run out of song and speed
> u ' u ' u ' u ' u '
> Sought for much after that it will be found

Stress here would be entirely out of place; the rhythm of the lines is determined

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[71] Robert Frost, "Hyla Brook" from Mountain Interval

to enable the thought processes of the reader to grasp the idea.

The pace is swift for the incident has occurred swiftly; the whole effect from the external point of view of rhythm is that the quality has not been sacrificed to quickness. There is a suppleness in the duration and pace for the rushing querical wonder of the first few lines are checked and more deliberate in the next five. The appearance of the brook bed after the disappearance of the water calls for "the fact." The words are dwelt on for a longer period of time as in:

> Its bed is left a faded paper sheet
> Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat.

Even though the pace is still rapid, the melancholy and arid appearance denoted by "faded paper sheet", "dead leaves" and "heat" demand a lingering and tense consideration. Yet, throughout, the voice and tone do not raise themselves; they are soft though sad in inflexion.

The series of congruous images are common to experience; yet the elements of surprise exceed those of expectancy. The first two words are surprise words for they set the pattern and provide the key to the wondering mood. The reader knows that over the year, the brook rises with

by the timing. The quiet tone runs on with rushing speed; the emphasis is on the pace. The pace is unchecked; in fact, it is aided by the short vowel sounds, particularly those of the short "o". The sudden experience by which the rushing brook of the May month has faded in the month of June is reflected by the swift pace of unstressed syllables. Anapestic metre appears to be in frequent use for speed because of the short vowel sounds and the lack of consonants. However, despite the fact that a case could be made out for scanning the lines in iambic or in anapestic feet, the speed is not gained by this traditional method but depends, instead, on the lack of stress, the swift pace and the short duration on the syllables.

Not until the line "weak foliage that is blown upon and bent" is reached, is there a check on the tempo of the poem; the tempo is checked by the long "o" and the alliterative "b", not by a slowing down into iambic metre. In the lines which follow, each of them checking the flight, the rhyme words "sheet", "heat", "long" and "song" assist in the braking effort and effect. While the duration element is short, it is not negligible. The instrusion of long vowel sounds and consonants naturally causes a longer resting time on the words. The resting time is just sufficient

the freshet period of spring and disappears during the summer droughts, but he doesn't realize that this happens in the glorious month of June. June, the month of growth, of blooming roses, of springing corn, of life and laughter and of romance, does not appear to the reader to be the period of "drying up."

The rushing away of life, symbolized by the drying-up of water so early in the span of the year, is a sombre and startling thought. The speed with which Frost rushes the reader through this sobering idea adds up to and leads to a feeling of melancholy. The understanding of the word "hyla" is crucial. The term is used to describe a small frog that is most common in the spring of the year. For so small a unit, the hyla can expand its throat into a vocal sac twice the usual size of its head and, with this enormous drum, can produce remarkable music. The disappearance of the "hyla breed" coincides with the drying up of the waters of the brook. The music disappears. There is a sadness associated with the brook without music; yet Frost, for all of his disappointment, pursues the cause in the hope of seeing some answer to the riddle of why this must be.

"Hyla Breed", "gone groping underground", like ghost of sleigh-bells in the ghost of snow", "jewel-weed"

and "Its bed is left a paper faded sheet of dead leaves stuck together by heat" are surprise elements striking and exciting but fearful and ominous in connotation. Together, they give a sensation and concept of aridity equal in strength and effectiveness to some of the despair of T.S.Eliot. [72]

In the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth lines:

A brook to none but who remember long
This as it will be seen is other far
Than with brooks taken otherwhere in song

Frost continues the statement of fact but lengthens the duration on " remember", "long", "far", and "otherwhere." The emphasis on surprise continues, for the reader is informed that much of the import in life consists in the remembering of the observed fact. The brook has been and will be, although it appears not to be at the present. Many of man's happiest moments consist in remembering something in a slightly different context than it had existed before- modified or magnified by man's imagination; many of his experiences consist of those in which the observed fact is interpreted in human values. The line " Than with brooks taken otherwhere in song" is light, aery, musical and fanciful. It refers to something

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[72] Cf the despair evoked by the difficult symbolism and imagery of T.S.Eliot in "TheWasteland" with lines above by Frost for power, expectancy, surprise and congruity.

permanent in the wider sense; that is, something remembered not by its absence, but by its presence. The brook remembered otherwhere in song, might be, for example, Tennyson's "The Song of the Brook."

Frost is content to take the appreciation of nature as measured in human values along with the observed fact as an experience most valuable and most lovely. He can love the brook in its presence and c an appreciate, in the human equation, the observed fact of its drying up and its sudden disappearance; in this he is happily much like Thomas Hardy. The beautiful and poignant line that caps the sonnet is rich with surprise: "We love the things we love for what they are."

It should not be thought that Frost's poetic range consists of an art of considerable variation within the deca-syllabic line. Much of his poetry is of four stress lines; three stress and even two stress measures. While one might expect the conversational tone to attain its highest dramatic emphasis in tetrametric, pentametric and hexametrical verse, his ability to gain equal dramatic effect from the trimeter and dimeter is both unusual and surprising.

The brevity of a dimeter line lends itself,however,

to the economy of words, to the sharp tensions and to the sense of the ironic one finds in Frost. There is less contemplation, for the condensation that requires a resolution of the action in short lines and poems depends on the use of the verb.

The stress is light, but the pace is moderate; in these dimeter poems, Frost uses many "s" sounds. These give the impression of a more rapid pace than actually exists, for in order to glean the thought in the brief passages, duration on words and lines is essential. The verb provides such opportunity for a moderate lingering.

The net effect of this art is to give short poetic flashes of some incident in nature which is paralleled by some brief but memorable incident in the life of a man. They are short vignettes. Here, as before, the variation appears in the form of spondees, dactyls and anapests on the iambic pattern; but there is no set scheme to the array. An attempt to analyze the feet in some scheme reminiscent of a known system will result in a chaotic failure.
The art lies in the ability of rhythm, as defined and explained heretofore, to fuse the philosophy and art into a harmonious pattern. The example of two-stress dimeter employed for consideration in the ironic piece, " The Rabbit Hunter" from the volume of poems, A Witness Tree, represents Frost's hatred of senseless slaughter.

"The Rabbit Hunter"

Careless and still
The Hunter lurks
With gun depressed,
Facing alone
The alder swamps
Ghastly snow-white
And his hound works
In the offing there
Like one possessed,
And yelps delight
And sings and romps,
Bringing him on
The shadowy hare
For him to rend
And deal a death
That he nor it
(Nor I) have wit
To comprehend.[73]

As in the sonnet "Hyla Brook", the effect is gained from a barely perceptible stress which owes more to the lingering duration of the verbs: "lurks", "depressed" "works", "possessed", "yelps", "sings", "romps", "rend" and"comprehend." In this poem the external elements of rhythm serve but to contain the meaning gently. The inner elements of expectancy, surprise and congruity are far more dominant than in the previous example.

The tensions aroused by "hunter" and "still", both expectant and congruous, are rendered more tense by the surprise the reader receives from the words "careless",

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[73] Robert Frost, "The Rabbit Hunter", from The Witness Tree

"lurks" and "gun depressed." The hunter is presented to the poet in a surprising light; traditionally the hunter is still, alert and tense; his gun is elevated for action- not depressed with lethargic posture. He is eager for the hunt and for the kill.

The next few lines fulfill the expected; the hound, according to his nature, "yelps", "sings", and "romps" as he does that which he understands not. The irony rests in the fact that the hunter, quiet, indifferent and unready, will soon kill. He will commit the act that does not stem as instinct from his nature.

The element of surprise also manifests itself in "have wit to comprehend." To deal out a death is not an act of understanding. The whole poem turns on the word "comprehend." It is not comprehension on either the animal or the human level to kill. The animal does so by an unreasoning instinct. The hunter surrenders his intellect and comprehension to satisfy a sensory stimulation. He does not"comprehend" the moral consequences of a pointless slaughter.

This incident is not uncommon in life. It is so true to experience as to make the incident both expectant and congruous. Each word is packed with implication. The meaning strikes a responsive chord because the details of the

action are personally intimate to both poet and reader. Then there comes the surprise inherent in the consideration of a common event reflected in a new light. It is the fusion of art and content which makes the appeal to the senses so strong and the intellectual grasp of the ethics involved so acute. Before continuing to the reconciliation of the minor by-products of art, figures of speech and ornaments of poetry, a short summary of this chapter ensues.

The traditional methods of explaining metre, rhythm rhyme and verse forms are not sufficiently fruitful in studying the art of Robert Frost. His rhythm takes on the characteristics of his meaning; both his art and his philosophy are mutually sustaining and reconciling.

The reconciliation arises from the blending of two aspects of his rhythmic art; first, the outer characteristics are those of stress, duration and timing (pace). Stress is used, not in the conventional way of accenting a syllable as much as it is in giving the proper tonal inflection to achieve a dramatic effect. Duration refers to the time given a syllable, a word or a line. It is the philosophic aspects of the external rhythm for duration is related to "time for reflection." The pace refers to the over-all tempo of the poem.

Closely integrated with these externals are the internal aspects of rhythm-expectancy, surprise and congruity. The syllables, words, phrases, clauses and even the lines are congruous in that they represent rational things which comprise common experiences. They are couched in words whose meanings are expectant in that they develop logically, one from another. The dramatic force comes from the elements of surprise exposed by the verbal elements, which, within the context of the expected and congruous, give rise to a wonder at the presentation of some aspect of nature and life not previously experienced.

Examples of his poetic art have been used to demonstrate the application of his principles of rhythm. The illustrations have ranged from the blank verse, iambic pentametric "Mending Wall" to the swift, tense and ironic dimeter selection,"The Rabbit Hunter."

Other examples have served to show how Frost can employ the open rhymed couplet, heretofore regarded as rigid in a classical application, to the development of a dramatic lyrical poem,"The Onset."

The third example was the fifteen line sonnet, "Hyla Brook." It was seen that Frost's sonnets are not

regular when measured against the traditional standard of the Italian and the Elizabethan sonnet. It is not claimed that he is perverse in his refusal to follow the traditional rigid sonnet form; although he may be so. However, his subject matter conforms to the dictum that the subject matter must be condensed, worthy, emotionally charged and lofty in stature.

Frost's art proves that the true nature of rhythm does not depend on the traditional metrical measurements. The art must be congruous with and intensify the content; both art and form must reinforce each other. The verse form reveals the design of the poem; it does not detract from the purpose of communicating an experience.

SECTION ONE

CHAPTER THREE

RECONCILIATION THROUGH FIGURES OF SPEECH AND ORNAMENTS OF POETRY

1. Preliminary Considerations

There is no clear cut distinction between figures of speech and ornaments of poetry; however, many critics place simile, metaphor and alliteration in the category of figures of speech; assonance, chiaroscuro and stichomythia are alloted to the classification under ornaments of poetry. All are vestments which intensify and reveal sensibly the inner and outer aspects of rhythm.

In making more effective the reconciliation between art and philosophy, they are of considerable importance. In Frost's poetry, the restraint shown in the employment of these technical elements is such as to, most properly, season and make palatable the main ingredients of the experience.

Assonance, alliteration, metaphor and simile are closely interwoven with the word melody which is often considered, and not properly so, the most important feature of poetry. Which is to state that, provided the verse is sufficiently mellifluous, good poetry results. Such an error in reasoning can be noted in the greatest of poets

to mention Keats, Tennyson and Chaucer as three, who, in their earliest writings, were tempted to employ their sensitive ear for verbal music to the extent that vitality was sacrificed.[1] However, not many artists agree that poetry is merely an enjoyable pastime in which the production of a beautiful melody of words is the ultimate value to be derived from the writing and reading of poetry. Too much emphasis on the "top dressing" has stultifying effects. Epstein, representing a different artistic medium than poetry, urged:

> I doubt whether an artist aims consciously at producing beauty. I try to express the character of what I am depicting... the danger lies in the artist who aims consciously at beauty; he destroys all character.[2]

Mr. Aldington further refines this objection to aestheticism for its own sake: "There are some critics who judge a poet by the noise his words make, as if poetry were merely a matter of sound."[3]

Two of the lesser aids in language are alliteration and vowel cadence; if the poet shows too much concern to the sound and to the artificially constructed rhythm of the word- and not the poem- the poem will not express intellectual and imaginative values. Swinburne[4] is one of the poets who

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[1] That is, they appealed too little to the cognitive.

[2] Haskell, The Sculptor Speaks, London, Kegan,1945, p.23

[3] Richard Aldington, The Art of Poetry, London, Trench, 1937, p.44

[4] Algernon Swinburne (1837-1909) tained an unsurpassed melody in verse by his dearth of intellectual content.

has been indicted for making the minor art the major note.

When there is something important and vital in the way of an experience of beauty, the most expressive words will have alliterative qualities and musical notes to assist and not to supplant.

Pleasantness of delivery is subordinate to the appropriateness of the thought expressed. It is fatal, for example, to the trenchantly worded poetry of Frost to clothe the power of the experience in the sweetly melodious tone of voice and word. This no way insists that many of his lyrics are not concerned more with the explicit expression of feeling than with the control of emotion by thought. In poetry sound has an undeniable importance; but it has its value in the ability to quicken the imaginative faculties, to stimulate thought and to derive emotion rather than for feeling alone.

What part does the sound of words, heard and imagined , play in the art of appreciation? Words are, importantly, primarily sounds; the sound of words is so intimately wrapped-up in association with the meaning that the mind cannot accept one without some part of the other. Sounds suggest size, shape, movement and pressure; they help to express atmosphere, impressions,

and sensuous imagery. Finally, they evoke emotions.

The aspects of rhythm, metre, rhyme and verse forms considered in the last chapter are aided by the skillfully constructed figures of speech and ornaments of poetry. Definitely, it is not the pleasantness of sound alone which is important but the expressiveness. The expressiveness lacks intensity and conviction if there is not congruity in the use of poetic aids. The right amount and the quality of the trappings serve to emphasize the congruity.

2. The Critics and Their Opinions on Frost's Employment of Figures of Speech and Ornaments.

What have the critics to say about Frost's use of sound effects, similes, color and other elements which make up the entire texture of form?

Lawrance Thompson considers that while Frost, like Wordsworth, insists on the inherent poetic quality of those speech rhythms heard from the lips of the people who live close to the soil, Frost differs in that he does not wish to reflect alone the elemental passions in the speech of the common man. Frost, like Whitman and Coleridge, would agree that such a practice would make the poet the slave and not the master of words and phrases.[5]

It did not take long for Frost to part company with Coleridge who asserted that the important part of human language comes from the reflections on the acts of the mind itself. Frost left Coleridge because the latter refused to pay attention to words heard in the market, at the wake, on the highroad and in the plough fields. Frost recognized that the poet,as master,can sharpen his understanding by listening to the power of homely and passionate speech, of brief rational statement and of the hard and flat epigrams of the rural element.[6]

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[5] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere, pp.44-55 passim and paraphrased

[6] Ibidium

These observations are fair for they strike to the heart of this question of sound. The sense of meaning conveyed to the reader through sound is of prime importance to Frost.

While alliteration, assonance and anaphora may assist, it is the tone of voice which conveys scorn, amusement, surprise and doubt. Having arrived at the necessity for the idea of "sound of sense", Frost, then, and properly so, infused the form of his poems with sufficient alliterative and assonantal qualities to focus the attention more sharply on the dramatic aspects of the experience. Thompson is most clear and accurate on this phase of Frost. However, he errs in claiming that the regular beat of the metre is, in Frost's poetry, an enemy of the cadence of the spoken sentence. One should go so far as to say that rigid adherence to any regular beat is an enemy to all poetry for, as has been detailed previously, the verse pattern is but the employment of some device, natural to the human voice which infuses its fibres in a form acceptable to the human idea of what is proportionate in beauty.

In viewing, critically, the book of poems, Mountain Interval, Sidney Cox wrote:

> His descriptions are made vivid by enough alliteration and assonance to sedulously avoid the sound of words for sound's sake....the long "o" with its assonance is used to the extent where one feels the painful nip of a very cold day, not to the point where the finger is numbed and then literally broken off.....Frost leaves room for meaning. His verbal sounds prevail with the sincerity and simplicity of restraint. [7]

The beauty of the sound patterns reflect what each person has heard in actual speech: alarm, agony, indifference, apostrophe, remonstrance, sarcasm, disillusion, deprecation and tenderness.

Llewellyn Jones made somewhat the same discovery in 1925 in a review of the Frost poetry as a whole:

> Technically, it is the outstanding feature of all Mr. Frost's verse that he makes it speak in human tones. He has never written a line of free verse and he has never written a lone of blank verse that does not scan- if the reader knows how to scan English verse as it should be scanned and not as Latin or Greek verse should be scanned. The reason why some people have thought Mr. Frost's verses very licentiate and why others have said that he writes free verse, is because he subordinates his metrical pattern to the cadences of human speech. If there is a short "o" sound or a melancholy series of wailing "w"s: then they result from and give force to the echo of the human voice as it speaks in everyday life. [8]

Before considering other critics on synecdoche and irony, both ornaments of poetry, a summary of the artificial sound constructions, insofar as the

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[7] Sidney Cox, "The Sincerity of Robert Frost", from a review of Mountain Interval in The New Republic, Vol.12, No. 147, pp.109-111 (August 25, 1918).

[8] Lewellyn Jones, First Impressions, "Robert Frost", p. 214.

poetry of Robert Frost is concerned, reveals that assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and anaphora appear in just sufficient quality and quantity to give polish to the inner and outer qualities of rhythm. They reconcile in that they sharpen the salient points of the experience and level off the plateaus which stretch along the great areas between one important moment and another.

There are two other elements of figures of speech and poetic ornaments with which Frost's appraisers have concerned themselves. One is synecdoche; the other is irony. Synecdoche is a reference to something by naming a part of it to emphasize the desired characteristic, or by naming the whole for a part:

> Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
> A sheep hook, or have learned aught else the least
> That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs.[9]

"Mouths" stands for prospective priests.

> I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
> And with forced fingers rude
> Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.[10]

"Year" stands for the autumnal portion.

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[9] Duffy and Pettit, A Dictionary of Literary Terms, 1951, Denver, University of Denver, p.100

[10] Ibidium.

Irony may be used in two senses. In one sense irony refers to philosophy and content. In this context the characters show an attitude in which words or actions mean the opposite of their customary acceptance. The meaning of the entire poem may be ironic. On the other hand, in the sense in which irony is used in this chapter on form, irony is a deliberate contrivance in which circumstances clear to the reader are deceiving to a character. Both definitions are related as art is to philosophy. Both senses of irony are employed by Robert Frost.

There is a fanciful touch to using a "sail" for a ship and "a brief hour" for a human life. Milton often indulged himself in that fancy. However, there is more justification for him than for others who have revelled in the art of synecdoche, for his poetry is the poetry of artifice.[10] When Frost uses synecdoche, the use of the figure of speech parallels his use of the specific for the general and vice versa; there is an economy, in other words. If the use of the part for the whole will heighten the dramatic interest, synecdoche is employed.

Untermeyer, who is an enthusiastic , but not a severe

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[10] Milton's Paradise Lost, for example, is an artificial saga compared with the epic, Beowulf , the folk epic.

Frostian critic, appreciated this artistic detail:

> The subtle variations of the tones of speech find their sympathetic reporter here; the lines disclose delicate shades of emphasis in the way they present an entire scene by giving only a significant detail.[11]

J.McBride Dabbs, in discussing imagery in Frost, concluded that:

> The images in Ezra Pound are exact in that they represent in 1:1 quantity and quality some thing he has in mind. That is not so of the synecdochist,Frost. He will select a detail of a scene or action that for me symbolizes life... his images are the symbols of the greater image.[12]

The point of these two observations is that the technical aspect called synecdoche is, in Frost, an external accentuation of his habit of revealing the greater meaning in terms of the part. Art and content are reconciled.

It is impossible to contemplate a human life without becoming conscious of irony. The deliberate use of irony as art by a first class poet is rare. The poet is usually concerned in rendering some aspect of beauty which appears to him in a certain experience. While the experience may parallel a lesser or a greater, as for example, a red rose may represent bravery, it does not often appear to him to represent both evil and good.

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[11] Louis Untermeyer,The Road Not Taken , p.181

[12] J.McBride, Dabbs,"The Dark Woods", article from The Yale Review , Vol.24,No.3, issue of April, 1928,pp.514-520

The critic often finds that a poet intends to represent one aspect of life, but, paradoxically , he represents the other side- its opposite; or, he presents, unwittingly, both sides. The dramatist Webster[13] went to extreme lengths to represent horror,blood shed and decay; instead he evoked not the dread of violence but a fascination for it. There is a difference between the artists who intend to show irony in life and those who, like Webster, are shocked by the opposite light in which their art appears. Hardy, Chaucer, Browning and Shakespeare are representative of the "purposive irony" cluster of artists.

In Macbeth, Shakespeare makes a definite attempt to show that often times that which appears to be good is,in effect, terribly evil. The language used is most aptly adapted for his purpose. The dramatist has succeeded in fusing his art and philosophy.[14] In the "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales", Chaucer is at his ironic best. Hardy's "Satires of Circumstance" are replete with the best of ironic craft.Frost happily accompanies these artists in the efficacious use of irony.

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[13] John Webster, (1580-1625) produced several blood-drenched, awe-inspiring plays, among them was the Duchess of Malfi

[14] William Shakespeare, Macbeth, I,vi.

Thompson insists that accurate and pleasurable delineation is more conducive to effective irony than is the attitude of didacticism and preaching. He is on tenable ground when he insists that a poet's first concern is with his art and not with his ideas and prejudices. However, when Thompson explains:

> Whenever he describes or suggests a contrast between the apparent and the actual, as he sees it or as others see it, he clarifies his own common sense position in the Golden Mean, from which he delights to satirize those extremes and absolutes, those pretensions and obsessions, which appear in a humourous light to the poet as relativist.[15]

He does not grasp the whole meaning of Frost as a poet and as a man. No man, no poet can occupy such a position from which he can hold aloof. The poetic processes involve the poet intuitively, intellectually and emotionally. When Frost sees an aspect of life interpretable in two ways; when he considers that one aspect of life means one thing to an actor and another to the audience, such an experience stems from the whole being of the poet. He is in the experience.

Thompson is correct to state that the conscious ironist is not necessarily a preacher; he errs, however, when he postulates the poet of irony as an artist who judges accurately when he is in a middle and non-involvable position.

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[15] Lawrance Thompson, "Irony in Frost and Swift", article in the Devonian of Delaware, Vol.6, No.8, issue of March 14, 1940, pp.18-22.

Because a man does not argue the relative merits of a case, there is no proof that he has not experienced, intimately, the conflict which makes for the greatest paradox of all, man's resolution of his"raison d'etre ." Later in this chapter, an examination of the poem "Birches" will reveal the ironic touch and concern of Robert Frost in terms of a personal experience.

Frost gives objective expression to his ironic view of life. His craft is such that he does not show the contrast between life's opposing views in black and white. Such emphasis would lead to the Swiftian dilemma. Jonathan Swift was so bitter and so obvious in his use of irony that he, himself, became the figure of interest rather than his theme. His technique, ironically enough, has received far more study than the message he was so anxious to awaken man with. An irony which is couched in such terms as to arouse an intense emotional involvment of the reader is bound to inhibit the intellectual conceptions. The emotional reaction should, in a restrained manner ensue from the perception.

Whereas Swift piles evidence on more evidence until the sheer mass informs the reader that the one-sidedness is ridiculous, Frost intrudes the sly word which may be taken one way or another. More often than not, the poem is completed

and the reader happy in the assumption that he has grasped the point of the poem. Suddenly, subtly but inevitably he is seized with the realization that he has missed something. There is another side to the case. Realization comes. He is surprised.

In this respect, Amy Lowell has had some influence among the feminine readers of Frost's poetry. In her comments on Frost's irony, she compares him with a fellow New England artist, Alice Brown:

> She too is a poet in her descriptions; she ,too, has caught the desolation and "dourness" of lonely New England farms, but unlike Mr. Frost she has a rare sense of humor, and that,too, is of New England although no hint of it appears in Mr.Frost's North of Boston . And just because of the lack of it, its place is taken by irony.[16]

As Cazamian points out in his extensive treatment of humour:

> ...the ironic perception of paradox is motivated largely by the sense of the humorous and the comic even when the implications of such paradox are tragic.[17]

The humour of irony is rare indeed. It is not the infectious and joyful humour from a ringing laugh of pleasure, but it has its roots in the risible whether that laugh takes the form of a bitter smile or the

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16 Amy Lowell, from a review in the New Republic , Vol2.,No.16, issue of February 16,1915, pp.81-82.

17 Louis Cazamian,The Development of English Hunour , Part I, Durham, Duke, 1951, p.18

laugh of self pity.

Ezra Pound put the case for Frost in different but effective terms:

> That fellow Frost has a consummate art in his pervasive humour, he is not its victim. He has the humour of things as they are not. [18]

Cornelius Weygandt warns of the subtle approach to the ironic:

> Watch for his irony when he seems the most obvious; he is then playing with the other, the hidden meaning. Unless you catch the ironic drawling stress, you will not understand him for just at that second he means two things instead of one.[19]

The question of the art of irony has been approached by R.P.T.Coffin from the word "litotes." Litotes is a type of understatement, made for emphasis, whereby an affirmative is expressed by denying its contrary. Coffin's statement is pertinent to the integration if certain reservations are noted. Coffin uses the homely experience of a classmate who, on entering the room one fine spring morning, exclaimed, "I think I shall get a rise out of this class." A few second later, he did, through sitting on a tack thoughtfully placed on his seat by a solicitous colleague.[20] The example is relevant as to art and meaning.

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[18] Ezra Pound,from an article in Poetry, Vo.5,No.3, issue of December, 1914, pp.127-130.

[19] Cornelius Weygandt, from The White Hills , p.126

[20] Henry Coffin,address to Middlebury University, "Understatement in Poetry", on 16 November, 1935.

Frost uses litotes extensively. He uses them because they are a part and parcel of New England speech. The fact that they form an unconscious part of New England idiom is a happy accident of which Frost has taken advantage. The reader must be warned that litotes only seem to deny the contrary by emphasizing one side by understatement.

The emphasis given one side of a question by litotes is an excellent foil for the tonal stress which tells the reader that the contrary really must and does exist. It is therein that the reconciliation occurs and the final judgment is assured in the resolution of both sides of the story.

Because Frost will not tell the reader directly what he feels about the relative merits of both sides or that there are two sides, he uses the qualities of rhythm and the element of litotes-without other ornaments- to ensure that the alert reader has clues by which to find the different elements which conflict with each other for man and nature.

3. What Frost Has to Say on Figures of Speech and on Ornaments of Poetry

In a preface to his collected poems, Frost has four short pages on " The Figure a Poem Makes." The net result of the introductory note is to express the sound sense that comes from the dramatic tone applied to the meaning. It is recognized that other sources are not enough:

> Granted that no one but a humanist much cares how sound a poem is if it is only a sound. The sound is the gold in the ore. Then we will have sound out alone and dispense with the inessential until we make the discovery that the object in writing poetry is to make all poems sound as different as possible from each other, and the resources for that of vowels, consonants, punctuation, syntax, word sentences and metres are not enough..... subject matter is required. This is the greatest help to variety. All that can be done with words is soon told. So also with metres-particularly in our language where there are virtually but two, strict and loose iambic...It is painful,to watch our sprung-rhythmists straining at the point of omitting one short from a foot for relief from monotony... we are back in poetry as merely one more art of having something to say , sound or unsound. Probably better if sound, because deeper and from a wider experience.[21]

Thus the question of sound goes back to the element of congruity again and one sees that the questions of alliteration and assonance, while vital, are limited themes woven into the poetic fabric. There is the relation between the soundness of the poem and the sound used in the artistic sense. The artificial

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[21] Robert Frost,Complete Poems of Robert Frost,1949 Preface by Robert Frost,"The Figure a Poem Makes",v,vi.

contrivance of parts of poetic ornamentation have value only insofar as they brighten the dramatic cadence of conversation.

The sparing use of ornamentation gets more direct illumination from Frost:

> A dramatic necessity goes deep into the nature of the sentence. Sentences are not different enough to hold the attention unless they are dramatic. No ingenuity of varying structure will do. All that can save them is the speaking tone of voice somehow entangled in the words and fastened to the page for the ear of the imagination. That is all that can save poetry from sing-song, all that can save prose from itself.[22]

It is imperative to keep this stress on external and internal rhythm close at hand for, on reading the poetry of Frost, one is struck, visibly and audibly by the presence of sound figures. However, the judgment that assonance and onomatopoeia are major elements of his poetry would not be qualitatively and quantitatively true.

In 1915, Frost stated a theory which has undergone little, if any, change:

> Every meaning has a particular sound posture, or to put it another way, the sense of every meaning has a particular sound which each individual is instinctively familiar with... a sentence is not interesting merely in conveying a meaning of words; it must do more;it must convey a meaning by sound.[23]

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[22] Robert Frost from the "Foreword" to A Way Out,N.Y., Holt, 1929, 23 p.

[23] W.S.Braithwaite, in"Robert Frost, New American Poet", article in the Boston Evening Transcript , issue of May 6,1915, page 35.

The major conveyance, however, is assumed by the proper reconciliation of stress, pace and duration with expectancy, surprise and congruity. The words " instinctively familiar with" relates this idea of external and internal rhythm to the quotation. The use of poetic figures serves to complete the texture of the poem.[24]

The poet has more to say about his art of employing metaphor. In this section, consideration of metaphor is limited, for the greater part, to its formal aspect. Frost claimed, vigorously:

> Enthusiasm is taken through the prism of the intellect and spread on the screen in color, all the way from hyperbole and overstatement, at one end, to understatement on the other. It is a long strip of dark lines and many colors. I would be willing to throw away everything but that: enthusiasm tamed by metaphor.[25]

That is the consideration here; not the meaning of metaphor in itself but its use and function in taming enthusiasm. What is metaphor?

One school of criticism will assert that metaphor is purely ornamental and unnecessary. That school has many

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[24] Texture refers herein to the complete art of the poem in which rhythm, figures and ornaments are completely reconciled.

[25] Robert Frost, from "Education by Poetry", "A Meditative Monologue" given by Robert Frost at A mherst College: published in the Amherst Graduates' Quarterly, Vol.20, No.2, issue of Feb.,1931, pp.75-85.

practicing adherents. Another school denies that metaphor has even a decorative function and revolts so much against emotion and colour that poetry is lifeless. Still another school revels in metaphor to the extent that there is a chaos of enthusiastic indirection.

The most common words are, it is claimed, metaphors if used to denote an object, event or idea in such a way as to parallel or to compare. Every word is a symbol that conveys to the mind an image. Words, at best, then, are improvisations, for they cannot carry the exact image or idea. Nevertheless, they attempt to clarify and to define by their use as metaphors.

The difficulty has been that over the passing years the supply of words has increased so that the reader and the poet must coin new adjectives and adverbs to suit the shades of meaning. The metaphors, the words, intend to assist the artist qualitatively; they are not an invention to enable one to become word and sound intoxicated. Metaphor does not help the word; it is the word; it is the poem.

Frost considers, then, that metaphor is an intellectual art of comparing which seizes on analogy to pinpoint, for understanding, the experience. He states that metaphor is like the prism which splits the mass of emotion into the various shad

of color. The splitting is the act of discriminating;thus each poetic discrimination reveals a facet of life. Only on the most primitive level of evaluation can metaphor be considered ornamental and decorative.

Frost, like Chaucer and Hardy, uses the images and experiences of the life and people of the times; they wrote uncommon poetry about common experience. He creates his metaphors to distinguish and to discriminate significant experiences with birds, flowers, animals, human beings,vices and virtues. The use of metaphor and the selection of metaphor have hinged solely on their congruity to make the artistic experience intelligence; this is Frost's position.

If the use of metaphor is not to be, on one hand, ornamental and decorative, and, on the other hand, if the metaphor is to avoid the metaphysical poetry and to escape the French symbolist tradition- with its abstruse and esoteric values, then metaphor must concentrate on holding open an avenue of communication between the poet and the reader. The element of congruity is paramount to Frost, as it should be to any poet. It is a fair deduction that the limitation of metaphor by Frost makes his artistic task the more difficult. He has allowed himself little leeway- no license.

He has to be sure that his analogies and comparisons do precisely what he wants them to do. If not, his dramatic style will break down into nothing but a meaningless verbal barrage. Every bit of the cautious and shrewd New England character is needed to thread his experiences through a self-imposed narrowing of the eye of his artistic needle.

It is interesting to note that Frost alone has spoken about his use of metaphor. His critics have omitted warily enough, that important aspect of his poetry; but this is not surprising in view of the contentiousness of the critics on this aspect of form; no standard for evaluation seems to have emerged during the period between the first and second world wars; his writings were the most prolific then. However,Frost has made more statements on the form of his metaphor than he has on any other aspect of his poetry. He confesses to his difficulty in handling this important part of his artistic skill.

Extracted from his observations on this score is:

> I do not think that anybody ever knows the discreet use of metaphor, his own and other people's, the discreet handling of metaphor unless he has been properly educated in poetry. Poetry begins in trivial metaphor, pretty metaphors and grace metaphors and goes on to the profoundest thinking we have...what I am pointing out is that unless you are at home in metaphor, you are not safe anywhere because you are not at ease in figurative values. You don't know metaphor in its strengths and weaknesses...All metaphor

breaks down somewhere; it is touch and go. It is a life itself. But it is the heights of poetry, the height of all thinking, that attempt to say matter in terms of spirit and spirit in terms of matter. It is wrong to call anybody a materialist simply because he tries to say spirit in terms of matter- as if that were a sin. The only materialist-be he poet, teacher, scientist, politician or statesman- is the man who gets lost in his material without a gathering metaphor to throw it into shape or order. He is the lost soul.[26]

These last two quotations record Frost's position and practice in metaphor.

Metaphor, that sense of discrimination, is required to give shape and order, not only to meaning itself, but to the art of the poem. To be at home with metaphor requires that the use reconciles the meaning; otherwise the analogy breaks down far too quickly. Metaphor not only fulfills the function of ordering and clarifying but also has a polishing effect which may be compared with the "trim" of a room. It contributes to the whole. It can be far too much if not employed in the requisite quality and quantity.

Before proceeding to a searching of Frost's poetic practice in terms of ornaments of poetry and his figures of speech, it is necessary to revert to the heretofore mentioned art of synecdoche. Frost outlines his position on this:

> Instead of a realist- if I must be classified-I think I might better be called a synecdochist; for I am fond of the synecdoche in poetry, that figure of speech in which we use the part for the whole.[27]

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[26] Robert Frost, op. citere, "Education By Poetry"

[27] Ibid.

This statement bears out the observation made that his use of synecdoche is not a frivilous and fanciful technique. Rather, it is related to the basic philosophy of his poem as rhythmically conveyed through the internal and external aspects of rhythm.

In order to give a complete texture to the poem, he must use the synecdoche of the part with the most consummate skill for the metaphor will, otherwise, on such a narrow base, break down. If the part does not succeed, the whole general value it represents is lost to the reader.

4. Consideration of Poetic Elements in Frost's Verse

There are several poetic terms which refer to sound; some of these are more natural than others. Some seem to flow from the meaning of the experience much less artificially than those which rely on a conscious manipulation. For example, the use of words that suggest by their sounds the intended object is called "onomatopoeia." In the conversational tone, whenever a person wishes to emphasize, his dramatic efforts to do so result in that which artists term an "onomatopoetic effect." As the dramatic rhythm is so pronounced in Frost one expect to find the sound effect. Because of his stress on variety through metaphor, one would further expect to find, and does find, considerable versatility in the range of the onomatopoetic effect.

There are two other sound effects whose purpose is to marshall an emphasis through a quantitative"piling-up" on the auditory processes of the poet and audience. These two are "assonance" and "alliteration." There are often opposite in effect.

Assonance has an appeal to the refined apprehensions; the net result is an appeal to the emotional elements of the poetic appreciation. The repetition of vowel sounds is conducive

to, first, speed in reading; second, intensity in emotional appeal; and third, in suggesting size effects. For example, the short "i" sound repeated again and again gives the effect of smallness and of femininity. On the other hand, the repetition of the long "u" sound gives an effect of masculinity, sonority and largeness. An intelligent use of assonance will bring out, to the dramatic tonal emphasis of stress, pace and duration, an added emotional touch. However, if the poet allows himself to be so undisciplined as to run riot with assonance, as did Swinburne and Tennyson, on occasion, the dramatic strength is lost, leaving only a cloying effeteness. Frost uses assonance with restraint and effect.

Alliteration, generally speaking, lends strength, pause and power to the line. No device, however, is more likely to destroy the graceful and emotional elements of lyricism than its indiscriminate use. The use of consonants in word series is called alliteration . It is common to the iambic pattern. Its use is that it emphasizes a virile note in a poem while slowing down the reading speed. The Anglo-Saxons relied much more exclusively on alliteration for a powerful emotional and beating effect because of a lack of vocabulary and because their environment motivated them to the expression of primitive sounds.

One unhappy use of alliteration since the Anglo-Saxon period has been the accumulation of words starting with the same sound to emphasize sound effects. The result of such poetic practice is the covering up rather than the discriminating of sound effects. For this reason, the reader will not find a host of alliterative samples in Frost, but he will find the onomatopoetic effect more sharply defined by the beautifully chiseled metaphor. Frost uses alliteration and assonance to fuse into the texture of the poem; in fact those items are an integral part of the poetic texture. Others add alliteration and assonance for pure artistic effect and "top-dressing"; however, this is not to integrate but to add another layer to the product- to apply another coat of word paint. Result-superimposition, not reconciliation!

In fact, in order to avoid the quantity of sound, which, added, may weaken the rhythm, Frost uses ,often, anacrusis- which is the inclusion of one or two unaccented syllables at the beginning of a verse in addition to those expected in regular metrical patterns. It is the phenomena of anacrusis which has led the reader to conclude that Frost has a laconic approach to his lyrics.

Frost, like Whitman, uses repetitions of sounds, usually of the same words, in successive clauses. These

bear a close connection with onomatopoeia in that anaphora is more closely tied in with the communication of the meaning. It is an art effect but not so obvious and as superficial as assonance and alliteration.

In considering one of Frost's poems from the standpoint of the sound elements, there will be no need to beware of dissonance and cacophony for Frost considers congruity more important than the effect that can be gained by the failure of sounds, ideas and images to agree with the general impression already established in the reader's mind by a poem or story. Frost's employment of surprise, expectancy and congruity lends itself more to an intellectual than to an emotional appreciation of irony. Euphony plays no role with Frost for, while the sounds are agreeable to and reconcilable with the meaning, there is no attempt to produce sounds agreeable in themselves. The New England dialect, with its nasal twang, is not meant for euphony. It must be observed, in all fairness, that Frost, in a Wordsworthian sense, does not use only the language that the character involved might understand. Although, if the person were actually using such language, he would adopt a dramatic tone congruous to the context. It is a weakness in Frost that his philosophical pieces ask a great deal from his poetic voice .

"Out-Out" from Mountain Interval(1916) is the selection that follows for the consideration of the reconciliation of sound sense:

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze blew across it.
And from there those that lifted eyes could count
Five mountain ranges one behind the other
Under the sunset far into Vermont.
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,
As it ran light or had to bear a load.
And nothing happened; day was all but done.
Call it a day I wish they might have said
To please the boy by giving him the half hour
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.
His sister stood beside him in her apron
To tell them'supper'. At the word, the saw
As if to prove saw knew what supper meant,
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap-
He must have given the hand. However, it was,
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,
As he swung toward them holding up his hand
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all-
Since he was old enough to know,big boy
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart-
He saw all spoiled. 'Don't let them cut off my hand-
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!'
So. But the hand was gone already.
The doctor put him in the dark of ether.
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
And then- the watcher at his pulse took fright.
No one believed. They listened at his heart.
Little-less-nothing! and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

The two tragedies by Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man" and"Out- Out" both relate to the disaster which may befall the common folk in the common experience.

The former poem, less horrible because it deals with the peaceful death of an old man, is without physical violence and is characterized by muted sounds, congruous to the experience. In the poem under consideration, a boy loses his hand on a live buzz-saw. The shock, physical and mental results in his death. The spirit of the farmer has invested the boy. The farmer, close enough to the demands of the soil to realize the value of being physically sound, has not yet learned to make compensations for physical deformities. The tree, damaged by the storm blast, is cut down; a dried-up brook is useless; a cow too old to milk is slaughtered for meat; the demands for physical fitness are rigid, exacting and inflexible. The farmer has learned to accept the fact of death. Having adjusted himself to it, the farmer is able to absorb the loss of even his boy and turn back to daily affairs.

The onomatopoetic effects are associated and integrated intimately with the meaning of the poem. The saw "snarling" and "rattling" is a faithful representation of the sound effect of the dangerous gasoline-driven saw. When the saw cuts through the dry stick or slab of wood there is a light

"tinging and pinging effect"; Frost expresses this excellently with "ran light."When the wood is wet and when the teeth encounter a hard knot ,the whine of the saw settles into a dull groaning complaint signalling the slowing down of the assailing teeth; this is expressed in the terse economy of "bear a load."

The nasal but carrying call of "supper" is in congruity with the rustic episode. One can imagine the dramatic effect of "supper" for the men, who although tired and hungry, yet yield to the idea that they must work closer to the finish of the task. Then there is the point of view of the boy who is famished; this boy also considers the supper call the symbol of a relief from work and a beacon to free and leisure time for himself. Add to these dramatic ingredients the girl who is only too anxious to have supper finished and the dishes over.

Suddenly there emerges from time a dull sound followed by the lightning rasp of steel against bone as the boy's hand drops off; all this is contained and implied in the onomato-poetic effect culminating in "leaped out at the boy's hand."

The sound of the next line defies an attempt to make it a purely ornamental connotation, " The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh"; the sound of the metaphor strikes to the core of horror and the heart for pity. The cry and the laugh,

the tragic and the comic often blend on the borderline-especially to a boy. The "puffing" of his lips represents the ebbing sound, fainter and fainter still as life dies out. The contrast between the living, biting, brawling and gusty sound of the saw fades away to the faintest sound below and beyond man's auditory level-" They listened at his heart. Little-less-nothing." Such great art at catching the human sound sense needs little from alliteration or assonance. The stark bare outline spurns a figurative border.

The effect of the sound springs from anacrusis; from the leisurely unstressed approaches at the beginnings of his statements. The ascent into sound is the more dramatic for this approach. Such anacrusitic approaches as " and the"; "to tell", "as it", "the boys", "he lay" provide gullies of relief from the tensions of sound to be found in the middle or toward the end of the lines.

The anaphora, restrained but effective, first becomes apparent in the lines which are really parallel repetition: "The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard", and " And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled." The combination of anaphora through parallel repetition and incremental repetition convey an intensity sufficient to surprise the reader. He feels and apprehends through sound that

something out of the ordinary is about to occur. More subtly, the entire poem has an anaphoric effect in a series of gradually descending and diminishing sounds, the last one unto death itself.

The few alliterative examples serve to accentuate an ominousness of the fatal instrument, the saw. By the hissing of the "s" and the continuous blending of one word into the next so that the reader hastens on from the first line, there is extant a serpentine effect. "Saw and snarled" lend themselves to an ominous and menacing withdrawal; yet, by the nature of the "s" the reader is impelled to slide on, howbeit reluctantly, to the next tone. "Dust and dropped", "stove-length sticks" are skillful employments of the alliterative function. Not only do they slow the tempo of the poem from the first snarl of the saw, but a reluctance is indicated, even if a passive one, to leaving the scene.

The fourteenth and fifteenth lines have "saw" and "supper" in each of them. The sound is artfully sustained here by alliteration through the suggestion of finality by each of them; "Supper " sound indicates the end of a day;"saw" suggests snarling resistance to any attempt to check its noisy career. In terms of the title, the day fades out

and the sound of the saw dies out; but there is one last savage and tragic retort by the saw. The few alliterative specimens are integrated into the fabric of the poem itself to give it an intensity rather than to serve the purpose of coloring matter.

Assonance is employed but once; yet its sparing use enhances its value. Near the close of the poem come the lines: "

Don't let him cut my hand off-
The doctor when he comes. Don't let him sister!
So.....

The three long "o's"; two in "don't" and the one in "so" have the hard,crisp and agonizing appeal of apostrophe. There is a calling on some agency outside himself for aid. The long "o" in these contexts is a superb utilization of assonance, of the employment of an ornament of poetry, not to embellish the delivery but to take part in the reconciliation of all effects to produce an emotional and intellectual appreciation of the loss of a human life. The whole tragedy is in notes of sound sense.

Every sound is congruous to its experience; the sound of the saw; the call of the girl for supper, the shocking cry of the hurt boy and the welling away of the life impulse- all are entirely in keeping with the over and under tones. There is not the least bit of cacophony

in the tragedy. Admittedly, the poem could have been composed so that the dissonance would have warned the reader that the common experience would have an unpleasant ending. However, the pity and compassion that emerge from the poem have their roots in the true observable fact of sound. The sound is true to nature, true to life and true to death.

This poem is but one example of Frost's sombre idylls; there are many others which might have served as well. The degrees and quantity of sound effects vary according to the experience. Whatever degree these poetic figures obtain in his verse they do so in terms of reconciliation as a part of the greater organic whole. Pulled from their context and pattern they have little significance; as a part of an interpretable whole, they communicate an artistic conception of some phase of life.

The habit of proceeding from a specific observation to the illumination of a larger aspect of meaning has gained Frost a considerable reputation for synecdoche, the employment of the part for the whole and the whole for the part. On the whole, the idea of synecdoche has its deepest roots in the meaning rather than in form as a separable entity. Which is to say that the poet will not exclaim:

" the hour has struck" merely to let hour represent time as a fanciful metaphor. In the poem,"Once By the Pacific", there is a wealth of synecdoche in the larger sense of the word meaning:

"Once By the Pacific"

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.
The clouds were low and hairy in the skies,
Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
You could not tell, and yet it looked as if
The shore was lucky in being backed by cliff,
The cliff in being backed by continent;
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.
There would be more than ocean-water broken
Before God's last 'Put Out the Light' was spoken.[28]

"Shattered water" stands for two things- one physical and one human. In a physical sense, the water represents the breaking vanguard of the ocean; in terms of the personal world it stands for the man of action, the pioneer and the one who would shape the destiny of the world. The "cliff" stands for natural land barriers to other invading natural forces and also represents the rigid unthinking individuals who uphold the conservative way of life.

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[28] Robert Frost, "Once By the Pacific" from the volume West-Running Brook.

There are further examples of synecdoche in the poem, but the ones given are sufficient to show that the employment of the term is directly reconciled to the meaning; the use of the words gives the finishing touch to the texture of the poem.

Irony, an important ingredient in Frost's poetry, carries the same relation of art to philosophy that exists in the use of synecdoche. The ironic figure, the metaphor, stands in congruity to the meaning. The fact that the reconciliation is complete makes it difficult to decide where the art aspect begins. Much of his irony stems from the question, when is that which seems to be true, true? This is nothing more nor less than pointing out that there is no clear cut answer to the truth of the observable fact and the believable one. The objective truth is liable to get short shift if some subjective impression of reality has meaning for another individual. In"The Black Cottage",[29] the poet uses analogy quite typical of his penchant for getting at the same point by a variety of experiences common to life.

The poem is too long to include in its entirety, but a portion of the verse, sufficient for engaging on the question of irony, will be selected. The story is told of an old lady

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[29] Robert Frost,"The Black Cottage" from North of Boston

who lived in a long since deserted black cottage. Her sons fought for the northern side during the Civil War. Her idea of the principles behind the four year struggle was naively unlike the commonly accepted reasons and principles offered for the war. She believed that all men are created free and equal; she allowed nothing to change her views. Her character is an important part of the poem, but she is the part of a greater whole that goes beyond her to the exposition of universal puzzles. The philosophy of the poem comes from the dramatic monologue of the wise and kindly country parson who asks:

> What are you going to do with such a person?
> Strange how such innocence gets its own way.
> I shouldn't be surprised if in this world
> It were the force that would at last prevail
> For, dear me, why abandon a belief
> Merely because it ceases to be true.
> Cling to it long enough, and not a doubt
> It will turn true again,for so it goes.
> Most of the change we think we see in life
> Is due to truths being in and out of favor.
> As I sit here, and, oftimes, I wish
> I could be monarch of a desert land
> I could devote and dedicate forever
> To the truths we keep coming back and back to.[30]

The gentle and kindly meaning in the lines-with irony impregnated-conveys the bewilderment of the honest preacher.

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30 Robert Frost, op. citere, p.176.

His ironic technique stands out most clearly in his use of the words "innocence", "truth", and " monarch of a desert land". "Innocence" which often bears a connotation of purity and truth in opposition to evil and falsehood at the same time represents the blind alley which is the haven of superstition and ignorance. It is impossible to argue with a person who holds a thing to be true in but one sense; the very idea of holding an opinion make a discussion possible. This old lady represents one who, satisfied with the meaning for her of her idea of truth, is innocent of perjury but guilty of ignorance.

"True" and "truths" have the same double implication. If a belief has meaning to an individual, it stands as a truth, although, objectively speaking, the observed fact may be of an entirely opposite interpretation. When the preacher pursues his trend of thought with " cling to it long enough and not a doubt it will turn true again," the two meanings represent, on the one hand, the idea that truth is relative and not permanent, and, on the other hand that truth for the old lady is faith which stands by her and has meaning for her in her hour of need.

"Monarch of a desert land", summarizes the dilemma of truth for the preacher who represents, as does the old lady, philosophic and ethical contentions. Truth, for her, is founded on the unscientific observations which become desert lands for the sceptic; the old lady might be right, at that, for the preacher's conclusion that all truth is relative leads to the most horribly arid stretches in life. Both characters have understated the case for faith and opinion; each opinion, ironically, leads to the opposite condition. The preacher, arguing for the freedom of relativity, has wandered into the bog of moral doubting. The old lady, rigid and dogmatic, has enslaved herself to unenlightenment.

The presence of litotes in Frost's verse is symmetrically blended with the understated meaning of the verse. In considering the litotic aspects, the idea may be focused clearly by combining its consideration with meiosis. Meiosis is the representation of a thing as less than it actually is with the intention to compel a greater esteem for it.

The result may be obtained through the use of tone, through the use of a common expression for an uncommon experience and through a condensation. One of the finest examples

of litotes, meiosis and anti-climax comes from the French Canadian folk-song "Malbrouck". After the exposition of a most dramatic experience, the poem concludes:

> And so we sang the glories
> For which great Malbrouck bled
> And when the whole was ended
> Each one went off to bed.[31]

The same atmosphere was present in the consideration of "Out-Out" in the concluding lines"... and they, since they were not the one dead, turned to their own affairs."[32] The reader will find much of this in Frost in his true to life poetry.

The poem " A Time to Talk" reveals the technique of understatement and apparent diffidence about major values. In the process of showing the neighbourly spirit, the poet arrives at the warming fires of friendship by a self-imposed homeliness. At the finish, one senses how much more is really meant than appears to the observation. Seldom has the true emphasis of brotherhood in man appeared in a more understated tone.

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[31] William McClellan, "Malbrouck", from Songs of Old Canada ,N.Y., Putnam, 1886, p.87.

[32] Robert Frost, "Out-Out", op. citere.

A Time To Talk

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am ' what is it?'
No, not as there is time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blend end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.[33]

The words "slow","stand still", "plod", and "go" seem vastly disproportionate to the spirit of feeling that defies the call of important labor for the quiet comfort of a talk with one's fellow man. The radical meiositical impact of these words heightens the dramatic climax with "I go up to the stone wall for a friendly visit." The hum-drum approach of the first few lines makes even the ordinarily unexciting word "friendly" assume a major emotional vestment.

The observable fact, both of the physical realm and of the human sphere, is so marked in Frost that one would expect the consideration of personification to arise. It is recognized that there is no figure of speech more stirring than the animation of the inanimate. In an artistic theory

[33] Robert Frost, "Time to Talk" from Mountain Interval

that physical phenomena can represent what is thought and imagined, personification is an art form both requisite and congruous.

Of the lore of poems graced with this figure of speech, "The Last Word of a Bluebird" is highly representative:

> As I went out a Crow
> In a low voice said 'Oh,
> I was looking for you.
> How do you do?
> I just came to tell you
> To tell Lesley (will you?)
> That her little Bluebird
> Wanted me to bring word
> That the north wind last night
> That made the stars bright
> And made ice on the trough
> Almost made him cough
> His tail feathers off.
> He just had to fly!
> But he sent her good-by,
> And said to be good,
> And wear her red hood,
> And look for skunk tracks
> In the snow with an ax-
> And do everything
> And perhaps in the spring
> He would come back and sing.'[34]

The bluebird's message is to be relayed to a little child. There is, however, a message to the adult as well. The sudden migration of the bluebird is linked with the affinity of the bird for the child. The story of the quick flight south with a sudden

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[34] Robert Frost, "The Last Word of a Bluebird"-as Told to a Child", from Mountain Interval .

change of weather is one thing. The imagination a child has that animals and birds can talk is another. The play of the child with natural objects as though they were human is still the third slant brought out by the personification of the two birds; the bluebird and the crow. The fourth and deeper meaning revealed, through nature, is the feeling that all creations of nature, and not man, are solicitous for the child.

Personification seems a common enough occurrence in poetry; frequently, it takes the form of having nature echo the sentiments of the human world directly; nature is bequeathed, for the moment, the glory of sharing the human world. Thus, in a line such as " the oat tops dance in the wonderful wind like little Susie flits about", the oats take on an attribute and accomplishment of the child. Frost is far more likely to give nature a human quality in order to convey a two-way communication. It is one way Frost has of forcing human beings to be humble and to see nature other than as man's slave. Frost often honors man with an attribute of nature.

Both the examples of irony and this last display of personification are samplings of the ornament of poetry,periphrasis. Periphrasis is a roundabout way of saying something, sometimes for emphasis on certain aspects and usually to produce a sympathetic participation of the reader in the experience.

Where there are opposites exposed by ironical thought, and where human values intrude in poetry, there is the element of "chiaroscuro"; this ornament characterizes over three quarters of Frost's poetry. From"Mending Wall", there is the joy of probing a new frontier of values; yet there is the dislike of giving up the tried and meaningful. In "Out-Out"[35]there is the brawling sound of life and the muted ebbing whisper of death. In each of the poems so far considered, opposite emotions and values have been mingled and reconciled.

The slant or bias of certain writers is called variously "point of view", "color" and "local color". There is a need for discrimination in the terms so that Frost's position may be elucidated. "Point of View" has its roots in content and philosophy. "Color", the visible tinge is the formal, the artistic manifestation of "point of view." "Local Color" is something else again; it may represent landscape, dialect, beliefs and attitudes common to a locality. In the light of this differentiation, it is appropriate to make conclusive statements about their participation in the poet's art. There are at least two points of view reconciled; so although black

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35 Robert Frost,op. citere, page 168.

and white appear as colors, the reconciliation results in a delicate shading.

Local color is most assuredly a Frostian element. The complete atmosphere of New England is tinged by his intimacy with the natural scene and the human experience. Yet, because his pictures can be applied generally and because they have a universal communicability, there is one important negative point to make. The local color is not in reference of dialect. Unlike Robert Burns, the written word does not reflect the eccentricities of sectional speech; therefore, the dramatic tone congruous with the reader will suffice to yield the meaning. Poems written in dialect limit the appeal of the poetry, by and large, to the members of the poet's particular community of speech. Many of Robert Burns' fine poems are lost to the understanding of the reading public because of the dialect in which they appear.

Brilliant color is the exception rather than the rule in Robert Frost. The New England country-side and its people have a certain rugged and dour appearance which emerges from a close association with the reluctant geographical features. New England is by no means bequeathed with a brilliant warmth and colour; neither does it have the towering grandeur of the more vast mountain ranges of the country to the west.

The effectiveness of coloring has its roots in Frost's faithful, accurate, precise and intelligible rendering of the small locality comprising the states of New Hampshire and Vermont. Yet, when the colours expand with enlargement of the general from the particular, there is indeed colour[36] whose hue is entirely faithful to the representation of the experience anywhere else.

Exciting language is language, which, when properly restrained, has life and vitality; the language aids in a vivid presentation of the experience. The dramatic tone, accompanied by language which is itself virile and stirring, is given a deeper and richer texture. The ornamental name, the artistic appelation to describe colorful movements, is called "diatyposis." The presentation achieves an intensity which the most obvious fact refreshes itself with in the most colorful way.

Francis Thompson, delineator of the impressionistic and of the mystic, employed diatyposis from the very nature of the ecstatic splendour of colour, imagery and emotion. In his earlier poetry, Yeats resembled Thompson. However, there is another form of this art which heightens the dramatic element and which gives rise to the excitement of

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[36] Refer to the discussion of "colour " on 184.

surprise. By the willing suspension of disbelief, requested by Coleridge, one can, of course, accept any experience without surprise. Hardy, Browning and Frost have the uncanny and very great art of communicating surprise through the revelation of the common in an uncommon way. Browning restricted his art to that of the psychological surprise elements, while Hardy was able to operate, as does Frost, on the natural and social planes.

It can be seen that many of the technical terms for the traditionalist in criticism serve as dressing to garnish and the flavour poetry and to give it an imaginative and unique coating; but, they are, instead, the visible aspects of the texture itself. Personification is one approach to diatypositić language; Frost finds it a convenient springboard for the fact and the implication.

In the short, "A Cloud Shadow" the chill touch of a cold wind, the darkening of the sun, the question of spring and the hint of the inevitable tragic moment in life, spring to moving phrases and exciting moments by the vigorous animation of natural objects:

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37 Robert Frost, "A Cloud Shadow" from <u>One or Two</u>

" A Cloud Shadow"

A breeze discovered my open book
And began to flutter the leaves to look
For a poem there used to be on Spring.
I tried to tell her 'There's no such thing!'

For whom would a poem by Spring be by?
The breeze disdained to make reply;
And a cloud shadow crossed her face
For fear I would make her miss the place.[38]

The first two lines are extremely exhilarating, refreshing and provocative; the use of the words "discovered" and "flutter" give a unique vitality to the wind in the form of a breeze. "disdained" and "crossed her face" complete the lyric of a commonplace bit of by-play in nature and still manage to give the breeze an epical quality.

Along with the previously mentioned techniques and tools of reconcilation considered, there is one which is an over-lord, in a special way, of poetic figures. Implication is the meaning to be arrived at by the reader. It is the art of leaving clues to meanings. Personification, irony, synecdoche, and onomatopoeia are special visible and auditory aspects of the art. It has been elucidated that the sound of sense springs from these figures and from the inner and outer chords of meaning and rhythm. Implication is the most

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[38] Robert Frost, op. citere, page 187.

baffling but stimulating maneuver Frost employs in order that the reader participates actively. His never varying reply to the question as to the philosophy behind his poetry is:

> If I had wanted you to know, I should have told you in the poem, but I have given you all the clues I had. The sound of sense is the answer for you as well as for myself...[39]

From one philosophical view point, if art is the communication of ideas and ideals through nature and man, then all contents of artistry are implications; not only are they likely to vary in quantity and quality and from time to time in the same person, but the grasp of implication will vary among individuals.

"Mending Wall" is a complete fifty-four line proof of the grand scheme Frost employs in implication. Metaphor, irony, fact, all the array of skillful employment of figurative language confront the reader who must decide whether conservatism or liberalism is important and which is the more so. The reader is not told directly, but the case for both is stated. The implication is there.

In the tragedy, "Out-Out", the implications are numerous and the problem complex. On the one hand, the reader is shocked by the death of the lad; he is further appalled, as well as angered, at the leisurely turning back to the ordinary run of

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[39] Robert Frost, from an open letter to the Amherst Student, Vol.6, No. 16, issue of March 25, 1935.

affairs with the boy's death; yet the implication for a sane and necessary turning back to the living is also in the poem. The reader is irked that he must find the clues, depend on the sound of sense and that he must, finally, make his own decision. Frost's outlook is revealed in his statement:

> Don't let the things I say against myself
> Betray you into taking sides against me,
> Or it may get you into trouble with me.[40]

Frost relies exclusively on his own brand of implication. The implication arises from the observed fact. As soon as the fact is registered the implication begins. The implication works on all planes of existence; it demands more from the reader when the supernatural meaning is probed. In the section of the thesis on the content, the meaning and the philosophy,more detailed consideration will be given to this. For now, implications, in their portrayal of opposites, arouse an emotional support, "a taking of sides." Along with the rhythmic dramatic effect achieved by tone and the tools of poetry, arises the problem as to how the artist will approach the problem of arousing mounting tension. The poet has three choices:

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40 Robert Frost, op. citere, p. 189.

he can speak directly for himself; he can permit one character to speak for another; or he can allow each character to speak for himself. Frost virtually never tolerates the first; he uses the second sparingly; but he places great faith on the third alternative. The points of view generally require two or more characters. Dramatic dialogue whereby one person speaks a line and another replies by a line is called stichomythia. Frost seldom uses the line by line method; there are usually a series of lines delivered by each person. His laconic and leisurely approach represents his deviation from the more condensed dramatic line. While the tension mounts more slowly, it does arise.

"Mending Wall" as was experienced in the handling of the poem, gives an honest hint of this art . The longer speeches of the "liberal" and the terse replies of the supporter of the "status quo" involve the reader emotionally.

If the poet considers metaphors as accessories and ornaments, he views metaphor in its lesser light. There can be no integration and reconciliation if metaphor is an appendage to the poem. The strength, the uniqueness and the congruity of the metaphor are tests that the first-line poet must meet. Aristotle, Dryden and Coleridge insisted on the command of metaphor;"command"meaning not only the ability to be proficient and gifted in its use, but the ability to restrain

it to its proper sphere. Images have a tendency to be unusual, bold and fertile to the extent that they assume the appearance and function that, for example, the billows of lace would have on a tractor. The metaphor may assume the extremes of grandiloquence or terseness; Milton employed metaphor in the former guise; Pope in the latter condition.

Thus metaphor may appear in the form of a simile or in that of an epithet. Every poetic image is metaphorical for metaphor is the word. Metaphor is the poem. The metaphor breaks the whole up into parts; each part has a role to play in a poetic clarification and discrimination in life.[41]

As metaphor is not the exact one to one reflection of life, it but reveals some truth about experience. The truths are not only revealed in visual terms, but are also revealed in such stimuli as touch, smell, hearing and in intellectual apprehensions. Frost appears to employ metaphor so that his poetic image operates in three ways, all to one end: first, it paints the picture in words invested with sense phenomena; second, there is the unmistakeable note of emotion in the philosophy; and, third, the metaphor is constructed to permit the reader to enjoy some particular emotion or passion intimately related with the philosophy of the poem.

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[41] Robert Frost's statements on metaphor and further considerations on metaphor were considered on pages 159-162 of this thesis.

In his implications, Frost subscribes to the dictum of Mr. Middleton Murry:

> Try to be precise and you are bound to be metaphorical. What we demand primarily is that the assumed similarity should be a true similarity and that it should have lain hitherto unperceived, or but rarely perceived by us, so that it comes with the effect of a revelation.[42]

It is important to note the indirect approach to the common experience and the uncommon writing demanded by Frost's poetic theory and practice. It would seem that his poetic images, uncommonly expressed are in a familiar context although hitherto unperceived. A study of the poem "The Runaway"[43] shows the extension into implication by metaphor.

On a purely physical level, it is the faithful word picture of a young colt that had been placed on his instinct too soon. He is lost and frightened when left alone and outside in the winter of the year. The reader may accept the poem as an interesting bit of animal husbandry, or as an insight into the behavior of the equine young. At this stage, however, the observant reader will comprehend further levels of meaning; the metaphor assists the reader in approaching these other levels; in fact, in Frost, the metaphor

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42 Middleton Murry, "The Image is Metaphorical", article in the Pandarus, University of Liverpool, Vol.11, No.8, issue of Spring, p.11-14.

43 Robert Frost, "The Runaway" from New Hampshire

is forever wagging its fingers at the reader in a challenge to probe deeper. It is up to the reader as to whether he wishes to speculate further and to go along with the extension.

There is a fable, a comparison and an implication that give the analogy between a neglected colt and a deserted child:

"The Runaway"

Once when the snow of the year was beginning to fall
We stopped by a mountain pasture to say "Whose Colt?"
A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,
The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head
And snorted at us. And then he had to bolt.
We heard the miniature thunder where he fled,
And we saw him or thought we saw him,dim and gray,
Like a shadow against a curtain of falling flakes.
'I think the little fellow's afraid of the falling snow.
He isn't winter broken. It isn't play with
The little fellow at all. He's running away.
I doubt if even his mother could tell him,"Sakes",
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know!
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone.'
And now he comes again with clatter of stone,
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.
'Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
When other creatures have been to stall and bin,
Ought to be told to come and take him in." [44]

The image of helplessness on the philosophical level is reached by " the other curled up at his breast," bringing to mind the helpless infant resting at the mother's breast for food and for the comfort of love.

[44] Robert Frost,"The Runaway", from New Hampshire

The awesome metaphor of " miniature thunder where he fled" shows a retreat from the realm of human sympathy and compassion to the harsh inclemencies of the elements. The view of him " dim and gray" with its achromatic picture shows the helpless retreat from the ken of protection. The image defined by "clatter of stone" suggests the complete divorce from a world of charity. The sheer panic revealed in the metaphor: " and mounts again the wall with whited eyes" invites an unavoidable comparison with the rolling of the eyes in sockets in moments of unabated terror.

The understatement inhering in the last three lines implies the difference between what is care and what is neglect, between the unthinking and the compassionate, between the love of man for man and for nature, and between selflessness and the selfish narrowness of the supremely self sufficient:

> Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
> When other creatures have been to stall and bin,
> Out to be told to come and take him in.

The result for the reader and poet is functional metaphor.

Earlier in the thesis[45] the problem of metaphor was discussed in terms of central, complex and functional metaphor.

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[45] Refer to discussion of this on page 9 of this thesis.

The use of the word, per se, in metaphor is central metaphor; the piling up of one complex unit by the addition of comparisons is complex metaphor; the reconciliation of the art and implication leading to extension yields the functional metaphor for the poet and for the reader. The central metaphor, the core, the visible recognition of the word or phrase itself as unique in substitution is the objective image.

The metaphor that is termed "complex" is not so much an additive and numerical entity as it is the fusion in such a manner as to throw open to the reader a road leading beyond the obvious. Metaphor which is effective in accentuating one plane, as, for example, "burnt out face", is the employment of the central metaphor. But the addition of "dried veins of the valley", and "bare cracked earth", fuse this metaphor into complexity. When the metaphor is considered as a unit in terms of the experience, the poet and the reaction of the reader, the metaphor is functional.

Modern poetic criticism has done admirable work in handling the question of metaphor because, traditionally, the glowing adjective before the noun, the array of compounded-epithets and the stirring sound of rolling similes have passed for metaphor. As such, they are still employable provided it is agreed beforehand that they are purely

ornamental, unnecessary and decorative words and phrases. Modern criticism tends to support Frost in its theory that the traditional employment of metaphor is not suitable. Except in their earlier roles and works, the greater poets have shunned the limited view of metaphor as being mere colouring matter.

The thematic development which is the relationship of all the elements of a poem leading to an understanding of the general idea is the intricate process by which the texture of the poem develops in terms of art and meaning. The next few pages will be devoted to a consideration of one of Frost's poems from the standpoint of the total reconciliation of its artistic elements. It is understood, of course, that in the final reconciliation, philosophy and art are compounded.

5. Reconciliation of Formal Elements in Robert Frost

The reconciliation of rhythm, figures of speech and ornaments of poetry is the texture of the poem. Only in terms of texture can there be the perceivable symbol of a complex experience. In discussing, in detailed fashion, the opinions of critics, of Frost, of the different schools of poetry and by going directly to Frost's poetry an approach has been made in terms of reconciliation. The traditional light by which figures of speech and ornaments of poetry have been viewed as devices which adorn the poem, as frosting does the cake, has been found inadequate in the consideration of Robert Frost, the poet.

These devices do adorn and give finish, but they sprout from the very art and meaning of the poem itself, they are an integral part of the apparatus which is necessary for communication. By the proper poetic chemistry, the reconciled form enables the reader to enter, as closely as he may, because of his limited ability, the intellectual, the emotional and the intuitive perceptions of the poet.

The first consideration was given to the question of rhythm; the conclusion was that rhythm is an integral part of the poem, gathering, as well as communicating, a unique quality from the dramatic elements of meaning. The traditional

approach has been to subordinate rhythm to a set metrical pattern and verse form. Instead, the position here is to consider rhythm as the sensitive communicator of thinking, imagining and perceiving. In order to do this, rhythm is considered from an inner and then from an outer phase. The inner core conveys the essential discrimination of the philosophy-often a by-product of the physical experience. It does this through expectancy, surprise and congruity. The dramatic aspects unite experience, poet and reader, through the external manifestations of stress, pace and duration. In reality, both the inner and outer apsects of rhythm are blended and reconciled so that the meaning is communicated in an intelligible,emotional and intuitive form.

The numerous figures of speech and ornaments of poetry are, in varying degrees, essential manifestations of this rhythm. Insofar as they intensify and sharpen the elements by which the individual appreciates the artistic, they are woven into the fabric of form to constitute the total texture. Not even the smallest degree of each device can be spared if it aids in the communication of the experience; not the slightest part is useful if it fulfills a function which can, at its charitable best, be called decorative.

The couplet, the sonnet, the long lyric, the epigrammatic forms of verse and the metre considered relevant to the type of experience of the poet are still important and useful when, and only when, they are important roles in clarifying, intensifying and discriminating. The consideration of the parts, even when they are given such artificial names as assonance and alliteration is justified where such consideration relates back to a synthesis. Consideration of the numerous poetic devices as parts is not fruitful in the appreciation of Frost. They are vital parts of the art if they create, altogether, the uncommon writing which illumines the common experience.

The number of poetic figures considered as emphasizing the rhythm of the poetry was considerable and included: assonance, alliteration, metaphor, anaphora, synecdoche, irony, litotes, onomatopoeia, tone, anacrusis, meiosis,anti-climax, personification, periphrasis, chiaroscuro,color, local color, diatyposis,implication, stichomythia and thematic development.

On synthesizing these, the picture becomes much clearer, for the tone, related to the rhythm, embraces such terms as assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia. Litotes, anacrusis

and periphrasis are visible aspects of pace. Surprise and expectancy are reflected by tone, chiaroscuro, implication, diatyposis and stichomythia. Metaphor, in its central sense, is a minor chord of rhythm; in its major sense it is that functional metaphor which plays a major role in communication of the whole experience. It is the poem itself by which all aspects of the art are subordinated in its service. The arbitrarily separated elements may combine themselves with all the complexity common to the functional pieces-that combination is as intricate a pattern as chessmen in action.

Some critics consider that appreciation of poetry is synonymous with admiration for the sound of the thought; for these erring individuals, all figures of speech pertaining to sound comprise important poetic roles. For those who enjoy only the visual image, poetry is apprehended by the more colorful appeal to the visual centres. For those who consider appreciation to be the intellectual comprehension of all meaning in a word, phrase, in irony, synecdoche, litotes and like connotative figures, the poem is rendered as a purely rational experience.

The reader and the poet who insist on an intensely emotional rendition of a phase of life will demand euphonious metaphor. Still another individual will perceive that

appreciation of poetry lies in the ability to use and to admire the unusual and unique figures of speech. For such, these bizarre appeals to the desire for the unusual for the unusual's sake constitute their enjoyment of the poem. However, these illustrations of the different approaches to poetry are really matters of taste and not appreciation- appreciation is a whole consideration of the whole poem.

Appreciation is complex; it is not the simple perception of the observable fact; it is not feeling of an emotion; it is not the desire for the mellifluous, nor yet again the demand for abstruse unintelligibility. It is, rather, the intricate operation by which all powers are synchronized for one purpose. The purpose comprises two phases: first, it is to experience, as much as possible, the intuitive conception of the poet; second, and concurrently of equal importance, it is to be acutely and pleasurably aware of the words by which the poet expresses his rhythm. This involves the reconciliation of the poet's rhythm together with the clues afforded by the metaphor as to philosophy and rhythm. The greater the poet's fusion of art, the more likely the reader is to experience the beauty obtained by the poet.

While the poet's greater sensitivity makes the experience of beauty easier for him, personally, the intensity

of the experience will be the greater according to his command of metaphor, together with the harmonious integration of the figures of speech and the ornaments of poetry. It is true that this assumes that the poet does, in the majority of cases, wish to communicate his experience, or, at least, to be able to repeat, as closely and as intensely as possible, his own experience.

It is admitted that the poet who denies that his experience should be communicable to others and recurrent for himself falls outside the ken considered here-that he is outside the limits of this position. The position taken by the writer is that the greater poets have the crowning glory of communicability of art and content to all generation in, although greater and lesser degrees, their poetry. The universality and permanence of communicability and appeal is the vital standard for assessing the stature of an artist. One of Frost's poems will be considered from the point of view of reconciling the aspects of form.

The well known and widely-quoted "Birches" from Mountain Interval will be used to demonstrate the poet's art of reconciliation of the formal elements. Many of the figures of speech, ornaments of poetry and verse forms are fused with the rhythm to produce an unusual artistic experience.

The poem may be accepted on the physical level as depicting an unforgettable phase of nature; it may be accepted on the level of human appeal as the interpretation of nature in symbols of youth and age; it may be considered as symbolic on the philosophical plane in ethical equations; better still, it may be read again and again for new experiences blending all these tiers in the over-all reference of a philosophy for living. The appreciation of the poem will enrich the reader's experience both quantitatively and qualitatively.

"Birches"

When I see birches bend to left or right
Across the line of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
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
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged back to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows-
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.

One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles like cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twigs having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.[46]

While the discussion of this poem is primarily of form, the meaning inevitably intrudes; but discussion of it will be limited to the purpose of this section.

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[46] Robert Frost, "Birches" from Mountain Interval

alliteration and assonance to the utter exclusion of meiosis. The absence of the latter is a certain sign to the reader that Frost is not engaging in irony and implication.

The emotional and imaginative heights are allowed to fall in the next four lines where the tone drops to the level of everyday observation. Assonance multiplies with a large number of short "o" and "a" sounds. To the reader (who does not read these lines aloud) they are the signal that Frost is running along on an even keel. There is one long decline which ends in a parallel of the low bowed and bent branches of the tree and the implication of the withered permanent bent shoulders of the old people. The figures and ornaments are muted to assist in obtaining the darkening scene.

A sudden excitement caused by surprise in the rhythm and dramatically revealed through the stress on the verb "throw" is heightened by the colorful metaphor of:

> Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
> Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.

The exciting simile sharpens the implication of the effect of the ice storm. The sudden flurry of life in the youthful action makes, by contrast, the plight of the birches less happy. As the assonance drops off, the dramatic tone stiffens as the poem moves toward deeper and wider implications.

The reconciliation requisite to put the reader on the philosophical plane, as well, involves the surprise of "truth broke in." The reference to the concreteness of the ice storm and the daily chores of the boy is both expectant and congruous. There is a lack of stress, a slower pace and a deliberate duration here as the reader and poet muse in reminiscence about a well known childhood experience. The single poetic device, the more effective for its exclusiveness, is the personification of "truth." By his skill, Frost has succeeded in engaging the reader on the physical, the human and the moral levels at one and the same time:

> But I was going to say when truth broke in
> With all her matter-of-fact about the ice storm
> I should prefer to have some boy bend them
> As he went out and in to fetch the cows..

He soon returns to the conversational level to consolidate his position on the "fact." This time the fact is of man, not nature. If the physical fact is true to the nature of the New England countryside, so is the human fact true to the experience of a boy on a farm. Again the shift in the inner and outer rhythm gains speed and loses colour and dramatic tone in:

> Some boy too far from town to learn baseball
> Whose only play was what he found himself,
> Summer or winter, and could play alone,

The surprise words of "baseball" ,"only", "himself" and "alone" accompanied by the assonantal qualities of the long "o" indicate loneliness. These simple, yet artful manifestations of his skill save these lines from becoming prose and instead turn them into poetry, moving and dramatic.

The rhythm is never stronger and more varied than in:

> One by one he took the stiffness out of them,
> And not one but hung limp, not one was left
> For him to conquer. He learned all there was
> To learn about not launching out too soon
> And so not carrying the tree away
> Clear to the ground.

The deliberate spondee indicates a drawling duration and a tempo so slow as to call to the imagination a picture both very large and very static. Now and then there is sudden movement to indicate a certain wonder and awe. The metaphor depends almost entirely on the rhythm here as shown by the human voice tones. The power of the verbs, the hallmarks of the great dramatic artists, is revealed with "took", "hung", "conquer" and "launching". The vigour is relieved by the musical sound effect of "n" sounds and by the "w" sound from "one." The latter word occurs four times. The light stress and the short duration on the "n" and "w" notes move the poem along gradually. The movement must not be too quick for such a rhythm would cause the reader to overlook the complex metaphor

which has enabled Frost to combine a scientific observation of boy and nature with an imaginative and emotional colour. The intimate experience of the boy in play with nature is fused into a philosophy of life by which, through nature, the boy learns a restraint and a caution applicable to his dealings with his fellow man. The implication and synecdoche project the implication as far as the moral plane. The boy avoids destroying the branches of the tree he both loves and challenges; he will not be like the men whom Oscar Wilde asserted "killed the thing they loved." [47]

The drama rises in intensity as the tempo quickens. The stress increases as Frost yields a detailed description of the lad's actions. The exciting chiaroscuro and diatyposis reflect the exhilarating tone of sheer surprise. Litotes are not present; the effect is even exaggerated, as is the tone, by the use of anaphora stated and restated in the comparison "of careful climbing" and " fill the cup to the brim". The central metaphors turn complex with the quickening tempo of the rhythm. The increased pace coincides with the reduction of the implication to two levels; the level of the birch tree and the level of the nature of the boy.

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[47] Oscar Wilde, "Ballad of Reading Goal"

A quiet dramatic interlude is achieved through the gently stressed, slow,and leisurely pace, which, however, leads to implication:

> So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
> And so I dream of going back to be.

The first line is a projection into the realm of a pleasantly remembered childhood experience; the second line is the emotional strain in the poet who engages on a philosophical venture. The two are reconciled by the surprise in the lingering quality and infinite length of "dream." Regret, sadness, pleasure and sympathy fuse in the two-line summary. The whole is achieved by the quiet restraint in the metaphor and rhythm. While the figures are subdued, the dramatic tension is coiling again for the next rise to intensity. For the "swinger of birches" summarizes the experience of youth; the "dream of going back to be" arouses the tension inherent in a partly satisfied curiosity.

The next two lines are sharply stressed, quick in tempo and of brief pace; they are expectant and highly congruous. The "l's" and "w's" indicate both sombreness and a certain irascibility. The sharp clear whistle of the terse simile, the deliberate understatement-these show that Frost is annoyed somewhat

with his present confusion in life.

> It's when I'm weary of considerations,
> And life is too much like a pathless wood

The remarkable shift to a colorful series of poetic devices results from a verbal elaboration of the dissatisfaction with life. The emotion he feels at present is heightened by a thoroughly stressed, sharp and rushing anger welling from the amazement extant from inner rhythm. He relies on the physical fact to punish the reader physically by his ability to recall an incident in nature which occasioned the most acute and ire-provoking pain:

> Where your face burns and tickles with cobwebs
> Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
> From a twig having lashed it open.

The senses of touch, pain, warmth, vision and sound are concentrated in a physical, emotional and philosophical fusion of art. There is an enlargement of a mood and an outlook on life by the colorful pinpointing of the experience from nature. Anyone who has stepped on the blade of a hoe and has had, as a result, the handle rap sharply against the forehead can appreciate the absolute frustration and discomfort aroused by the snapping of the resilient twigs against sensitive skin. The parallel with the frustration in life in which the individual endures smarts

and rebukes without being able to reply satisfactorily emerges from the philosophy he outlines in his desire to swing in the birches.

It may be dangerously fashionable to limit the consideration of Frost to the philosophic plane, the plane of meaning, when discussing his use of the part for the whole. It is apparent, clearly, that the little illustrations from nature bring to bear on universal truths. It is also not difficult to ascertain that the use of synecdoche, in both the narrow and broader senses, is an artistic device in reconciling meaning and art. However, vitally important is the question of reconciliation in the scrutiny of his artistry in using the "particular" within a general context. This hearkens back to the theory of inner and outer rhythm. The expectant elements of the lines embark on general truths known to the reader; the elements of surprise are particulars which are artistically illuminated facets of life in a congruous texture. At the same time, these particulars outline the universal. Frost's reliance on the dramatic results that come from life in action; his revelation through expectancy, surprise and congruity; and his external communication through stress, duration and pace- which are

visible and audible in poetic ornament and device- indicate that he excels in this aspect of poetic poetry, a theory which integrates part of the texture and a part of the experience in beauty.

While the emphasis is on the formal at this point, the form is determined by the philosophy. Frost does not reveal action in nature unless the implications extend to human and supra-human levels. If the metaphor and other poetic devices do not revel in brilliant flashing colors; if the experiences are not romantically sentimental; if the particularizations are thoughtful and sombre in tinge rather than happily colored and joyful, then the reader has to consider that Frost reflects experiences which have meaning for him and to him. His art expresses itself in language and form suitable for the communication of his poetic genius. That is one test for a great poet. There is no burden on the poet to furnish poetic expression whose meaning coincides with the desires and outlook of the reader, although it is his happy faculty to furnish a communicable experience on a universal level- if he is a good poet. Frost is.

If the experience is moving, congruous to the emotional and intellectual range of man; if the art is congruous to the philosophy,yet surprising enough to arouse an emotion at and

toward life and still be true to life; then the artist has a claim to excellence.

A variation in rhythm should indicate a range of experience in and by the artist. The order imposed on his art and meaning suggests the sense of responsibility to communicate an experience in harmony with truth. The rise and fall in the texture of Frost's poetry reflect an innumerable array of experiences, entirely different through color, intensity, and sound, yet of a fabric familiar enough to the reader to permit him to engage in that poetic range.

If the range is not sufficiently high and wide to please some reader and critics, it is because the poet does not have control of this greater heighth and breadth and prefers to say so. Frost does not attain the range and sonority of Milton, for his basic philosophy of life does not admit of Milton's scope. Milton lived in an artificial literary world, self imposed, where his imaginative range soared beyond the scope of anything that could be scientifically and rationally demonstrable as proof. The accurate range of, on the other hand, the realistic folk epic Beowulf is more in keeping with Frost's art insofar as both rely on the accurate day by day experience of the people and natural scene involved.

Frost has limited himself to the drama of the taciturn, persistent, reluctant, yet eager; selfish yet generous; that is, he has engaged himself with the paradoxical New England farmer. He knows the narrow geographical ranges of New Hampshire and Vermont. Within that limited scope, he, as Jane Austen in her small English nook, can produce by his accurate differentiations, an unbelievable number of experiences. Both Emily Dickinson, the New England poetess , and Frost have a remarkable variety in their art and output.

While his self-imposed range of observation is confined to the Puritan farmer and his locality; there is no confinement to Truth. The specific examples portray, inculcate and emotionally communicate truths for all peoples of all estates.

Quaintly, dramatically-within his scope- he reveals an inimitable blend of art, philosophy and their reconciliation:

> May no fate wilfully misunderstand me
> And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
> Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
> I don't know where it's likely to go better.
> I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
> And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
> Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
> But dipped its top and set me down again.
> That would be good both going and coming back.
> One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Frost admits that pain and joy, ambition and contentment, dislike and love; in fact, all the opposites that are common to man's experience and complexity. are,for him, demonstrably limited to his idea of life.

His philosophy is that "Earth's the right place for love." While concerned with the experiences of fancy, his pragmatic outlook on life compels him to admit that this is the world he knows. He has defined this world for himself. The intimate experience with a nature he knows and has studied, his concern with the people who live and struggle with this nature have their ranges of fancy, mysticism, psychology and emotion- but he insists that he has one foot, at least, solidly anchored on the soil he knows so intimately. In that basic sense, he is a realist. The point of return is this life grounded in the observable fact.

The ever-green sense of fancy and intrigue with life is fused with the realism of "I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree, and climb black branches up a snow-white trunk." The homely description of the white trunk and black branches is in contrast to a sense of flight and adventure in the lines. The tree, a birch, denies the idea of rigidity; the idea of climbing the "snow-white trunk toward heaven" opens a

refreshing line of thought that heaven is as close to the commonplace life as to the unusual and the esoteric. The shift back from fancy to fact, from the emotional to the reflective, from surprise to expectancy comes from the anapest " till the tree" to the brake of the stressed iambics: "could bear" and "no more". The fundamental approach to life by Frost is particularized by: " till the tree could bear no more, but dipped its top and set me down again." The wonder of the experience, the resignation that it must end and the whimsical pleasure of the over-all tone are reinforced by the gentle but firm personification involved. The physical fact is both expectant and surprising because the joyous spring of the branches is firmly encompassed by nature who turns the aspirant back to ground.

The personification leads to synecdoche and implication: "bear", "dipped", and "set" serve to drive home to man his limitations- both as a man and as being engaged in a challenge to nature. Frost does not deny experience apart from this world; he insists that, for him, thus far and thus high man may go until he is faced with the indisputable "fact" of a concern with this world, the indisputable and observable fact.

The final reconciliation of his point of view comes in the closing lines:

> That would be good both going and coming back
> One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Whether or not there is agreement that the poet Frost has had the most lofty experience, the selection of word, phrase, figure and ornament to integrate with the basic rhythm has presented the experience with the greatest intensity, significance and beauty. The commonplace words are uncommonly expressed through surprise in the general context. The sensitiveness of intuition and the creative flights of the imagery are restrained to the value and heights of the philosophy of the poem.

Summarizing again this section: traditional figures of speech and ornaments of poetry still have vital importance in Frost's poetry; however, they are properly integrated to reveal the dramatic elements of rhythmic form and expression. The rhythmic expression reveals irony, implication,fact,fancy, nature, human nature and supra-human considerations through an inner and outer fusion. The inner elements consist of expectancy, surprise and congruity;the external elements consist of pace, stress and duration. The latter and former elements are qualitatively and quantitatively apparent through the use of figures and ornaments to appeal to the sensory and intellectual discrimination of the reader.

In order to have a sufficiently natural correspondence between poet and reader, Frost uses particular examples for the revelation of universal truths; at the same time, special revelations emphasize the importance of truth, as expressible in terms of his New England farmer. The operation of the dramatic rhythm finds a fusion of the surprise elements with particularizations and synecdoche.

The phenomena of surprise in Frost is the ability he has because of his particular bent for artistic appreciation of the common experience in uncommon ways. He uses his formal art to seize these experiences at their highest emotional point. He yields clues in his poetry to enable himself and the reader to perpetuate the experience . The art and philosophy are interwoven so that they are in effect one great unity.

The second section of this thesis concerns itself with resolving paradoxes of meaning in the Frostian poetry. However, as in this section, the formal elements are reconciled because consideration of the philosophy of his poetry is extremely difficult to attemot unless the form is concurrently aporeciated.

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

RECONCILIATION OF FACT AND FANCY IN ROBERT FROST

1. Introduction to This Chapter and Section

The content of the poem is subsumed under thought, associations, imagery and emotion. The philosophy is the meaning of an experience to the poet. It is too true that first attention is riveted on the poetic art of producing one unusual sound word and picture after another; the poet is first judged by his use of words, which, if adroit, colorful and entrancing, go far to enhance the initial impression of the poem and poet.

Sooner or later, however, if the poet is to obtain first rank, he must meet the severe test of the quality of his thought; he must say something, but it must be worthy of saying. The poet's actual verbal expression makes the thought come alive, but novelty, felicity and beauty of the word must not be allowed to come at the expense of thought. The alienation of thought and word results in three unsatisfactory states: mediocrity, unintelligibility and impressionism.

Robert Frost is not being compared with his contemporaries; he is not being compared with poets of an area, such

as New England; he is not being categorized as a nature poet, a satirist or an imagist; but rather his work and art are being synthesized. True, the synthesis involves his poetry, the opinions of critics, a review of past literary thought and his own sayings. Over, and above all else, there is the evaluation of this poet in respect to the qualities which make for universality and permanence.

One of these qualities bears on the ability of the poet to enhance, by form, the content of the poem, without permitting either to despoil the other. The grandeur of the thought and the freshness of the sentiment must not cover up the sound of the verbal expression, the rhythm and the imagery. The poem, must, however, by the thought contained, repay reading and rereading by the revelation of some broader and deeper aspect of life than is at first apparent. It is in this sense that great poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom.

As Margaret Bulley stated: " A great painting will only yield its secret slowly."[1] Frost has been at no small pains to insist to the reader that:" if I wanted you to know, I should have told you."[2]

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[1] Margaret Bulley, Art and Counterfeit, London, Cumberlege, 1936, p.53.

[2] Robert Frost, as quoted by Lawrance Thompson, in Fire and Ice , op. citere, p. 41.

As poetry is made of words, the words themselves must be dwelt on for the word may convey an idea or a delicate shading of meaning. In some instances a single word will colour and give meaning to the poem. In considering philosophy in poetry, it must be urged that the outstanding faculty of the poet is that he uses a word which does far more than the ordinary use of the word will do. The use of such words gives a peculiar force and quality to the entire poem.

Two examples may serve to impress this score: In John Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness", there occurs the word "lodg'd." This word expresses, as few other words are able, the bitter fact that a poet has been given an art which he cannot employ. The endowment is really a mockery because its use is not available to him. The entire line "lodg'd with me useless"[3] indicates that he has an unwelcome lodger, a guest who becomes a burden rather than a welcome visitor. There is the tremendous implication in the repressed bitterness. As with Milton, there is the key word, the clue to meaning in the poetry of Browning, Hardy, and now Frost.

Naturally, the reader is enriched if he can ascertain beforehand the slant of the writer-his basic outlook on nature, man and God. Where there is a concern with the problems of man

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[3] John Milton, "On His Blindness."

the artist places symbolistic significance on the pivotal word for the "word" discriminates. There is no stressing of the word in Whitman, for example, because he belongs to the clan of poets whose vast inclusiveness relies on weight and quantity of verbal felicity; discrimination is swept aside, often unhappily so. In the precision, the verisimilitude, the objective observation and the exclusiveness of such poets as Hardy, Browning, Chaucer and Frost the essence of meaning must be distilled from the key clue. In the poem "Lodged"[4], Frost yields four concise facts: the coalition between wind and rain; the specific agreement between the two elements of nature; the result of their joint efforts; and the damage sustained by the flowers. Until the word "lodged" is reached the short poem appears to be a lyrical expression of an exquisitely expressed occurrence in one lovely phase of the natural world. The key word which irradiates the entire line of thought comes with "lodged"- of temporary displacement.

"Lodger" has, in New England, an unpleasant connotation; it yields to an implication of transience. There is an alien and wandering note sent twanging. Yet, in Frost, the word takes on, in its expectant context, a surprise meaning. The fact that its state is not permanent means that the flower will

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[4] Robert Frost, "Lodged" from West-Running Brook

move from its awkward and unenviable position. The general frame of reference of "lodged", then so antipathetic, now becomes a welcome and joyous note. There is both the unwelcome recollection of being "lodged" and the happy thought of being only temporarily discomfitted. The entire poem reveals, then, the crucial meaning of that word:

"Lodged"

The rain to the wind said,
"You push and I'll pelt."
They so smote the garden bed
That the flowers actually knelt,
And lay "lodged" though not dead.
I know how the flowers felt.[5]

Frost relies on the rhythm and texture of the poem to enhance and to focus on the word "lodged." Frost realizes that it is exceedingly doubtful that any synthesis of artistic endeavor can be obtained without the effort on the part of the reader to comprehend the thought,and the responsibility of the poet to enhance and to provide the key to the thought.

Coleridge[6] made a clear statement as to the inadequacy of thought alone in poetry. Words differ not only in meaning, but in their philosophy, for it is subject to qualitative

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[5] Robert Frost, op. citere, p. 224

[6] Samuel Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria."

and quantitative differentiation. Coleridge, an acute critic, observed: "Be it observed, however, that I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object but likewise all the associations which it recalls."[6a] Thus we can see that in any poem the subsidiary meanings are of the utmost importance. They enable the whole poem to ripen.

In making a common experience blossom into an uncommon one, the plain, simple and physical meaning is made precise and of exact timbre by the combination of word meanings. The poet works on the imagination so that it can create form, vision and intuition. In Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", the meanings of the words are reconciled with the sound in such a way as to compel the mind to yield to the sway of the sensuousness of his rich verbal flow. In Eliot's "The Waste Land", on the other hand, the meanings of starkness, fixity, rigidity and desolation require an intuitive avoidance of rich associations. The destroying force of modern ugliness and boredom must have angry and coarse words to impress the reader, such as : and each man fixed his eyes before his feet."[7] The associations are subsidiary only in the sense of expression, but that rhythmic tone even there sets

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6 a Op. Citere, p.225

7 T.S.Eliot,"The Wasteland" a modern indictment of a society without faith.

up the implication for cognition to act upon.

Implication plays such a major part in the poetry of the highest order that one seldom errs in searching out the implied meanings of words. Each successive reading of the "Prologue to Canterbury Tales"[8] reveals something more and some more subtle character facet inherent in each pilgrim. Even more important, the repeated reading clarifies and reconciles the picture, not of the individual character alone, but of the heart of Chaucer's England.

In like manner, the implication of the word becomes more crucial with each consideration of a Browian dramatic monologue. Surely no finer example of the importance of the associative value can be urged than those revealed in Robert Browning's, "My Last Duchess." Further study and speculation intensifies the intellectual approach and the emotional involvement until the whole is reconciled in the shocking revelation of the degradation of a man.

It is impossible to read a great poem and find many irrelevant details; on the other hand, it is possible for the reader to read a great many irrelevant details into a poem. Sometimes an over-intentness on the possibility of extension

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8 Geoffrey Chaucer, "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales"

leads to incoherence and the dissipation of imaginative powers. On the one side, this may be the fault of the reader. The fault is not serious if the reader does not overlook the more important experience for the lesser. The fault is more serious in the poet. In the hands of the great poet, the complex combinations of language are such as to lead to rich associations providing they contribute to the whole and do not detract from it.

A good poem combines imagery, imagination, intuition and emotional qualities with thought so as to constitute, in the final synthesis, a clear note of meaning. Its words derive their connotations from the whole text; they do not cancel each other. Specifically, that is vital insofar as the question of imagery arises.

Often imagery demands an imaginative state beyond the range of the reader. These images, unsuitable for communication, result either in unintelligibility of meaning or in a concern with the imagery, the art alone. The main test of the image is its relevancy. When sound and touch are the senses invoked, a purely visual image is abortive. Imagery should be sensitive to the subject in depth, nuance, richness and delicacy.

The extremely well developed powers of observation and sensitivity to all degrees of imagery are nowhere better

apparent than in Hardy and Frost. The gift of expression and the acquired skill in reproducing truth in nature and from nature make the imagery one with meaning; the shading reveals the philosophy. It is by the infinite variety of experiences in living with nature-and through finding the art of expressing her-that both of these poets sense the opposites and are able to reconcile them on the larger pattern of the physical and human experience.

In the poem "Afterwards", Hardy's sheer intimacy with the physical world, his knowledge of life-animal and human-has enabled him to reconcile colour and twilight; night and day; life and death-all these in terms of a philosophy of life, which, for all its sombre thought, affirms basic values:

> When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
> And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
> Delicate filmed as new-spun silk,will the neighbors say,
> 'He was a man who used to notice such things?'
> .....
> If it be in the dusk, when like an eyelid's soundless blink,
> The dewfall hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
> Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
> 'To him this must have been a familiar sight.'
> .....
> And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom
> And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
> Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
> He hears it not now, but used to notice such things.[9]

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[9] Thomas Hardy, "Afterwards"

The next poem is as characteristic of Frost as the previous one by Hardy. Nevertheless, both have marked likenesses in imagery, imaginative quality and thought. The meanings in both suggest strong similarities in the art and philosophy of the two:

"Lost In Heaven"

The clouds, the source of rain, one stormy night
Offered an opening to the source of dew,
Which I accepted with impatient sight,
Looking for my old sky marks in the blue.

But stars were scarce in that part of the sky,
And no two were of the same constellation-
Not one was bright enough to identify.
So 'twas with not ungrateful consternation,

Seeing myself well lost once more, I sighed
"Where, where in Heaven am I? But don't tell me,"
I warned the clouds "by opening me wide!
Let's let my heavenly lostness overwhelm me." 10

It is not held that Hardy and Frost's art and philosophy are identifiable one with the other. Despite strong similarities, there are as strong differences. However, from the point of view of irony, implication, communicable meaning, precise imagery, faithful representation of the natural fact and an exquisite rhythmic quality, both have these in common.

There is a deeper more-abiding gloom in Hardy; there is also a more tender and discriminating lyrical quality in his verse. In his common touch, in humanity and in his whimsical

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10 Robert Frost,"Lost in Heaven", from Taken Singly .

and gentle humour, Frost is far superior to Hardy. Frost, like Chaucer, convinces.

The reader leans to expect from Frost the common experience in the New England setting; this experience is slanted in the unique and uncommon manner. The opposing conflicts in life are resolved in terms of a wider pattern than New England. These opposites are clearly defined through an incident in nature.

The incident in nature, while convincingly accurate, invariably has implications of a dual nature, and, as well, presents the contrast of the present emotion with the long range reflection and cognitive solution. For example, in "Out-Out", the intense emotional feeling aroused by the death of the child is resolved with reference to life which cannot be checked and halted; it must be met, a necessity, day by day.

The facts, imaginatively dressed and afforded the same variety, within set bounds, that life imposes, constitute the philosophy of his poetry. The earthly realism of the physical world and man's tie with it are the twin facts which are at the core of his content.

Myriads of experiences are episodes of beauty and wisdom, all reconciled into the pattern of an inescapable urgency of the action demanded by life. The permanence of Frost will endure, among other reasons, because, Frost, like Chaucer, is very much

a willing and courageous part of the temporal pageant. The cold fact is not only dressed with warmth and sympathy for the understanding, but lives because of its meaning for mankind.

2. On Fact and Fancy

While fact yields an observable picture, it is usually fancy which leads to the meaning in the implication. Thought, understanding, knowledge and belief are often considered to be factual; whereas opinion, desire and wish are ruled fanciful. The former has the connotation of "that which is," while the latter has that of "what we wish were." The one is grounded on the observable phenomena. The fact persists independent of the colour, bias and temperament of the observer. The most simple illustration of this point is revealed in the example of a treatment of a birch tree. The birch tree as the fact reveals the white and papery-like bark, the black branch, the bending structure, the dancing-quivering of the twigs and leaves, the moderate heighth of the tree and its deviation from a vertical position.

The fanciful view of the tree is the evocation of moods, attitudes and emotions through a visual and imaginative consideration. The extreme position of the "fanciful" would postulate the tree with reference to the subjective mood of the observer. A painter, for example, suffering from a stomach-ache, might well produce the tree in terms of the mood engendered by a bodily disturbance so that no scientific point of reference

would be available to the reader unless, of course, he could experience in colour the painter's discomfort. The experience would then be in terms of the ache and not of the tree. Both views are unsatisfactory.

The association of the word "fact" has an unpleasant note of grim and ugly realism. To the realist, "fancy" suggests the irrational desire to insist on a belief in the unreal- fairies, for example. To the emotional temperament, the devotee to the "fact" is without charm, grace and imagination. The realist considers the reveller in "fancy" to be emotionally unbalanced,unwilling to face the realities of everyday existence and to be decidedly "eccentric." These are extreme and opposite views; nevertheless, people tend to adopt the opposites with considerable stubborness on the one hand, and with no small amount of "heat of collision" on the other hand.

By the nature of poetic expression, the emotive use of language is involved. The Neo-Classicists, faithful adherents to the philosophy of the imitative, the realistic and the factual, started out with the idea that statements should be used for the sake of references, true or false, that they caused. The statements were to be verifiable with reference to human nature and to physical nature.

This scientific approach was given special verse forms for added effectiveness. The rigidity of the iambic-pentametric closed-couplet is as close to a perfect form of reference for precise meaning that English literature contains. However, as shown in the first section [11], the very unique nature of poetic creativeness vitiated the purely intellectual and scientific approach to poetry. In order to achieve poetic communication, the poet was forced to engage his own attitude and emotions in order to reach the reader. Pope, Dryden, Goldsmith, and other Neo-Classicists were unable to escape the "emotive" use of language. This emotive language is used for the evocation of the resulting emotion and attitude caused by the specific reference.

Much of the difficulty may be dissipated by an approach to "fact and fancy" from a different point of view-that of reconcilability. That is not to say that both fact and fancy are engaged in the poem as constituents of a mechanical mixture; rather, they are organically fused in order to produce the emotion and attitude so that the factual aspect of the situation is present to reveal the emotional experience more intensely.

Science is not poetry; the use of the exact factual statement in science is necessary because of the difference

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[11] Refer to the discussion on page 11(ff)

in the mental processes involved in the artist and in the scientist. In scientific activity a variation in the references means failure, and the end desired could never be attained without a new start.

For emotive language there may be a wide variation in references if the effects in attitude and emotion are of the desired and desirable kind. In the scientific use of the fact, connection of fact and referential relationship must be logical to prevent confusion. This condition is not mandatory for emotive purposes for the important requirement for the poet is that the series of attitudes springing from the references have their own proper form and their own emotional congruity.

Richards approaches the problem of the fact from the point of view that the scientific sense is per se inimical to the artist:

> The scientific sense, that,namely, in which references, and derivatively statements symbolizing references, are true, need not delay us. A reference is true when the things to which it refers are actually together in the way in which it refers to them. Otherwise, it is false. This sense is one very little involved in the arts. [12]

He then continues to consolidate the position for emotive language

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[12] I.A.Richards,Principles of Literary Criticism, Kegan, London, 1945, p.268

> The usual other sense is that of acceptability... the "truth" of Robinson Crusoe is the acceptability of the things we are told, their acceptability in the interests of the effects of the narrative, not their correspondence with the actual facts...sometimes it held that whatever is redundant or otiose, whatever is not required, although not disruptive or obstructive is also false. Super-abundance is a common characteristic of art, much less dangerous than the preciousness that too contrived an economy tends to produce, so sheer economy is to make too excessive demands on the artist. Poetry affords the clearest examples of the subordination of reference to attitude. It is the supreme form of the emotive language.[13]

In many respects, Richards is correct. What passes for knowledge is often comprehended under faith, belief and opinion. Belief is that element which the individual accepts as verifiable. Richards is pointing out that this is a different type of belief from that of scientific truth. The reader accepts as true that which he proves to his own satisfaction;-this satisfaction may be derived through observation, through reason, through intuition, through expert pronouncement and through imagination.

By extension, it is apparent that Richards is justified in pushing the psychological aspects of the case, for there is no one to one correlation between beliefs and objective facts. At one time in history people held a clear strong belief that the world was flat. It was for such people "a fact", a matter of direct observation, knowledge and common heritage of information Today, many people take it as a clear unquestionable "fact" that

[13] I.A. Richards, op. citere, p.236.

negroes are inferior to the white race in innate intellectual capacity. It is of especial significance that beliefs which show a discrepancy with the objective facts can nevertheless be as strong and can be associated with the realities of the situation.

As the strength of a belief does not necessarily depend upon the degree of correspondence with objective facts, there must be another important factor. Richards does not develop his thesis far enough to elucidate the factor of "attitude." The strength of a belief depends on the degree of meaning for the poet and for the reader. The meaning itself is a reality. Any belief which meets the needs and goals of the individual is for him an irrefutable actuality.

A belief, then, is an enduring organization of perceptions about some aspect of the individual's world. It is all he "knows" about this world and embraces such knowledge as faith and opinion. The "attitude" is the factor which engages the belief in meaning for the person. It is an enduring organization of motivational, perceptual and cognitive processes with respect to some specific individual experience-physical, mental and moral.

The attitude is a series of beliefs in action. The emotional colour with which the individual faces life

influences what he accepts as truths. The important point to emphasize is that purely scientific language and meaning are those which approach the closest one can get to an entire absence of attitude. The attempt to attain this frame of reference is evident through the scarcity, in science, of such signs as "pro" and "anti."

The factor which makes for literary excellence is the emotional power of appeal to the artist and reader. As soon as the artist clothes the scientific fact with attitude and elaborates its signs, the scientific fact has artistic meaning. The psychological school of literary criticism, headed by I.A.Richards, has failed on this pivotal point. For a fact by itself is useless. The description measured in the most analytically precise and mathematical manner has no existence until it has meaning.

From a utilitarian point of view, the fact has meaning when it goes into action and meets a human need and demand. When emotion and intuition enter the scene,the correct reaction and fusion result in an artistic experience. Every cognitive reaction, perception, imagination, thought and reason is an effort after meaning. The higher values of human endeavor require an emotional satisfaction which can only be expressed through such apparently irrational experiences as the artistic and religious.

A small number of great artists have the ability to apprehend a fact and to reveal the fact with such objective accuracy and truth that it can meet the test of each age and merit the acquiescence and pleasure of a wide range of readers. It is revealed with such precision that it is not only accepted as true; it is true. When the associative imaginative faculty of fancy clothes, irradiates and activates such a fact, the attitude and the emotion are intensified.

Thus, many people do accept as a belief that which has meaning for them whether or not the fact be objectively demonstrable in reality, or, whether,or not , there is an added power given the artist to make an experience seem real. The great poets, Chaucer, Wordsworth, Keats, Hardy, and the essayist, Edmund Burke, were so accurate and truthful in the apprehension of the "fact" with its emotional clothing in "attitude", that they have both delighted and instructed-they have furnished beauty and truth. Frost, in his imaginative clothing of the fact, is in the same category. He is enjoyed and believed. For the poet who is fortunate enough not to require the willing suspension of disbelief, the range of emotional communication is infinitely widened. There is no

limit to the implication which may be turned on the fact, for like the genuine jewel, each different plane of reflection discovers new aspects of the truth.

The emotional and the imaginative in Frost are fused with the truth discovered by a magnificent faithfulness to the observable and the physically substantiable; the fancy and the fact, reconciled in action, follows. The result is a human equation which has emotional and imaginative experiences with the fact; it is life with implication.

Frost cannot sit back and contemplate nature without involving himself and the reader in the question as to what phases of life are engaged by the physical phenomena. In short, the personification of nature, the infusion of the physical into the human equation, both of these reconcile , through fact and fancy, into an experience whereby man both looks and has an outlook on the world.

In the poem, "Birches", the series of facts were moved into meaningful action by the fancy which played on the parallel and interaction of man with the birch tree. Reliance on empirical data provided the truth to which the poet and reader can return time and time again to spring out into the world of implication. The trees represent the force which reconciles the adventurous and the timid, or , again, it is the force

which encourages, yet limits metaphysical speculation. The variety of possibilities of meaning exists because of the truth of the fact and the desire man has to seek a solution to his needs and wishes.

Writers in this tradition have one more advantage, for they are able to maintain a permanent and pertinent paradox. There is in man a constant chafing at his enslavement to the fact; the fact of self-preservation; the fact of evil and good; the fact of geriatrics; the facts of sadness, boredom, melancholy, gloom and satiety. The poet uses the elements of fancy to indicate man's desire to abolish,to avert and to mitigate the unpleasant aspects of the fact, and to prolong, make always the same, and to feast on the more pleasant experience. Pivoting around the fact is the fancy of union and separation. The reconciliation has life in action.

Frost's integration of the fact and the fancy has still a more subtle manifestation. By it the poet makes the reader discover the poetic experience. The reader can fall back on the reality-the fact; his poetic fancy then involves the reader to take a glance at Frost's implication or to make the extension on his own. Having accepted the fact, the reader is impelled to go along and accept Frost's fancy or to provide his own. At any rate, the important step has been made, the

reader is given the reward of re-creating an attitude and emotion from a consideration of some phase of reality.

It is in this spirit that Frost has repeatedly declared that " the fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows." Such facts as mending walls, wood chopping and all the daily tasks of the New England farm are accurately pictured in the way they actually occur. Then his deep personal interest and his artistic acumen involve him in a relationship with the fact so emotionally that fancy produces an attitude which engages the "fact" into action. The action reveals the episode as a part of a philosophical implication of life.

3. Frost's Critics on Fact and Fancy

In an article, "The Realist", Russell Blankenship observed:

> Frost is difficult to discuss in the phrases we apply to other poets. He has no philosophy, for his deep insight into the significance of a fact or episode can hardly be called philosophical.[14]

It is the deep insight which follows the reconciliation of the fact with the fancy; the imaginative and the intuitive react with the factual to produce an experience whose action"means" something in an individual's view of life. The words "significance" and "insight" can hardly be termed other than philosophical. Edward Garnett was much closer to the mark:

> Frost has the uncanny, the original and the stimulating genius of being able to reproduce familiar features in lifelike actuality; he then gives these a lively feeling of situation, a glow of romantic colour, and the play of the picturesque fancy all revealing some real, true and natural vision of life.[15]

It would have been more accurate for the critic to have considered that the reader has an active part in the revelation; that the reader and the poet make the essentials live and speak.

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[14] Russell Blankenship, "The Realist", an article from the book American Literature, N.Y., Holt, 1931, p.288

[15] Edward Garnett, from an article in the Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 116, No. 2, issue of August, 1915, pp.218-224

The observation of J.McBride Dabbs in a 1934 review arrives at the question of fact and fancy obliquely yet effectively:

> I should say now that though his poetry is immediately notable for its fresh, real living quality, its realism, it is more memorable for its rich after-images, its deeply based idealism. [16]

Frost has capitalized on the psychological phenomena in the individual- as did Browning and Hardy. By harking back, always, to the objective phenomena, he affords the reader a pivot about which to view the known in a series of new lights- these new lights stem from the reader's attitude, a psychological factor. This is not deny, of course, that illumination may sometimes strike through in an unexpected flash, but to assert, on the whole, that wisdom is a clear light gained by man's experiences with the common incident and turning that incident over in terms of implication. The experiences are facts which rise from the level of man's unending struggle with man and nature; the fancy is the imaginative color these experiences take from the methods and attitudes man adopts toward life. With Frost one keeps returning to the anchor of knowledge, the fact, and from there to the attitude, the fancy.

The poetry about living day by day, which is the fact, synthesizes with man's view about living, which is the fancy.

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[16] J. McBride Dabbs," The Dark Woods" an article in The Yale Review , Vol.23, No. 23, Spring issue of 1934, po.514-520.

Both reconcile into an artistic communication about some phase of life.

John Farrar approaches the same theme through a more technical apprehension. In comparing Frost with Virgil, he considers that both, had they lived in each other's time, would have written each other's poetry. Apart from this fanciful speculation, Farrar comes to grips nicely with the question of reason and emotion:

> A poet of the minutiae of a locality, a singer of Yankee moods, he yet succeeds in being both national and universal because of his understanding of the stark motivation of simple minds. His North of Boston is a series of dramatic portraits of New England farm folk, but it is more than that, it is an epic of the lives of isolated and lonely people, wherever in the world they may be.[17]

This is an exceedingly fair and keen observation. However, it is important to realize in considering Frost's poetry that his characters, as do the readers, react to the "fact" in fanciful ways. The emotional response grips the reader both from the point of view of an intimate akinship with the characters and their problems and from an impersonal and rational decision on their problems. The experience is so rendered that attitude enters and the reader "takes sides".

In the poem "Out-Out" the fact of the common and dangerous experience of the buzz-saw is only too real. For

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[17] John Farrar, "From the Literary Spotlight," Anonymous Sketches ,N.Y., Doran, 1924, p.68

example, the factory worker can apply his knowledge of the dangers of his textile machine in a close parallel with the New England gasoline wood-cutting instrument. The emotional involvement springs primarily and surprisingly enough in the fanciful, the imaginative and the emotional key to the poem- despite the boy's death, life goes on as usual. Two readers may well take diametrically opposed views, one of horror at the seeming callousness of the New England farmer, the other may accept, without murmur, the question of concern with the living and not the dead. More often than not, the same reader experiences both reactions in different degrees at different times. The reconciliation comes in the blending of the real and the imaginative in such a way that the incident broadens into one of the universal considerations of temporal life.

Mr. G.R. Elliott pointed out, justly, the danger of ignoring Frost's emphasis on the fact:

> In failing to follow out the implications of this spirit, interpreters have failed to trace the distinctive pattern of Mr. Frost's work as a whole. Miss Amy Lowell has exaggerated its lyric gladness. Centrally, however, it is neither sad nor glad. The burdens and limitations of the neighborhood keep the poet from being very glad; but his faith in the latent value of the neighborly spirit prevents him from being very dour and very sad. [18]

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[18] G.R.Elliott, "The Neighborliness of R.Frost", article from The Nation, Vol.109, No. 2840, issue of December 6, 1919, pp.713-715.

Obviously, Mr. Elliott should have gone on to develop an important conclusion; Frost is neither sad nor glad only insofar as certain experiences in life evoke both reactions on the part of the individual. Frost takes the fact of a situation and a certain group of people. The fancy derives from the attitude they take toward the situation and the attitude the reader takes in the evaluation of their reactions with reference to his own experiences and in the light of his own personality.

Chaucer's people have a greater social range than Frost's- this results from the wide social and geographical experiences of Chaucer. Because of this wider scope, coupled with his greater genius, he will always hold an edge over such poets as Frost, Masefield and Hardy. All of those mentioned are masters of the "fact"; each is a fine social historian. Despite Chaucer's degree of superiority, particularly in emotional content, his poetry has but little more universality than that of Frost.

Frost has purposely limited himself to a narrow range- that of the humbler class of occupation. Whereas Chaucer had a larger number of people, socially stratified,each speaking and acting with feeling appropriate to him, Frost has but one class; however, like Jane Austen, in dealing with that one class

he is a superb artist. It would appear that if Frost deliberately limits his range, he must have a limited audience. However, the newer countries, such as Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand,with their socially classless society, are peopled by individuals who place much emphasis on pragmatism and empirical data. The citation of the United States Senate [19] was a remarkable reflection of this interest in a classless society whose interest in centred in a proud individualism. Frost appeals to all of these peoples. In addition, it is not without significance that Frost received his first and lasting recognition from the more acute English literary critics.

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[19] Op. Citere, page 36 of this thesis.

4. A Brief Frostian Note on Fact and Fancy

From the pen of a poet less gifted than Frost, a hoe would appear but an agricultural tool; in the hands of Frost it becomes the "fact", the agent which has made him groan, sweat and cause his hands to callous. The fancy comes from the implication of the hoe as a symbol of the force which binds man to his common obligations, the force which tests his solidity, his strength and his honesty. Together, the incident fuses into a powerful appeal to reason and to feeling. What does Frost say?:

> There are two types of realist. There is one who offers a good deal of dirt with his potato to show that it is a real potato. And there is the one who is satisfied with the potato brushed clean. I am inclined to be the second kind. To me, the thing art does for life is to clean it, to strip it to form. [20]

Superficially, this is a refutation of the school which shows sordidity for the sake of the sordid. Philosophically and artistically, it is much more. The potato brushed clean is the selected fact which is realistically portrayed so that fanciful speculation may reveal some important experience both beautiful and wise. Realism is not for realism's sake but for an end purpose; the purpose of an artistic experience.

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[20] Quoted by M.P.Tilley, in "Notes from Conversations With Robert Frost", in the Inlander, Vol.20, No. 4, issue of February, 1918, p.11.

Frost refuses to embrace the Vachel Lindsay [21] escape from reality; on the other hand, he has never subscribed to the raw reality of the machine and the slums expressed in the novels, the drama and the verse of the American literary scene of the past thirty years. Frost contents himself with sufficient brushing to enable the spiritual implications to spring from the fancy of the attitude toward the fact.

In all fairness, it is necessary to state that the emotional restraint ignored and the emotional resentment felt by the modern realists have lead them to picture the horror of the fact of modern life. Many of them seek to reform, to bring about a revulsion from the fact, luridly depicted by T.S.Eliot, of the modern waste land. Frost does not seek to reform. Yet, in his quiet dramatic medium, he brings men back to the consideration of the basic values in life, for each individual within himself must meet a rather stern supernatural order. He must resolve his problems in terms of his own personal qualities.

The glory in life comes from the fancy he brings to the implacable system that impels him to live and that promises him death. He speculates with intense concern on the role of the individual's reaction to the fact. The dramatist Fry reveals

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[21] Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) a hero-worshipping poet of such figures as Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson; Disillusioned, poverty-stricken and faith-poor, he committed suicide in 1931.

the basic attitude of Frost. Both start with and come back to reality. But the middle flight is no small venture:

Jennet: I am interested in my feelings.
I seem to wish to have some importance
In the play of time...
What is deep as love is deep, I'll have deeply.
What is good as love is good, I'll have well.
Then if time and space have any purpose,
I shall belong to it...
The least I can do is to fill the curled
Shell of the world
With human deep sea sound, and hold it to
The ear of God, until he has appetite
To taste our salt sorrow on his lips...
Listen! What
Can all that thundering from the cellars be?[22]

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22 Christopher Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, London, Cumberlege, 1948, p.85

5. Fact and Fancy from Frost's Poetry

Selections which represent a number of his volumes will be considered from the point of view of "fact and fancy". The following treatment will consider "fact" to involve the rational, the observable and the objective phenomena, while "fancy" will include the imaginative, the emotional and the intuitive.

A Boy's Will consists of thirty short poems. These, his earliest collection, are as rich in the blend of reality and imagination as his later volumes. "In Hardwood Groves", the poet seizes on the natural phenomena of falling leaves to reveal the hard core of life and death in nature; the fanciful similes and the imagination conjured by the powerful verb clothe the whole with the philosophy of acceptance:

> The same leaves over and over again!
> They fall from giving shade above
> To make one texture of faded brown
> And fit the earth like a leather glove.
>
> Before the leaves can mount again
> To fill the trees with another shade,
> They must go down past things coming up.
> They must go down in the dark decayed.
>
> They must be pierced by flowers and put
> Beneath the feet of dancing flowers.
> However it is in some other world
> I know that this is the way in ours.[23]

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[23] Robert Frost, "In Hardwood Groves", from A Boy's Will

The fact of falling leaves and the exactness of the colour shade is intensified with the imaginative simile of "fitting the earth like a leather glove." The leaves are not only the one aspect of nature laying on top of the earth,but they also claim the same intimacy that a leather glove has with the hand. The two blend into a picture that is not now a natural fact of a seasonal change, but one which distills a sombre brooding and melancholy hint of decay. The word "faded"denotes the slipping away of life, and the brown is the stage before disintegration. Black is not the symbol of death to the poet of nature; decay and rot are depicted by various shades of gray and brown.

The second four lines state the biological fact; in the cycle of plant life there is decay followed by the disintegration of chemical matter. Then, through the reversible chemical action, common to plant and animal life, leaves grow again. However, the fact is wonderfully arrayed with fancy. The sharpness of "fall" in the first stanza is contradicted with the hope and vibrant note that the leaves can "mount again." The word "mount" carries an attitude with it. In the English language it can seldom have other than an optimistic, vigorous, hopeful and enthusiastic connotation. The positive sound of "fill" is in imaginative contrast with the same sharp "fall."

There is a dramatic march to the third line of the second verse: "They must go down past things coming up". The fact of life and death is given a musical and lively scale. The whole idea of beautiful life descending to be decayed is promise, concurrently, of things "coming up."

In the third stanza the beautiful fancy-surprise-outscores the fact of renewed life. The fourth line blends the two into a surprising, but, logically, homely and sane conclusion. Frost italicized the word "must" in "they must be pierced by flowers and put beneath the feet of dancing flowers." The sombre thought of life resting on the backlog of the dead is relieved by the enjoyable action suggested by the bursting out of the flowers as revealed in "feet of the dancing flowers."

From the emotional speculations on the riot of life concurrent with the feeling of death and decay, Frost drops down to a calm but powerful whisper. This is not pure fantasy, the poet promises: "However it is in some other world", "I know that this is the way in ours." The reader has returned from his flight into fancy to the indisputable rock-bed fact of this world. The poem makes its mark. It lingers because it appeals to the imaginative and the emotional aspects of the poet and the reader in their attitude toward their respective destinies. It is "over-learned" because it is deeply rooted in the experience

of man. No matter how dramatically, and there are surprising variations, a man may exclaim " I have seen this", Frost ensures that the theme is rendered in such a context that the individual sees it jell for him in an unusual mold of reference. At the same time, the reader knows the experience to be true. The verb "saw" urges basically, irrevocably and emphatically, the fact of proof; he has seen it happen! The same analogy may be urged in Frost's final conclusion in implication; the last line reconciles all: "I know that this is the way in ours."

North of Boston, his second volume and one of his best, contains longer poems even more quickened with the blend of the two reconcilable qualities of emotion and reason. It is difficult to choose from the equal poems, but "The Wood-Pile" will serve admirably for the discussion:

> Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day,
> I paused and said 'I will turn back from here.'
> 'No, I will go on further- and we shall see.'
> The hard snow held me, save where now and then
> One foot went through. The view was all in lines
> Straight up and down of tall slim trees
> Too much alike to mark or name a place by
> So as to say for certain I was here
> Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.
> A small bird flew before me. He was careful
> To put a tree between us when he lighted,
> And say no word to tell me who he was
> Who was too foolish to think what he thought.
> He thought that I was after him for a feather-
> The white one in his tail; like one who takes
> Everything said as personal to himself.

One flight out sideways would have undeceived him
And then there was a pile of wood for which
I forgot him and let his little fear
Carry him off the way I might have gone,
Without so much as wishing him good-night.
He went behind it to make it his last stand.
It was a cord of maple, cut and split
And piled- and measured, four by four by eight.
And not another like it could I see.
No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.
It was older sure than this year's cutting,
Or even last year's or the year's before.
The wood was gray and the bark warping off it
And the pile somewhat shrunken. Clematis
Had wound strings around it like a bundle.
What held it though on one side was a tree
Still, growing, and on one a stake and prop,
These latter about to fall. I thought that only
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tracks and tasks
Could so forget his handiwork on which
He spent himself, the labor of his ax,
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
With the slow smokeless burning of decay. [24]

The cold rational idea, the unmistakeable and the inescapable series of facts turn on the precise and detailed description of a wood-pile. The poet moves from the outer circle to the inner, limiting the expanse of landscape enroute. The indefinite expanse of swamp, the grayness of the atmosphere, and the distant view of small trees get definition from "frozen" and from Frost's account of the hard snow with the occasional soft spots.

The insertion of the personal attitude gives an imaginative twist to the setting , for breaking through is a human equation in the form of a man talking to and arguing with

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[24] Robert Frost, "The Wood-Pile" from North of Boston

himself: " I will turn back from here", then, " No, I will go on farther." On the grayness of the scene, there is also introduced a whimsical and plaintive note of a rueful truth: "I was just far from home."

From the circle of the physical surroundings, the poet steps inside to postulate another fact- that of a small bird. The bird, carefully detailed as to the white feather, lands silently, yet manages to keep a tree between himself and the poet. The factual aspects of the bird and his caution are illuminated with a touching and fanciful personification. The prosaic incident is adorned with the substitution of "careful" for "fright", "say no word" for "not singing" and "He thought I was after him for a feather, the white one in his tail" for "I was going to harm him" and "Like one who takes everything said as personal to himself" rather than " he was intensely self -conscious."

The bird may, by his nature, take flight from the menacing event but man must stay and face the fact, must dwell on the fact and must come to some conclusion. The bird's way is the simple way: " I forgot him and let his little fear carry him off the way I might have gone,without so much as wishing him good-night. " The poet and the cord of maple stand face to face. From the precise description, the reader receives

the full impact of the Frostian observation: the wood has been expertly split; the pile was isolated but carefully stacked; the pile had been there, untouched for several years- the entwining of the clematis plant informs the reader of that fact; and, finally, the whole stack had been skillfully staked, propped and supported. The fancy enters! The skill and the care that have gone into the cutting and the piling argue a craftsman who took intense pleasure in his work. Why then , has the pile been left alone? Reasons for the incident crowd up and beg the imagination.

The possibilities are many and the imaginative reply is in itself surprising. The whole tone would suggest to the reader that tragedy in the form of illness and death had intervened and had taken the craftsman away from his woodland scene. Instead there is an additional hint thrown out by the poet:

> I thought only
> Someone who lived in turning to fresh tracks and tasks
> Could so forget his handiwork on which
> He spent himself, the labour of his ax,
> And leave it far from a useful fireplace
> To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
> With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

While there is the regret that man despoils his work by leaving its product to decay, there are two more judgments handed down. One, a reluctant

admiration for the person who forges on to new endeavors, and the pessimistic suggestion that in the end all that comes to man's work is the " slow smokeless burning of decay." The fusion of the fact and the implication leads to a wider view of life which passes beyond the woodpile, the bird and the man to ponder on the destiny and importance of life itself. The great dilemma is the vitiating of man's day by day work because of a lack of insight into the worth of his endeavors in the long range scheme of things.

In moving on the next Frost volume of poetry, the reader finds in Mountain Interval a widened landscape and more variation in episodes. There is also a more pronounced concern with fancy, a keener concern with the unique and unusual, although Frost, like Hardy,does not seek out the eccentric. His previous successes in the more restrained volumes encouraged him to indulge a wry and gentle humour. The poem, " The Cow in Apple Time" is a riot of action blending the comic and the tragic, the fact and the fancy:

> Something inspires the only cow of late
> To make no more of a wall than an open gate,
> And think no more of wall builders than fools.
> Her face is flecked with pomace and she drools
> A cider syrup. Having tasted fruit
> She scorns a pasture withering to the root.
> She runs from tree to tree where lie and sweeten
> The windfalls spiked with stubble and worm-eaten.
> She leaves them bitten when she has to fly.
> She bellows on a knoll against the sky. [25]
> Her udder shrivels and the milk goes dry.

[25] Robert Frost,"The Cow In Apple Time" from Mountain Interval.

The fact is clearly and logically established. It is true that a layman who knew nothing of the habits of the cow might conjecture that the poem was a fantasy or tease on the poet's part. The simple truth, faithfully, yet colorfully depicted, is that cow has wandered into an orchard and there gorged herself with rich food whose sap has made her drunk, literally.

The important plane of approach is not through the truly deep metaphorical infusion of the fact but through the imaginative route to profound philosophical parallels. The critics who have acclaimed the poem as Frost's real humorous indulgence, who have asserted at random that the poem is about a mad cow and who have claimed that the cow represents bovine fury at man's attempt to dominate the animal world have gone wide of the mark.

The fancy leads to several conclusions, each of them in several ways inter-related. The outburst of the cow parallels man's occasional and apparently inexplicable outbursts at fettering convention. Examples of this are brought to mind by the cropping up of eccentric sects, hair-brained political ideas, radical fancies in dress and a miscellany of other aberrations such as the "zoot-suit craze." The pain suffered from the cider exploit of the bovine is reminiscent of the feeling man has after he has indulged,not wisely, in food, drink and in other excesses. It may well and appropriately

remind the individual of an upset in the physical sphere because of a change in the atmospheric conditions, a great emotional upheaval and/ or a change in diet, with its attendant upset.

The last two lines, for the cow and for the farmer, are little more than stark tragedy:

> She bellows on a knoll against the sky.
> Her udder shrivels and the milk goes dry.

The helplessness of the animal in resolving her difficulties, other than by emotional response, and the economic loss to the farmer-suggested by "the only cow of late" are not humorous. Neither is the association that fancy brings to the reader and poet. The emotional outburst, the wild attack on convention, the futile struggle that comes from an overdose of emotion, as well as the paucity of reason involved, lead to an exhaustion which ends in aridity and sterility.

The same volume contains a short dramatic episode in which, for a change, the fact is embedded in the fancy; yet both lead to the establishment of queries on the level of the universal. "The Line Gang" from Mountain Interval[26] shows how the telephone and telegraph, the product of civilization, is introduced at a cost to nature:

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[26] "The Line Gang" from Mountain Interval was published in the United States in 1916, immediately after Frost's return from England.

Here come the line gang pioneering by.
They throw a forest down less cut than broken.
They plant dead trees for living, and the dead
They string together with a living thread.
They string an instrument across the sky
Wherein words whether beaten out or spoken
Will run as hushed as when they were a thought
But in no husk they string; they go past
With shouts afar to pull the cable taut,
To hold it hard until they make it fast,
To ease away-they have it. With a laugh,
An oath of towns that set the wild at naught
They bring the telephone and telegraph. [27]

The title of the poem sets the reader for the basic idea and strongly suggests the factual. The first four words support the suggestion:"Here comes the line-gang." The next word gives a Whitman-like tone of glorifying the common-place when Frost slips the word "pioneering" into the context. There is a joyous and buoyant flow of imaginative lyricism. The first reading gives the reader the impression that the modern civilization is regarded by the poet as the exciting succession of scientific advances for the benefit of mankind:

They plant dead trees for living, and the dead
They string together with a living thread.
They string an instrument against the sky
Wherein words whether beaten out or spoken
Will run as hushed as when they were a thought...

Then the dramatic rhythmic elements assert themselves, and the fact emerges. The woods are broken; the trees are dead and all nature is

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[27] Robert Frost, op. citere, p. 262

scorned and set"at naught." There is no obvious attempt on the part of Frost to rail against the way man lives; he blends the deed and its significance so that the incident has the philosophical depth that leads man to ask "where" and "why". The incident itself and the powerful metaphorical appeal to the reader are fused into a question that involves a higher level of meaning. Frost comes back to the conundrum of the act and its significance. The crucial question in "The Line-Gang" as in "The Wood Pile" is not what man has done nor how it is done but as to whether or not man, the rational animal, understands the significance of his actions.

In this poem, the shouts of direction, the mechanically deft movements of the workers and the rolling boisterous language of the gang evoke the feeling of a brief flurry, of something not profound and of an action well done,but not understood. The fancy and fact reconcile to show the result of "doing" rather than "thinking"- a characteristic of a pioneer people. The word "pioneering" returns to the reader's new plane of consideration to take on a more sombre implication.

No volume of Frost's poetry has received more esteem than the Pulitizer prize-winning collection, New Hampshire. In this, Frost continues to widen the range of observation so that his philosophy may touch on specific matters not portrayed

for the reader in earlier volumes. The fact has now been extended to include human episodes. More people enter his poetic sphere; they speak their lines as they would in going about the daily experiences of farm life. Within those daily experiences, some most unusual implications arise to constitute spiritual problems.

"For Once, Then Something" reveals the experience of the poet in a direct yet reluctant consideration of the truths beyond the physical plane:

> Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs
> Always wrong to light, so never seeing
> Deeper down in the well than where the water
> Gives me back in a shining surface picture
> Me myself in the summer heaven godlike
> Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.
> Once, when trying with chin against a well-curb,
> I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,
> Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
> Something more of the depths- and then I lost it.
> Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
> One drop fell from a fern, and, lo, a ripple
> Shook whatever it was lay there at the bottom,
> Blurred it, blotted it out. What was the whiteness?
> Truth, a pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.[28]

The reality of life has been never so clearly portrayed. Frost states that he knows,honestly and through his experiences, but one truth- that of the knowledge gained through empirical data. In the first line,he chides himself for his lack of instinct, for his intuitive deficiency in not being able to see what others have told him

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[28] Robert Frost,"For Once, Then, Something" from New Hampshire.

exists- a something beyond the reality of the world he knows.

Yet, his language would seem to contradict his assertion that he knows only the temporal fact, for he clothes the fact in the language of the supra-physical- "summer heaven godlike." He compares, fancifully, the inexplicable intrusion of the drop of water, at this particular time, which has come to destroy the scene reflected in the water, with the feeling man has that there is something beyond his knowledge, something greater and something mysterious.

The "water" that "came to rebuke the too clear water" is the emotionally dressed-up explanation of the result of the dropping of fern water to mar the clearness of the depth of the well. The truth of this little occurrence in man's real world is of universal acceptance. On considering the imaginative severity of "rebuke" one is taken by reconciliation away from the vignette to the realm of spiritual values. Frost admits the justness of a rebuke that he is too satisfied with his acceptance of this world as the greater source of satisfaction for man's needs. Still, his honesty is such that he cannot more than admit that he feels there must be something, but that he lacks the faith to yield to a truth that is not empirically satisfactory to him. He does confess:"Truth?

A pebble of quartz? For once,then, something." He saw,dimly, something. That something is a hint of a greater experience whose meaning he has not the capacity to grasp.

Finally, the slim volume of West-Running Brook ,with its number of short verses, is cited for the Frostian approach to fact and fancy. The poetry becomes more reflective and shows that the poet is thinking of things he looks back on from the distance of time. It is as if the poet is resting quietly in some unhurried atmosphere, from which he muses on some little incident which takes sharpness and direction through association with present thoughts.

"The Door in the Dark" leisurely, yet dramatically, relives a painful experience interpretable in the present thoughts which strike the poet's fancy:

> In going from room to room in the dark,
> I reached out blindly to save my face,
> But neglected, however lightly, to lace
> My fingers and close my arms in an arc.
> A slim door got in past my guard,
> And hit me a blow in the head so hard
> I had my native simile jarred.
> So people and things don't pair any more
> With what they use to pair before.[29]

The short verb forms make the experience so vivid that the reader virtually staggers in sympathy with the blow.

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[29] Robert Frost,"The Door in the Dark" West-Running Brook .

The seventh line," I had my native simile jarred", is a marvellous blend of fact and implication. There is the humorous outlook on a vivid experience, then agonizing,but now divested of the painful stimulus so that the poet may chuckle at the event. At the same time,the employment of "simile" introduces a word entirely removed from the previous idiom of the poem. The transition word accompanies the release from this experience so that the speculation may be transferred to an analogy on a higher level. The past experience had come to mind when the poet's cognitive processes were pondering a change in people's manners and ideas: "So, people and things don't pair any more with what they used to pair before."

Is the poet referring to the changes which come with age and the caution employed into a growing conservatism? Is he considering the lessening of the daring spirit and the action-seeking faculties of those who have had bitter experiences in life? Is he wondering why the individual has lost his daring and why he wishes to settle in an insulated security? Whatever one of these or how much of any of these implications the reader and poet may accept, the fact and fancy blend into some experience whereby man must seek an answer for his problems and try to give reasons for his beliefs.

In summarizing the content of this chapter, it is fair to insist that the "fact" and the "fancy" have deeper meaning

in Frost's poetry than may appear if one accepts the poet as an artist whose main desire is to render the fact for the reader's appraisal. While the portraits of the events in nature are so faithfully, sympathetically and truthfully put in verse for the reader's delight; the fact is not written for the fact's sake. The emotional vestments awaken the reader's fancy by the sheer imagery of implication so that the initial reaction to the episode in nature fades to be replaced by an experience on a spiritual plane,where man must face a consideration as to the meaning of life and the value of his actions.

Several selections have been synthesized to show, in each case, that the poem rests on the observable truth of man's physical world. Around the fact man turns his physical actions and his mental queries in such an imaginative way that he combines the attitude with the belief. The attitude toward the fact reconciles into a feeling about life. This feeling is resolvable on the loftier sphere where man must face the questions of "why", "ought" and "should."

CHAPTER FIVE

RECONCILIATION OF THE TRADITIONAL AND THE PROGRESSIVE

1. Prefacing Remarks

In popular parlance, the word "traditional" has grown to mean the quality of adherence to past customs, beliefs, ideas,ideals and actions. Tradition refers to dress, ways of talking, methods of agriculture, systems of business, educational doctrines and religious beliefs-all of which have operated in the same way over a long period of time in some particular place among a specific people.

To those who have found security in the devotion to the time-honored customs and ways of life, any departure evokes resistance as long as the vestigial social norms and institutions yield satisfaction. The traditional ways of life satisfy so many people because they answer the goals of gregariousness, social approval, wealth display, security and the desire to seek comfort in some substantial dogma, and, more than all, because they represent a manner of living concerned with man's needs and goals-work, play, religion and love. When cultures, races, societies and social groups find that their needs and demands are satisfied by certain beliefs and attitudes toward life; then, over a period of time,they become traditional to these people.

A person who is steeped in tradition does not want change-except to his point of view- over the years,there is

built up in the mind of the individual, and transmitted to like individuals in the same environment, the firmly fixed idea that "this way is the best" The traditional belief becomes a "fact." It is not a question of blind faith; for any traditionalist will assert, doggedly and defiantly, that his code of life is the best. He has proven it to his own satisfaction. This proof may come through reason,intuition or through expert pronouncement by members of his society. There is no necessary relationship between such perceived "facts" and the true objective facts which may be urged by the progressive.

Nothing is surer than that the traditionalist seldom holds opinions. Opinions are elements of human judgment which have neither the proven quality of knowledge nor the unverifiable property of faith. Opinion is that which characterizes the "progressive."

Probing a little more deeply, as Frost ever probes,albeit indirectly,the traditionalist tries to avoid frustration in his own sphere but sets up a "frustrating barrier" to any outsider who introduces an alien thought. The "progressive" wishes to change the existing order.

He is dissatisfied with the existing order whether it be physical, educational, intellectual or spiritual- in his discontent, he wishes to evolve a more utopian order. In addition to holding

the opinion that traditionalism is a way of decay, he also holds strong emotional attitudes toward the traditionalist. The refusal of the conservative to engage in discussion on the rational level is extremely frustrating and evokes a choler against which the upholder of the status quo shows even more resistance, for he knows that each slight concession will make him insecure. The slightest yielding on his part may prove the thin edge of the wedge that will split his kingdom of customs and mores asunder.

The case for tradition is not inconsiderable. In the folkways and mores there are products of natural forces which change just enough to enable the society to survive. These products come from experience; they are generally without rational basis, and they are guardedly handed down from the earliest beginnings of the race. They are protected by ethics and religion.

The progressive fails to take into account that the mores and folkways express group standards and are the group's opinion as to what is right and what is not right for the well-being of the individuals who are like themselves. Those who conform are praised; those who dissent are censured. Yet, by and large, it is difficult to believe that man could survive in his environment without these.

The progressive makes his crucial error in overlooking the importance that social mores, taboos and set ideas possess. They are perceived with intense meaning by the old "die-hard." Merely attacking an ivy-covered theory is not effective. Even in the case of scientific discovery, other scientists are reluctant to give up a scientific theory even though it does not fit the facts. People do hold on to "disproved" scientific theories, economic ideas and religious dogmas. They do so for these old ideas do integrate life for people who hold them- they do organize experiences in a satisfactory manner.

The progressive cannot succeed until the old ways of life are no longer meaningful to the traditionalist. The upheaval must be great before a surrender to new ideas can come. The changes do come, but not easily, for society must not surrender its old until the new prove better. In the depression period of the "nineteen thirties" in the United States, banking systems which had fought attempts over the years to protect the depositor, finally surrendered. They did not surrender to the persistent attempts to correct their modus operandi but to the fact that the system collapsed completely and was no longer capable of answering the demands of the people.

In the human equation, the conflict is greater. In one way, the traditionalist becomes entwined in his means of upholding tradition rather than in the purpose tradition serves. The refusal of the father to interpret the social scene for his children in the light of changes made since his boyhood gives rise to the world old struggle to retain the new and to resist the old. As with so many opposites, the conflicting forces are often prone to ignore reason. The solution for the progressive is not to insist upon disruption until he can change the way the traditionalist views his world. If the progressive can alter the appearance of the entire range of stimuli men live through and by, he may be able to make the traditionalist unhappy with the world which hitherto had meaning for him.

Frost concerns himself with this question; in verity, the consideration is seldom missing from his poetry. However, Frost does not declaim in bitterness for one side or for the other. In his poetry, impregnated with truth, he reveals the strength of the case for each. He is able to do so; for he has the insight to recognize in himself, and to show all men that every individual has, to some degree, the elements of both. Often the forces within a man which cry for change engage in agonizing conflict with those which cry,"hold, the old is best."

He reveals the plight that can befall the one who refuses change; he invites the audience to see the unveiling of misery for those who will abandon all faith in that which has supported man in ages past. He does not argue for compromise; he does not adopt the role of the reformer nor that of the reactionary. Instead, he shows that it is not a question of one or the other, but the reality of both; they are a part of the world order he knows. The problem is to know when which of these must assert itself completely and when one must let the other have play. The two terms are reconciled by Frost in much the same light in which Matthew Arnold blended "strictness of conscience" and "spontaneity of consciousness." [1]

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[1] Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) prose writer, educator and poet wrote one of the most influential books of the Victorian Period in Culture and Anarchy. In appealing for a reconciliation between the Greek and Hebraic philosophies of life, he considered "strictness of conscience" to characterize the Hebraic and Puritan and "spontaneity of consciousness" to be characteristic of the cultural leaven of the Hellenic civilization. These two terms are thoroughly considered and brilliantly rendered in Culture and Anarchy, "Hebraism and Hellenism", Chapter IV.

2. The Opinions of the Critics

Lascelles Abercrombie, who possessed a keen dramatic sense, as well as considerable intellectual acumen-enjoyed a reputation for excellent literary criticism in English circles. This English poet, who wrote the first review on Frost's North of Boston , was the first critic to speculate on the poet's concern with the conservative and the liberal.

He pointed out that Mr. Frost was the one American since Whitman to stand out against tradition in that he, like Whitman, dramatized everyday American rural life. American poetry, prior to Whitman and since him, had traditionally avoided the concern with America. In breaking with the traditional content of American poetry, he was, paradoxically enough, able to reveal the traditional tenor of the rural way of life.

Abercrombie located another break with tradition:

> To say that a poet stands out against tradition is not to accuse him of being a rebel. He may be, as Frost certainly is, one of those in whom the continual readjustment of poetry is taking place...we find very little of the traditional manner of poetry in Mr. Frost's work. Scarcely anything , indeed, save a peculiar adaptation, as his usual form, of the pattern of blank verse. [2]

His unique manner of achieving dramatic emphasis through expectancy, surprise, congruity, pace, stress and duration has been commented on in the first section of this thesis.

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[2] Lascelles Abercrombie, an unsigned review of North of Boston , Vol.15, No. 11, issue of June 13, 1914, pp.423-424.

Amy Lowell, in 1915, rendered the following verdict:

> Mr. Frost writes as a man under the spell of one fixed idea. He is as racial as his own puppets. One of the great interests of the book is the uncompromising New Englander it reveals. His intense repugnance to change is rooted in his faith in the soil and rocks of his beloved Vermont and New Hampshire. Mr. Frost is as New England as Burns is Scotch.[3]

The review is faulty in two major respects: First," the poet is under the spell of many fixed ideas", Miss Lowell is, in effect claiming" but Frost's poetry reveals by implication the necessity for new ideas and many changes; Second, while it is true that this poet depicts the narrow New Englander with his stern Puritanical refusal to embrace change, Frost does not, by any means, embrace the tenets of the people he portrays. Often Frost shows that, contrary to accepted opinion, there is a strong urge to change inherent in the Vermonter.

Robert Markerly, in a long review of West-Running Brook, reflected:

> Both Frost and Emily Dickinson have felt the heartbeat of the land and matched it with human pulses. Through them, we know what New England is worth, what it can do, and what it can be counted on to refrain from doing... but that is not to say ,in the slightest, that both are enslaved to the past for if they suggest that the New Englander is not receptive to progress in his own fragment of America, his desire for independence and for pioneering have made him the lecturer of progress in Mid-Western colleges..... you will, as a matter-of-fact find the New Englander heralding a new philosophy of education as a county superintendent in Minnesota.[4]

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[3] Amy Lowell,review in the New Republic,Vol.2,No. 16, Feb.20, 1915, pp.83-86.

[4] Robert Markerly,"Frost and Dickinson",article in The American Mercury, August,1929, (no.vol.)(no no.) pp.234-241.

Markerly went on to recall the urge in Frost that led him away from the shores of New England to embark on the adventurous journey to England. He emphasized the revolt of Frost against the tradition of classical studies as fostered in the old and venerable institutions.

Two or three lines from Dorothy Canfield Fisher's study, "Vermont", serve to present an insight into the man's interest in the wider view: "while he loved the Peleg Cole house, it was not because it was better than the house at Sunderland, but because from Peleg he was closer to the world of larger limits. Sunderland was too far from a railway's promise of an exit to a larger world."[5]

From "The Dark Woods" comes a colorful view of the philosophy of Frost:

> Robert Frost glances longingly at lonely woods, hesitates and turns back towards men. It is this hesitancy, charming in Frost, that makes him so modern. He is forever steering straight off into space. His lonely flight into the unknown, into distance, into the future...his spirit of discovery is ours. Strange voices lure us away. The insistent voice of man calls us back to the ways of men. He tells us that, confused by conflicting voices, all of us sometime fall asleep in the miles of life we have to go.[6]

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[5] Dorothy Fisher, "Robert Frost's Hilltop", in the Bookman, Volume 64, No. 4, issue of December, 1926, pp.403-405.

[6] J.McBride Dabbs, "The Dark Woods," from the Yale Review, Vol.23, No. 3, issue of Spring, 1934, pp.514-520.

Admittedly, the critic has engaged in considerable metaphor and permits, perhaps, too much implication. Notwithstanding the justice of this comment on his flight of fancy, there is a world of insight into the reconciliation of liberal views with the demands of tradition. The freshness, the infinite variety, the vigor and the action of his poetic range argue a progressive spirit of the highest order with the discipline of the "tried and accepted" to give order and support.

An angry, complaining and incisive article is David Lambuth's"Illumination and Wisdom":

> Proudly I confess to a feeling of heat of collision at the considerable number of New England College professors who claim that Frost is to be immortalized as the faithful artist of two small rocky states, Vermont and New Hampshire. I rebel when I hear our pseudo intelligentsia expatiate on his love for the moss covered ideas of our beloved Yankee realm... Nothing can be more significant than his flight from their colleges! What greater irony than to be claimed by those who rejected him as an upstart radical... Many hereditary strands have gone into making Robert Frost. These, together with his experiences, ensure that the poetry of Frost is neither the new nor the old ideal. His poetic genius rises from the more profound level where man engages in the unending struggle to adjust the spirit to the world and the world to the spirit.[7]

In the last two lines the synthesis of the traditional and the progressive is reached.

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[7] David Lambuth, "II.A Foreword", from Robert Frost , A Bibliography by W.B.Shubrick Clymer and Charles R.Green, (Jones Library,Bowdoin,1938).

Elizabeth Sergeant, twenty-six years ago, expressed the same idea, more intuitively and imaginatively, when she disclaimed those who would consider his verse as a "local" product, thoroughly provincial."[8] She quoted the example of "The Star-Splitter"[9] to show that Frost sympathizes with those who shun the hum-drum life of the rural Vermont farmer. She considered that the rebellious man burned his house down so that:

> He was able to satisfy a life-long curiosity
> About our place among the infinities.[10]

Miss Sergeant interpreted the burning down of the star-splitter's house (for insurance money) as the same symbol of revolt against tradition as the habit of the star-splitter to observe heaven instead of man.

Patrick Colum credits Frost's travels with being a significant factor in a lively concern with the values of tradition and the necessity for finding new ways of saying things and of thinking them. Frost can love the bleak, craggy and lonely land with its lonely people; he can hate their cold dogmatism with hot anger. As Mr. Colum aptly observed:

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8 Elizabeth Sergeant, "Good Greek Out of New England" from Fire Under the Andes , N.Y., Knopf, 1927, 379 p.

9 Robert Frost, "The Star-Splitter", New Hampshire

10 Ibidium

> The sojourn that he made in England twenty-five years ago has been one of the most profound influences on his career. England gave him the sustaining spectacle, a spectacle that America does not offer, that of young men striving to shape their intuitions and experiences into an art or a philosophy without feeling they were wasting time that should be devoted to the traditional business and craft.[11]

If Frost is as moral as a Puritan, he is as liberal in heart as an Abraham Lincoln. He has the traditional dislike of idleness; yet, he spurns the demands to carry on family business for the business' sake.

Louis Untermeyer, in a survey of the first three volumes of Frost's poetry, observes the emphasis on the poet's debate between the progressive seeker after causes, and the lover of the traditional:

> "Something there is that doesn't love a wall", insists the pioneer; "Good fences make good neighbors," doggedly replies the literal minded traditionalist... We have the essence of nationalism versus the internationalist; and the conflict between blind obedience to custom and questioning iconoclasm.[12]

Untermeyer might well have devoted some attention to the Frostian art of revealing the opposites, not so much as conflicts between people as with opposing aspects residing in the same individual who can

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[11] Patrick (Padraic) Colum, "A Yankee Sage", in The Book-of-the-Month Club News ,N.Y.,Doran, May,1936.

[12] Louis Untermeyer, "Man and Poet" from Modern American Poetry, Fifth Edition Revised,Harcourt,N.Y., 1936, p. xxxi-xl

be happy only when he manages to establish some give and take equilibrium.

In the treatment of the poetry of Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound from the angle of "authority", Munson was able to develop, by contrast, the points that progressiveness, liberalism, creativeness and spontaneity are predominating qualities of Frost's poetry:

> There is an important difference between Robert Frost on one side, and the ubiquitous Ezra Pound and T.S.Eliot on the other... These last two are , in the main, loyal to the principle of authority, whereas Frost depends almost wholly on personal discovery. They give allegiance to tradition as a governing body , but, Frost, like the intelligent Greek is by nature positive, critical and experimental.[13]

Ludwig Lewisohn in Expression in America compares Frost with Wordsworth to bring out the virtues of the American poet:

> Robert Frost's revolt against convention in both substance and form may be called the classical revolt for it heralds the return from artifice to expression, from falsehood to veracity. He has never taken the trouble to explain his revolt in critical terms, but in Mountain Interval, the sonnet called "The Oven-Bird" gives the worship of things for what they are and not for what they would be... but the poet also has his moments of revulsion and a desire for escape: "I'd like to get away from earth awhile." [14]

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13 Gorham B. Munson, "Against the World In General", from Robert Frost: A Study in Sensibility and Common Sense , N.Y., Doran, 1927, 453 p.

14 Ludwig Lewisohn,"Revolt Against Convention ", from Expression In America , 1932, N.Y., Harper and Brothers, 593 p.

The statement by Lewisohn places its finger on the heart of Frost and his poetry, for the emphasis is correctly on veracity. He is true to his subjects. In getting back (like Wordsworth) to essentials, he avoids the futility of escaping into a worship of any one particular belief. That is, in accepting life as determined, he does not consider it to be hopeless. In the poem"Out-Out", the casual matter-of-fact return to the problems of the working day, so soon after the death of the boy, symbolizes a Calvinistic traditional New England idea of the sanctity of the task.

In one of the recent American films, "I Remember Mama", there is an episode illustrating this point. On the intrusion of any domestic crisis, the woman would scrub the floor. The dogged insistence on the physical act and fact of labour is indicative of the catharsis of the Puritanical concern with erasing impurity through toil. The Puritan looks with askance on emotionalism. Yet, the intuitive, the imaginative, the metaphorical and the raptural visional work in various New England individuals in varying degrees. More significantly, they work in the same individual- the tree climber in "Birches" echoes, through his experience with the birch tree, the desire for tradition, convention, conservatism, while, at the same time, he seeks escape into a new world free from the restraints imposed on him by the demands on the part of every day life.

Universal truths- that men are faced at all points and on all fronts by the perplexing opposites of security and affection resting in the comfort of the old ways, in one instance, and the desire for adventure and the desire for change demanding the shattering of the traditional in the next instance-can be revealed by the Vermont scene as well as by a more cosmic range of geography.

James Southall Wilson, in a southern review, arrives at this conclusion:

> Truth is often hidden in a paradox. So with Frost. He seems interested only in the particular, but the particular is for him the universal. He finds the centre of the universe in every grain of sand that blows by his Vermont farm gate: the centre of the universe is the focus from which the poet, who is also a philosopher, looks out in all directions upon the universe. Vermont, New Hampshire: does a poet need to draw a map of the world to prove that a man in South Shaftesbury is the same man he would be in Moscow?[15]

He is typical"of" but at the same time, Frost reveals the urge to be different "from."

It would be a contradiction of terms to insist that the majority of readers and critics are conscious of the presence of both the conventional attitude toward institutions and the eagerness for change in Frost's poetry. As individuals, man tends to take from life that which has meaning for him and that which makes him feel secure.

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[15] James Southall Wilson, "In Human Terms", from the Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol.7, No.2, issue of April, 1937, pp.316-320.

The "Edmund Burke" of Nova Scotia, Joseph Howe, exclaimed: "When the reformer considers that his aim has been attained, he is the worst and the most hide-bound person." This statement suggests that tradition rests on the foundation of utility to society. When there is confusion , lack of direction and world upheavals, man goes back to church, back to the fundamental beliefs which offer him the most secure anchorage. In the early days of the Spanish Civil War, Basil de Selincourt echoed this idea:

> He is the voice of the people; he is the great upholder of their tradition. He has a special aptitude to the changing and critical conditions of our day. His sane contention is that basic values are rooted in the home. He is leading a counter-revolution to the revolution of the "five years plan." 16

Despite the truth of this view, it is significant that few critics are able to see Frost without attaching a revolutionary tag to him even though his revolution takes the form of an individual champion of the value of convention.

A.C.Ward's "Pan With a Difference" is yet another attempt to determine Frost's proportion of experimentalism and tradition. According to Ward, Frost is an alchemist who has succeeded in his art, for he proclaims:

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16 Basil De Selincourt, "Poet of Sanity", a review of A Further Range, from the Observer of London, England, issue of April 4, 1937.

> Tradition enters largely into Robert Frost's poetry but it is always in place and apposite because it is transmuted and hall-marked by a strongly individual mind...[17]

Ward has something to say, despite the doubtful connotation of "apposite" and "transmuted"; indirectly he has arrived at the reconciliation. He is saying that every poet sings of old matters in a new light-newness of oldness. There is nothing new under the sun save refreshing and surprising arrangements of things long known. His conclusion is in this vein:

> He is entirely original and entirely traditional for tradition speaks of values all men know. T.S. Eliot is infelicitous in communicating a traditional faith; Robert Frost, who contemplates the world with a direct personal vision, is the true experimentalist for the world about him is everywhere revealed and interpreted in universal terms by his invigorating originality.[18]

Progressiveness is that quality which, dealing with the known values, attempts to give them a new interpretation which has to satisfy those whose appetites, feelings, ideas, and ideals are in revolt against convention for convention's sake. In this context, all the so-called moderns are progressives; but, if one accepts the theory that experimentalism and liberalism must have meaning for, and communicability to a wider range of society than the experiencing poet, then Frost succeeds where many of the others fail.

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[17] A.C.Ward, "Pan With a Difference", from American Literature, N.Y., The Dial Press, 1932, pp.312-318.

[18] Ibid.

In the Revue des deux mondes, Albert Feuillerat reviewed Frost's position in poetry; after paying tribute to his sincerity, to his power of observation and to the unique flavour of the poetry, he introduces a psychological approach:

> One might say that he can register in his memory only those impressions which have come to him in the land of his ancestors- as if there were secret relationships, indispensable to his inspiration, between his spirit and the region which gave birth to his race. Within a small space where Frost only has eyes for the rural life with its Puritan tradition, nothing has escaped him. He changes our impressions of the things we have conventionally ignored. It is unbelievable how many marvellous spectacles escape us simply because we do not know how to see them. He understands tradition as he understands the spectacles of life, but he is swollen with desire to escape tradition for he loves the intoxication of odors, the perfume of ripe fruit, the bitter essence of the resin dropping from the cedar, the exhalation of decomposing plants, the smell of sawn wood, of the sap falling from the wound in the side of the tree. In all these passions he is a rebel, for tradition and sensuality are mortal foes.[19]

Feuillerat points to the reconciliation in terms of implication. New England Puritanism has banished natural and spiritual joys beneath the fetters of a traditional false religious emphasis on the virtue of material acquisition and democratic idealism.

The joy of life which is exultant and drunk with fresh air is the experimental, the liberal and the rebellious part of the Frostian poetry. New England is proud of him, for he

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[19] Albert Feuillerat, article in the Revue des deux mondes, Series 7, Vol. 17, No. 1, issue of September 1, 1923, pp.185-210

has achieved a recognition as one of her successful sons. The view was not always held. But New England does not love him; for although he consecrates his talent to revealing a portrait of the people of New Hampshire, Vermont and other parts of New England, the portrait is by no means entirely flattering, although it is truth. Only too often, his exact sensuous distillations of nature stand in happy contrast to the New Englander.

Karl Schwarz, another European critic, is one of the few judges to assess Frost in the reference of a philosopher-poet. How much influence German idealism has in this approach is difficult to assess. He develops the theory that Frost uses nature as a symbol of life whose mysterious laws Frost can reveal without explaining. In returning briefly to the poet's treatment of the human equation, he decides:

> E.A.Robinson has buried himself under the forms of a tradition he hates. T.S.Eliot prefers intellectual extravagance to the poetic instinct for sensibility of impression. Carl Sandburg is a monumental particularist ... Robert Frost, the poet of his country and a universalist reveals a people caught, emeshed and anaesthetized by the destiny of tradition and ignorant of the destiny of intention.[20]

In summarizing the opinions

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[20] Karl Schwarz, from Hochschule und Ausland, Vol.13, Number 3, (March,1935), pp.234-46.

given on Frost's quantitative and qualitative treatment of convention and revolt, it may be said, first, that those elements are generally observable in his poetry. The two extremes are present; there is the school of thought which considers that Frost loves and upholds the traditions of Puritan New England. At the other extreme, there is the opinion that Frost is a rebel. Still another holds that Frost is a traditionalist in new clothing. On one point there is universality of agreement; his poetry differs widely from the tradition of American verse. There are one or two critics who have seen, in Frost, the reconciliation. Insofar as tradition deals with the realities of people who respond in certain ways to their environment, he is a traditionalist; insofar as he urges and reveals that there is much more in nature and life than a set response, he is progressive. Within the limits of an area noted for its resistance to change, Frost shows, as the European critics point out, through his subject matter, the inadequacy of the human response to the possible combinations and varieties of stimuli which derive from traditionalism.

Frost has but few direct statements to make on the subject of revolt and reaction. His paucity of overt declarations results from his dislike of formally stated theory.

3. The Position of Frost on the Subject

In the first section[21] attention was called to Frost's answer to the pressing question of the form in modern poetry. After all forms have been tried, with and without the traditional elements, something is still left. When Stephen Spender[22] assured Frost that, traditionally, poetry was characterized by little content, and that modern poetry, to correct this deficiency, should be saturated with propaganda, Frost replied: " Wrong twice. Wrong twice and of theory prepense." In protesting against fads of political diatribes in poetry-in order to air the woes of frustration, Frost belaboured the tendency to "gape" in agony, and to write "huge gobs of raw sincerity bellowing with pain." [23]

In his book, Complete Poems of Robert Frost (1949) he has written a short preface entitled "The Figure a Poem Makes." The first part of the essay discusses the reconciliation of form, hitherto outlined in the first section. In the latter half, he

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21 Page 52 of this essay wherein this thesis treats of reconciliation through rhythm.

22 Stephen Spender (1909-) English literary figure prolific in criticism, fiction and drama. He was noted for his socialistic themes in his poetry of the 1930's.

23 Robert Frost, several times quoted on this, once in his address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Nashua, N.H., April 19, 1936.

casts light on the problem of the old and the new:

> We prate of freedom. We call our schools free because we are not able to stay away from them until we are sixteen years of age. I have given up my democratic principles and now willingly set the lower classes free to be completely taken care of by the upper classes. Political freedom is nothing to me. I bestow it left and right. All I would keep for myself is the freedom of my material- the condition of the body now and then to summons aptly from the vast chaos of all I have lived through. [24]

Frost has arrived at a great and fundamental truth. Tradition loses its meaning for man when it depends solely upon its numerical consent in the name of democracy. John Stuart Mills, in his powerful essay "On Liberty" makes the same point. In the name of democracy, the identity of the individual may be buried by the majority. In pointing out that Christ was crucified by a consenting majority, that the great advances in medicine have been checked by a hostile and numerical weight of reactionaries and that the great efforts of great men have been thwarted by an unenlightened and stubborn majority, Mills pins his faith on the fact that truth, although often lost for centuries, may return. In the same vein, Frost finds, for example, that the school, a symbol of enlightenment, has been changed into a confining institution,and that it constitutes a menacing thrust at the freedom of man. The idea behind the school, to lead to the intellectualizing emancipation of man, has turned

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[24] Robert Frost, quoted by M.P.Tilley in "Notes of Conversations With Robert Frost", in the Inlander, Vol.20, No. 4, issue of March, 1918, pp. 232-239.

by consent of the majority, to the fettering of the individual. Tradition, then, that aims for perpetuation and dominance over the rights of man, must be put in its right place— a source for man's inspiration and not the medium for his eclipse.

His own words echo the previous interpretation:

> The artist must value himself as he snatches a thing from some previous order in time and space into a new order with not so much as a ligature clinging to it of the old place where it was organic...More than once I should have lost my soul to radicalism if it had been the originality it was mistaken for by its young converts. Originality and initiative are what I ask for my country. For myself, the originality need be no more than the freshness of a poem run in the way I have described; from delight to wisdom. The figure is the same as for love...[25]

While man resents limitations on his scope of action; while he chafes under the fetters of society's restrictions in favor of the lesser people; while man struggles to untangle himself from the net which, originally woven for his protection against outside forces, now keeps him from free play with them; while all of these may gall the free spirit, Frost warns against enslaving oneself to the chimera of radicalism, which, instead of leading to satisfactory values, leads to a chaos of nihilism.

The reconciliation of the spirit of revolt and that of restraint rests in the ability to evince the old in terms of a freshness and originality of arrangement. True satisfaction is attained within the patterns and media of traditional values.

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[25] Robert Frost, Collected Poems of Robert Frost(1939); on the dust jacket of this volume was a prose introduction, by Frost, on "The Figure a Poem Makes", N.Y., Holt, 1939.

4. Resolution From Frost's Poetry

The forces in "Mending Wall" and "Birches" are clearly defined. The insistence on tradition and the demands of progress wage a dramatic struggle which is reconciled so that change is seen as a necessary dynamic demand on tradition to satisfy man's love for adventure and his imaginative flights. However, Frost is a considerable utilitarian. He has as fierce a love for land as Wordsworth's "Michael."

The fierceness of the love for property springs from different sources in the two; the Wordsworthian love for property emerges from its relative scarcity and for the desire for material and tangible possessions. Frost's love for land springs from a never-ceasing demand for the satisfaction it gives to his poetic senses as well as from his utter dependence on its materiality to reflect his philosophy of life.

In an important way, this is a dangerous type of materialism; the former degree of possession for acquisition's sake may be isolated from a man's whole personality and leave a nobler part. Frost, Wordsworth and Byron are poets who made nature such an intimate and reconcilable part of their innermost feeling and philosophy that they were unable to extricate

themselves from identifying man and nature as one. The satiric art of Byron and his own colossal egoism were sufficient to save him from postulating nature as one with his moods and fancies. Wordsworth's personification of nature, especially in"Tintern Abbey", elevated nature to the super-natural, the highest power. Frost, with his extremely faithful reliance on the physical fact poses an even greater threat to the higher values- those on the supernatural level. Frost desires to rebel against the forces which prevent man from achieving his greatest pleasures in the world of material values and in this present world- this experienced world of man.

In the poem, "Love and a Question", Frost has a subtle approach to acquiescence and revolt. A newly married couple have settled before the fire and are dreaming of all the things they will do- things that are exciting, adventurous and that have never been done before. A stranger, coming for aid, on that chill pre-winter night, asks for shelter. The bridegroom ponders a problem- will he give aid or not?

> But whether or not a man was asked
> To mar the love of two
> By harbouring woe in the bridal house.
> The bridegroom wished he knew. [26]

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[26] Robert Frost, Love and a Question , from his first volume of poetry, A Boy's Will

The stranger represents the force that asserts the traditional order of cares, duties, reproduction and responsibilities. There is no way to avoid the fact, the tradition of life. The saving grace is that in each generation, the couple, any couple, may dream and hope of something more than gratifying the order of nature. Man may, in his imagination, at least, build a new and lofty world whose planning may result in a pleasurable experience even though the flight must end, and there must be a return to the sombre thought of physical decay. While Frost is not openly scornful of those who lay emphasis on and seek comfort in a belief in the power of a divine order, he never resolves the problems of the world in terms of God's laws.

Thomas Hardy was openly and persistently doubtful as to any interest of a Supreme Being in the affairs of the world of nature and man. Where Hardy denies, Frost ignores. He is content to measure the experiences of life which give satisfaction to man and which indicate man's revulsion from the order of the temporal world. This world he accepts as a dynamic experience of natural and human incidents which rest heavily on sensory observation. He is content to speculate on the values as observable in this world and to make implications as to the next.

In "Storm Fear", there is the question as to whether to rise against the habit of tradition by the glorious excursion into uncharted experience or to accept the conventional way of life. The thought is contained in the questions asked by a man who surveys the stormy exterior forces of wind, snow and darkness. In watching his sleeping wife and child, he doubts man's greatest happiness can be achieved apart from his society:

> Those of us not asleep subdued to mark
> How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length,-
> How drifts are piled,
> Dooryard and road ungraded.
> Till even the comforting barn grows far away,
> And my own heart owns a doubt
> Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
> And save ourselves unaided. [27]

In "To The Thawing Wind", there occurs the same spirit of individualism and revolt. The revolt subsides dramatically, as Frost, in a wonderfully surprising twist, is forced to reject his wild demonstration against the natural order. After telling the southwest wind to awaken stagnant thoughts, to sweep aside the cold de-emotionalizing habit of custom, to awaken him from his intellectual trance; he concludes, with delight and sadness mixed:

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[27] Robert Frost, "Storm Fear", A Boy's Will

Burst into my narrow stall
Swing the picture on the wall;
Run the rattling pages o'er;
Scatter poems on the floor;
Turn the poet out of door.[28]

From the masterful, "Death of the Hired Man" comes another display of the Frostian concern with tradition and change. The habit-enslaved Silas is contemptuous of higher education, Latin and new ideas. He has a pride in his practical skill in the ancient art of building a hay load. That is the symbol of his worth in life. His tradition is thoroughly rooted in one rigid standard for evaluating his fellow man. Frost makes it clear, through Mary, who states the case for Silas:

I know! That's Silas' one accomplishment.
He bundles every forkful in its place,
And tags and numbers it for future reference.[29]

Yet, Silas has had his dreams. In unfolding the story of the dying farm hand, Silas, Warren and Mary, in their dialogue, reveal Warren's enslavement to tradition. Strangely enough, through the years, it is Silas who has had an idea for making changes on Warren's farm. Mary speaks for this side of Silas, the side of imagination, of a desire to do something progressive. He is going to "help you ditch that meadow. He has a plan." [30]

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[28] Robert Frost, "To The Thawing Wind", A Boy's Will

[29] Ibid.,"The Death of the Hired Man",North of Boston

[30] Ibidium.

There is humour in "The Code", but the humour is of the uneasy brand. It is as though the reader, realizing that the joke may be on him, dares not to laugh. The incident involves a town-bred farmer who flies in the face of tradition. The hired man, independent, proud and steeped in tradition, resents a suggestion that he take more pains and that he speeds up his labor. Realizing that the town-bred farmer is new to the game, the hired man takes it upon himself to cite an incident involving a more experienced farmer, who, through neglecting "the code", came to grief. In trying to streamline the working habits of his help, he incurred the disfavour of an elderly hired man. Upon taking a load of hay to the barn, the farmer endeavored to have his hired help "drive" a little harder in unloading the hay. The hired-man ensured that the farmer, Sanders, was literally buried under the hay.

The offending farmer was left to emerge from the hay without assistance. Later, the crew, curious to see whether or not Sanders was injured,(and somewhat fearful, as well) found him shelling peas for his wife as a token of humility and disgust with himself. He realized that he had broken the code and was imposing a penance to serve.

Frost, under the guise of humour, is driving home the

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[31] Robert Frost, "The Code", North of Boston

point that man, in "bucking" tradition is likely to be crushed by force and unreason. He must make himself acceptable to the society whose disfavour he is now in; he must accept, there and then, the rebuke and conform. The poem is not an indictment on rebellion and progress, as such, as much as it is the revelation that change, for the sake of change, is hazardous. In gratifying his urge to sever the tie with the old ways of doing things, the farmer intruded on the tradition which bolstered the ego of the hired man. The traditional approach of the New England hired man to his employer has been one of patronizing service. The hired man has occupied a unique place in the farmer's household by virtue of his lack of family, his skill in his craft and his pride in being able to work without direct supervision.

Frost is revealing what can happen when change threatens to remove an important prop in the human equation-self esteem. Nothing could be further from truth than to urge that this poet resents progress; in this case, he reports that a sense of responsibility demands that a person considers not the fulfillment of a wish for the wishes' sake, but also the direction and implications involved.

From the volume, Mountain Interval, Frost states the case for both tradition and liberalism; in so doing he transforms

the problem into a question of reconciling both in terms of the experiences of the mind and heart. The poem "Bond and Free" resolves tradition and liberalism with reference to Love and to Thought:

> Love has earth to which she clings
> With hills and circling arms about-
> Wall within wall to shut fear out.
> But Thought has need of no such thing,
> For Thought has a pair of dauntless wings.
>
> On snow and sand and turf, I see
> Where Love has left a printed trace
> While straining in the world's embrace.
> And such is Love and glad to be.
> But Thought has shaken his ankles free.
>
> Thought cleaves the interstellar gloom
> And sits in Sirius' disc all night,
> Till day makes him retrace his flight,
> With smell of burning on every plume
> Back past the sun to an earthly room.
>
> His gains in heaven are what they are.
> Yet some say Love by being thrall
> And simply staying possesses all.
> In several beauty that Thought fares far
> To find fused in another star. 32

Here is an interesting reversal of the usual poetic treatment of love and thought. Often the poets consider love to have wings and to soar on limitless planes, while the sobering qualities of thought fetter one to reality. Here, Frost uses love to hold man to the traditional respect for old things; while thought and reason

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32 Robert Frost, Bond and Free " from Mountain Interval

struggle to escape the shackles of the blind conventional satisfaction with the status quo. Yet, despite the fact that both are forces within the human world of experience and common to the individual, Frost sees in love of the material substance of the world the real light of man's life; while the darker spaces are those tenanted by thought. Still, the fact of the fancy accords thought a very real and necessary part of life, for, through the flight of thought, the fused star has a permanent value for man.

From the nine poem collection Quantula comes the short verse " A Semi-Revolution." In this poem, Frost, in a semi-humorous vein, gives vent to his concern with the economic and political upheavals of the late nineteen thirties. In the satire there is the universal truth emerging. Revolution for the sake of revolution is no panacea for the world's ills. In addition, there is a Brownian insight into the psychological factors in the equation. The result of the revolution is that the same class comes to the top. The implication is such that "class" may embrace the revolutionist in spirit or the leader of any group. Indirectly, it is an effective way of calling attention to the fact that revolution means more to the dominant individual in society than to the following masses.

One does not know whether or not Frost is condemning the leader as such. Such an extension of judgment might not be justified. However, he is giving excellent advice to the

radical, the reformer, the liberal or to whatever agency wishes to establish the new order:

> I advocate a semi-revolution.
> The trouble with a total revolution
> (Ask any reputable Rosicrucian)
> Is that it brings the same class to the top.
> Executive of skillful execution
> Will therefore plan to go halfway and stop.
> Yes, revolutions are the only salves,
> But they're one thing that should be done
> by halves. [33]

The inevitable question that must be answered by Frost and that must certainly be asked of him refers specifically to his idea of progress. There is no doubt but that he considers change not only essential but an integral part of the individual. The qualitative factor begs resolution. What is progress?

Hegel's theory of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is substantially the belief that one state leads to conflict with its opposite state and that both blend to form a whole; this whole is on a higher plane. Hegel's theory not only leads to the formation of a whole from an opposite reconciled with an opposite, but it is, in theory, a "spirally up evolution." Each new stage of life is superior physically, mentally and spiritually. Frost has a definite statement for Hegel's idea:

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[33] Robert Frost, "A Semi-Revolution", Quantula .

> Hegel saw two people marry and produce a third person. That was enough for Hegel- and Marx, too. it seems. They jumped to the conclusion that so all truth was born. Out of two truths in collision today sprang the one truth to live by tomorrow. A time succession was the fallacy. Marriage, reproduction and the family with a big F have much to answer for in misleading the analogists. Fire flashes from the flint and steel of metaphor and if caught in the lint it may spread, but there is no reason why it should spread to burn the world. That is monomania or monometaphor.[34a]

The crucial point in the quotation is that there is no proof for Frost that evolution leads to a higher order of things in the sense of a moral improvement. Frost is reluctant to let go of the things which give pleasure to man; he cannot see how the sensation of beauty experienced in the observable fact of nature is necessarily qualitatively and quantitatively improved over time.

The "Will Rogers" note in "A Serious Step Lightly Taken" parallels that of Thomas Hardy's "In Time of the Breaking of Nations."[34]The permanence of important things, things which renew life in each generation, are the moving themes in each poem. Hardy sees in the tilling of land and in the love whispers of the sweethearts the basic stuff of an adjustment of heredity and environment. Kingdoms fall, dynasties pass; but life goes on in the world of plant life, and man reproduces his kind.

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[34] The theme of both poems has a close parallel, but of course, there is a more sober and serious tinge to Hardy's deeper philosophy. Hardy had not the intimate sense of humour possessed by the American humourist-philosopher, Will Rogers. In many ways, Frost has that sense of humour lacking by Hardy.

[34a] R.P.T.Coffin, New Poetry of New England, Maryland,1938, Hubner, 307 pp- p.134.

Hardy sums this trend of thought by saying, in conclusion: "War's annals will fade into night,'ere their story die."[35] Because Hardy has the greater art of compression, the more dainty but incisive touch of implication, the wider education and the more profound philosophy of life-however unacceptable it may be to many- his poetry is more immediate and more impressive in effect. Frost, losing in immediacy, states much the same thought in more homely terms. What he loses in the more refined art, he gains in the dramatic effectiveness of the facts which support his ideas.

Frost's poem, stated in entirety, makes it obvious that the change and revolt from tradition is not that which man calls the joys of the mechanical and atomic age. The sensationalism of journalism, the bloody struggles of the past thirty years and the political machinations do not enter his field of speculation in planning the establishment of a new order of life:

" A Serious Step Lightly Taken"

Between two burrs on the map
Was a hollow-headed snake.
The burrs were hills, the snake was a stream,
And the hollow head was a lake.

And the dot in front of a name
Was what should be a town.
And there might be a house we could buy
For only a dollar down.

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35 Thomas Hardy,"In Time of Breaking of Nations."

With two wheels low in the ditch
We left our boiling car,
And knocked at the door of a house we found,
And there today we are.

It is turning three hundred years
On our cisatlantic shore
For family after family name.
We'll make it three hundred more

For our name farming here,
Aloof yet not aloof,
Enriching soil and increasing stock,
Repairing fence and roof;

A hundred thousand days
Of front-page paper events
A half a dozen major wars,
And forty-five presidents.[36]

The permanence of nature, of the home and of the family constitute for Frost, as for the New Englander- as well as for the world at large- the things in life that are truly worth while. His philosophy of tradition is especially emphasized in the third and fourth stanzas. The two wheels in the ditch and the boiling car serve a dual purpose; first, they describe an experience common to many motorists along the country roads of a New England state; second, the two wheels and the boiling car parallel the plight of man in a confused society. The tremendous surge of "isms", wars and scientific changes have left no man a haven toward which to turn. The last two lines of stanza

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[36] Robert Frost, "A Serious Step Lightly Taken", Over Back

three yield a clue as to the direction man must take to re-orient himself: " And knocked at the door of a house we found , and there today we are." The fourth stanza lightly, yet insistently, stresses the home as the place for anchorage: "For family after family name,We'll make it three hundred more."

But! Let no one think that Frost is content to rest in the nest of stagnating tradition; that is not his idea in the least:

> For our name farming here,
> Aloof yet not aloof,
> Enriching soil and increasing stock,
> Repairing fence and roof.

"Aloof" means the disdaining of the outward trappings of material comfort and the aimless surge of political conflict,on the one hand; "yet,not aloof" means interest in the charm, wonder and imaginative phenomena of this life, on the other hand. The world is the "enriching of soil, the increasing of stock, repairing fence and roof." In seeking satisfaction in this world clever man can make a new environment or change the one he has; Frost is content to do the latter. He is content to make over the basic ingredients he has inherited. When man's existing world involves a less complete satisfaction of his wants and ideals, he makes over the environment by altering it in particular directions.

Frost will not let his soil (capacity for viewing life emotionally, spiritually and intellectually) lose richness. He will increase his stock (he will seek the wide range of experience within the family); finally, he will repair fences and roofs- he will not succumb to decay and disintegration.

In summary, Frost sees change, liberalism, radicalism and progress as phases of and in society. Not only do the elements of tradition and reform stir in different individuals, but they are also integral and active parts of the same person. The traditional within the individual furnishes an anchorage by which he is able to avoid aimless confusion caused by the trifles man calls the wonderful progress of science. Frost will agree that science has its use in enriching the traditional values man can and must retain; home, family and love of nature.

Frost does not attain his reconciliation through the Hegelian idea of progress through conflict and the synthesis of opposites on a higher and future plane. For Frost, the important fact is the "here" and "now" of this world. In an important and unsatisfactory way,this places the Hegelian theory on a higher plane, if by "higher" one could be sure that Hegel meant evolution in a spiritual sense. Frost's reconciliation is through his insistence that man must constantly revolt against the old way

for the sake of the old. In the thirst for change, for reform and for liberalism, the qualities of love, emotion and fancy are evoked, invigorated and re-invested with the power to present, continuously, the old in a new light. The soil is enriched; the roof is repaired; and the stock of life is increased.

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THE ART AND PHILOSOPHY OF RECONCILIATION IN ROBERT FROST

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CHAPTER SIX

RECONCILIATION OF OBSERVATION AND IMPLICATION IN FROST

1. A Background For Discussion

How much of a poet's work is to be taken as a true account of what the poet has observed? How much is implication? How much extension is justified? No poet's work, in this modern era, has been the object of so much extension as that of Robert Frost. While Frost is certainly not of the stature of Chaucer and Shakespeare, he is much their equal in the area of being "true to life." While the geographical sweep of his nature scene is not as wide as that of Chaucer and Shakespeare, there is something about his delineation of incident and character that makes the reader and audience feel that Frost, like the two greater artists, is talking about something real. His characterizations are such as to remind the reader that such people, like Shakespeare's Hamlets, Macbeths and Edgars, exist in all ages. The reader is usually reminded of someone he knows intimately.

To understand Frost, one must consider Chaucer's qualities--particularly the ability to observe so accurately that man, today, can read in Chaucer the faithful account of the social history of the time. The tempo is life is quicker today; there is more complexity, but, basically, Chaucer's objective observation of his fellow man and his institutions are as valid today as in 1360.

Chaucer, Shakespeare and Frost imply a great deal. They are not soul-arid reproducers of the observed fact of nature

and human nature. They have a philosophy of life; the incident and the character are extended to represent universal truths. The implications written concurrently into the observations of Chaucer on the pilgrims to Canterbury are a source of wonder in themselves. So wide is the range of Shakespeare and Chaucer that they are seldom at the same point. Their very diversity leads to implication. This implication leads to an interpretation which gives animation to life.

It is not contended that these two poets are the sole poets who thrived on the observed and the implied. Browning, in his psychological insights, based his observations on the specific incident; Hardy used the sensitive approach to nature's nuances to reveal the disparity between man's avocations and his practices; and the creators of Beowulf used the brutal facts of Germanic tribal life for observation, and the ideal of the hero for implication- all have caused man to speculate on their poetry and to interpret it in terms of a way of life.

Walt Whitman, E.J.Pratt, the Canadian poet, and Robert Frost are pioneers in the new world artists who have been successful in grasping the fact for the anchor, and in dressing the fact with such imagination as to cause man to see the incident and character portrayed in terms of larger issues. This ability is not an inconsiderable gift. Whitman fastened on the

fact of diverse occupations in the classless American of the "eighteen sixties." In his accurate delineation of the individual and his vocation, Whitman tossed the implication so that his characterizations are implied in a whole interpretation of American democracy.

In his accurate portrayal of the intimate lives of the Jesuits and their charges, the Hurons, E.J.Pratt[1] painted an incredibly faithful account of the Indian of seventeenth century Canada and of northern New York. The daily habits, the dress, the ideas, the ideals and the detailed account of the total environment of the characters involved cannot but convince. On the bedrock of fact he wove an implication that takes the fact of the poem from the class of incident and places it in the realm of an interpretation of three creeds of life- that of the victorious Iroquois, that of the humbled Huron and that of the unconquerable spiritual faith of the martyred priests.

Frost has taken a small sector of terrain and a limited number of people for his observation. In a most faithful account of the farmer of New England, his homestead, his school, his habits and the revelation of the multitude of natural phenomena, Frost has done his work so well that he is taken as the epitome

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[1] E.J.Pratt, Brebeuf and His Brethren (1943)

of his small segment of the world. His treatment of nature is so sensitive that the odor of flowers, the tangy smell of the soil, the rustle of the leaves, the murmur of the brook, the sober shades of color, the sharp feel of stone on bare feet, the numbing cold of a wintry four o'clock morning, the bend of the ladder against the yield of a branch of an apple tree, the wet smack of earth from the shovels of men filling in a country grave, the sight of eyes filling with tears on the toil worn features of a farmer's wife, the sight of gray and decayed farm buildings, the rasp of a saw against the bone on a boy's hand, the proud unbending character of a hired man, all these and countless other details of man and nature are as plausible as they were to the poet on the moment of his realization of them.

These details are presented in such a way that the reader experiences something more than the recognition of things known and expectant to him. He has the experience of surprise.They mean something more than the incident itself. They are more than recognition. He thinks on them and passes judgment in terms of universal truth. They represent a philosophy of life.

To one person, the experience may mean that Frost is taking a flight into pure fancy-that he is using nature as an escape. To another, the accurate representation of an experience may mean that Frost has no faith in anything more than the material

appreciation of an observable and identifiable sense experience. As has been shown elsewhere, some see in his poetry a symbol of tradition; others see a refutation of the conservative nature; still others read into his poetry a life philosophy which reconciles all opposites in terms perfectly balanced in interpretations of good and evil.

In reviewing what has been written on the score of observation and implication by the critics and by Frost himself, the point of this thesis is that the two are inseparable elements of his philosophy as they are of his art.

2. What the Critics Say

Mark Van Doren, not quite sure of his assertion that Frost occupies a middle ground, hedged a bit and stated:

> What might have been meant is this. He, perhaps like any other poet who has received acclaim today, is something of a symbolist. He deals, that is to say, in indirection. The thing he seems to be talking about is never quite the thing he means to be talking about. He selects an object, an animal. a person, a life or whatever thing he likes and makes it a symbol of something larger or deeper than itself, so that as we read him we seem to see behind or through his subject matter, and derive a pleasure from so doing.[2]

The trouble with Mr. Van Doren's judgment is that there is too much " seems" and "perhaps." Nevertheless, the fact and its implication cause him uneasiness. Whether he makes the fact a symbol of something larger and deeper than itself,or whether he fastens on the fact and lets its implication be incidental is the crux of the question. When one reads Frost's poetry with careful attention to the fact, it is obvious that the thing he is talking about is that thing most accurately detailed. The extension is that it is not only that thing but more. When Eliot employs his symbols in "The Waste Land", there is considerable room for conjecture as to whether the thing he is talking about is that which he means to be talking about. Not so with Frost. Frost derives considerable pleasure from the incident itself; this incident is then appreciated on a level

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[2] Mark Van Doren, "The Permanence of Robert Frost", From The American Scholar , Vol.5, No. 2, issue of Spring, 1936, pp.190-198.

which extends to a consideration of the meaning of the experience with reference to life as a whole. This is not the same as making an incident or a fact the symbol of something else. It is a phase of reality to be enjoyed and appreciated as such; then, in addition, this appreciation leads one to a synthesis of the fact into the whole fabric of life.

Edward Garnett, by far the most perspicacious of the earliest Frostian reviewers, arrived at the secret of the fusion and the implication:

> The reader notes the feeling of the mountain's mighty bulk and hanging mass, its vast elbowing flanks, its watchful domination of the near fields and scattered farmsteads. This begins to grow on him till he, too, is possessed by the idea of exploring its high ravines, its fountains, springs and granite terraces. One of the surest tests of fine art is whether our imagination harks back to it, fascinated in after contemplation, or whether our interest is suddenly exhausted both in it and in the subject. [3]

The implication results from the sense impression given the reader of the observable fact; so strong is this appeal to the reader that he projects himself into the relationship (reader-object) and commences to speculate imaginatively on its meaning to him. When the individual is involved, the implication seizes him in its toils; thus he is carried on to make conclusions on the level of universal

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[3] Edward Garnett, from an article in The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 116, No. 2, issue of August, 1915, pp. 214-224.

judgments. Ezra Pound's review, a short one, was highly favorable to Frost. Much of the review consisted of attacks on the "pseudo-Masefields" with their stilted literary language. It is significant that in his review, he discusses not the nature of New England, not the New Englander, but the life of the New England people as portrayed by Frost. He writes:

> ..... He (Frost) has given their life honestly and seriously. He has never turned aside to make fun of it. He has taken their tragedy as tragedy, their stubborn ways as stubborn ways. I know more of farm life than I did before I had read his poems. That means I know more of "life." [4]

The last statement is significant for implication; the former statements for the item of observation. In the lines: "He has taken their tragedy as tragedy, their stubborn ways as stubborn ways", Pound avoids the error of Van Doren. The tragedy is the tragedy in the situation, not that symbolic of another. In the revelation to the reader of the fact of tragedy, the reader is possessed by the idea of engaging himself in the experience. By imagination, the reader is extended so that he makes the decision on a universal level. As in the example previously cited in "Out-Out", the observed fact is the loss of the boy's hand, his faith and his life. There is also observed the reaction of the adults to the situation. The reader substitutes himself in response to the appeal to his senses

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[4] Ezra Pound, article in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, Vol.5,No.3, issue of December, 1914, pp.127-130.

and in terms of his imaginative extension. He decides that the reaction of the onlookers to the boy's death was or was not horrible, callous and cruel. As a result of a comparison with his standards, his philosophy of life, he adopts an attitude of permanent duration toward the ethical character of the incident.

Caroline Walsh, in a lecture at the University of Minnesota, echoed the sentiments of the group who are so anxious to make Robert Frost more "human" than he is, when she attempted to "soft-pedal" his accurate description of the fact. In trying to convince the audience that Frost is a pure symbolist, she eulogized:

> Frost is never a descriptive poet. It is always with something intimately human or capable of being humanized, with something reaching deep into human experience that he is concerned. [5]

Certainly there is some truth there, but not enough. He is a descriptive poet- not solely descriptive, but impressively so. His exactness often approaches, as the cited poems have revealed, an almost painful preciseness.

His faithfulness of description shows an intense concern, interest and love for both nature and human nature. He does not tell the reader how to extend himself to make the implication:

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[5] Caroline Walsh, address on November 18, 1941 to the Daughters of the American Revolution at the University of Minnesota.

"If I wanted you to know in the poem, I should have told you."[6] It is significant to note that Frost did not say: " If I had wanted you to see, to hear, to smell and to taste, I should have permitted you." If the reader is to know, if he is to engage in meaning, the reader must engage himself with the experience on both a poetic and philosophical level. What does it mean to him in truth?

In a review of Frost's Mountain Interval, Sidney Cox devoted considerable attention to the Frostian artistry with the observed fact:

> Mr. Frost leans hard on facts, so hard, sometimes that they hurt. And it is because he has that belief after reading one of his poems the reader feels he has had an actual experience....The segments of life existed first as experiences... a territorial limitation is set because Mr. Frost believes that a poet must utter not what he conjectures but only what he knows.[7]

But then he goes on to say:

> Mountain Interval is sincere and uncompromising of of the fact. Passion and sentiment are restrained. Yet, each time I read this volume, and I have read it many times, it gives me new pleasure. Surely the greatness of this unique poet rests in his genius for ensuring that after the reader has felt at "oneness with nature", after he has had the same feeling of doubt as to the ultimate wisdom of life as ordered in New England, he is forced, as I am, to make a profession of or a denial of faith in God. So strong is the impression on the reader that he cannot ignore. He must decide whether he can feel the mysterious oneness of hearts. Mr. Frost, admitting that he cannot see the beginning or the end admits he has no compact message other than the event,but places his faith in God. It takes courage.[8]

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[6] Robert Frost, as reported by Jane Wilton, University of Vermont, April 18, 1939.

[7],[8] Sidney Cox, "Original Ordinary Man", in the New Republic, Vol.12,No. 147, Aug.25, 1917, pp.109 ff.

The point at issue here is not the religious profession of Frost but the conundrum of what he has observed and what its implications are for him. Cox was shocked by the hard fact of the death of the boy in "Out-Out". He was shocked by the fact of the actual accident which was so vividly presented that the reader feels a sickening numbness in the stomach. The fact of the living turning away from the dead was presented so brutally but honestly that the spiritual side of man is appalled and seized with revulsion.

So intensely is the reader involved and engaged that he must, "willy nilly" try to resolve the question on as high a plane as that of God's wisdom in ordering the events of the world. "Why" we ask, can God acquiesce in and give his consent to such tragedy? What is the real order of the world we live in? What do we mean to God? The reader cannot escape these extensions.

Louis Untermeyer, in a 1936 article on Frost, suggested:

> North of Boston, like its successor contains much of the finer poetry of our time. Rich in its actualities, richer in its spiritual values, every line moves with the double force of observation and implication. The very first poem in the book illustrates this power of character and symbolism. In "Mending Wall", Frost is not arguing for anything in particular; but, from a whimsical turn and pungency of expression, the reader obtains the experiences through his senses, then the latter senses more than enemies of walls. [9]

Untermeyer's review, like that of the previous review cited in this section, neglects

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[9] Louis Untermeyer, "Man and Poet", from Modern American Poetry, Harcourt, 1936, pp.189-219.

one important point. While Frost is deservedly notable for his powers of observation, his observation is that of a man who is in close communion with the subjects observed and who has used the phenomena he scrupulously depicts. This communion and this usage make the experience live for the reader as well as for the poet.

Alfred Kreymborg echoes in the same tenor:

> He has knowledge of his people, of all people and a thorough mastery of himself. So complete is his self-mastery that his poetry never preaches. He rarely tells a story; he lets it tell itself. He does not tell; he shows..[10]

He does, of course, tell; he tells beyond any possible misinterpretation on a factual level. After the development of the fact, the reader-fact involvement works itself out in philosophical synthesis.

Albert Feuillerat found in Masters and Sandburg two poets who painted a canvas unflattering to American life. They did so, stated Feuillerat, with the intention of:

> ...destroying that civilization which they think responsible for all present ills. Their verses are so many poisoned arrows aimed at the heart of a world which they detest. Mr. Frost, on the other hand, is, first of all, an artist, solely interested in reproducing what he sees, and, in so doing, it seems, merely for the joy of creation. He lets himself float on the sea of life and while he is in the power of its waves,be they calm or stormy, his mind burdens itself with observations and implications. [11]

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[10] Alfred Kreymborg,"Our Singing Strength", America in Verse , 1929,N.Y., Coward,Inc, 306 p., pp.213-227.

[11] Albert Feuillerat, from an article in Revue des deux mondes, Series 7, Vol.17, No. 1, issue of September,1, 1923, pp.185et seq.

It is Frost's intellectual self- effacement which permits the reader to feast on the fact-following which the reader involves himself in the experience and burdens his mind with the meaning extended to a wider and universal level.

In considering the help that the poet himself may give on the subject of the observed and the implied, the reader must be warned that Frost is in the category of such poets as De La Mere, Hopkins, Keats, Blake, Chaucer and Shakespeare. For divers reasons they seldom saw fit to elaborate their poetic theories. In the cases of Blake and Hopkins, it is doubtful that they could yield a theory comprehensible to the reader. Shakespeare, the dramatist, had neither the time nor the interest. Hardy and Frost leave no monumental works to explain in prose what they have created with verse. Hardy, so sensitive to criticisms on the interpretations placed on his novels that he ceased to write fiction, withdrew to the world of the poem, in which he withdrew to a philosophy of negation. Frost has not withdrawn, but, at the same time, his refusal to enter the lists of theoretical poetic propaganda, aimed at slanting the public bias to his view and his insistence on the reader's role in the poetic venture set him apart from the role of one who would, formally, be a leader of any particular school of poetry and criticism.

3. Frost on Observation and Implication

Frost does not wish to be considered the nature poet of New England. He does not wish to be considered a symbolist-one who uses the fact as the representation of something entirely different from what it appears to be. He is not willing to make the poetic experience any more difficult than the fact of nature and the fact of life may be. In short, he, in effect, says:" I have seen this, can you see it? This tree appears to me, at this time of the year, in this place and under these conditions to strike my senses in the following ways. In considering this tree on this and on other occasions, I cannot escape the feeling and thought of abstract ideas related to a philosophy of life. What about you?"

In this way, the reader may be delighted with the fact itself and enjoy the poetic experience on a purely sensory level. According to the past experiences and the imaginative and cognitive ranges of the reader, there may be dramatic after-effects of the observation which carry on to higher levels of experience.

It is realized that this is an over-simplification. The reader does not devote himself entirely to the study of a running brook so that he experiences, perceptually, a phase of life sealed off from mental and emotional levels. The fact

is not followed by the implication in a one-two succession.

Concurrent with the stern representation of the observation there is a dramatic texture to the poetry which invites the reader, to the extent of his ability to respond, to look at the incident so intimately as to involve himself in a consideration of his own values. For example, were a steeple-jack to read "Birches" he would appreciate the poem from the fact of climbing with the exact recall of the sensation experienced in the bending and swaying of the branches, in the exhilaration of heights and in the need for caution.

In addition and in extension, he would appreciate, favorably or negatively, Frost's insistence that man's need for a sense of security demands a resting place on the more solid and enduring earth. If the nature of the steeple-jack is such that his adoption of his hazardous enterprise results from a desire to tear himself from the hum-drum activity of man on earth, and if his is a wild and turbulent soul which seeks comfort on the more stormy heights, he will be reluctant to come down- he will resent Frost's refuge in the "fact" of earth.

Early in 1925, Frost, in a talk of the poetic art of Amy Lowell, made a critical point on the saliency of the concrete observation of things done in nature and by man:

> The most important and exciting movement in nature is not progress, but expansion and contraction, the opening and shutting of the eye, the hand, the heart and the mind. We throw our arms wide with a gesture of religion to the universe; we close them around a person. We explore and adventure for a while, and then we draw in to consolidate our gains.[12]

Expansion, contraction, opening and shutting are concrete, real and material. The person is a creature of flesh and blood; he does not exist in the imagination alone- he is corporeal; he is substantial. The same may be observed of the fact of nature. The apple tree exists and satisfies man's perceptual apprehensions. When one throws himself on the universe, he wishes to receive an answer to its meaning. To Frost, this answer suggests itself in tangible form. The form presents itself in such a way as to answer the question of"what"; the implication comes in terms of opposites which force the reader to question "why".

The adventure and exploration open the senses to the concrete representation of life; the fact observed and gained in experience is categorized, now"here"and now"there", to complete some unanswered query. It is by the observation that man is able to get the material to make life intelligible,at least to himself.

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[12] Robert Frost, from his commemorative comment on the "Poetry of Amy Lowell", in the Christian Science Monitor,issue of May 16, 1925, (no vol) (no number).

In his dramatic verse, by which character is illumined, Frost still insists on the accuracy of observation. The reader must be satisfied that the characters are speaking according to their true natures:

> I have three characters speaking in one poem, and I was not satisfied with what they said until I got them to speak so true to their characters that no mistake could be made as to who was speaking. I would never put the names of the speakers in front of what they said.[13]

The dramatic art and texture of the whole poem are reconciled to give a dual but concurrent picture of life. With Frost, the dramatic incident is satisfactory in itself as the revelation of a facet of life; at the same time, the reader interprets this experience with reference to his own past memories of experiences alike or entirely dissimilar. Attitudes are aroused and the incident becomes reconciled on a universal level as to whether it was right or wrong, enjoyable or painful and desirable or undesirable.

That poetry must range on both levels, the observed and implied, is asserted by Frost. In a confession of his own inadequacy, he admits, that important as the concrete fact may be, a final unity through extension is difficult but mandatory and rewarding:

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[13] Robert Frost: from shorthand notes by Ellery Fain, August 22, 1950 evening lecture at Bread Loaf summer school.

> Greatest of all attempts to say one thing in terms of another is the philosophical attempt to say matter in terms of spirit, or spirit in terms of matter, to make the final unity. That is the greatest attempt that ever failed. We stop just short there. But it is the heighth of all poetry, the heighth of all thinking.[14]

Frost has himself answered the reconciliation of the two. If his spirit is that of this world and not sufficiently that of the next world, he is that less in stature. But in his attempt to answer the riddles of the whole in the observation of the part, and to interpret the whole by the part, he is making the great adventure. Insofar as he must approach closer to truth than those of less courage, he must be rewarded with the glimpse of its spirit denied to many others.

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[14] Robert Frost, lecture delivered on June 5, 1937 at the commencement exercise program at Center College, Kentucky. Reported by Leslie Avery in a stenographic report of notes.

4. Reconciliation of Observation and Implication From Frost's Poetry

The unique blend of fact and extension in the poem "Blueberries", a metaphorical revelry extended from precise information, show a family as seen through the eyes of the neighbors. The mixture of humour, the taste and smell of blueberries, the detail of rural customs, the difficulty a large family has in satisfying hunger and the forms of deception practiced by man on man are each and all observed with a scientific meticulousness.

"Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb", "real sky blue", "the flavor of soot", "the ebony skin", "the blue's but a mist from the breath of the wind"[15] are phrases which reveal his familiarity with the blueberry. The setting for the poem "Blueberries" is most concrete in nature:

> Why, there hasn't been time for the bushes to grow.
> That's always the way with blueberries, though:
> There may not have been the ghost of a sign
> Of them anywhere under the shade of the pine,
> But get the pine out of the way, you may burn
> The pasture all over until not a fern
> Of grass blade is left, not to mention a stick,
> And, presto, they're all around you as thick
> And hard to explain as a conjuror's trick.[16]

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15 Robert Frost, "Blueberries" from North of Boston

16. Ibid.

George Munson, on reading the poem, exclaimed: "I have never seen a blueberry, nor do I know any place where they grow, but I am sure I know where to look now and how to recognize one."[17]

The American artist, Chichester, wrote:

> The lines of "Blueberries" remind me of the instant reappearance of the bugs my wife and I tried so hard to keep from our garden. My wife claims these lines remind her of my hair which forever seems to need trimming."[18]

The acute observation stamps an imprint on the psychological field of the individual-which field leads to implications of a broader nature.

In the conversation of the two men engaged in the direct dialogue of the poem "Blueberries", the human equations appear, concretely laid. During the early part of the conversation, it is noted that the genial and easy-going owner of the patch, Patterson, doesn't mind people trespassing his property in order to take the berries:

> Does Patterson know what he has, do you really think?
> He may and not care and so leave the chewink
> To gather them for him- you know what he is.
> He won't make the fact that they're rightfully his
> An excuse for keeping other people out.[19]

This is the real fact- but the implications? Is Patterson sloppy in the care of his

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[17] George Munson, "Frost and Sandburg" as quoted from an address on July 17, 1935 at the Kansas City, Kansas Municipal Auditorium.

[18] Wilder Chichester, "Thoughts on Frost", article in the "Chronicler" of Putney, Vermont, issue of August 23,1936.

[19] Robert Frost, op. citere, p.327

property; that is, is there a rebuke in " you know what he is" and in "He may and not care", or is he the most generous and kindly of people who offer what they have for those who want and need?

The name of Loren, a farmer with a large brood of children, arises from the conversation. Again the fact goes further and lifts the question of virtue as well as vice. When the first farmer, with a tightening of his lips drawls: "He's a thriftier person than some I could name", the reader gets the decided picture of a person who is "tight with his money and his possessions." The second farmer, naturally and in conversational tone, responds:

> He seems to be thrifty ; and hasn't he need,
> With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed?
> He has brought them up on wild berries they say,
> Like birds. They store a great many away.
> They eat them the year round, and those they don't eat
> They sell in the store and buy shoes for their feet.[20]

Here is the concrete statement of the way the Lorens are able to survive and how essential the blueberries are to them. It places the thrift of Loren in a new light-thrift that results from the honest attempt to provide for those in need becomes a virtue and not a vice. The implication runs along various routes: the reader who is conscious of vitamins immediately speculates on the poor diet; the sociologist reflects on family unity with respect to social and financial stratum; and the business man ponders the problem of Loren's deficiency in skill and his lack

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[20] Robert Frost, "Blueberries", op. citere.

of more remunerative employment- and so on through the various types of reader.

For all the fact of blueberries, their crucial place in the family economy and the thrift of Loren are the important observations. Yet the varied interpretations that are placed on these facts arise from the certainty that man will take "sides" on any question and nearly always his own side. The neighbors have seen Loren and his family driving along, with Loren bowing politely to them. His youngsters are well trained, also, "Not one of them turned.", "and they looked so solemn-absurdly concerned."

The Frostian maneuver of surprise within expectancy, the art of great poets, is again manifest. The reader has not expected too much from a poor family with many children, a family whose survival depends on the blueberry. Yet the degree of civility and the manners of the children put Loren in a favorable and unexpected light.

Then another side of Loren is presented. Knowing Loren quite well, one of the farmers, tongue in cheek, asks Loren if he knows where blueberries may be found for picking. Loren, struck with terror at the thought that his livelihood might to some extent be threatened by the forays of other pickers, dissimulates:

> I almost provoked poor Loren to mirth
> By going to him of all people on earth
> To ask if he knew of any fruit to be had
> For the picking. The rascal, he said he'd be glad
> To tell if he knew. But the year had been bad.

> There had been some berries-but those were all gone.
> He didn't say where they had been. He went on:
> I'm sure- I'm sure- as polite as could be.
> He spoke to his wife in the door, 'Let me see,
> Mamie, we don't know any good burying place?
> It was all he could do to keep a straight face.[21]

Now, the reader has the concrete data before him: he can readily translate this into a general law- for he knows of experiences like that. Robert Frost recounts:

> One bright young thing came up to me at Ann Arbor last year, broke into one of my reveries and said,"Oh! Mr. Frost, what Loren said reminded me of a bicycle repair shop man. My tire went flat and I wanted to borrow his pump. He said it wasn't working. I found out afterwards that it was working. He was annoyed because I hadn't bought my bicycle from him.' I found out that although she lived but one block from him she didn't buy from him because he was colored. I realized then that she didn't pay enough attention to the farmers who were telling the story. Although she came to visit me, she never looked me over carefully or she would have taken sides against me.[22]

The implication is subtle. While the reader knows many people like Loren, he doesn't examine himself. A few centuries ago the Lorens would probably have preserved the patch for themselves by force. In the struggle for existence, man has come to depend more on the use of the intellect. Which is the more virtuous, possession by force or dissimulation through intellect?

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21 Robert Frost, "Blueberries", op. citere.

22. Robert Frost, lectures from his notes at Bread Loaf School (New Hampshire) on August 11, 1951. Notes recorded by (Mrs) Eileen Winters.

Centuries ago the farmers did what they did in the "Blueberry Incident". They heartlessly teased and tormented the Lorens in a most vital area- that of self-preservation. The second farmer plotted:

> If he thinks that all that fruit which grows wild
> is for him,
> He'll find he's mistaken. See here, for a whim,
> We'll pick in the Patterson's pasture this year.
> We'll go in the morning, that is, if it is clear.[23]

Veritably, an indictment by observation and implication.

"Wild Grapes" is the revelation of an experience and its meaning to a young girl, a farm girl. She is looking back over the years to an incident which made an indelible impression. The adventure commenced when her brother led her to a glade where stood a white birch tree with wild grapes on vines encircling and spirally up to some appreciable heighth:

> A white birch he knew of stood alone
> Wearing a thin head-dress of pointed leaves,
> And heavy on her heavy hair behind,
> Against her neck an ornament of grapes. [24]

Her brother climbed the tree and pushed the top down low enough for her to eat grapes; wishing to eat some for himself, he asked her to hold down the tree top:

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[23] Robert Frost, "Blueberries"

[24] Robert Frost,"Wild Grapes" from New Hampshire

He climbed still higher and bent the tree to earth
And put it in my hands to pick my own grapes.
"Here, take a tree top,I'll get down another.
Hold on with all your might when I let go.' I said
I had the tree. It wasn't true.
The opposite was true; the tree had me.[25]

The sequence of conversation and events is so logical and true to life that the reader must stop to say " I remember back to such and such a time and place when that happened to me or to someone I know." Of course, it is not likely that the same experience fell to his lot, but an experience involving the grasping of something more than one can hold occurs to the reader.

The next instant, she, terrified, was dangling aloft in the air. Her brother, wishing to calm the terror-stricken girl, made a joke to relax the tension:

My brother tried to make me laugh to help me.
'What are you doing up there in those grapes?
Don't be afraid. A few of them won't hurt you.
I mean they won't pick you if you don't them.[26]

What a wonderful way of warning her not to let go!

The girl returns to a direct account of her personal experience:

One by one I lost off my hat and shoes,
And still I clung. I let my head fall back,
And shut my eyes against the sun, my ears
Against my brother's nonsense; 'Drop', he said,
'I'll catch you in my arms. It isn't far.' [27]

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[25] Robert Frost, "Wild Grapes"

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

The sage and laconic advice of the relieved brother appears and sound congruous to life situations. It is the same advice that might be given by an affectionate parent, a friend and a teacher:

> My brother said:'Don't you weigh anything?
> Try to weigh something next time, so you won't
> Be run off by birch trees into space.[28]

If Frost had stopped at this point, the implication would have been sufficient. But, in a weak moment, he yielded to the school-teacher in him and drove home his own philosophy. He gives no specific answer to any specific problem; he still insists that the reader draw his own conclusions. Yet, there is no doubt but that he didn't, in this case, trust the reader's extension sufficiently:

> It wasn't my not weighing anything
> So much as my not knowing anything-
> My brother had been nearer right before.
> I had not taken the first step in knowledge;
> I had not learned to let go with the hands,
> As still I have not learned to with the heart.
> I may yet live as I know others live,
> To wish in vain to let go with the mind-
> Of cares at night, to sleep; but nothing tells me
> That I need learn to let go with the heart.[29]

He felt that he had over-done the fact and the observation, so he reminds the reader that courage, faith and love must predominate. There are those poems whose messages move us deeply for a time. Wordsworth's

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[28] Robert Frost, "Wild Grapes"

[29] Ibid.

"Tintern Abbey" is such a poem. Yet, there is an attitude about the scene which does not convince. There is the stirring of the germ of an idea that the Abbey is purely a mental state, symbolic of something that does not exist. But in such poems as "Wild Grapes" the observation is grounded , Gibraltar-like- in the unchangeable enduring truth.

The longest dramatic poem by Frost, "Snow" from Mountain Interval combines the clearly and cleanly chiseled observation with a Browning-like subtlety of psychological analysis.

The story centers about a modest farmhouse living room on a bitterly cold and blizzard-like night. Brother Meserve, a self-confessed lay minister- and two women, Meserve's wife and farmer Cole's wife are the principal characters in the episode.

On his return from an evangelical prayer meeting on this cruel winter night, Meserve, who had left his wife and children at home, stopped at Cole's house before resuming the last three miles of his trip.

The indomitable will of Meserve, as well as his egoistic nature, are revealed when he telephones his wife to tell her that he will complete his trip-even though she, like Mrs. Cole, believes he would be wiser to remain overnight with the Coles.

Although Mrs Cole detests Meserve, she, out of consideration for his wife, thinks that Meserve is wrong to leave for the final three mile trip:

> I detest the thought of him
> With his ten children under ten years old.
> I hate his wretched little Racker Sect
> All's I ever heard of it which isn't much.
> .....
> He says he left the village store at night.
> Three hours to do four miles- a mile an hour
> And three more miles to go.
> What is he doing out on a night like this?
> Why can't he stay at home?[30]

Frost who will not stifle truth, even though he disapproves of Meserve, must present Meserve's good side as well as his bad. He uses Cole to support Meserve: "He had to preach"; "He may be small; he may even be good." "One thing is sure, he's tough; he'll pull through." [31]

Mrs Cole, thwarted by logic, still persists: "He's full and strong of stale tobacco." "You don't know his kind, dear." "He's getting up a miracle this minute." [32]

The conversation goes on with Mrs Cole waxing more wrathful and her husband teasing her quietly;but the humanity in each of them protests against Meserve facing the storm.

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[30] Robert Frost, "Snow" from Mountain Interval

[31] Ibidium.

[32] Ibidium.

To Mrs Cole, Meserve is a pious scalawag who sees in his braving the elements a false devotion to duty and to religion. She resents his callousness toward his wife, for, in the name of braggadocio, he will risk the security of his wife and children by emperilling his own safety. Cole, somewhat abashed by her embarrassing protectiveness, feels that his manhood is slighted. Therefore he defends Meserve's right to do as he pleases.

Despite Mrs Cole's final plea, Meserve, with platitudes about his own bravery in the face of danger, strides heroically into the storm. Nearly two hours later, Mrs Meserve rang in anxiety about her husband. Tremendous tension is built by the poet who lingers on the difficulty of turning the handle on the old fashioned farm telephone and on the number of receivers down to listen to the conversation- even at three o'clock in the morning.

In the telephone conversation, Mrs Meserve chided Cole for permitting her husband to leave. After Cole heard her say,"Oh, you, why did you let him go", it appeared to him that she had let the receiver drop. The tension mounts as Frost speculates on what must have happened:

> "I hear an empty room-
> You know, it sounds that way. And yes, I hear-
> I think I hear a clock- and windows rattling.
> No step, though. If she's there, she's sitting down.[33]

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33 Robert Frost, "Snow"

Both took a turn at listening over the phone; Mrs Cole thought she heard a child crying. Finally both sat fast with hopeless resignation to await the coming morning. The chirp of the phone started them up. Meserve announced his safe return and informed them that his wife had gone to the barn to let him in, dropping the receiver as she went.

Woman-like, the tension over, Mrs Cole,who had worried so much about Meserve's departure, exclaimed petulantly:

> Well, she has him then, though what she wants
> Him for I don't see.....
> The whole to do seems to have been for nothing.
> What spoiled our night was to him just his fun.
> If he thinks he is going to make our house
> A half way coffee house 'twixt town and nowhere...[34]

Cole quiets his excited wife and both observes and implies when he soothes her ruffled feelings:

> If you mean he was inconsiderate
> To rout us out to think for him at midnight
> And then take our advice no more than nothing
> Why, I agree with you. But let's forgive him.
> We've had a share in one night of his life.
> What'll you bet he ever calls again?[35]

In those last two lines, Frost reconciles that which has actually passed in the implication that attitudes of man to fact and man to man are a share of life. In the poem the characters of four people have been

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[34] Robert Frost, op. citere, p.337

[35] Ibidium.

accurately portrayed through their behavior under stress in a certain situation. Courage, pettiness, pride and hypocrisy take their place in the revelation of how four people react to a strain on and a test of character.

Frost is able to rely on the senses to bring about a response. First, the reader responds to the concrete picture, be it a house, an auction, snow, Meserve or a burial. He has language congruous to the fact so that he gives the exact timbre of sound and the precise shade of colour. He is giving the plain simple meaning, but by an inflection of the tonal qualities of the poem he invokes surprise, delight and excitement. These work on and through the imagination so that the observation is quickened to invite implicative meanings in the experience. The observation is not a uni-faceted photograph; it presents the phase of experience in different angles so that the reader is impelled to make a deduction which involves him on a more intellectual and abstract level. The observation is multi-threaded.

This reconciliation meets the test of great literature, for the words have an exact reference; the broader implication is determined by the whole context, a consideration of which is demanded by the presentation of the fact from more than one point of vantage. The art by which he invests the bare fact

with an emotional tone has been discussed in the first section. This dramatic texture, combined with an observation not remote in description, as well as rich with implications springing from and not remote from the fact, yields a decision on life- made by the reader.

In "Snow", the decision on Meserve depends on several things: first, the reader's frame of reference; second, it depends on his sex; third, it calls into play his philosophy of life. The same observations are available for each reader. He is responsible for what he does with them. The dramatic emphasis in form is present. The elements of expectancy and surprise are ever at hand. The stimulating observation is integrated with the necessity to extend the observation into the greater meaning in terms of a whole way of life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REONCILIATION OF NATURE AND MAN IN ROBERT FROST

1. Derivation of the Frostian View of Nature

This chapter considers Frost's views on nature, the natural environment and man's relation to it. In addition, this introduction yields, clearly, the position of the major schools on nature. Critics have vaguely likened Frost to this school or to that without making the reference precise. At no point does there seem to be agreement, and at no point do Frost's critics define his use of nature in terms of any specific and accurate representation of a major school on nature. In addition to focusing on the major thought of nature, the intuitive approach of Frost to nature will be made precise. Thus, this intuitive approach will have been derived from the writer, from major critics on nature and from Frostian critics. The varied stand of the Frostian appraisors will be surveyed in view of the synthesized approach.

Whereas Frost sees in nature the hand of a greater power, there are major poets who see nature as the revelation of the greater power. For them, nature, as nature, is not an ultimate in values. The Old Testament records this position: "The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."[1] The Mystic Blake, the Jesuit Hopkins and Alice Meynell belong here.

Then nature is considered a set of instructions and laws for man's conduct and guidance in a temporal and material world:

[1] Old Testament, "Book of Psalms", 19: i

> ..... well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.[2]

concludes Wordsworth. [2] He is affirming that man must attune himself spiritually to the direction of nature-and to honour her messages, in all things, is his duty.

There is also the poet who sees in nature the reflections of his own moods; when he is stormy and turbulent, nature is seen in this image of wildness; in his moments of calm and serene delight, nature responds in like manner. The nature scenes serve as outlooks and outlets for this supreme egoist. Such poets flee conflicts with men to find a relief in reanimating nature in their own image:

> There is a pleasure in the pathless woods;
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore;
> There is society, where none intrudes,
> By the deep sea, and music in its roar;
> I love not man the less, but Nature more.[3]

There is, as well, the poet who sees beauty in nature for what it is, a part of the experiencing world of man. He reads no mandates from a world outside but is content to enjoy

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[2] William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll. 104ff.

[3] Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, from Canto IV, ll. 1594-1598.

her beauty. Such poets-Frost is not one of these- tend to romanticize nature for herself and to see none of the disturbing forms of her violence. It is difficult to find a poet of first rate status in this group. Frost refutes the tenets of this group and holds that man is seeking after meaning. He is seldom content to observe unless that observation will lead to conclusion. Frost holds that beauty for the sake of beauty results in an effusion and effeteness which repels rather than attracts.

Frost holds no brief for the poet who enthrones nature as a being, a vision as inaccessible as Christianity's Supreme Being. Thus Frost would refute Shelley who substituted the abstract beauty of nature for God. Frost will not hold that nature is aloof, mysterious, immortal, invisible and all-pervasive.

Apart from a fierce and devoted love for the intimacies of physical beauty,shared by Hardy, Spenser and Masefield, Frost is not like Keats, another type of nature poet. Frost does not adopt Keats love for a purely passive contemplation of beauty-passiveness tends to characterize Keats. Frost,like Keats,does have a love for life , but, unlike Keats, Frost does not regret each passing moment. Thus, critics, who have seen so much of Keats in Frost have underestimated Keats' love for mortal nature. They have overestimated Frost's desire for life. To understand Keats fully one must realize that the early bite of death[4], the blooming and the decay of nature,in its annual course,gave him,

[4] Some medical authorities hold, particularly those physicians in the neuro- psychological field,that a few diseases, (mainly tuberculosis), cause an intense preoccupation with, as well as a desire for, material beauty in nature.

alternately ,pleasure and sadness.

Nature, again, is represented as a foil to the greater glory of man. The Neo-Classicists, the anthropocentrists, attempted to place nature in the same neatly landscaped pattern of man's order. The appeal to the sensuous, to the intuitive and to the imaginative was stunted- Pope, Dryden and Swift belonged to that school of thought.

Browning and Hardy represented two opposite approaches to the significance of nature: Browning, the optimist, persisted in seeing good in nature, even in her ugly forms; Hardy, convinced that nature and mankind exert such unpredictable and uncontrollable pressure against the individual, approached man from a fatalistic standpoint. Nothing the individual can do and plan will ensure him success- the long hand of coincidence reached out to thwart man's calculations. Not expecting more from nature, Hardy prepared to love nature for the feeling and beauty it gave him. He knew the natural scene intimately. Like Frost, he knew the fact of nature and he loved the fact of beauty passionately,but this love is grounded in truth. The only reality Hardy accepted is that of the sensuous quality of the physical experience. Concentrating on this, he was able to reproduce the observation with microscopic exactness. Fact of nature or fact of beauty, implication reconciles

in each form; but Hardy persists in revealing the beauty. Then he insists that beauty means nothing more hopeful than pleasure for the experienced moment.

Nature often has attracted the attention of the poet who tries to resolve his spiritual doubts and difficulties in her. Arnold, to a considerable extent, and Tennyson, to a lesser, are two such representatives of this school. In "Dover Beach", Matthew Arnold sees in the receding waters of the channel the ebb of human faith. In his pastoral elegy, "Thyrsis", Arnold calls on the natural haunts of his friend Clough to be the living shrine for him. Nature becomes the symbol of man's doubt, confession and failure.

There has been a tendency, since the First World War, to use natural phenomena as complex symbols for human values in a historical sense. T.S.Eliot employs such terms as "yellow fog", "April as the cruellest month", "hyacinths", the legends and symbols from Frazer's Golden Bough, the fetid odor of low-lying swamp land as well as other kindred grotesque manifestations of nature to create and to communicate an impression on a psychological plane. W.H.Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis NcNeice and Roy Campbell are more prominent leaders in the field of psychological and historic symbolism. In one degree or another, poets love nature for itself.

They use her for an interpretation of the supernatural; they employ her forms for solving complex mental states.Frost never embarks on this; however, he will use her to evoke a complex mental state- there is a profound difference. They see her as a sympathetic repository of man's moods, while Frost sees her as a source for evoking moods. Frost will agree with them that nature is a real part of man's experienced world and a manifestation of life which calls for a reassessment in terms of a whole philosophy of living.

Frost,then, is like some of the schools of nature on the points heretofore cited. It is , obviously, erroneous to state that he is like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Eliot or any particular school of nature unless one defines the exact point of similarity. This, his critics have not done.

Frost holds, in summary, that man desires to know. In enjoying nature, he inquires into her role. She, by common experience with the poet, stimulates him to extend the physical fact to natural, social and philosophical levels. Nature does not, herself, reveal these. Instead, the reaction of the poet and nature is such as to lead man to analogy. As well, Frost abhors the thought that nature's chief role is to fill an "aesthetic need", or, on the other hand, to have the chief role as the source of material requisite to preserve man in life.

All in all, poets consider nature as the confidante, the source for escape,the wonder of God, the threat to man, the supreme value and the source for all material analogies.

Seldom does the poet make a complete reconciliation of all of these viewpoints. While Chaucer, Shakespeare and Spenser were able to approach this mastery of synthesis occasionally, they had their failures. Frost is not of their calibre, not nearly. Yet, even while taking cognizance of his limited sphere- compared with theirs- he is often able to postulate and to imply a satisfactory working arrangement with man and nature.

The subjective element in the artist frequently, and, undoubtedly, happily, "militates" against the achievement of a unity with nature in the widest view. The most comprehensive view of man and his environment appears to have been achieved by the artist with the more objective frame of reference. Shakespeare, writing for his public under the sense of urgency to provide that which met the approval of the public and the satisfaction of his needs, had the happy faculty of letting man interpret nature and letting nature interpret man- both with sufficient verisimilitude and imagination.

Frost, like Chaucer, is characterized by a catholic interest in nature and man. Chaucer was often successful in reconciling both. The spirit of nature fuses with the rebirth of the spirit in man so that spring in nature and springtime in man exist in inseparable union. Both Shakespeare and Chaucer commence and end in this universal truth!

Nevertheless, even the poets who have been able to attain synthesis have had to stop far short of adequate treatment on the sphere of the supra-physical. The attempt to convince the reader of the power of God in nature is not unsuccessful, but the attempt to render God in specific terms of beneficence and malevolence has collapsed. The poet Hopkins,[5] who may be considered to have attained a glimpse of the supra-natural through his treatment with nature, has not been able to render his observations concrete enough to communicate the truth perceived.

Where does Frost stand? He stands with Hardy, Housman[6] and Pratt[7] in several important respects. The first limitation is that they rely on a certain geographical area for the presentation of their observations on nature. Pratt relies on a selected Canadian landscape; Hardy derives his pictures of nature from the Wessex area of England , and Housman settled on the areas of Wales and Shropshire. The second limitation is that these four adopted certain frames of reference to which they

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[5] Father Manly Hopkins,English poet and Priest (1844-1889)

[6] A.E.Housman, (1859-1936) "The Shropshire Lad"

[7] E.J.Pratt, Professor of English, Victoria College, University of Toronto. Within poetry in which the treatment of ocean and stream plays a large role, Professor Pratt has achieved a wide versatility of event.

remained faithful: Hardy denied that man and nature worked to a definite end-Frost ignores. Housman declared outright that neither man nor nature was true- Frost implies some of this. Pratt, like Frost, both admires and distrusts nature, for he is strongly inclined to judge nature as a testing and jousting trial for mankind. Frost will concur generally but will not labour, as will Pratt, the trial point.

These four have the seldom paralleled ability to reproduce nature so accurately and so faithfully that the facts of observation intrude themselves permanently on the consciousness of the reader. Apart from the texture of their poems by means of which the experience is perceived, imagined and cognitively digested, their ability to convince rivals and often surpasses the art of Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare. The careful reader cannot but say to himself "Well, at least, this much I am sure of."

This genius has its limitations-grounded on the material fabric of nature as it is. Man is content, unfortunately, to interpret his implications on that level. When one, for example, points out the inevitability of the inadequate development of branches which face from the north side of a tree, any implications man may make from that physical fact are material. For illustration, the analogy would extend to a material parallel. In the previous case cited, the analogy would extend to contemplation of a stunted individual who cannot protect himself against the ravages of nature or the aggressiveness of many of his fellow men.

It is useful to have such analogies. At least,man may take his lesson from the natural phenomena insofar as his physical and psychological well-being are concerned. Unfortunately, the metaphor breaks down and the extension is not reached whereby man is shown that lack of faith and belief in God's spiritual world leave man as bare as the exposed north side of the tree.

The inescapable fact is that man is more troubled by his purpose in the order of things and by the mystery of life than by the phenomena he can observe. The pleasure that he can obtain from seeing the many combinations of natural facts and the implications of them compared with human experience are indeed precious in enabling man to estimate his position in what he calls the "real order of things."

But! Man, as long as he has that within him which desires to know what part he plays in the scheme of all experience, is not content that his life, like the rose that blooms in June and fades in the same breath, is soon to go and that he, as an individual, ceases to exist. Is there more than this, he asks? Hardy, Housman, Pratt and Frost convince only too well that there are many parallels between the life perceived in nature and the life of man; but they cannot answer the supra-physical question with the same heart that they advance toward the material query. Therefore, their end result approaches pessimism

Hardy's theme is " what you see, there is. Think not that God has any interest, miserable man, in you-resolve yourself to the fate of birth and decay." Housman, after depicting nature harshly would say, in effect,"reader, this is a world of cruelty; nature parallels man in her unkindness." Pratt, like Hardy, sees nature as indifferent. Whatever hope there may be depends on man's one superiority over the natural world- the conscious ability to struggle in face of hopeless odds. This implies a militant acceptance.

Robert Frost excels these poets in his biological-like ability to see nature, in her most gross and in her most minute manifestations,from a more intimate range. Instead of picking up the bit of matter and describing it from the face towards him, he turns it this way and that way and renders it to the reader from a multi-angled approach.

Peculiarly enough, this makes him more of a pessimist than his colleagues. While Frost can see the many implications in nature and transfer them to the actions of his fellow man, he does not make the conclusion. It is difficult for his readers. From the sheer accuracy of the senses comes that which confuses man. For example, in discussing the blasted-north-side of an exposed tree, Frost will pass onto the quality of stamina . He will dwell on this quality which is passed on through the seeds to the future seedlings. The individual is then in doubt as to whether he is an individual in control of his own

destiny or whether or not he is some object of a fate which, without considering him, is shuttling him forward to some purpose which will never and can never be revealed to him.

The factual evidence in nature that Frost supplies as to life and death without purpose is the point to which the reader must return each time with more despair. Matthew Arnold, who asked nature to embrace his moods, compared his despair at human conflict with the loss of faith represented by the sea ebbing away. The symbolism with its half truth, paradoxically enough, saves man from despair- for man knows that which ebbs away, like the sea, comes back on high tide.

With the critical admission that Frost cannot reconcile nature and man in terms of a divine creed, there is now the consideration of the fact that he does reconcile man in terms of this world. The four poets cited join the ranks of other poets, some of them greater, who err in considering a stone, a flower, a barn and a family as the great reality and not God. In the previously considered poem, "For Once,Then,Something" [8], Frost confesses his belief in something greater beyond his knowledge- something that is above and beyond him, but he is not, in Christian faith quite up to the task of ascertainment.

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[8] Robert Frost, "For Once, Then, Something" from New Hampshire

2. What the Reviewers Have Said on Nature and Man in Frost

The reviewers who will attack with abandon and ferocity the art of the poet and who will probe out contradictions in content, hesitate and tend to shy away from man's treatment of nature when the extension involves God. It is easy enough to observe that Tennyson sees "nature as red in tooth and claw" and yet conclude that he has a tender love for nature's quiet moments. There is no particular difficulty involved in ascertaining that Hardy believes that man's most heartfelt wishes founder over the inexplicable hand of coincidence and the apparent indifference of God. The difficulty comes when the critic is confronted with the problem of answering: "What is your standard for evaluating the poet's reply to the synthesis of man, nature and God?" Yet, such a question confronts every honest critic-every reader, who, to a degree is a critic.

One has to know what the critic, himself, believes; he is seldom able to state. Insofar as possible, the critics' avowed or implied stand will be given. If the reconciliation is solely judged to be on the materially-observable world of man and nature, then Frost, subject to his supra-natural limitations, will be reconciled on the less adequate level.

Alan Williams, in a talk on a Will Rogers memorial dedication said:

> There are two men America can be proud of as spokesmen, Robert Frost and Will Rogers. Both have spoken truth, the one living and the other dead. Mr. Frost scans men's actions true to nature. He proves this by facts as incontrovertible as his own Plymouth Rock. Will Rogers, as true to America as Mr. Frost, has, with as deep a feeling as we have for New England, enshrined his native soil of Oklahoma with the humour of a man who sees in his world the lively image, not only of man but also the image of a greater world with God.[9]

The difference between the two levels is fairly made. Will Rogers, was not a poet in the formal sense. But his light satire, his love of the soil and man of America, his understanding of people and his faith in God were expressed with verbal drama wherever he went and whenever he spoke.

Amy Lowell saw in Frost's poetry a lack of humour and the presence of pessimism:

> Mr. Frost has reproduced people and scenery with extraordinary vividness. His work is of a color so local as to be almost photographic... The pictures, the characters are reproduced directly from life, they are burned into his mind as though it were a sensitive plate. His imagination is bounded by the wind blown trees of New England hillsides. The men who have to live there learn and live their lessons from nature. He tells you what he has seen exactly as he has seen it... His New England people, unlike John Masefield's English people, have not seen God. [10]

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[9] Williams, Alan, "A Charitable Heart" at the Will Rogers Foundation Address, at Tulsa, Okla. Jan.8, 1939.

[10] Amy Lowell, a review in the North American Review, Vol.2, No. 16, issue of Feb. 20, 1915, pp. 81ff.

In the long review,"New Hampshire", Cornelius Weygandt interprets Frost in the spirit of New Hampshire. While he strains overly-much to fit Frost in his niche, there is much that is valid:

> Like the New Hampshire countryside, his is a winding laconic approach... the picturesqueness of his phrases remind me of our White Hills... The hard rock of the farms is somewhat like his stiff lip, the winding and slanting roads are a duplicate of his twisting approach to thought.[11]

Weygandt is arguing determinism at this point. Man is the replica of his physical environment. Further along the critic states:

> His nature and men are one. "After Apple Picking" has touched the experience and hearts of a score of people I know. Three men have told me that they "in hot youth" have buried in the hay men against whom they have had a grudge, that the experience of "The Code" was their experience. But every time the talk turns on Frost someone versed in country things and human nature tells me he has grown tired and ached on a ladder as Frost recounts.[12]

" Whicher also arrives at the close blend of the physical and human equation:"[13]

concludes Weygandt and then quotes from the George Whicher article:

> Frost and Dickinson are keenly sensitive to the changes of season and have known and have survived dark inclemencies of 'inner weather.' They have felt the heartbeat of the land and matched it with human pulses.[14]

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[11] Cornelius Weygandt,"New Hampshire" from the White Hills, op. citere.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] George F. Whicher, "Manifest Destiny" from the Amherst Record, (no vol) (no. number) issue of July 14, 1933.

J. McBride Dabbs comes bravely into the arena and is the first to tackle Frost and nature with zest:

> Frost is a humanist, a classicist, a man concerned primarily with men, with that plane of life which lies above nature and below God... he sees nature as man's source and environment. Nature holds man in a shadow. Yet, through nature there is hope. Though nature threatens man with destruction, its very challenge creates courage, and so life within him.[15]

At this point, it should be observed that Dabbs must be confirmed as to the place of man in Frost. The last statement is true of Housman's poetry, and to some extent of Hardy, but not of Frost. Frost would concur that nature has its implications but would never grant the physical as a destructive agent per se. "Nature", continues Dabbs, "exists-so far as man is concerned- to be fought against, but not to be destroyed,(even were that possible)for that would be the destruction of man himself."[16]

Then Dabbs repents somewhat and concludes that Frost is also concerned with the individual in nature; he admits that the individual enjoys nature in his two roles; first, that of the individual who yearns to go away on the wings of the lonely and beautiful, then next as a social man. He sees in nature the seeds of withdrawal and also the opposite

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[15] J. McBride Dabbs, "The Dark Woods", from The Yale Review, Vol.23, No. 3, issue of Spring, 1934, pp. 514:530.

[16] Ibidium.

call to come, spontaneously, and to burst into bloom:

> In "The Sound of the Trees", which is the counterpart of "Now Close the Windows", he realizes the danger of withdrawal. One may go too far into oneself to be found.[17]

The counterpart of nature's recession and succession is the parallel of man's desire to be secure and safe, and yet, at the same time, to venture into realms uncharted.

Elizabeth Sergeant took a different approach to a difficult approach to Frost, man and nature. She considers that he is part Dantesque and part Puritan. The Puritan in Frost forces him to avoid superlatives and to seek the answer to the problems in the dark shades of nature's phenomena and man's prosaic everyday actions:

> In the heart of his starkest tragedy we find the old New England effort to compromise ideals and facts, escaping either in shy tenderness and beauty or in a whimsical humour that often verges on irony. There is something strong and steady in Frost's view of nature and his appraisal of himself which takes account of his compromises, and holds the twisted strands of his life together for one central purpose.[18]

Miss Sergeant did not elaborate on nor did she define this purpose, but it obviously isn't to leave the fact and fancy of nature to

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[17] Op. Citere, page 356

[18] Elizabeth Sergeant, "Good Greek Out of New England", from Fire Under the Andes? Knopf, 1927, p. 317.

make the great and daring flight into religion and faith.

For Sidney Cox, Frost's greatest virtue is his understanding of people. That is, of course, something different from answering their questions. He may well understand that people have the unquenchable thirst for spiritual nourishment without being able to satisfy that need. But granted that limitation, Cox's warm estimate of Frost is relevant at this point:

> He understands people, first, because he has the sincerity and courage to know himself, second, because he likes people, and third, because he is a searcher after truth; by reason of those qualifications, he can put himself almost completely into the emotional and moral vertices in the hollow of which even simple lives are swirled. and can, therefore, discern inner desires, fears and thoughts and purposes. When he goes to nature for these truths, his readers go with him.[19]

For Gorham Munson, Frost is a classicist who, like the wise Greek, evolves his philosophy in the small world of the New England farmer as the Greek evolved his from the hills of Ionia. The life he leads is tangible and measurable by the facts of nature. He is free from commerce, industry, machine technique and science. There is a flight from the complex questions of the age of technocracy:

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[19] Sidney Cox, "Original Ordinary Man", review of Mountain Interval, in the New Republic, Vol. 12, No.147, issue of August 25th, 1917, (reprint) pp. 109-111.

> "Me for the hills where I don't have to choose." With this simplified world given, Frost built his art on the rock of observation, and it is by critical and positive observation of things conceived as discrete that Frost has discovered his Nature.[20]

The statement is not entirely true for Frost is writing admittedly on the observable fact of nature and controlling other variables. Munson continues:

> His distinctions are based on appearances and both they and appearances are treated as reasonably final data. Of course, something inscrutable remains beyond,"something must be left to God." but the fundamental truth or error of dualism is not plumbed... So, in Frost's poetry we are consistently struck by his acceptance of a dualistic world and his actual contentment with his lot of joy and love dashed with pain and weariness and fault.[21]

At this point, it is incumbent to question the word "contentment". Nature, as closely as one can observe and trust the senses and pragmatic experience, exhibits phenomena , which,by implication, closely parallel one's physical state and which cause man to see in them the vehicle for expression of mental states through personification. For example, one sees in the bent birch an insistence in nature that parallels that in man who seeks the light and warmth while

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[20] Gorham B. Munson, "Against the World in General", A Study in Sensibility and Common Sense , N.Y., Doubleday, 1927, p. 183 et sequentia.

[21] Ibidium.

bent by hostile and competitive forces. It is a pity that the biologist is not a poet for he, of all men, should have a keener insight as to how far the system of nature and man lies from dualism. Frost, convinced of one reality, the verifiability of the level of physical material in terms of one reality, at least, for man, transfers his faith from an (to him) uncertain next world to the experience of the world of matter.

Munson moves directly to the attitude of man to nature:

> Nature is a friendly antagonist, dangerously strong, too strong sometimes, but, on the whole, a fair opponent. In combat with her one cannot laze or cheat; but honest struggle brings fair return.He spends no time dilating on the indifference of nature to man. He accepts the fact of her as lovely and fair as well as that of her unconcern for man's disaster...He is the poet of the customary in man and nature. The language of nature fills the bulky evidence of senses and a man of good sense, therefore, does not accept the lies of idealism. At the same time the man of good sense will not in his acceptance of the fact as such fly to materialism and atheism. Something inscrutable and ordering very likely remains; there are overtones for the observer of the fact; he cannot ignore them. Thus, he denies neither God nor the world. He accepts the latter as demonstrated and the former as possible.[22]

This is a persistent as well as an admirable effort,but not good enough. Frost's lifetime silence on God's specific relationship to man and nature is

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[22] Gorham Munson, op. citere, p. 359

justly suspect. He either rejects or he honestly feels the whole thing is beyond him. The latter is likely true. The truth is that he accepts the evidence of his senses; his is empirical knowledge founded on the fact of nature and that of his fellow man. He feels and cares for both and renders this love in a dramatic and emotional medium.

The best proof of his care and concern is his technique of presenting the fact in so many lights that man is forced to involve himself in an interpretation of the fact. He is forced to make a deduction in terms of his attitudes. In the light of the experience in nature, man must arrive at a general truth to guide his own conduct to his happiest frame of reference, however limited that must be. Man, in his struggle to survive, must find a suitable environment, meet his organic needs, assert a physical, mental and moral supremacy and reproduce.

These involve cooperation and conflict. Insofar as man can observe a fact in nature whose implication will bring to bear on the four requisites above cited, man can reconcile his world and that of the physical environment. Frost urges his fellow man to love the world for what it is to man and materially for what it can offer in beauty, pleasure and challenge.

3. What Frost Has Stated On Nature and Man

Frost is adamant in his refusal to grant the realities,beyond his world of experience, the highest place. In the statement he made on Edwin Arlington Robinson, he affirmed:

> I am not the Platonist Robinson was. By Platonist I mean one who believes what we have here is an imperfect copy of what is in Heaven. The woman you have is an imperfect copy of some woman in heaven or in someone else's bed. Many of the world's greatest- maybe all of them- have been ranged on that idea. I am philosophically opposed to having one Iseult for my vocation and another for my avocation... Let me not sound the least bit smug. I define a difference with proper humility. A truly gallant Platonist will remain a bachelor as Robinson did from unwillingness to reduce any woman to the condition of being used without being idealized.[23]

Yet that shaft is no comfort for those who consider Frost a believer in a mechanistic view of nature:

> Somebody said to me a little while ago,'It's easy enough for me to think of the universe as a machine, as a mechanism.'
> I said ' You mean the universe is like a machine?'
> He said,'No, I think it is one..Well, it is like..'
> 'I think you mean the universe is like a machine.'
> 'All right. Let it go at that.'
> I asked him: "Did you ever see a machine without a pedal for the foot, or a lever for the hand, or a button for the finger?'
> He said 'No- No.'
> I said: "All right. Is the universe like that?'
> And he said: 'No. I mean it is like a machine, only... it is different like that.'
> 'It is different from a machine', I said.[24]

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[23] Robert Frost,"Education By Poetry",from the Amherst Graduate's Quarterly, Vo. 2, No. 2, issue of Feb.1931,pp.75-85.

[24] Ibid.

Those two quotations are Frost's double rebuttal, first of the world as an imperfect copy of another world; second, the idea that this world runs as an independent agency. He would like to know who started the machine going. He is probing for the entelechy. In the meantime, he relies on his senses and on his emotions to make himself one with his fellow man and nature:

> I can speculate on the 'not-here',but if I act in the 'here-now',I am stroking faith the right way. But I must stop before the metaphor breaks down.[25]

The metaphor to which he refers is the danger of carrying this vitalist principle of living by action too far.

Frost's random statements on nature lend weight to his attempts to resolve nature and man as honestly as his belief will permit. In answer to a question directed at him during a lecture on nature in poetry, he said:

> We farmers can do nothing together that we cannot do as individuals; human individuals can do nothing that is impossible to algae living on the surface of the earth-in the sense of preservation, I mean.[26]

This casts some pertinent light on the question for it is not often known that even plant

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25 Op. Citere, p.362.

26 Alfred R.Cross as recorded on his stenographic notes taken from a lecture by Frost at Michigan State College 4 H Club on September, 15, 1937.

life engages in the processes common to all life and can do one more thing- it can make its own food- animal life must depend on having its food made. Again, he noted:

> I feel very humble today coming in from the fifth-line thicket out there for I realize now that living beings require two things from the earth- standing room and food.[27]

In another Mid-Western address, he stated:

> I could have learned to be on speaking terms with Alexander Pope if he hadn't told me that I didn't have a sense of humour. When he called me the 'glory, jest and riddle of the world',I was somewhat shocked. It was the 'jest' which shocked me. Then he suggested that I follow nature. I don't mind learning from nature but I have some reservations about following that girl. I just saw two trees;one was driving its roots under the crevices of granite rocks and lifting up tons of water to its leaves and branches; the other, a little pine, was under its shadow and bent and twisted like a ptarmigan's beak or a pretzel. ...I once saw a bear who could ride a bicycle and career about on roller skates, but he looked like his brother who couldn't. The seal who can juggle apples on his nose is still a seal. Strip off from mankind all that represents achievement, leaving only the actual basis for that achievement, and the gap between man and other animals would contract amazingly. I know two brothers, each has, for New Hampshire, quite a few acres of fertile ground. The only difference between them is that one owned a single grain of wheat, the other nothing. One is rolling in wealth- the other is going to the poor house before long. I'm going to stop, look and listen before I follow anyone. Mr. Pope didn't tell me to look, but a fellow from my part of the country has to look twice...[28]

Behind the humour there rests a great sincerity, an honest query and a keen appreciation of

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[27] Op. Citere, p.363

[28] Robert Frost, as reported by Allan Jacobi,from an address to the Minnesota Faculty Club on November 16, 1946, Minneapolis. The subject of the address "Native Caution."

of the fact of man and nature. Man's superiority must rest on his discernment of "similar to" but higher than.

In an interview at Ann Arbor, seat of the University of Michigan, Frost was told that he resembled Wordsworth in his treatment of nature:

> Not so! Notso, young man. A family changed my desire to watch and receive into action. I took to heart four lines from Wordsworth, two at the beginning of "The Tables Turned" and two at the end. 'Up! up! my friend, and quit your books; Or surely you'll grow double.' Then, 'Enough of Science and Art;"Close up those barren leaves.' That greater poet was able to squat and to contemplate for forty years. I have to see nature through action. My family is action-the Mayflower and Puritan type. Something has to be done about something. There are compensations, though. Wordsworth wrote poetry on his beliefs. There is an old Stoic proverb which has it: 'Men are tortured by the opinions they have of things, rather than by the things themselves. Not the facts, but men's opinions about the facts are what matter. These facts lead to action in my books, not Wordsworths. But then, he is a greater poet. There are facts that make you say 'so what'. It seems to me that his took even a long time to do that.[29]

Frost is latching-on to a defect and weakness of the standard of intelligence in the realm of animal life. The intelligence which enables man to survive and to bring to his service nature and man (who are biologically quite close- in his opinion) also serves to be illusive. The tragic feature of the whole situation-one of the penalties of intelligence-

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[29] Robert Frost as reported by John Winslea from an interview at Ann Arbor on October 12, Columbus Day, 1924.

is that belief governs with equal authority whether it be true or false. Belief is no less determinative of conduct, when it is purely visionary, than when it is sound-that is, in accordance with the facts. Frost is one who wishes to cut down the margin of error by fastening on the fact, visible in nature and applicable to man.

He fears that man does not so much have real faith in the supernatural as much as he relies on his desire to gratify a wish not necessarily in accordance with the inherent qualities which exist. Frost points out that he would like to know, as a fact, more about the 'Prime Mover.' He scoffs at the idea that the whole scheme of things started from a nothing. There must be something. He wishes to ensure that this something may be apprehended empirically and founded, as much as may be possible, through the incontrovertible fact he knows. Frost has taken another poke at the problem of ascertaining truth:

> I know a colonial housewife in Litchfield who showed the same interest in a wooden nutmeg that she would have if it were genuine. The string of synthetic pearls or a tiara of paste jewels bring the same glow to the cheek of the wearer as a gem of the first water- as long as the truth is hidden. Thirty-seven million immigrants have come from Europe to America believing that they can find freedom, wealth or some form of prosperity here. In a majority of cases, presumably, the belief is sound; in a minority- take a look at the'Connecticitty' tobacco country- it has turned out to be wholly illusive. The man who says to himself about a certain proposition,'I'm not going to do anything about it' already has his belief and is acting(?) on it. My people and my nature always do something about it. I am trying for truth that way-in action.[30]

[30] Op. Citere, p.362

The fact of life and death in the physical and in the human world are integrated, at least physically, on the basis of survival value. The individuals who possess the traits to survive in diverse elements win out over those who do not in the struggle for existence and in the competition in life for material guerdons. In other words, people must develop certain traits in order to survive. These traits are revealed- and conditioned- in the individual's reaction to his environments. These traits range from the physical to the spiritual. The crux of the question of religion is that Frost cannot obtain the same evidence of its meaning that he can for the natural and physical planes. He admits his difficulty and is too courageous to accept without conviction.

His admission, in prose and poetry, of the limits of the empirical method leads to universal truth. His limit is the limit inherent in the process itself. The attaining of knowledge of nature and man is, first of all, measurement and testing by the senses. To a large extent it is purely descriptive. Insofar as it attempts to go beyond description and to afford explanations, it relies exclusively on the method of cause and effect- that is, it invariably proceeds from one thing to another from cause to effect or contra. An explanation of this sort is, obviously, merely a statement or description of a process, and no real explanation at all in the ultimate sense.

Frost admits this limitation. He can not, for example, take one of the greatest problems of the human imagination, the origin of the world, and explain its origin. Admitting his inadequacy and not desiring to accept the intuitive proof of some single form of primeval matter, he admits that his method has its limits. But, in this world, from what he can test by its principles, he comprehends the intimate relationship between man and nature.

Frost's remark on the Platonism of Robinson indicates that religion can no more explain the origin of the earth than can science. Religion quickly sidesteps any obligation to explain and to prove the origin of the earth in the usual reliance on the inductive method. The man of religion frankly admits that there are many things on heaven and earth that cannot be explained in any such way. He puts all question of explanation aside, calls to his aid whatever knowledge of a scientific method that may support his case, and then plunges without reserve into belief through faith.

Frost, like his fellow man in aggregate, craves an explanation of everything from the lowest to the highest. The forms of life in this world, without reference to another, richly provide, for him, such explanation. But complete genesis is impossible and Frost realizes that there is no way out of the dilemma for him. To Frost, it seems to be one of

the limitations laid on the forms of life spinning out their existence on a material world, which, as Frost sees and relates , appears to him to be a world which is one of struggle.

Can it be that Frost considers it quite as unfair to religion to ask it to explain the physical ancestry of man, as it is of science to demand that it expound the nature of God? Whatever glimpse he has of immortality comes from the close vision of recurrent life in death and life in nature and the family of man. The struggle for existence for both nature and man is accompanied by manifestations man terms as "strengths", "weaknesses", "cooperation," "conflict", "fear" and "courage." The observation of these and their implications in a temporal existence are his attempts to reconcile man and nature, servants to a greater order, not comprehended by him, but neither master nor slave to each other.

4. Nature and Man from the Poetry of Robert Frost

Frost does not go back to the first cause in nature but he does go back to the knowledge of the geographical and geological proof of the ancient lands which left the shells before the age of the fern to show that, despite the evolution of life from the Devonian Period of the Paleozoic Era[31], two things remain constant: the permanence of the east wind which brings the heavy rains and the permanence of love which stirs within man as he rides the storm of the east wind and of life. The poem " A Line-Storm" reveals that all forms of life cower and fall before the ravages of the easterly blast, but that man, different from nature in that he can love and be courageous, answers the challenge of nature. Thus man and nature are reconciled to being the objects of a common threat- the smashing nemesis, the East wind, which acts on nature so that:

> All song of the woods is crushed like some
> Wild easily shattered rose.
> Come, be my love in the wet woods, come
> Where the bows rain when it blows.

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[31] The Paleozoic Age is estimated to comprise some 24% of time and to have existed some six hundred million years ago. It comprises the age of the invertebrates, fishes and amphibians. This age was divided into, in order of time from backward before the following eras: Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous and Permian. During the Devonian period much of the land was submerged.

> And it seems like the time when after doubt
> Our love came back again and amain.
> O come forth into the storm and rout
> And be my love in the rain.[32]

The love of nature, the love of man and the courage to stand against an indifferent force that threatens all life are the implications on the fact.

Compared with man's alarums with his fellow man and with nature, the order above, beyond man's empirical experience as represented by the constellations, is the one source of orderly design and purpose. Whatever it may be, it has lasted a long time, and, as Frost indites:

> We may as well go patiently on with our life,
> And look elsewhere than to stars and moon and sun
> For the shocks and changes we need to keep us sane
> .....
> Still, it wouldn't reward the watcher to stay awake
> In hopes of seeing the calm of heaven break
> On this particular time and personal sight
> This calm seems certainly safe to last tonight.[33]

His love for nature parallels his love for man. In the two the individual can salvage, even from autumn death, a feeling of beauty which comes from sharing a perilous adventure:

> A tree beside the walls stands bare.
> But a leaf that lingered brown,
> Disturbed, I doubt not, by my thought,
> Comes softly rattling down.

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[32] Robert Frost, "A Line-Storm" from A Boy's Will

[33] Ibid, "On Looking Up By Chance at the Constellations", from A Boy's Will

I end not far from my going forth
By picking the last faded blue
Of the last remaining aster flower
To carry again to you.[34]

The boon of nature is that she can fill a man's needs in his most poignant experiences of loneliness. There is not the same taking-in of nature as a confidante that one finds in Wordsworth, but there is the acceptance of her phenomena as filling a deepest need in man-that of arousing sympathy and love. In "Loneliness", Frost bespeaks the tender emotions aroused by the going and return of the birds. They open a communication between husband and wife which has threatened to dry up for lack of emotional stimulation:

One ought not to have to care
So much as you and I
Care when the birds come round the house
To seem to say good-bye;

Or care so much when they come back
With whatever it is they sing;
The truth being we are as much
Too glad for the one thing

As we are too sad for the other here-
With birds that fill their breasts
But with each other and themselves
And their built of driven nests.[35]

Man should reconcile himself to the order he knows, and, as nature, make a protest against the unseen order. Frost's is not a defiant challenge

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[34] Robert Frost, "A Late Walk" from A Boy's Will

[35] Robert Frost, "Loneliness" from Mountain Interval

but the result of a considered experience of man who has resolved his problems into a reconciliation that will make man and his environment the one great adventure. There is a calm and dignified peace which the poet is prepared to accept in the fact of the diurnal course of day and night until dissolution steps in-following which life renews itself. He, like nature, is "safe" in that security. This, at least, is the order which may be depended on:

> When the spent sun throws up its rays on cloud
> And goes down burning in the gulf below,
> No voice in nature is heard to cry aloud
> At what has happened. Birds, at least, must know
> It is the change to darkness in the sky.
> Murmuring something quiet in her breast,
> Our bird begins to close a faded eye;
> Or overtaken too far from his nest
> Hurrying low above the ground, some waif
> Stoops just in time to his remembered tree.
> At most he thinks or twitters softly, 'Safe!'
> Now let the night be dark for all of me.
> Let the night be too dark for me to see
> Into the future. Let what will be, be![36]

Frost reconciles man and nature in another light. The physical phenomena is endowed with the qualities and activities of man's mind. The mental states may be preserved and repeated. He reconciles objective matter as real with the subjective view that the qualities of the mind are perceived as existing in objective phenomena although beauty is intrinsically in the

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[36] Robert Frost, "Acceptance" from West-Running Brook

mind of the poet and reader. This explains why the beauty from an experience in nature is satisfactory. When the idylls of nature are as well and as closely observed as by the nature poet, the qualities of the mind are afforded the opportunity to exist in the variation afforded by the multiple resources of the natural environment. The tree at the poet's window has been apprehended over the years in its particular detail and while the tree has afforded the poet a wealth of experience through sense stimulation, the poet, on his part, has endowed the tree with the qualities of his mental state:

Both have come together on the common ground of a loose compact against the inexplicable; the relationship is not so much cooperation and valence as it is toleration and a necessary partnership:

> Tree at my window, window tree
> My sash is lowered when night comes on;
> But let there never be curtain drawn
> Between you and me.
>
> Vague dream head lifted out of the ground
> And thing next most diffuse to cloud,
> Not all your light tongues talking aloud
> Could be profound.
>
> But tree, I have seen you taken and tossed
> And if you have seen me when I slept,
> You have seen me when I was taken and swept
> And all but lost.

That day when she put our heads together,
Fate had her imagination about her,
Your fate so much concerned with outer,
Mine with inner , weather.[37]

If Frost has both feet on the ground with the nature he knows, he has not the confidence and the communicability with that which is in the heavens and beyond. Despite his confessed inadequacy, he is willing to give himself over to an imaginative flight for a time. The gem "Canis Major" pays tribute to this superior entelechy:

The great Overdog
The heavenly beast
With a star in one eye
Gives a leap in the East.

He dances upright
All the way to the West
And never once drops
On his forefeet to rest.

I'm a poor underdog
But tonight I will bark
With the great Overdog
That romps through the dark.[38]

"In The Time of Cloudburst" is the gentle wistful laughter of a man who has long since made up his mind that he and nature are in the fell clutch of circumstance, but that he is in the company of something that has gone on a long time- and whose prospects for continuing are excellent:

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[37] Robert Frost, "Tree At My Window", West-Running Brook

[38] Ibid, "Canis Major", from West-Running Brook

Let the downpour roil and toil
The worst it can do to me
Is carry some garden soil
A little nearer the sea.

'Tis the world-old way of the rain
When it comes to a mountain farm
To exact for a present gain
A little of future harm.

Some force has but to apply
And summits shall be immersed,
The bottoms of the seas raised dry-
The slope of the earth reversed.

Then all I need do is run
To the other end of the slope,
And on the tracts laid new to the sun,
Begin all over to hope.

Some worn old tool of my own
Will be turned up by a plow,
The wood of it changed to stone,
But as ready to wield as now.

May my application so close
To so endless a repetition
Not make me tired and morose
And resentful of man's condition.[39]

For the great poet, nature is the reality man knows as one who not only senses her ways but who works with her. As the source of perpetual satisfaction of physical needs, she gives only as man strives with her. In the long run she rolls over past forms of life to challenge the new. Intellectually, she challenges man who confides and represents to her, and through her, the qualities of his mind as he perceives her, himself and things of the spirit.

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[39] Robert Frost,"In Time of Cloudburst", A Further Range , Taken Doubly.

Spiritually, she tempts his flight to comprehend the order which rules them both. Morally, she demands his courage to try her mettle and to endure her indifference to his wishes. Aesthetically, she fills his life with moments of incredible beauty if he has but the sense to perceive, the mind to contemplate and the heart to enjoy.

That nature and man are all, Frost will deny. That he reconciles them both in a higher being cannot be honestly asserted nor pragmatically nor intuitively proven. But that he senses something more, that he does not deny and that he seeks fulfillment for both himself and nature in the understanding of something greater comes in a late volume of poems, A Spire and Belfry. From this, "A Steeple on the House", is a magnificent tribute to one who would, with humility, like to know the greater values:

"A Steeple On The House"

What if it should turn out eternity
Was but the steeple on our house of life
That made our house of life a house of worship?
We do not go up there to sleep at night.
We do not go up there to live by day.
Nor need we ever go up there to live.
A spire and belfry coming on the roof
Means that a soul is coming on the flesh.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RECONCILIATION OF MAN AND SOCIETY IN FROST

1. Derivation of a Concept for Man and Society

Frost is vitally concerned in the question as to the degree of man's belonging to,and his dependence on,society. The poet from the traditionally tight-knit society of New England must, perforce, be impelled to speculate on the diametrically opposed theories of society- the "social contract theory" and the "social organismic theory." More important, in order to arrive at the point of synthesis, it is vital to evaluate the sad deficiencies in both theories to arrive at Frost's qualifications on society and man. His critics have placed themselves in irreconcilable camps on this score by using the opposing theories without laying down specific guides for a very complex field for evaluation of man and society.

Frost does not, as the contract theory stipulates, consider that society exists only by convention and ordinance- that is, society is not merely an artificial contrivance set up for man for certain temporal means. Frost does not approve of the idea of society as a necessary "watch-dog" on man; he does not value society for its economic coalition of men; nor does he agree that it is merely a device by which the strong consent to unite to exploit the weak- nor that it is a hand-cuff for the weak to exist at the expense of the more competent.

Adam Smith, as well as John Stuart Mill, the utilitarian, conceived of the contract as entered into by men , who, by competition, work out the good of the whole by pursuing their own self-limited interests. Objections urged to this theory, in its various forms, centre around the assumptions that: human beings cannot be human beings by themselves and when the individual is apart from society; that the child develops the capacity for society; and that of Aristotle who asserted, and St. Thomas Aquinas generally concurred, that man is a social being. He is, as well, the offspring of a social relationship which is determined by religious dogma and by pre-established mores. The individual is neither the beginning nor the end in the succession of life. Society liberates as well as it limits man's potentialities by affording , on the one hand, definite opportunities, and by restricting, on the other hand, things man would like to do. If this general statement of individualism and its defects does not answer the question of man and society, the opposing theory, that of an "organismic society", also has grave limitations.

This latter theory regards the community, the city, the state and the nation as an organism. It conceives society as a biological system, alike in structure and function to the individual organism and subject to the same laws of development, maturation and death. In this theory's recent formulations, Comte and Hegel

stressed the claim that the unity of society and the operation of individuals in it are to be considered in terms of an organism.[1] Springing from the organismic theory is the idea the society should be thought of not so much as an all-inclusive body, but as an embracive mind. Plato, Hegel, and the psychologist William McDougall[2] have insisted on the reality of the group mind. They insisted that society is itself a mind, a mind common to and working through all of its members.

This system has proven to be a useful and simple analogy if the society of man is compared with an organism to bring out such aspects of society as the interdependence of the members. This is different from calling the social system an organism. The distinction is important. Biologists and chemists are not prone to make this error; neither are poets. However, the reader is in danger of succumbing to such an impression and interpretation for the artist colours the word with such metaphor that more of the impressionable and emotional faculties of man are involved.

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[1] Aristotle's position as outlined in Nicomachaean Ethics, Book VI, Cp.VIII, pp.139ff, Everyman's Library ed., translated by A.D.Lindsay is an excellent refutation of both extreme individualism and the "group mind" concept. For Comte's organismic position, cf Martineau's translation of Comte's Positive Philosophy, Bk VI, Ch. III. For Hegel's position, cf. R.M.McIver, Society, N.Y., Rinehart, 1949, BOOK I, passim, pp.3-38.also43,45.

[2] Cf. McIver, op. citere,also Development of Sociology, F.N.House, N.Y.,McGraw-Hill, 1950, 5th Edition, Chapter V,XI XVII, and Part VI.

As the former theory fails to recognize the limits to the individuality of man so does this theory fail to pay tribute to his individuality. The traditionalist tends to say that only the social lives and breathes in its members- that man's conscious judgment and action stem but from the social consciousness. Many of the periodic revolts of the stronger men, with the movements started by them, are a protest against the idea that the individual is merely a pawn in a pre-determined physical, intellectual and spiritual existence.

The individualist has a good case when he refutes this claim of society and argues that it is only in the individual that society exists. Man does not belong to society as the leaves belong to the trees. As W.E.Hocking states:

> Society can have little meaning unless the individuals are real. If, when I think, it is society that thinks in me, there is no thought and no society. Society has no common sensorium, unless it be God. We speak of sharing our feelings and our thoughts, but it is only an individual who can think and who can feel. We can communicate our feelings so that others may sympathize with us, and, if they have had similar experiences, can appreciate what our feelings are. But there is a sense in which they cannot share our feelings. In this sense every self is, as it were, insulated. Feelings are like, not common.[3]

Poetry is one way of clothing man's apprehension of experience so that feelings are comprehended as like,not common. This explains why Frost tells the reader, with his indirect acerbity, that "If I wanted you to know, I should have told you."

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[3] W.E.Hocking, Man and the State , New Haven, Yale Press, 1926, Chapter XV, 157 et sequentia.

Frost will hold that the only society man knows, empirically, is that in which he exists in time and space. He will hold that the relationship of one man to another is inherited by family or created by experience. For Frost is steadfast on the point that the only experience man really knows, satisfactorily, is that of the individual. It is in the light of "like" in struggle, aspiration and interest that functions and goals may be ascribed to society.

Mr. Frost abhors the thought that the group, as such, has thoughts and desires other than those which animate the motives of its individuals. It is true that men often have like goals. This does not prove, to Frost, that the common group interests postulate fulfillment solely from the group. As with Frost, great artists have wrestled with the individual versus the group problem. The great tragedies of Marlowe, Webster and Shakespeare delineate that which occurs when the group and individual come into conflict for supremacy. The strife rages on physical, intellectual and spiritual levels.

Frost is not of the poetic school which appeals to the individual to seek his destiny apart from the fetters of conventional society. He is not like Spenser who retreated to the world of sound and colour, nor like Shelley who postulated an abstract ethereal God to whom the individual, esoterically free, could communicate. Wordsworth fled, temporarily-not Frost- to a

nature far from the institutions of man conceived as vested in society. On the other hand, Aristotle, Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and other leaders of the world's prominent religious creeds exhort the individual to blunt his ego and to seek self-realization and spiritual becomingness through humility.

There is, of course, the all-important and vital reservation that the more nourishing religions base their tenets on the achieving of salvation through an individual capacity whose realization, however, is predicated on development through society. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find any religion which asserts that the individual renders up his account to his God in and through society. In the final synthesis, it is postulated that man, as an individual, has an account to render for his own peculiar capacity , opportunity and life.

Poets, and other artists in their respective forms of art, have not concerned themselves with an attempt at reconciliation. The bulk of poetry boldly defends the individuality of man by an outspoken revolt against society, as witness the poets Byron and Shelley. Others yield to an indirect revolt by a sheer escape from the realm of society to that of fancy; Edmund Spenser and Samuel Coleridge, to an appreciable extent, demonstrated this faculty. The dramatic effect of art depends, for its immediate success, on the ability of the artist to induce an attitude to

the exclusion of, or the conquest over, an opposite point of view. Reason often takes the rear position when emotion is given rein.

The twentieth century, as a whole, despite its weird forms of artistic expression, has adopted the more reconcilable viewpoint that society, with its institutions, is an order into which individuals are born with certain limited capacities and opportunities for fulfillment of their individual natures. The thought of the past fifty years is grounded in a fairly consistent and persistent belief that no society should and can exist apart in its own right and remote from the welfare of its unit members.

One can go much further; there is a growing belief that not even sometimes is it desirable to sacrifice the welfare of an individual to society. This position has come to rest more and oftener on the proposition that the only ends for which men strive are for those realized by and in individuals. The changes in techniques of instruction have reflected the intense concern with individual differences, needs and desires.

It is, on the whole, impossible to agree with Hegel, Mills, Fichte, Shelley, Byron and Henley that society is inherently antagonistic to the development of the individual. Experience refutes this, and the faith of man in man and man

in God will not tolerate it. Frost does not agree with them, nor is he to be found in the camp of those who maintain, stoutly, that society has a more worthy end beyond the meaning it has for the individuals who comprise it.

What is the meaning of individuality to Robert Frost? Frost is not, like Tennyson, greatly disturbed by the physical and social implications of man and evolution. Frost does not, like the Auden of the "nineteen thirties"[4a] involve himself on a scientific level which involves attitudes of revolt against the enslavement of the individual's ego by the inexorable and predictable laws of genetics. Tennyson, in poetry, sounded the concern that the scientist of the mid-twentieth century is evincing in the growing realization that science, after all, depends not on the empirical but on the intuitive for the underlying universal truths as exemplified in theory. Frost, empirically minded, is content to maintain the integrity of the individual by stating a case of fact that leads to implication by fancy. The implication must be resolved intuitively.

It is significant to note that even the poet who is scientifically inclined will take flight to the arms of a society concept of life rather than to accept any conclusion which might

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[4a] W.H.Auden, versatile critic and poet, concerned himself on this level in "The Ascent of F.6" (1936)

deny that he exercises any importance in the chain of life other than that of reproduction. Society sets up ends which are nearer and more satisfying even though the ends have no verifiable, empirically, properties as regards man's purpose and his ultimate end.

There is a sense in which the concept of individuality can be reconciled. It is not just in the sense of being original, nor in the sense of being eccentric, nor is individuality the yardstick of how much one person may vary from another. It is how far each man, in his relation with the physical, the mental and the moral phenomena acts autonomously, in his own interpretation and through his own conscience, about the claims of the world on himself. This permits the concept that society is a fundamental condition for the development of individuality but that the condition can never substitute society for the individual.

One synthesis of the problem of society and man rests in the admission that man, as such, is not intelligible to man except through social development; this social development involves conflict as well as praise and cooperation. The conflict is one of degree- ranging from complaint to litigation to the extremity of waywardness- war. Conflicts for economic goods, emotional attachments and for distinction and power are the most dominant clashes. Cooperation may be tacit or overt, in that

man , comprehending like goals through like difficulties, will band together against opposing forces. The society which thwarts man's rebellious mood, on the one hand, affords him protection and security on the other hand. Frost points out , directly and indirectly, again and again, these conflicts. They must be reconciled for in life contending parties and differences are seldom utterly subdued. Frost does not accept a compromise position but resolves the conflict of man and society by finding, despite never ceasing frustrations, that the beauty of the fact of nature, the like sympathy of man for man in common plight and the very act of living are incommensurably greater than man's retreat from himself and from society.

Lawrance Thompson has considerable to say about Frost and the concept of the individual. In summing-up the twenty five pages [4] Thompson has written on this problem of man, society and Frost under the headings of "The Individual Life" and "The Individual and Society", he starts with the assumption that Frost's attitude is related to the basic principle of the central idea in Greek thought- the desire to perceive the peculiar idiom of the individual which makes him different from any other individual and then to combine that idiom with those potentialities or virtues which he shares with all men.

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[4] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere, Fire and Ice , pp204-229.

2. What the Critics State as to Frost's Position

Thompson is correct in his assumption that it would appear from Frost's poetry that there is the desire to perceive and to communicate the reality of the fact. At the same time, while he is apprehending the experience in terms faithfully peculiar to his own consciousness of values, there is little evidence to prove that he is desirous of apprehending individual differences as such. The poems heretofore cited and synthesized indicate that Frost is more taken with the conflicts that rage between the individual and society and the contending elements within the individual.

Thompson also suggests[5] that Frost has taken up a position in which he, uninvolved, is a spectator,only, of the human drama. From this vantage point, avers Thompson, Frost sees people in two categories; first, there are those who vizualize life as a perfection towards which the people strive; second, he fastens on those who vizualize life as being nothing more nor less than whatever they find it to be-good and bad enough to permit the working of crude material into some sort of usable form. The first group is fettered by the assumption that perfection is not attainable; the second group concedes that life is not the best existence, but the best available.

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[5] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere, page 387.

One can concede the general division of these two camps, but there is some fault to be found with Thompson's conclusion. He concludes:

> In such a division, the first group thinks of trying to overcome all drawbacks that hinder the attainment of perfection. Eventually, they grow disappointed with their position- they are forced to accept a compromise. The second group never uses the word "compromise" because there can be no such position so long as the best use is made of whatever there is at hand. This second viewpoint has its own idealism, of course, in that it presupposes that one cares to do the best he can. If then a compromise is made, it is a deliberate and self-imposed shortcoming.[6]

The fault to be found with this conclusion, which is ascribed to Frost's assumptions, is that it is setting up the theory that in youth individuals adopt the first position-that of the Platonists- and as they become older they leave their idealism and become confused, bitter and pessimistic. The second group, those who deliberately impose limitations on themselves, are the sceptics.

The sceptic, accepting limitations to perfection, relies on two sources for making the best of what he has: first, he employs the individuals and institutions outside of himself; second, he considers his own individuality in revealing his own limited possibilities. Thompson does point out, most effectively, that no man really starts from "scratch." The factors of heredity and environment influence and determine

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[6] Lawrance Thompson, Fire and Ice, p.208

the scope of action of the individual. He can no more attain perfection within this framework of the promises our ancestors have made for us than he can afford to rely too strongly on the heritage of family, school, church and government. Therefore, he accepts as correct the position that is neither centrifugal nor centripetal. He adopts a deliberate compromise by admitting that society with its collective institutions and man with his limited capacity cannot attain perfection. This summary, it is urged, is a fair and generous statement of Thompson's interpretation of Frost and society and the individual.

This is not , on Thompson's part, a whole picture of Frost in this area- it is neither complete nor satisfactory. There is an area that Thompson has neglected- he has eliminated anything more for the poet than the assertion that life, even when society aids the individual, can never approach perfection because of the inherent deficiencies of both the individual and society. Man, per se, Thompson would assert, loses his virtue and his idealism when he realizes his inadequacies. In order to make the best of his limitations,,man invokes society to assist him in supporting him in a deliberately self-imposed view of his purpose in life. In short, Thompson finds himself in the position of suggesting that Frost sees in man an organism which is conscious of a lack to aspire to perfection

on any plane. Society,with its institutions, can be sustained in his acceptance of an existence admittedly a compromise between his ideal that it can be perfect and his practical acquiescence in the fact that it never will be. Granting, wholeheartedly, that Frost does not place his faith in the perfectibility of man which involves the:

> ..harmonious development of all the powers of the human being, physical, social, intellectual,aesthetic and spiritual, according to their essential hierarchy, by and for their social uses, and directed toward the union of the individual with his creator as the final end..[7].

there is still a difference between revealing the conflicts that prevent man from attaining perfection and confessing that man cannot rise to the perfect life. There is a difference between revealing how far short man is content to stop from the highest aspiration and from the conclusion that the poet finds in man's failures the proof of his limited capacity. The only failure and imperfection Frost will admit is that occasioned when man refuses to struggle against the contending forces of nature and society.

Dorothy Willis and Manual Carolan asserted that Frost saw in society, as represented by the New England community

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[7] Redden and Ryan, A Catholic Philosophy of Education, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1942,1949, p.23.

the cancerous result of the surrender of the individual to a social code based on physical preservation:

> Mr. Frost describes the disintegration of the moral fibre of the New England farmer. The hired man is an illustration of this deterioration. In order to lure a living from the reluctant matter of New Hampshire, these men have put their faith in the grim, unhumourous, salvation through work doctrine of the Puritan. The grace of beauty, the lilt of gaiety, the joy of laughter, the touch of kindliness and the exhaltation of love have been banished. Mr. Frost, through his individual characterizations, reveals a society which has collapsed before the nature it abused. His is the cry of the individual in anguish. [8]

This is too harsh an indictment and is but part truth. Moreover, these two make the common error in not considering the fact that Frost is often reconciling the conflict in the individual rather than in different individuals. There is a great chasm between the disappearance of the old New England institutions for cultural and economic reasons and the assertion that they have disappeared because the moral fibre of the New Englander disintegrated through his associations with his fellow man and his society. Mr. Frost's reputation rests, to no inconsiderable degree, on his ability to show men's concern with the things they love and in his representation of a philosophy in life by the courageous approach to the everyday problems which constitute the substance of man's existence.

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[8] Dorothy Willis and Manuel Carolan, "Robert Frost", Chicago and New England :Some Contemporary Americans , Decatur,Ill, University of Chicago Press, 1924, pp. 171 ff.

The opposite point of view comes from an article by Mrs Carveth Wells, wife of the prominent English hunter of the "nineteen thirty" period:

> I have met and talked with Mr. Frost. I received the impression that this American devoted his lifetime in eulogizing, through his homely poetry, the staunch Puritan society of thrift, honesty and piety that we, in England, have come to associate as the virtue peculiar to that part of America...[9]

Wilfred Allen wrote in the same vein:

> Those who are prone to see the eccentric and the "queer" in these New England rustics do not perceive that Mr. Frost is devoted to the individual who radiates the dicta of the rural society of New England-a place where the school teacher still lives two or three weeks with one family before moving on until she has spent the year with the parents of each school child. It is a brave man who will fight against the society of the New England Town Hall-that iron code which regulates dog-catching, school taxes, the length and place of the funeral services, the heighth of the church steeple (and its color), the treatment and tenure of the hired man, the number of days you can tramp in a silo for another man and how many years can pass before the farmer can repaint his house. Mr Frost has moved me greatly by his portraits of the lonely individuals,the half-insane men and women who sever themselves from the limb of the community... take for example that hired man who left his employer at the busiest time. As Warren intimated, the sin of Silas was his violation of the code society imposed on this unique institution of the hired man.[10]

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[9] Mrs Luard Carveth Wells, Manchester University Review, (article title not known), Vol. 14, No. 187, pp. 11-12,22, issue of April 17, 1939.

[10] Wilfred Allen, "Mr. Robert Frost and New Hampshire", article in the Detroit Free Press, issue of November 18, 1940, pp 7,11.

Ellery Vaugh, in a review on "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" concluded:

> Mr. Frost does not like extension into philosophy. But when he wrote these exquisite lines:
> 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> But I have promises to keep
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.'
> I am sure that this poet had in mind his obligations to society. In his promises, he bows to the demands of village and family that he return to their world. His world that is 'lovely, dark and deep' is the flight of the poet who wishes to escape the demands which fetter him to the world of hum-drum reality. What tone can be of more agonizing length than that of 'miles and miles?' How sadly and bitterly does he yield to the theme of death at the heart of life. How much more poignant and tragic yet glorious is his surrender to reality than Shelley's flight from it!

Vaugh has recognized in Frost and in his poetry the important element of individuality for the essence of individuality must contain the quality of a responsibility to something. This requires the individual judgment and not a blind working through the individual of a social mandate.

John Farrar, in a written portrait of Frost ventures:

> Some of his best pictures are of grim and terrible events and the whole body of his writing indubitably shows a decaying and degenerating society of New England. That he fails to see the other side of life is untrue. Passages of great beauty shine through the drabness. His events and characters have wonderful moments of warmth and happiness. His individual genius does not, like Milton's, soar above his material. He is of it, but in it.[12]

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[11] Ellery Vaugh, article in The Harvard Bulletin, (no. vol.) (no number) issue of March 20, 1936.

[12] John Farrar, "From the Literary Spotlight", Anonymous Sketches, N.Y. Doran, 1924. pp. 287ff.

The recurrent theme of New England society as degenerative as seen through the poetry of Robert Frost occurs too often not to be given serious consideration. It is true that this society has not been able to adjust itself with its traditional family unity to deal with machine-age upheavals in work and education and startling material changes in a standard of living. However, that does not have the same sinister connotation that "degenerative" would imply. The traditional use of that word is still in wide acceptance- decay in a moral sense. Now that is one phase of the Puritan society which has not degenerated. With the wide break-up of family ties in various part of the United States as reflected in the increase in juvenile delinquency, divorce, separation, abandonment and desertion, the States of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine lead the nation in proportion to their population in maintaining the integrity of the home and community.

Decline of certain industries and the unsuitability of the land to the employment of large scale machine farming have necessitated the migration of many of the youth into industry and away from New England. The cultural tone has swung from the liberal to the technical in urban areas; but, by and large, the qualities associated with that society-honesty, thrift and family unity- have persisted in strength.

G.R.Elliott, in an article (1919) on "The Neighborliness of Robert Frost (II)"[13] observed, with pregnant insight, that Frost's opinion is that the ultima thule for the individual lies not in his leading revolutions for or against society but in the ideal feeling of a brotherhood that can stand the "drab test of actual and local conditions."[14] The sympathy that Frost feels for and with society is the sympathy of a man who " has realized that his forward path lies with his everyday relations with the person who is nearest him."[15]

The reconciliation of man for man in common plight is the comfort the individual receives from the society of men experiencing like joys, efforts and weariness under the yoke of the like task. The reality of the fact of labor is the unifying and the harmonizing bond between the individual and his fellow man. The bond can never be attained unless both hands and spirit are employed in the action.

Elliott finds that Frost is clear to see that it is necessary to separate the spirit of brotherhood from the validity of social convention and the ingrained personal tendencies of the individual. The implication is that Frost will concern himself

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13 G.R.Elliott, "The Neighborliness of Robert Frost"II" from The Nation, Vol. 109, No. 2840, issue of December 6,1919, pp.713-715.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

with a society as real as the individuals who are its sum and substance. He will not, as will T.S.Eliot, force into the fabric of his characters sudden emotional moments , mysterious and nebulous manifestations of social phenomena. In the "Death of the Hired Man", Frost is true to that hired man and to his society. In "The Waste Land" and in "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock", Eliot forces individuals to reflect abstractions so complex that one of two results ensues: first, the representation of a loss of historic faith is so horrible through its lack of specificity and through its unrelieved inclusiveness that extreme despair results; or, second, the reader does not understand and does not believe. If Frost does not use the individual as the mouthpiece for society now, then and forever, neither does he embrace the contradictions of the romanticists.

John Van Alstyne, in a review of West-Running Brook said:

> Frost's steady vision of man and his fellows keeps him clear of a certain heavy paradox which has clung persistently to poetry since the time of Burns; namely, the singing of men's common brotherhood in a tune which defies, without transcending, men's common sense. Since the days of the English Pre-Romantics, and particularly since Shelley and Whitman, our poets have often chanted in various tunes the joy of human brotherhood and the joy of such a free following of one's individual temperament. To take their advice would badly disrupt that brotherhood![16]

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16 John Van Alstyne, "New England Foresight" from Robert Frost;A Bibliography by Clymer and Green, 1937,Amherst.

Ludwig Lewisohn, who has consistently considered Frost as being in the classical tradition, observes that Frost avoids the abstractions of social and moral thought. States Lewisohn:

> Peasant-like, he clings and cleaves to permanent essentials... he admits the force of human passion in the individual; at the same time, as in "The Impulse", he shows the ultimate and tragic consequence that can result from defying the sum agreement of the human experiences we call society. Yet, if he is no conventional optimist, he is far from hopeless, either. Mankind has a way of striving; in striving, day by day, there is the fundamental moral energy in human life. "The Tree Fallen Across the Road" cannot really halt us.[17]

Russell Blankenship finds that Frost is:

> ... a friendly spirit, sociable man, as the rustics phrase it, sincerely interested in the small affairs that make up his neighbors' lives. He is always ready to stop in the road or to drop his work and chat with the passers-by. In short, he is so fond of man in the specific that he has never found it incumbent upon him to gather, in a capacious embrace, man in the abstract.[18]

While man seeks his own individual expression in his concern with the fact of everyday labor and delight with nature, he finds that the individual is not complete if this separates him from other men. "Men work together", I told him from the heart, Whether they work together or apart."[19]

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[17] Ludwig Lewisohn, op. citere, p. 282

[18] Russell Blankenship, op. citere, p. 244

[19] Robert Frost, "The Tuft of Flowers", from A Boy's Will .

James Southall Wilson wrote, on the occasion of Frost's first book of Collected Poems:

> He is an individual in a universal sense. He is as typical as his characters are typical. Frost is the individual of the great America of the mountain sides, the valleys, the open fields, the small towns and the quiet homes in the cities; men and women, quiet, unmoved and sound in heart and head, who never get on the front pages or run to the pier to meet the European celebrity; that is the America of which Frost is typical. He keeps his individuality in the midst of confusion: like the tree by his window, every passing wind plays upon him but the roots of his being are unshaken.[20] The happy blend of a worthy life and worthy philosophy is expressed by Frost himself in his paradoxical heart and head manner: 'The more sensibilist I am, the more I seem to want my mountains wild.'[21]

Under the patriotic aegis flaunted in these closing lines, there can be deduced the fundamental point of agreement on Robert Frost- his universal truths rouse from the individual in his everyday setting and are to be evaluated in terms of his response to the problems his local environment and society impose and pose for him.

The English critic, Basil de Selincourt is another who sees Frost and his society as showing the universal truth that rests in the exposition of how man deals with the daily fact of living:

> How immensely refreshing to find a man who contends that sanity begins in the home... 'I bid you' Frost welcomes

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[20] James Southall Wilson, "Again in Human Terms", on the occasion of the anniversary of the publication of Frost's collected poems (1930) from the Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. 8, No. 3, issue of May, 1932, pp. 417-423.

[21] Ibidium.

> 'to just a one man revolution, the only revolution which is coming.'Yet the scheme is not for the individual to loose and lose the idea, but to get something concrete for it... to work it out and to know how it works... Frost is not concerned with mass emotion which rests on illusion. Frost never rests on that... In a free society, we more and more recognize that truth lives only as the individual sees and realizes it. Individual vision with its nicety, its personal distinctiveness, its poised and piercing articulation becomes, in a sense, a presupposition of our poetry.[22]

Another English critic, one of wider range, W.H. Auden, considers that Frost:

> ..... speaks as a farmer on a small scale, and the civilization in which he feels most athome is one in which each man has a small holding. Verily, competition is mild, and personal eccentricities are possible and tolerated. He is a liberal. Just as Browning was excited by the conflict in the minds of men and women of the world between spiritual values and those of high society and success, so Frost returns again and again to the odd country character, to the deranged, to the unsuccessful and to those who do not live by the ordinary standards of material profit. He says that there are such people and you must take account of them. He knows that our life depends on material things. He intimates that though reason is an uncertain guide, it is the guide by which man must live. [23]

There is always so much in Auden that is the result of keen insight in the nature of man and society that to say he is wrong, utterly wrong, is to mistake his genius. He often does that. His considerable condensation

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[22] Basil De Selincourt, op. citere, p. 285.

[23] W.H.Auden, op. citere, p.85.

and compression place his meaning in doubt. On the face of the short review by Auden, his impression of Frost would indicate that Frost's poetry is devoted to the "extremist" among individuals- those who are beyond the pale of conventional society. While Frost does know that life depends on material things, he doesn't admit that it does so to the exclusion of a higher view and a loftier set of values. It is more accurate to state that the character of the individual and of society are revealed by the way they react to the material of life. Terms used by Auden in this review (Auden was quite "pink" in his views when his work was published) indicate Auden's socialistic thinking with the class society of England in mind.

C.Day Lewis takes an opposite stand; he considers Frost to be a farmer but a highly civilized one. The love of things for what they are gives his poetry a moral quality;and Frost is freed from being classed as an "escapist" into nature poetry:

> Escapist nature poetry represents a running away, in the first place, from human emotions. If further proof were needed that Frost is not guilty of this, we should find it in his narrative poems... We see the peculiar blend of honesty and subtlety which characterize Frost. He is never false, pretentiously or artificially stimulated; he is sometimes dull, as life is dull. This dullness bounds from the conclusion that he is a serious moralist as well as a serious artist... His earnest love of things as they are, the mainspring of his poetry, is not an exclusively American virtue, but proceeds from the sober passionate Puritan that breathes the genius of its local habitation. [24]

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[24] C.Day Lewis, "Four Prefaces to a Book" from Selected Poems, London, Jonathan Cape, issued in 1936.

Paul Engle, born and reared in the Middle West of America, wrote, with Auden, Lewis and Muir, "Four Prefaces to a Book." He surveyed Frost's philosophy from the point of view of one who is an environmental determinist:

> Out West we still use the word "neighbor" as equivalent to "friend," because we remember a neighbor as valuable as a lender of tools, a burial partner and the loaner of coffee. Those New Englanders have been there long enough to build granite defenses for themselves- where else in America could the man who lived next door to you have as a saying "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors?"[25]

The answer to this is that anywhere in the world where men live next door to other men there can be that practice and saying. The "neighborliness" Mr. Engle mentioned is that induced solely by the need for esse preservandi- the cooperation that results from collective action without which there would be disaster.

Mr. Engle continues:

> They had lived on the same land until the life was sucked out of it and the plough harvested only rocks, and the barns had wooden cages in the darkest corners where the minds that had cracked under in-breeding and the lonely repressive life in remote valleys, under the weight of a morality-like November morning mist defying the sun by day and the lantern by night, gibbered their life away.[26]

Mr. Frost has not found this at all. The paucity of material resources does not result in spiritual and intellectual aridity, for New England is truly, and has always been, the

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[25] Paul Engle, "Four Prefaces to a Book", op. cit., p.401

[26] Ibidium.

cultural centre of the United States. It is pertinent to point out that Sinclair Lewis found much material in the sufficiency of Mr. Engle's "Mid-West" life to be without content and the life without spiritual meaning.

Fortunately, Mr. Frost has spoken on man and society in his short quotes and in his poetry. His commentators are numerically and qualitatively divided on the question of Frost's approach to society and to the individual. There are certain like areas of agreement: these are, first of all, a concurrence that the society of New England reflects certain qualities that appear to result from and to deal with the physical environment; second, there is agreement that Frost considers man and society are most comprehensible through the fact of everyday life than through the complex abstractions of philosophical systems; third, there is agreement that Frost uses the "fact" of real experience to develop his implications and extensions; and, fourth, there is general agreement that he does not consider the individual from the extreme view of such romanticists as Shelley and Byron.

3. Frost's Statements on Man and Society

The areas of disagreement centre on the opposite theories of Frost's idea of society. on whether he is a member of society or a dispassionate onlooker, on whether or not he is condemning New England society, on whether he loves or merely tolerates his fellow man as an experienced phase of reality and whether he has any philosophy of man and society other than a purely material consideration.

During one of the many Sunday afternoon gatherings with Robert Frost there arose , among the numerous questions propounded to him on his poetry and on his philosophy, the query as to Mr. Frost's opinion about William Blake as an individual and William Blake's idea of society. The answer, in the usual laconic and indirect Frostian manner was:

> I cannot understand Mr. Blake no more than I can Matthew Arnold. Mr. Arnold boxes up feelings with words, I can't do that but I can recognize in the length and width of a garden the results of a powerful lot of feeling when I see the flowers grow. When Mr. Blake tells me that innocence turns to evil after birth, I think about how Widow Patterson brought up the young orphan of the man who jilted her. But I think that Blake must have been something like Arnold because they believed man should worship together and philosophize alone. When I'm thinking about something, I don't need the approval or disapproval of society. But when I feel so almighty, then truth breaks in and society asks "who are you?" I think that Blake, Arnold, Widow Patterson and Robert Frost trip over the log of something I call "friendliness".[27]

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[27] Ralph Tipton, stenographic notes of a conversation recorded on September,27, 1941 at Amherst College with Frost as host.

There is more to life than taking recourse to others when material help is needed, thus, even if Frost's approach is indirect there is a very substantial moral note to "friendliness" in the reference to Widow Patterson and in the reference to the "log". Both the individual and society have their being in something very real. At the same time, Frost is honest enough to confess that he cannot soar on the philosophical wings of a Blake and an Arnold. Nevertheless, by his concrete illustrations, he can postulate the same general truths.

His references to society are specific; with reference to education through formal methods, he admitted his creed for individualism:

> The freedom I'd like to give is the freedom I'd like to get, the freedom of my material. You might define a school boy as one who recites to you, if you start him talking, everything he read last night in the order he read it. That's just the opposite of what I meant by being a free person... I think what I'm after is free meditation. I don't think anybody gets to it when he's in anybody's company; only when his soul is alone. I would run a course by self-withdrawal. I would begin a course by being very present, and then slowly disappear. A sort of vanishing act. I'd rather melt away just as I stood there, and leave a fellow more and more alone, and let him feel deserted, like a baby in a room alone. Give him that terribly abandoned feeling, left to the horrors of his own thought and conscience.[28]

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[28] Robert Frost, from his talk ,"The Manumitted Student", published in The New Student of Wesleyan, Vol,6, No. 1, issue of January 13, 1927,(no pages)

There is considerable substance in that passage. Several precise points are made. First, this statement is not grounds for a general credo for the independence of the individual from the society of his fellow men; in the school-boy passage, Frost is pleading for an opportunity to reach a decision in life on personal terms and not through the decrees of a collective society represented by an instructor. He is opposing the blind acceptance as a substitute for reason.

That society is not there to aid is refuted in the clever approach," I would begin a course by being very present, then slowly disappear.... a sort of vanishing act." There will be a guide, the substance of other men, to support the probing steps of the individual; society is the scaffolding and not the substitute for man, the singular. How far society has the right to interfere with the individual and how far the individual must go in giving himself over to group economy, group politics, group intellect and group morality have been primary concerns for this poet.

His sympathy with the South for its adherence to states rights rather than the federal government control, together with his heritage of the rugged individualism of Puritan New England have forced him to revolt from the practices of society resulting in the diminished rights of the person. In a reluctant response to give an opinion on the "new deal" policies of the early Roosevelt Administration, Frost replied:

I do not know much about finances for I've never had any. I think, though, that one banker lends my money, and yours, on a mule as security.[29]

Brooding on this phase with a certain in-grained thrift consciousness, he continued:

> It is poor business for him and for you. The mule is likely to die. He should lend on two mules and cut his risk in half. But, on the other hand, a large part of this country was made on less than a mule. I have to go along with the rules that will help to keep me from making a fool of myself, not on my account, but for the sake of the other people...[30]

Frost is confessing to a desire for complete independence from the regulating order of nature and society, but admits, that with other people in existence, he has a responsibility to them. His actions must be considered in relation to them. The banker who lends money on poor security may consider that he is helping the individual in a venture, but he fails to consider and to weave into account that he is parcelling-out the money of the depositors without weighing his duty to them. The analogy may be drawn that other people have like interests in the world of living and that duty to them, in the moral sense, forbids man's ventures to the selfish neglect of society.

[29,30] Robert Frost, as reported in a conversation at Charlottesville(University of Virginia) on October 26, 1936 by Walter Leightville.

In his address at Marietta College (Ohio) in 1948, Frost declared:

> I know that I am at the site of the old Shawnee hunting grounds. We have old Indian battle fields near Deerfield, Massachusetts. The pioneers who settled Marietta went through the same terrible adventures as those who fought the Iroquois in New England. Pioneers have these things in common: (even the pioneers of ten thousand years ago) they break the soil and grow food; next, they build an altar or church to worship some God; they erect some sort of educational prison for their children to revolt against; and, finally, and not too happily for all of us rebels, they put up some building from which a few give order to many. This is the time for a pioneer to leave and start all over again. I have been a pioneer of sorts. I taught school; I helped to build a church, but I ran out on the town hall business and began,then, life as a pioneer in poetry. But I didn't leave off being the old pioneer type until I was sure someone had built a town hall- even if it wasn't me.[31]

This pays tribute to the yearning of the human race for permanence of worship, education and order. Yet, Frost, personally, would avoid the depersonalization involved in the bureaucracy of government. He has centered on the theme that the individual has within himself all the qualities which lead to the breaking of new soil, the building of fundamental and traditional anchors of security- education, worship and government. Yet, with adventure, intellectual curiosity, elements of worship and the need for order, there is that within him which begs mightily for an interpretation of life on individual grounds.

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[31] Robert Frost, from an address on May 28,1948 at the annual literary festival of Marietta College. Reported by Mary Ann Cromack.

4. Man and Society from Frost's Poetry

Frost's own terms for life are never more aptly illustrated than when he said, in the closing lines of the previously synthesized "Birches": "I'd like to get away from earth a while and then come back to it and begin over."

The duty which devolves upon the individual to meet life's crises in terms of the capacity of the person, together with the sheer courage it takes not to retreat and not to call for society's aid is contained in "Storm Fear." The stress of life is implied by the physical storm:

> When the wind works against us in the dark
> And pelts with snow
> How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length-
> How drifts are piled,
> And my own heart own a doubt
> Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
> And save ourselves unaided. [32]

There is no doubt but that Frost feels that man should aid himself if he can.

The sense in which man should assert his essential individual self and not rely on things as props is revealed with stern sadness:

> And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
> No longer blown hither and thither;
> The last lone aster is gone;
> The flowers of the witch-hazel wither;
> The heart is still aching to seek,
> But the feet question, 'Whither?'

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[32] Robert Frost, "Storm Fear" from A Boy's Will .

Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things.
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season? [33]

The humanity, the sympathy and the great compassion so often deep-rooted in the heart of the great individualists are integral parts of Frost's philosophy. In "The Death of the Hired Man", Mary represents that part of a human being that finds beauty in life to be a love greater than that of beauty in physical nature. She has love for suffering man. When the individual who is cynical of society,with its tradition backed by the force of custom , scornfully ejaculates: "Home is the place, where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in"[34], the other part of man justifies and immortalizes the great society of man by responding: "I should have called it something you somehow haven't to deserve." [35]

Frost goes a long, long way with people. His friendship for his fellow man is not measured in money, nor in reservations for the rich and for the good. The affection he has for man as man and not as an institution is, in some respects, as inclusive as Whitman's. In "The Star-Splitter", he shows his heart for a

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[33] Robert Frost, "Reluctance" from A Boy's Will

[34] Ibid. "Death of the Hired Man", North of Boston

[35] Ibid.

moment:

> Mean laughter went about the town that day
> To let him know we weren't the least imposed on,
> And he could wait- we'd see to him tomorrow.
> But the first thing next morning we reflected
> If one by one we counted people out
> For the least sin, it wouldn't take us long
> To get so we had no one left to live with
> For to be social is to be forgiving.
> Our thief, the one who does our stealing from us,
> We don't cut off from coming to church suppers,
> But what we miss we go to him to ask for. [36]

In the poem, "The Census Taker", Frost tells of the vestigial signs that life once flourished but has now ceased in an old tar paper covered shack. The poem reveals Frost with his reserve down and in open confession that society, together with all living beings, mean most of all in life to him:

> The melancholy of having to count souls
> Where they grow fewer and fewer every year
> Is extreme where they shrink to none at all.
> It must be I want life to go on living. [37]

When society rides rough shod over the individual and regiments him to an automaton-like existence, Frost is roused to protest. The humorous, witty yet sharp irony, "Departmental" conveys his ideas of society as an end rather than the means:

> The word goes forth in formic:
> Death's come to Jerry McCormic,
> Will the special Janizary
> Whose office it is to bury
> The dead of the commissary
> Go bring him home to his people
> .....

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[36] Robert Frost, "The Star-Splitter", New Hampshire

[37] Ibid, "The Census Taker", from New Hampshire

And presently on the scene
Appears a solemn mortician;
And taking a formal position
With feelers calmly atwiddle,
Seizing the dead by the middle,
And heaving him high in air,
Carries him out of there.
No one stands round to stay.
It is nobody else's affair.

It couldn't be called ungentle.
But how thoroughly departmental.[38]

With all his staunch belief in the individual, there is the deep fear of evil. There is the haunting spectre of the social disapproval of departure from the dictates of convention and morality. In the poem " The Fear", Frost tells the dramatic story of a woman who deserted her husband for another son. The woman, seeing a man's face outlined against the bushes near the road thinks that someone, possibly her husband, has come to spy on her and to condemn her.

On finding that a man and a little boy are walking, by chance, along the highway, the sudden effect is such that the woman faints and the lantern, in falling, goes out. There are two interpretations: one is that the mental uncertainty of the woman was much more terrible than anything else that could have occurred- that nothing did enter but fear itself. The other interpretation, much more subtle, persists in intruding itself. The man and the boy symbolize society with its stern mandates and compelling morality. The presence of her husband, although

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[38] Robert Frost, "Departmental", A Further Range ,Taken Doubly

terrible enough, would not have the moral effect of the symbol of innocence- represented by the young lad. The lantern smashing against the stones and the extinguishing of the light represent the turning away from her of the support of her fellow beings.

Two sonnets reveal the difference between Frost's attitude toward society as composed of individuals who do seriously yearn for the better life and the impersonality that inheres in the organization of states- both large and small. In "The Planners", while Frost casts doubt on the permanence of social work, he pays tribute to the few who do care:

> If anything should put an end to this
> I'm thinking the unborn would never miss
> What they never had of vital bliss
> .....
> Only a few of those even in whose day
> It happened would have very much to say.
> And anyone might ask them who were they.
> Who would they be? The guild of social planners
> With the intention blazoned on their banners
> Of getting one more chance to change our manners?
> These anyway might think it was important
> That human history should not be shortened.[39]

In "No Holy Wars for Them", Frost maintains his lack of faith in the collective morality of the state. He minimizes the conscience of the group for good works:

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[39] Robert Frost,"The Planners", from Editorials

States strong enough to do good are but few.
Their number would seem limited to but three.
Good is a thing that they the great can do,
But puny little states can only be.
And being good for these means standing by
To watch a war in nominal alliance,
And when it's all over to watch the world's supply
Get parcelled out among the winning giants.
God, have you taken cognizance of this?
And what on this is your divine position?
That nations like the Cuban and the Swiss
Can never hope to wage a Global Mission.
No Holy Wars for them. The most a small
One can give is a nuisance brawl.[40]

There is the feeling, most unhappy, that Frost is speaking of what can happen to the individual as well as to the small state.

With the depersonalization of man by society, with the blind unreasoning fetters of convention, Frost is not in sympathy. He denies vehemently that society speaks through him-to him, yes! In the sum total of wisdom which she has acquired through years from the individual, and which she given back to him in support of physical, intellectual and spiritual needs, Frost finds a needy anchor. For the individual's responsibility to nature, to his fellow man and to himself, Frost insists in a response to life , which,though it may be viewed with doubt, must be resolved with determination, courage and love.

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[40] Robert Frost, "No Holy Wars for Them", from Editorials

CHAPTER NINE

RECONCILIATION IN TERMS OF CHARACTER, MORALITY AND RELIGION

1. Prefacing Remark on the Chapter

From the point of view of a Catholic definition of character, Frost's theory and practice would not measure up to the important requisite- a means of achieving the ultimate end which is the union of man with his Creator in Heaven. By a lesser token, his theory and practice would not measure up to the important requisite of other major religions- a morality defined in the ultimate good in each faith. Here Frost confesses an inability to confess to any formal articles of religious belief- and disbelief. It remains to evaluate him from a less acceptable vantage point.

The most primitive form of morality and character development rested on adherence to taboos. It would not, it is urged, be an over-simplification to hold that the first positive step in any system of morality and any claim to positive character principles rest on man's adherence to a creed based on other than fear of what might happen to him if he disobeyed.

There are those who will urge that Frost considers right and wrong as dependent on the adherence to or the rejection of , respectively, society's strictures. Evidence of such views will be presented. In a pioneer society, taboos

become the cornerstone of the whole social order. The relation between leaders and followers, political lives, sexual lives and family relationships possess, in these mores, an exceedingly strong bond. Frost cannot but be imbued, to no small degree, with the spirit of the New England rural community. These, by their composition of individualists and by the powerful town hall organization, hold the line against change. Yet, at the same time, the right of the individual to be heard , in any cause, cannot be denied. Frost radiates the better qualities of restraint and freedom.

It is often suspect, and justly so, that some religions are adopted to support, rather than to abrogate, the complex unreasoning ways of social structures. Such religions, negative rather than positive powers, are not the result of inspiration and aspiration. It is this degeneration of the lofty ethic of the old Puritan into the dour, grim and cheerless life of the Calvinist that Frost resents. He regards it as an affront to the dignity of the individual.

Such critics as Munson, C.Day Lewis and Yvor Winters have seen Frost as being in the tradition of a utilitarian ego-centrist. They compare Frost with the powerful and challenging American essayist, Emerson. Frost is considered to reflect the scornful challenge of Emerson at social mandates. However, in considering this tradition, it is important to qualify that Emerson urges, challenges and quarrels with society;Frost does not.

Emerson and Frost are accused of having a view of society which permits it only insofar as it aids and does not prohibit their desires and fancies. That is, they are said to belong to the order of men like Alexander, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Marc Anthony, Huey Long and Stalin who interpreted the world in and on their own terms. Frost does not interpret the world- he lets the reader do that. In short, these critics place Frost in the position of having denied right and wrong except on his own evaluation. They conclude that he denies the world hereafter, that he scorns those who fear the prohibitions of society, that he holds no brief for morality other than that based on individual utility and a faithful adherence to his individual point of view in face of all the pressure that can be brought to bear on him.

Van Doren and Thompson, heretofore cited as being in agreement on the "golden mean" alleged position of Robert Frost, hold that Frost offers a compromise to character and morality in the same way that he holds this middle position on other grounds. They urge that he does not become involved but that, objectively, he paints the picture he sees and leaves the decision to the spectator. In their stand, the intimacy of attitude is absent from Frost's poetry. On one point, the critics, Frost

and his reader are in agreement; no evidence can be adduced to show that he subscribes to any religious system in which character is directly related to man's destiny in a world to follow. In all fairness, there is no proof that such a belief does not exist in Frost; if it does, it has not been, as yet, revealed in his poetry. He has considered the supernatural but has not, to the public, rendered a decision. Any speculation as to what he does believe about the future state of his soul, if any, must result in a hazardous guess from his poetry.However, he has not yet referred to the Deity without a capital letter.

Frost will not grant that character is that prize to be obtained from a firm adherence to habit as such. Nor will he concur, as will others, that character is to be attained from a self-insistence on performing a stated task, though the difficulties, desirably avoided, may involve pain in their resolution. But he will grant that the individual must himself decide if the task is to be performed. Frost would never agree that character and morality derive principally from the result of self-control and the stifling of pleasure. Nor,yet again, will he agree that morality is that which the individual interprets in terms of the "best advantage" for society and as an adherence to the moral standards pledged to, for and by, the group in which he lives.

A substantial bedrock definition of character and morality, conceding that the highest form should be in terms of a responsibility to God and the after life, for a life on a purely temporal basis should certainly involve man's concern for his fellow man. There must be a steadiness of will and a fixity of purpose to avoid baseness and weakness. The unit must recognize some entity outside of himself to which he acknowledges that to obey its order is good and to disobey its principles is evil. That entity must be other than the order of society.

The order of society must rest for its authority on the recognition that the principles set up by society are those which involve the finest qualities existing in the individual. The consideration of the "other man" usually involves a sacrifice of self as regards one's desires. However, the quality of the intellect must enter, for there must be a rational evaluation of the choice to be made between the will of the individual and the dicta of society.

Kilpatrick has illuminated three important ingredients for good moral character:

> I seem to see three things in the working of a good moral character; first, a sensitivity as to what may be involved in a situation; second, a moral deliberation to decide what should be done; and, third, the doing or effecting of the decision so made.[1]

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[1] W.H.Kilpatrick, Group Education for a Democracy , N.Y., Association Press, 1940, pp. 175-178.

In the first, there is the conscious recognition of the scale of desires-that which the individual wants to do- and the scale of right and wrong as outlined by the accepted moral standards, not of society in a local sense, but of the greater temporal society. He must be able to foresee, in each case, the consequence of certain actions as affecting him and his fellow man.

In the second, the moral deliberation to decide what should be done is the testing of the strength of the person to stand for what he feels, in each situation, to be the greater right. Oftimes he must reject the tenets of society in the geographical and sociological sense for the large morality which invests man in a universal sense. For example, if a man believes, to his very core, that slavery is wrong, even though the local society and state to which he owes allegiance supports or condones slavery, the tests of character and morality are the decisions made on the abstract principle of human bondage or freedom. The third, the finest test of all, yet depending on the first two, is the carrying into action of decisions based on the moral issues.

Kilpatrick's interpretation of character will be the position of this thesis insofar as Frost is held to reconcile his ethics in this spirit. The key notes are knowledge, volition and action. The recognition of the values confronting the

individual in his choices, the will to choose and the courage to put his ethical choices into action involve the whole individual. While certain tried standards of society exist to guide, direct and influence the individual as to what may be right and wrong, the main test of virtue, of morality and character must always, without exception, be the decision of each person, in each specific case. This decision is based on both pragmatic and intuitive appreciations of the values involved. He must act so as to support the conclusion he has reached.

Deprived of the loftier truth of God and the hereafter, the philosophy of Frost is deficient; yet, by the strong sense of ought, limited as it is and narrowed to this world of the empirical and rational, there are many of the better elements of a more altruistic utilitarianism.

2. Frost's Critics on Character, Morality and Religion

G.R.Elliott, bravely venturing an appreciation of Frost on the moral qualities in his verse,offers:

> Considered broadly, his work appears as the poetry of true neighborliness emerging from the romance of human brotherhood. He keeps his eye more faithfully than they on the facts of human nature in the immediate neighborhood. In the same way, he has been able to envisage, far more positively than they, the human spirit of friendship: the spirit which enables people to live together more or less fruitfully in a small community, and which, with all its meannesses, comprises the basal conditions of the wider human brotherhood. Mr. Frost always distills it into local terms. Mr. Frost epitomizes, intuitively, this larger world of ours in which the ideal of human brotherhood is now being put through the drab test of actual and local conditions. Thus, while aiming to be faithfully local, Mr. Frost has become more deeply representative than many poets who have set themselves at catching the spirit of our age. [2]

Mr. Elliott's opinion centers on the fact that the test of character, in Frostian terms, results from the relations of people whose experiences are concretely revealed to him. From the distillation of such experiences, abstraction in moral terms, is relevant to the larger world. Character is to be revealed through the everyday relations of one person with another. The sympathy and love of one for the other ensue from common joy, effort and weariness under the yoke of a common task.

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[2] Robert Frost, op. citere, pp. 247, 248.

Marilyn Williams is of a different mind:

> Robert Frost has met and has evaluated the world of men in unhappy contrast with the world of nature. When he holds up the mirror of the fact of man and his meanness, spite and ignorance with and of his fellow beings! How tawdry, miserable and despairing is the picture.[3]

but Ralph McAllister maintains:

> Frost will settle for a kindly chat with a fellow farmer. The sound of life humming in the world of men together in nature sounds a sympathetic chord in him more beautiful than the roll of a church organ to the soul of the kneeling devout....[4]

Among those who extol him for his rugged moral individuality is Professor Willis Dean:

> No man has been more often pressed for a stand on God and the life to come. Certainly this great American, who speaks for all men in kindness and sympathy, towers above the community of men who hope with despair. Not able to see God in creeds, he has evolved his own ethic. If it assists man to live with nature and his neighbor as if each day were the ultimate experience in life, then like Hunt's"Abou Ben Adhem and the Angel" his name should lead all the rest...[5]

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[3] Marilyn Williams, address on March 3, 1950 on Robert Frost delivered to Kenyon College, Gambier.

[4] Ralph R. McAllister, "A Friendly Farmer", article in the Macon Monitor, issue of January 17, 1946.

[5] Willis Dean, Ph.D., visiting lecturer's address as reported in part, Lecture subject "Frost's Ethic", delivered at Faculty Club, Dayton University, December 11, 1947.

A stand on Frost's religious deficiences is well-taken by the Reverend Walter Johnson of the Southern Diocese of the Baptist Church who regrets:

> I would be less than honest did I not admit that this man Frost moves me to a love of nature and a deep feeling for the distress and misery of the all too commonly monotonous life of those who supply our food, the farmers. But, this poet has set up for himself an insulation against the social code of his own brothers in God, his fellow man. He has made himself the authority for a personal moral code in which the great creation of God, man-the Son of Christ, must accept his knowledge of right and wrong from comparison with the phenomena of nature. We cannot, we must not let ourselves forget that a man without a belief in the God of salvation is a man who eyes the world in his own image. He is limited. His outlook is down and not up. America, our country, was founded by men more often on their knees than stiff-necked in their wilful pride. With all respect to the poetic genius of Mr. Frost, and with a sad but firm rebuke to our Senate of the United States, may we not feel that a tribute to a sacrifice in the name of Christ is more worthy than honor accorded to a man without faith in the virtues on which our nation was founded-on the greater faiths.[6]

This is a formidable indictment- all such indictments are formidable for they are difficult to answer on rational grounds. However, the indictment rests on a deduction that Frost accepts a moral standard as coming from nature herself. There are no solid grounds for such an assumption. Frost rests the test of his moral code on the dealings men have with each other as they vie in common tasks with nature. He will, on occasion, imply the test of character in the working of man

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[6] Rev. W. R. Johnson, as quoted from his address at Shelbyville, Tennessee, to the Southern Baptist Diocese on May 17, 1949.

with nature, but that is not the same as saying that man adopts the moral code of nature. The minister is assuming that Frost has ascribed such powers to the world of physical phenomena; but Frost is not a Wordsworth, Shelley or Byron, who, in and to varying degrees, might have furnished a target for Mr. Johnson.

There can be but little doubt than an individual without a belief in God is a man whose vision is limited, but the assertion that his outlook is down and not up is another matter, for a man who honestly seeks an answer to the question of the supernatural problem may be earnestly gazing upward -far more so than those who may accept from habit and not from conviction.

Wayne O'Day wrote, in an editorial:

> It is the old and perplexing question of the artist's duty to the public. Kirsten Flagstad was criticized brutally for her pro-Nazi attitude during the war. As a result she was refused permission to sing in England and in the United States. She is a truly great singer whose music has inspired thousands, and could, if singing and heard, probably inspire the thousands who have not yet heard her. How much restraint should be exercised by society on the artist on grounds of politics and morals? What connection is there between her singing and her character? The great, and I say this without reservation, really great Mr. Robert Frost has been acclaimed by the Senate of the United States for setting forth to our minds a reliable representation of ourselves and all men.

> What if this representation is derived on a purely "this world" standard? Is the reliable representation of ourselves and all men based on Frost's admitted love, sympathy and kindness for all mankind? Or is it based on the fundamental belief of the greater virtue in the life to come with God? Robert Frost has not denied his belief in God; he refuses the question.... There has been too much heat and fury, so little direction and so much wind in deciding what people do and do not believe. For the time being, we may, at least, safely conclude that one who, like Marcus Aurelius, looks on his fellow man like Frost cares for his must be the kind of a man who finds that "the greatest of these is charity." [7]

There is no escaping the fact that "character" suggests morality and that "morality" inevitably brings on the problem of a belief in a God. The faithfulness to a set of standards, no matter how closely they may resemble the virtues taught by a religious order, does not carry with it the connotation of morality and of right and wrong. For all his aptitude for trifling with the relative standard of the individual in questions of character and morality, there is a persistent intuitive core of a belief in a Supreme Being.

Feuillerat interprets Frost's morality in reference to Hellenic sensuousness:

> He does not perceive beyond created matter, the idea of the presence of a Creator. He does not, like Wordsworth, feel the need to penetrate to the universal spirit of which nature is only the sign... It is enough that things

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[7] Wayne O'Day, "Bonds on the Artist", editorial in the San Francisco U Examiner, issue of September 29, 1951.

> exist and that he can enjoy them... He has given himself to love; free from the tyranny of the mind, his body has recaptured all its elasticity, his senses have acquired a peculiar acuteness, and his soul is exultant with a joie de vivre. For the society which enjoys his view of life, he is ecstatically in accord but his pen trembles with fury when he describes moral catastrophies against the society which makes such tragedies possible. [8]

In contrast with this view, the German critic, Karl Schwarz sees in Frost a man who believes in:

> A great unity, enclosing the world of life, is back of it, a God conceived but not described-no sum of codified restrictions and moral percepts, but a free proud life in this world, among these people, on this small part of earth, and through them bound with the eternity of life. His poems achieve an almost mystic undertone; World, God and Man are basically one, and "Life" itself is the wisdom of this whole. [9]

The last two extracts are from the heretofore cited European critics and reveal a more mystic and romantic approach to Frost. By European, this thesis refers to critics on the continent of Europe who are other than English.

C.Day Lewis joins the school of thought in which the moral code is considered as deriving from the implication rather than from the direct statement;

> A subdued and ironic twist is typical of Frost. He is a serious moralist as well as a serious artist. But his peculiar intimacy with nature prevents him from being

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[8] Albert Feuillerat, op. citere, p.287

[9] Karl Schwarz, op. citere, p.288

> openly didactic. He preaches, like nature, in parables: sometimes merely presenting a picture, sometimes a mood, sometimes a narrative and leaving you to draw your own conclusions... The moral quality of living things for what they are stems from the sober puritanism that breathes the passion of local habitation.[10]

Ezra Pound said much the same thing in spirit and with much more vigour:

> That man Frost has no use for me. That's fine with me for I love hate, not love. He teaches God in so many simple ways that I am uneasy. I'm glad he's on his way to America again.[11]

Van Doren's position of the "golden mean" finds its expression in:

> Sometime ago, I said that this man, my friend, would be a great poet. Today he is acclaimed by all walks of life as meaning something to almost everyone. He represents American morality which has, as he has, kept to the center. He has avoided the extremes of denial and blind faith. In a love for his fellow man and a belief that kindness, mercy and justice serve for the beloved common task, he has obtained an honorable compromise which avoids but contains the extremes. His faith is the character of his people in action with life.[12]

Van Doren has never explained what he meant by "American morality" and "kept to the center"; nor is it clear what is meant by "containing of the extremes"-unless an out and out compromise is suggested, which would, in effect, state that a certain set of attitudes brings the richest

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[10] C.D.Lewis, "Four Prefaces to a Book", op. citere.

[11] Ezra Pound, op. citere, p. 153

[12] Mark Van Doren, address as recorded by Samuel Shapiro at Wesleyan College, October 18, 1950.

reward in dealing with one's neighbor. The reward is to be considered in terms of such ethical standards as kindness, mercy and justice. Denial of a purpose in life would invalidate such virtues; no blind faith is necessary in an after life when these virtues show concrete results on this temporal plane.

With Lawrance Thompson, Frost's middle position reestablishes itself in the mean position between a religious doctrine and an agnosticism. Given the entire range between idealism and skepticism, both Thompson and Van Doren sidestep the issue of an absolute moral standard and accept one of relativity. Thompson declares:

> Stop dodging the issue, the absolutist says to Frost. For Heaven's sake be consistent... choose.. Frost's answer is quite simple. He says. 'I don't dodge any issue. Those who fail to understand my position are those who want life neatly arranged in pigeonholes of comfortable classification. Frost sympathizes with anyone, be it an absolutist like Plato, a theologian like Thomas Aquinas, or a mystic like Swedenborg, who take the glorious risk... He is willing to fluctuate between two positions: a dualist in his thinking, a monist in his wishing. He is not willing to be consistent in any philosophic system because he constantly fluctuates between the darkness and the light of these two positions, exactly as the earth moves back and forth through day and night. 13

Certainly the finest qualities which exist in the individual and which are held up

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13 Lawrance Thompson, Fire and Ice, p.201

by society as virtues irrespective of the presence or absence of a religious dogma are permanent and universal. Truth, honesty, kindliness, sympathy, generosity and love have stood the test of moral peoples. It is difficult to see how Thompson and Van Doren can condone such a position, if it, in reality, does exist. It will be held that Frost's work and his own direct statements do not correspond to this compromise position. Thompson develops his thesis further:

> His persistent objection is to the kind of cheating to which theological discourse resorts when it tries to have its cake and eat it too. The theologian accepts in dogmatic fashion the monism of an absolute God, but then wants to put Him aside for a little limber while so that he may enjoy the free speculation of the philosophers. But this spoils the bold courage of the first choice: the willingness to step forth into the unknown; the heroic seeking in face of an apparent dualism, an equally apparent but not provable monism. In his own fluctuations, Frost never wants to turn his eyes away from the probability. He likes the incident in Pilgrim's Progress where Pilgrim is asked:
>
> 'Do you see yon shining gate?'
> 'Yes,' said he, 'I think I do.' [14]

The implication is that Thompson is of the opinion that men wish to see that of and for which they have no conviction. Thompson assures the reader that Frost is of this opinion, as well. Yet, conviction is a true test of morality and character. This conviction must be that persistence in belief through action will triumph with virtue over vice. There

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[14] Lawrance Thompson, op. citere, p.429. Fire and Ice, p.202.

is no relativity to the virtuous thought and the honorable act. The moral code asserts the immutable truth that character results from the insistence that certain forms of conduct must prevail over the individual good and that the individual must himself agree, abide and ensure that such ensues. As Christopher Fry stated in his tragedy, The First Born, "Good has a singular strength not known to evil." This thesis holds that Frost has never denied this very great truth, but that, instead, in his writing and in his conduct he is of this firm moral conviction.

3. What Frost Has to Say on Character, Morality and Religion

The forces of nature and the forces of society press equally hard on the New Englander who has, substantially, turned away from the religious pull of Calvinism. The impression of a harsh and chastening God has given way to a creed which attributes to nature the qualities previously ascribed to the Divine power. As comfortless as his belief in a possibility of attaining happiness in the world to come may have been, at least he obtained some relief in believing that good work, honesty and deprivation of pleasure are outward signs of one destined to be saved.

In turning away in rejection from even that hope, he has foundered miserably for nature promises him nothing except the pleasure he may gain from contemplating her and not from her beneficence. When he surveys himself and his fellows at their common tasks, he feels a heavy sense of failure for there is nothing ahead.

But Frost will reject this and deny such conclusions on the part of his New England compatriots:

> One can safely say after from six to thirty thousand years of experience that the evident design is a situation here in which it will always be about equally hard to save your soul. Whatever progress may be taken to mean, it can't mean making the world any easier a place in which to save your soul-or if you dislike hearing your soul mentioned in open meeting, say your decency,your integrity

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15 Robert Frost,open letter to the Amherst Student, Vol. 9, No. 17, issue of May 25, 1936.

Definitely the poet holds that a moral order exists apart from any experience man may have in a changing material order. The reference to"soul, decency and integrity" refer to the character of man as an entity which must be preserved and maintained in all orders.

In response to the suggestion that little remained for the person lost in a technical world except pity for himself and for his fellow men. Frost responded:

> I am impatient of such talk. All ages of the world are bad- a great deal worse anyway than Heaven.If they weren't, the world might just as well be Heaven at once and have it over with...There is at least so much good in the world that it admits of form and the making of form. And not only admits of it, but calls for it.[16]

Certainly there is nothing relative and equivocal about his position on character, virtue and morality as postulated in temporal terms. While his morality is not directly derived from a theological system, it does not stem from the fountain of material utility. In an address to a Junior League, he gave a reluctant performance. His account of that address contains:

> When I meet very wealthy people, I have to face them; I hate to face them. I remember facing once a small group, not a thousand miles from Philadelphia. I did it for a charity working friend of mine. She told me that the girls I must speak to must begin contributing and must be gone for. They were worth at least a million apiece, and I could be rough on them. I knew they were all helping her in her charity

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16 Robert Frost, op. citere, page 432.

> work, so that you can see my state of mind. She told me that the girls would respond. I felt cross to be there. I took for my text, 'Let no man bring together what God hath put asunder. 'Let the rich keep away from the poor for all of me. Into the Bible it says, you think- I don't-it says in the Bible that you always have the poor with you. That isn't what it says. It says,'For Christ's sake, forget the poor some of the time.' There are many beautiful things in the world besides poverty.'[17]

Frost shows here the clouds that may hang over the true meaning of charity. His idea is that charity vests in all men. He is more than hinting that "poor" does not alone refer to material poverty;there is a poverty of the mind and of the spirit for which no appeal to the material good is appropriate.

Frost does not concur in a social morality which confesses to and boasts of a set of rules to protect man in his search for worldly-well-being. He is exceedingly aware of and severe in his approach to mercy and justice. He said, in a talk at Haverford College in Philadelphia:

> We are in danger, in our way of thinking, that mercy comes first in the world. It comes in, but it comes in second. The thing you are interested in is in justice; all you ask for is justice in the struggle. I had a boy come to me with poetry the other day. (Who is a poor thing?) He came to me with poetry the other day to talk about mercy on earth- everything has now gone merciful; kinder times ahead. I let him talk and have it all his own way. Finally, he came out with the poetry he had brought. I said: 'You've come for mercy.'
> He looked at me a second and said: 'No, sir, I just want Fairness.'
> (You see, they've really more spunk than you think.)
> I said: ' Thought so.'

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[17] Robert Frost as quoted in Fire and Ice, by Lawrence Thompson, op. citere, quotation from page p.218

> After I had treated him with fairness- and he came out, as it happened, very poorly in my estimation- then I might in mercy carry him home to his mother. Mercy is there, of course. It is a part of everything. But there is so much confusion about who is a poor thing nowadays, that I can't help saying there is not much of that sort of thing around my poor people.[18]

Here Frost is bitterly attacking a morality which purports to protect its adherents against the test of a large morality- the response of man to the demands to forego his selfishness. Man has not the right to excuse himself from failing to measure up to what he knows is the truth about himself and his acts. The individual has a right to fairness; to be adjudged without discrimination, but no individual nor collective morality can serve which permits man to accept a false estimate and a false substitute for truth.

The courage to seek beyond pleasure of the passing moment, however enjoyable and beautiful, for the permanent values, is revealed in "Reluctance":

> And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
> No longer blown hither and thither;
> The last lone aster is gone;
> The flowers of the witch-hazel wither;
> The heart is still aching to seek,
> But the feet question, 'Whither?'

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[18] Robert Frost, as quoted from Lawrance Thompson's Fire and Ice, p. 220.

> Ah, when to the heart of man
> Was it ever less than a treason
> To go with the drift of things,
> To yield with a grace to reason,
> And bow and accept the end
> Of a love or a season?[19]

Despite the fact that Frost will, to the utmost, drain the fact of nature, this is not the alpha and the omega of life for him. He must search beyond, hoping for the empirical fact, pointed out by implication, which shall lead him to the greater faith on the higher level.

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[19] Robert Frost, "Reluctance", A Boy's Will

4. Reconciliation on These Higher Levels from Frost's Poetry

The tender compassion revealed in a fairness and in a genuine sympathy,which is not the mawkishness of mere sentimentality, is a marked quality of Frost's philosophy. In "The Death of the Hired Man", the love of Mary for the old, the worn and the dying Silas is shown with a restraint which belies the depth of sincerity:

> No, but he hurt my heart the way he lay
> And rolled his old head on that sharp-edged chair-back.
> He wouldn't let me put him on the lounge,
> You must go in and see what you can do.
> I made the bed up there for him tonight.[20]

After a few moments, Mary felt akinship for the fierce personal integrity of the old man; she said, gently:

" You musn't laugh at him".[21]

In "Home Burial", the character of both husband and wife have been placed to a severe test over the sorrow of the death of their child. The wife is unable to submerge her grief which grows on her; the husband seeks to dull the shock of sorrow by an intense concern with his daily chores. Unable to speak his grief, he turns the conversational trend to talk about the weather:

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[20] Robert Frost, op. citere, "The Death of the Hired Man"

[21] Ibidium.

The wife accuses the husband of brutal callousness because he could bear to bury his own child; he, loving her dearly, fails to appreciate her outraged sensitivity:

> And its come to this,
> A man can't speak of his own child that's dead!
>
> 'You can't because you don't know how to speak.
> If you had any feelings, you that dug
> With your own hand-hour after hour- how could you?
> His, his little grave;
> I saw you from that very window there,
> Making the gravel leap and leap in air and land so lightly
> And roll back down the mound beside the hole. [22]

The husband, anxious with love for her, pleaded:

> Don't, don't go.
> Don't carry it to someone else this time.
> Tell me about it if it's something human.
> Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
> Unlike other folks as your standing there
> Apart would make me out. Give me my choice and chance.
> I do think, though, you overdo it a little.
> What was it brought you up to think it the thing
> To take your mother-loss of a first child
> So inconsolably- in the face of love?
> You'd think his memory might be satisfied.- [23]

Frost reconciles the tragedy in the greater sacrifice of a universal love: barriers may be set up against everything except this:

> Though I don't like such things 'twixt those that love.
> Two that don't love can't live together without them.
> But two that do love can't live together with them. [24]

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[22] Robert Frost, "Home Burial", North of Boston

[23] Ibidium

[24] Ibidium

As important and as essential as the task of concern with the material may be, Frost places his faith in the human touch of friendship of a fellow man. In the poem,"A Servant to Servants", he elucidates the unimportance of work which becomes mere drudgery. The wife of a materialistic farmer has been obliged to do all the housekeeping and to cook for his numerous hired men. Broken physically by the labour, she senses the futility of the slavery which has made her a "Servant to Servants."

Her objection is not to the work as such, but her revolt is against the teleology to which it has been directed:

> Bless you, of course you're keeping me from work,
> But the thing of it is, I need to be kept.
> There's work enough to do-there's always that;
> But behind's behind. The worst that you can do
> Is set me back a little more behind.
> I shan't catch up in this world,anyway.
> I'd rather you'd not go- unless you must.[25]

The duty of the individual to preserve through the greatest tests his sense of integrity in the hierarchy of values, in which material wealth is the lowest, is powerfully portrayed in the double implication suggested by the "Self-Seeker," The principal character in this poem has lost both his legs in a saw-mill accident. The lawyer, who represents the insurance company, has come to settle terms with the victim. This barrister, all the while, is hoping that the debate over the settlement will

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[25] Robert Frost, "Servant to Servants", North of Boston

not be too long and too bitter.

To the surprise of the lawyer, the legless one refuses to haggle over his misfortunes. He signs the paper without discussion over the amount listed in settlement. Willis, his friend, insists that the offer is too low and that better terms should be sought. The "self-seeker" makes it plain that his concern now is to seek for that real self which will give him courage to face his new and limited life. He realizes that it is far more important than the money he may seek to compensate him for a material loss. The irony exists in the fact that the lawyer does not understand the spiritual implications in the "self-seeker's words":

> Well, Anne, go dearie. Our affair will wait.
> The lawyer man is thinking of his train.
> He wants to give me lots and lots of money
> Before he goes, because I hurt myself,
> And it may take him, I don't know how long.
> But put our flowers in water first. Will! Help her:
> The pitcher's too full for her. There's no cup?
> Just hook them on the inside of the pitcher.
> Now- run. Get out your documents! You see
> I have to keep on the good side of Anne.
> I'm the great boy to think of number one.
> And you can't blame me in the place I'm in.
> Who will take care of my necessities
> Unless I do.
> ' A pretty interlude.'
> The lawyer said. 'I'm sorry but my train-
> Let your friend look at it.'
>
> 'Yes, but all that takes time
> And I'm as much in haste to get it over as you.[26]

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[26] Robert Frost, "The Self-Seeker", from North of Boston

One of the few examples of unrelieved tragedy occurs in Frost's "The Vanishing Red." The poem treats of the importance of man in terms of universal love; in this instance, the decline of the American Indian is personified by the murder of a Mohawk red man, John. The curious Indian is pushed through a manhole in the floor of a mill. He is drowned as the result. The miller, the murderer, stands for man's inhumanity to man. The contempt of man for his less fortunate fellow is reflected in the coarse and callous behavior of the miller:

> He took him down below a camping rafter,
> And showed him, through a manhole in the floor,
> The water in desperate straits like frantic fish,
> Salmon and sturgeon lashing their tails.
> Then he shut down the trap door with a ring in it
> That jangled even above the general noise,
> And came upstairs alone- and gave that laugh...[27]

Frost has an attack for the theory of doing the deed for the sake of recognition. The effort and care employed in the fact of work are not the ultimate values if the thing is to be bartered. He is not speaking of selling with its usual connotation of exchange. The sales he opposes are those of propaganda, material possessions and charity:

> I've seen the time I had to work myself.
> The having anything to sell is what
> Is the disgrace in man or state or nation.
>
> I met a traveler from Arkansas
> Who boasted of his state as beautiful
> For diamonds and apples...
> 'I see the porter's made your bed,' I told him.

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[27] Robert Frost, "The Vanishing Red", from Mountain Interval

I met a Californian who would
Talk California- a state so blessed,
He said in climate, none had ever died there
A natural death, and Vigiliance Committees
Had had to organize and stock the graveyards
And vindicate the state's humanity
.....
I choose to be a plain New Hampshire farmer
With an income of cash, say a thousand
(From a publisher in New York City).
It's restful to arrive at a decision,
And restful just to think about New Hampshire.
At present I'm living in Vermont. [28]

When man abandons himself to the consuming heat of emotions and passions and therein reckons character by the yardstick of intensity of feeling, he is likely to perish in a fire of his own making. At the same time, Frost would avoid the character, which, disdaining emotion, asserts itself in the pure cold light of reason alone. Such a being will die from a lack of the warmth of feeling:

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.
But if it had to perish twice.
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice. [29]

The position Frost would attain is not one of part emotion nor part reason; but that character

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[28] Robert Frost, "New Hampshire" from New Hampshire

[29] Robert Frost, "Fire and Ice" from New Hampshire

which ascertains, through reason, the finer points and principles which should inhere; these principles are clothed and invested with the emotion which attends virtue in action.

The devotion to the fact has been given emphasis; the human fact as well as the physical fact has come in for its share of attention. Unless one catches the dramatic tone characteristic of the texture of the Frostian poem, he is apt to overlook the deeper implication. In the poem "Not to Keep", Frost supplies a dramatic incident; a wounded soldier has been returned to his home and to his wife during a period of convalescence. Delighted to see him and relieved that he is not "visibly" disfigured, she asks the question: "What was it, dear?" She hopes that it will be serious enough to keep him home with her:

> 'Enough'
> Yet not enough. A bullet through and through,
> High in the breast. Nothing but what good care
> And medicine and you and rest a week
> Can cure me of to go again.' The same
> Grim giving to do over for them both.
> She dared no more than ask him with her eyes
> How was it with him for a second trial.
> And with his eyes he asked her not to ask.
> They had given him back to her, but not to keep.[30]

There we have the strength of character, the submission to the great fact, the greater duty. The life is held in trust for work and for love,

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[30] Robert Frost, "Not To Keep" from New Hampshire

but for something else, some higher duty, as well.

The courage to action requires a moral strength. It is difficult to avoid rationalization which will help to keep the individual from doing something which he ought to do. It is hard to know when man rests for the sake of contemplation of beauty or when he seeks an escape into the world of nature from the world of man. In the poem, "Misgiving", Frost imagines the conversation between the leaves and the fierce wind. Like the mortal beings who confess to the desire to embark on the journey perilous, the leaves become more reluctant, vague and misgiving as the time arrives for the adventure:

> And now they answer his summoning blast
> With an ever vaguer and vaguer stir,
> Or, at utmost, a little reluctant whirl
> That drops them no further than where they were.
>
> I only hope that when I am free
> As they are free to go in quest
> Or the knowledge beyond the bounds of life
> It may not seem better to me to rest.[31]

In the last verse, he expresses the hope that he will not fall into a state of contentment with the means rather than move forward and toward the greater end.

In the terse epigrammatic quatrain, "Plowmen", Frost appears, to some critics, to be playing on the use of "plow"

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[31] Robert Frost, "Misgiving", from New Hampshire

in contrast with moving snow and moving rock; to other critics, the four lines appear to be a bitter attack on the bleak rock-infested soil of New Hampshire.

The strain of contending against something unsubstantial is as frustrating as hurling a steel blade against the whirling elusiveness of snow. It seems as futile as hurling a tennis ball against a gale. The opposite difficulty and strain, for the worker, in hurling iron and bone against rock until the frame of the plow and that of the plowman is strained and battered is also futile. Frost calls to the intellect and to the senses in his discussion of the strained ligaments, the aching back, the pain of bruised and shocked kidneys and the flagging spirit of the plowman; the intellect and feeling of the reader is quickened to an emotion yielding sympathy. Bitterness and futility are not lacking:

> A plow, they say, to plow the snow.
> They cannot mean to plant it, no-
> Unless in bitterness to mock
> At having cultivated rock.[32]

The problem may only be resolved in the morality of the purpose for which these things direct themselves. The pursuit of the will-of-the-wisp fancy is not the test of character; the stubborn action for the sake of action is not the highest criterion.

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[32] Robert Frost, "Plowmen" from New Hampshire

The quality in which man is able to strive against great difficulties derives from a moral fibre which ultimately insists on winning through physical and material obstacles:

> The tree the tempest with a crash of wood
> Throws down in front of us is not to bar
> Our passage to our journey's end for good,
> But just to ask us who we think we are.
>
> Insisting always on our own way so.
> She likes to halt us in our runner tracks,
> And make us get down in a foot of snow
> Debating what to do without an axe.
>
> And yet she knows obstruction is in vain:
> We will not be put off the final goal
> We have it hidden in us to attain,
> Not though we have to seize earth by the pole
>
> And, tired of aimless circling in one place,
> Steer straight off after something into space.[33]

The use of the physical fact, in this instance, the fallen tree, does not indicate that Frost derives his moral code from nature;but he, instead, uses natural phenomena for implicative purposes from which the universal truth may spring from the concrete particular.

From the philosophic range of West-Running Brook comes the significant "The Peaceful Shepherd." It would be easy for the reader who tends to become entranced by the means to conclude that Frost is the bitter foe of religious doctrines

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[33] Robert Frost, "On A Tree Fallen Across the Road" from New Hampshire

and that his scorn of the symbols held in traditional reverence are little more than expressions of complete disbelief:

> If heaven were to do again,
> And on the pasture bars,
> I leaned to line the figures in
> Between the dotted stars,
>
> I should be tempted to forget,
> I fear, the Crown of Rule
> The Scale of Trade, the Cross of Faith,
> As hardly worth renewal.
>
> For these have governed in our lives,
> And see how men have warred.
> The Cross, the Crown, the Scales may all
> As well have been the Sword.[34]

Frost's complaint is not launched at the spirit which the symbols represent but at the terrible ways in which the protagonists have employed the symbols. His love of peace and his hatred of force are at the heart of his protest.

There is a destructive bent in man, a lawless individualism which will act under slogan or creed to express the emotion of the person. This brutal atavism is not only freed by war, but also by predatory forms less violent but equally as pernicious and wicked. In "The Flood", Frost uses the word "blood" to show a violent savagery in the nature of man. It is pictured as a

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[34] Robert Frost, "The Peaceful Shepherd", from West-Running Brook

rolling tide which cannot be contained: eternal vigilance is required to keep it in check so that society and the individual himself will not be consumed:

> Blood has been harder to dam back than water.
> Just when we think we have it impounded safe
> Behind new barrier walls (and let it chafe!)
> It breaks away in some new kind of slaughter.
> We choose to say it is let loose by the devil;
> But power of blood itself releases blood.
> It goes by might of being such a flood
> Held high at so unnatural a level.
> It will have outlet, brave and not so brave.
> Weapons of war and implements of peace
> Are but the points at which it finds release.
> And now it is once more the tidal wave
> That when it has swept by leaves summits stained.
> Oh, blood will out. It cannot be contained. [35]

There are times when the greatest virtue is the will to restrain from giving over to the violence by which the emotions are entrapped and by which the blood "cannot be contained." This strength and virtue is that set forth by Christopher Fry in A Sleep of Prisoners :

> **David:** So help me, in
> The stresses of this furnace I can see
> To be strong beyond all action is the strength
> To have. But how do men and forbearance meet?
> A Stone forbears when the wheel goes over, but
> That is death to the flesh.

On the other hand, Frost pays tribute to the soldier, who, believing to the death in the cause for which he gives

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[35] Robert Frost, "The Flood" from West-Running Brook

his life, leaves an aura of courage in the world. The poem "A Soldier" follows "The Flood" in the volume West-Running Brook; the implication is that if, at times, the titanic contest which results in the strength of inaction is worthy, there are also occasions when the will to do is the test of character. In horror at the death of a warrior, Frost still realizes that the greater concern is for the cause which impelled the man's death:

> He is that fallen lance that lies as hurled,
> That lies unlifted now, come dew, come rust
> But still lies pointed as it plowed the dust.
> If we who sight along it around the world.
> See nothing worthy to have been its mark,
> It is because like men we look too near,
> Forgetting that as fitted to the sphere,
> Our missiles always make too short an arc.
> They fall, they rip the grass, they intersect
> The curve of earth, and striking, break their own;
> They make us cringe for metal-point on stone.
> But this we know, the obstacle that checked
> And tripped the body, shot the spirit on
> Further than target ever showed or shone.[36]

The short tribute to the spirit of Hannibal, the great Cathaginian, is in the same vein:

> Was there ever a cause too lost,
> Ever a cause that was lost too long,
> Or that showed with the lapse of time too vain
> For the generous tears of youth and song? [37]

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[36] Robert Frost, "A Soldier" from West-Running Brook

[37] Robert Frost, "Hannibal" from West-Running Brook

On reading through these poems, and on considering the implications, one comes more and more to realize how much confidence Frost places in what man has come to call Christian virtue. If Frost has not reached and attained the comfort that rests and inheres in the complete morality and teleology of the ultimate end, he believes in practicing many of the percepts one must follow to obtain the complete life. Unlike Hardy, who considered that God had withdrawn from the world of man and as a result man must reject the idea of God as the ultimate seat of happiness, Frost will strive to live the best life possible for one who cannot pierce the veil of the great mysteries. He will have faith in that which he can grasp empirically and will accept such intuitive knowledge as may be implied in his world of constant and cognizable phenomena.

"Sitting By a Bush in Broad Sunlight" is an admission by Frost that there must exist, in addition to what he accepts as proof of moral values in the world, some greater truth higher even than the most lofty ethic. If he is not sincerely converted, he will not dare scoff:

> And if men have watched a long time
> And never seen sun-smitten slime
> Again come to life and crawl off,
> We must not be too ready to scoff.

God once declared that he was true
And took the veil and then withdrew,
And remember how final a hush
That descended of old on the bush.

God once spoke to people by name.
The sun once imparted its flame.
One impulse persists as our breath;
The other persists as our faith.[38]

Through the ages, man has given his accolade of recognition to those who have thrust aside the personal pleasure and pain involved in their individual lives in order to sacrifice themselves to a higher meaning of values. Frost's "Two Tramps in Mud Time" expresses the philosophy that pleasure and satisfaction for the unit human being are not enough. The two tramps need the work of chopping wood; he, himself, is deriving pleasure from the playing of games at the wood-chopping profession. The tramps' need is first in order and must involve the sacrifice of what man would like to do(and what he wants for himself) for what he ought to do:

But yield who will to their separation
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one.
And the play is for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future's sakes.[39]

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[38] Robert Frost, "Sitting by a Bush in Broad Sunlight", West-Running Brook

[39] Robert Frost, "Two Tramps in Mud Time" from or from the other implication, "A Full-Time Interest" from A Further Range : Taken Doubly

The sense of the higher obligation is the manifestation of a courageous attempt to study the relationships with society in order to derive a higher ethic. Man, as a physical being, is but a microscopic part of the universe whose mind and spirit lift him above the horizon. His spirit, if bold and fearless, will attempt to probe beyond the immediate discoverable fact. Man does desire to solve the riddle of his physical universe and to look behind the curtain which so far has defied the extra-sensory perceptions man has. Frost would say, despite the knowledge he may attain of the starry heavens and the teeming earth, that the infinity of space remains to humble and to frustrate. There is another riddle to solve, as well: by use of man's experience with the physical fact and with his society of fellow man, the individual may devote himself to the solution of the enigma of man's temporal existence-man, earth and society.

No amount of verbal"glass and gloss"can cover up the tremendous difficulty which faces Frost, and those like him, who would resolve morality from the restricted tests of physical and human equations. For these are not the final-and they are not the complete-answers . The solution urged by the supporters of a purely man-held and man-centered ethic is not sufficient-not even to those who try to hold this view.

Thompson attempts to resolve the problem by observing that Frost says, in effect, " mine are not the final answers, but they are answers good enough to live by." Of course, to those who have faith in God, the answer in the reference of anthropocentrism is not good enough to live by nor to die by. The most that can be said for Frost, and this is considerable, is that the holding of a man-centred ethic in terms of sacrifice of the individual to the greater good of the whole requires, without the help of faith, an awesome courage. He would approach perfection on a lower level, but the point is that the level at which he would approach is not that one for which man was created. Subject to this important limitation, and a fatal one, for all such like Frost, he is a man of lofty principles and high ideals.

Frost is more honest than those who would whitewash his tragic limitation in religious faith. In his letter which expresses the courage which results from a faith in action, he admits his inability to grasp the larger view. His crowning achievement is his persistence in garnering, translucently, the best answer man can give in rational terms as to the moral conduct of one man toward another;

> We people are thrust forward out of the suggestions of form in the rolling clouds of nature. Anyone who has achieved the least form of it is lost to the larger excruciations. I think it must stroke faith the right way. The artist and the poet might be expected to be the most aware of such reassurance. But it is really everybody's sanity to feel it and to live by it. Fortunately, too, no forms are more engrossing, gratifying, comforting and staying than those lesser ones we throw off, like vortex rings of smoke, all our individual enterprise and needing nobody's cooperation: a basket, a letter, a garden, a room, an idea, a picture, a poem. For these we haven't to get a team together before we can play.[40]

Here Frost has epitomized both the strength and weakness of the artist. An ascent to the vision of life as higher than material pleasure is the strength. The acceptance of form when doubt arises is the weakness for his form is not that which impels to a faith in the mysteries of God.

In complementing his position, Frost concluded:

> The background is hugeness and confusion shading away from where we stand into black and utter chaos; and against the background any small man-made figure of order and concentration. What pleasanter than this should be so? Unless we are novelists or economists we don't worry about this confusion; we look out on it with an instrument to tackle it or reduce it. It is partly because we are afraid it might prove too much for us and our blend of democratic-republican-socialist-communist-anarchist party. But it is more because we like it.

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[40] Robert Frost,"Open Letter to the Amherst Student", op. citere, p.432.

> We were born to it; we were born used to it; we have practical reasons for wanting it there.To me, any little form I assert upon it is velvet, as the saying is, and to be considered for how much more it is than nothing. If I were a Platonist, I should have to consider it, I suppose, for how much less it is than everything.[41]

Thompson, by reputation, a close friend and commentator on Frost, comments on this last excerpt as follows:

> Here is life and faith in action without worrying about any final understanding as to the mysteries of God and the universe; for though he may not be precise in faith, through man's active and persistent yearning, seeking and doing, he places himself in accord with the intended ways of God to man.[42]

Thompson's statement involves serious and dangerous conclusions. First, one of the important qualities of faith is the strength that often requires inaction. Second, any degree of understanding God and the universe requires considerable anxiety and worry. Third, can it be true that action and persistent yearning and doing are the "intended ways of God to man?" As often as not, man's character depends on a restraint from yearning and on his power to forego. Finally, it is fatal to the doctrine of free will, by which man can and must aspire to be better than he is, to admit that he is the automatic manifestation of forces over which he has no control and whose purposes he cannot apprehend in terms of self.

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41 Robert Frost, op. citere, p.454

42 Lawrance Thompson, Fire and Ice ,pp. 189-190

More specifically, Frost has outlined his three stages of belief:

> The person who gets close enough to poetry is going to know more about the word "belief" than anybody else knows, even in religion nowadays. There are two or three places where we know religion outside of belief and belief outside of religion. The latter is most present. One of them is at the age of fifteen to twenty in our self-belief. A young man knows more about himself than he is able to prove to anyone.He has no knowledge that anyone else will accept as knowledge. In his foreknowledge, he has something he is going to believe into fulfillment, into acceptance.
>
> There is another belief like that, the belief in someone else, a relationship of the two that is going to be believed into fulfillment. That is what we are talking about in our novels, the belief in love. And the disillusionment that the novels are full of is simply the disillusionment from disappointment in that belief. The belief can fail, of course.
>
> Then there is a literary belief. Every time a poem is written, everytime a short story is written, it is written, not by cunning, but by belief. The beauty, the something, the little charm of the thing to be, is more felt than known.
>
> Now I think- I happen to think- that those three beliefs I speak of, the self-belief, the love belief, and the art-belief are all closely related to the God-belief, that the God-belief is a relationship you enter into with him to bring about the future.[43]

With this statement, the most definite of his philosophical quotations, his high moral ethic is completely outlined. The vigour of the individual will, the love which demands sacrifice in the name of love for love of man and the intuitive feeling for the beauty of something evinced

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[43] Robert Frost, "Education by Poetry", from the Amherst Graduate's Quarterly , Vol. 20, No. 3, issue of February, 1931, pp.75-85.

through the creative spirit, all these reconcile and inhere in some higher relationship. This is not the faith of the Christian but it is the representation of a moral and lofty mind.

The human being who is deficient in these beliefs has little joy in the present and must have a fearful outlook in the future. From Five Nocturnes, the short verse, "I,-The Night Light" presents the portrait of an unhappy person:

> She always had to burn a light
> Beside her attic bed at night.
> It gave bad dreams and broken sleep,
> But helped the Lord her soul to keep.
> Good gloom on her was thrown away.
> It is on me by night and day,
> Who have, as I suppose , ahead
> The darkest of it still to dread.[44]

Frost's outlook on the world is not, per se, gloomy. He has his moments of pessimism about the high values man places on the possession of material wealth; Frost realizes that man's greatest and most precious investment, temporally, is time. Time, limited as it is, is not to be taken up with strife and war over things which do not, in the larger ethic, matter. Expressing impatience with those who have blamed the world and its people for the disillusionment and despair over two great world wars, Frost decries those who would

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[44] Robert Frost, "I"-The Night Light", from Five Nocturnes .

protest that man is living in the age of a moral twilight. Man must utilize the fleeting moments to the attainment and enjoyment of the best possible standard he has. The courage in action by which man is impelled and compelled to strive beyond the frustrations of the "like" task is expressed in his defiance of the things men allow themselves to disillusion their outlook with: "It is immodest of a man to think of himself as going down before the worst forces mobilized by God." [45]. Instead of pessimism, his dominant note is one of a courageous bright outlook on the whole visible scheme:

> The play seems out for almost infinite run.
> Don't mind a little thing like the actors fighting.
> The only thing I worry about is the sun.
> We'll be all right if nothing goes wrong with the lighting.[46]

The refusal to be side-tracked by consideration with unimportant conflicts is a dominant note in his moral outlook and make-up. Not until he had reached his seventieth birthday did Robert Frost turn to what appeared to him a conflict important enough to devote himself to an open discussion on morality and religion. A Masque of Reason (1945) and a Masque of Mercy (1947) seek a resolution of God's attitude toward the world and man's responsibility to him in the light

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[45] Robert Frost, op. citere, p. 456.

[46] Robert Frost, "It Bid's Pretty Fair", Out and Away

of reason, mercy and justice. A Masque of Reason commences with the forty-third chapter of Job - there are but forty-two in the Bible. Job, in delivering his opinions to God, reflects Frost's distaste for a religion which promises man a pleasant escape from the travails of this world if he will but put up with them in resignation:

> The let-up's heavenly. You perhaps will tell us
> If that is all there is to be of Heaven,
> Escape from so great pains of life on earth
> It gives a sense of let-up calculated
> To last a fellow to eternity. [47]

At the same time, Frost, satirically, warns man about the dangers of assuming the responsibility of postulating virtue and vice on his own grounds. Reason is great, indeed, but imperfect in ascertaining the creative moral principle:

> God: I've had you on my mind a thousand years
> To thank you someday for the way you helped me
> Establish, once for all, the principle
> There's no connection man can reason out
> Between his just deserts and what he gets.
> Virtue may fail and wickedness succeed. [48]

Man's daring at setting up a system of religious thought which would speak for God, instead of allowing him to declare his own decrees, is attacked by Frost, who considers this to be a subversion of reason:

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[47] Robert Frost, A Masque of Reason

[48] Ibidium.

> The only free will there at first was man's,
> Who could do good or evil as he chose.
> I had no choice but I must follow him
> With surfeits and rewards he understood-
> Unless I liked to suffer loss of worship.[49]

As man persists in requiring God to give the cause in words which will appease man's rational query, there comes the scornful response:

> There you go asking for the very thing
> We've just agreed I didn't have to give.[50]

In trying to seek ways for salvation, man, not certain now that reason will do the task, considers that by taking care of the indigent and unfortunate by organized charity-so that individual responsibility may be circumvented-God will incline himself to mercy, if not reason:

> The test is always how we treat the poor.
> It's time the poor were treated by the state
> In some way not so penal as the poorhouse...[51]

Job's wife, who has made this remark, points out that this line of approach is more likely to succeed than man's concern with abstractions from reason:

> Of course, in the high abstract singular
> There isn't any universal reason;
> And no one but a man would think there was.
> You don't catch women trying to be Plato.[52]

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49 Robert Frost, A Masque of Reason

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

To those who expect immediate results from prayer, from reason and from faith in the doctrine of salvation, Frost gives warning:

> God needs time just as much as you or I
> To get things done. Reformers fail to see that.[53]

The belief that individuals can entrust their religious hopes and yearnings to that collective organ of man, society, is assaulted:

> Job: All very splendid. I am flattered proud
> To have been in on anything with You.
> 'Twas a great demonstration if You say so.
> Though, incidentally, I sometimes wonder
> Why it had to be at my expense.
>
> God: It had to be at somebody's expense.
> Society can never think things out:
> It has to see them acted out by actors,
> Devoted actors at a sacrifice-
> The ablest actors I can lay my hands on.
> Is that your answer? [54]

At this point, God replies that the plan for working out His will must be through the individual, rather than through society; faith in the ability of the individual to exercise his reason and to work out most of his problems is a consistent theme of Frost's.

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[53] Robert Frost, A Masque of Reason

[54] Ibid.

Job, representing, much of the time, Frost's point of view responds:

> We disparage reason.
> But all the time it's what we're most concerned with.
> There's will as motor and there's will as brakes.
> Reason is, I suppose, the steering gear.
> The will as brakes can't stop the will as motor
> For very long.....
> Before I let You off
> From telling me Your reason, don't assume
> I thought You had none...[55]

Frost, willing to concede that man's use of reason to construct a spiritual order to suit his own conception, however lofty that conception might be, still claims that man has to fall back on that which raises him above the primates-Reason. At least, reason must arrive at a higher cause although the cause may still remain in question.

Job, pressing for a concrete answer to God's plan for man, is informed that through the individual reason there is a greater chance for an answer than through the organized approach:

> God: What I mean to say:
> Your comforters were wrong.
>
> Job: Oh, that committee!
>
> God: I saw you had no fondness for committees.
> Next time you find yourself pressed on to one
> For the revision of the Book of Prayer
> Put that in if it isn't in already:
> Deliver us from committees. 'Twill remind me.
> I would do anything for you, in reason.[56]

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[55] Robert Frost, A Masque of Reason

[56] Ibid.

Job is forced to accept the fact that there is a plan; but man's reason is to be used to reconcile himself to the idea that God is not going to give its detail in data comprehensible to man's intellect. Man's intellect, suggests God, works in strange ways; it has, for example, made Satan indispensable. While granting the Evil One's reality as vice, God suggests that the devil is not the potent factor man has willed him to be:

> God: He has his business he must be about.
> Job mentioned him and so I brought him in
> More to give his reality its due
> Than anything.[57]

Job's wife, accepting the fact, that, come what may, the event of life on earth is very real indeed, employs her reason in a very concrete way: "Now, if you three have settled anything, you'd as well smile as frown on the occasion."[58]

Having discovered the importance of the individual's reason in discerning a high level of values, but having also convinced himself of the limitation of the rational in discovering first causes, Frost inquires into the problem of God's mercy and His justice; the one intelligible through will, the other through reason. Reason, while a great force,

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[57] Robert Frost, A Masque of Reason

[58] Ibid.

indispensable to man, is inferior and negative to the force of love. In A Masque of Mercy, mercy will be Frost's term for love. Justice, apprehended rationally, will presume that Jonah stands responsible to God for commissions and omissions of duties and responsibilities to man and to God. Mercy will be man's flight to a concept of Christian charity. Because mercy is intelligible through the will only, and because justice is intelligible through reason, mercy and justice will be antagonistic, one to the other.

The different points of view given in the masque are not so much those of entirely different people as they are manifestations of conflicts, ideas and ideals within the same person. The Brownian psychological introspective technique is employed.

One point of view is that man should, as a unit, seek guidance from the reading of the Bible; another side, quoted, represents the feeling that God's mercy is not to be attained and contained in the individual approach:

> A Bible!
> To find out how much to get away from God?
> Which is what people use it for too often-
> And why we wouldn't have one in the store.
> We don't believe the common man should read it.
> Let him seek his religion in the Church.[59]

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[59] Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

Another facet reflects the philosophy of the individual that God is strong for justice; man must face Him on a"stand and deliver"basis. The least that man can do, in justice, is to be brave:

> Your courage failed! The saddest thing in life
> Is that the best thing in it should be courage.[60]

The attack within converges on St. Paul. Paul, arguing for God's mercy through a searing charity, insists on embarking on his journey armed with and backed by a rigid theological system. Man, alone, argues Paul, is involved in a dilemma which he cannot solve. Justice is not the crucial point:

> Paul:
> I recognized you.
> You are the universal figure.
> Escapist as we say, though you are not
> Running away from Him-you think you are-
> But from his mercy-justice's contradiction.
> But here's where your evasion has an end.
> I have to tell you something that will spoil
> Indulgence in your form of melancholy
> Once and for all. I'm going to make you see
> How relatively little justice matters.[61]

Here, one aspect of man accuses the other of: "robbing me of my incentive". The other part replies,through Paul, "I am empowered to excuse you from it." [62]

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60 Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

Can the Church, any church, with its concept of mercy, excuse man from the necessity of facing God's justice in rationally individual terms of adherence to or retreat from the day by day struggle? Frost is reluctant to grant this point. He is fearful that man, if he places his destiny and freedom into the hands of the collective concept of Christian charity, will lose the qualities which enable man to stand up against and to hurl back the pressure of the physical and social wear and tear:

> There's not the least lack of love of God
> In what I say. Don't be so silly, woman.
> His very weakness for mankind's endearing.
> I love him and fear Him. Yes, but I fear for Him.
> I don't see how it can be to His interest
> This modern tendency that I find in Him
> To take the punishment out of all failure
> To be strong, careful, thrifty, diligent,
> Anything we once thought we had to be.[63]

The pressure on St. Paul, who is accused of devitalizing life, is carried further:

> You don't know Paul: he's in the Bible, too.
> He is the fellow who theologized
> Christ almost out of Christianity.
> Look out for him. [64]

The most powerful condemnation of mercy is levelled against false democracy which has permitted collective mediocrity in the name of Christian brotherhood:

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[63] Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

[64] Ibid.

> **Keeper:** You know what lets us off from being careful?
> The thing that did what you consider mischief,
> That ushered in this modern lenience
> Was the discovery of fire insurance.
> The future state is springing even now
> From the discovery that loss from failure
> By being spread out over everybody
> Can be made negligible.
> The one indecency's to make a fuss
> About our own or anybody's end.[65]

To Paul's insistence on the quality of mercy, Frost leaves implication to become most precise:

> Just, I would have Him just before all else
> To see that the fair fight is really fair.
> That He could enter on the stricken field
> After the fight's so definitely done
> There can be no disputing who has won-
> Then He could enter on the stricken field
> As Red Cross Ambulance Commander-in-Chief
> To ease the more extremely wounded out
> And mend the others up to go again.[66]

Mercy has yet to state its case forcefully. Paul points out that in the name of justice, the strong triumph. Wealth is concentrated into the hands of the few; in the name of justice in courts, the powerful succeed. Reason, under the aegis of justice, makes the rich "richer" and the poor "poorer". Charity, through Christ, has waged a struggle against violence; the Sermon on the Mount has made mercy the symbol of a life worth while.

But the individualist protests!

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65 Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

66 Ibid.

> Paul's constant theme! The Sermon on the
> Mount
> Is just a frame-up to insure the failure
> Of all of us, so all of us will be
> Thrown prostrate at the Mercy Seat for Mercy.[67]

There are the two viewpoints: first, Christianity is a religion designed to ensure that the less fit, physically and intellectually, survive at the expense of the more fit- a refutation of the bald law of the "survival of the fittest"; the second point is that man has, through reason, decided that cooperation is necessary for the survival of the species. There is, concurrent with this, the belief in a moral code which rests on the integrity of a code of life based on"should" and not "want to." The virtues of humility, kindness and love are considered man's most potent arsenal for human life and for preparation for the life to come.

Frost, through Paul, asks the antagonists to re-read the Sermon on the Mount. One states:" A beautiful impossibility." [68] The theme is carried further when one persists:

> A irresistible impossibility.
> A lofty beauty no one can live up to
> Yet no one can turn from trying to live up to.[69]

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67 Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

Paul continues his thesis by reminding the debators that no one can turn from the beautiful impossibility; the finest achievement man can attain is the winning of mercy through the collective admission of a lack of merit:

> Mercy is only to the undeserving.
> But such we all are made in the sight of God.
> Here we all fail together, dwarfed and poor.
> Failure is failure, but success is failure.
> There is no better way of having it.
> An end you can't by any means achieve
> And yet can't turn your back on or ignore,
> That is the mystery you must accept. [70]

The theory that failure is failure and that success is also failure is not to go by without protest and demands for clarification. One of the gathering objects: "I won't deceive myself about success by making failure out of equal value." [71] The implication there is that if there is to be no merit for superiority in striving for temporal success, the same theory may apply, disastrously towards efforts to become morally successful and superior. In order to get an answer satisfactory to each, all turn to the humble Jonah and ask: "What is your answer?" [72] He replies, sadly and wistfully, for he is on the brink of a great faith and yet kept back by a restraining and questioning wisdom:

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[70] Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

> You ask me if I see yonder shining gate,
> And I reply I almost think I do,
> Beyond this great door you have locked
> Against me,
> Beyond the storm, beyond the universe.[73]

Jonah, hopeful, looking for help, asks the way of light. Paul instructs him that faith in the glory and truth will lend him guidance. He is to place his trust in the dogma of the Church. Jonah, dazzled by so many enticing and opposing lights and suggestions, is literally blinded into confusion and indirection.

Jonah tries once more and asks for help from another debator. He is told to place his faith in courage, although the importance of fear is not to be deprecated:

> In glorifying courage!
> Courage is of the heart by derivation,
> And great it is. But fear is of the soul.
> And I'm afraid.[74]

The fear of God is not the fear of punishment for sin unless one believes in the doctrines of the Church. The fear is not for the institutions of the state: the asylum, the jail, the schoolhouse and the poorhouse. The fear arises because:

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[73] Robert Frost A Masque of Mercy

[74] Ibid.

> I'm too much afraid of God to claim
> I have been fighting on the angel's side.
> That is for Him and not for me to say.
> For me to say it would be irreligious.
> (Sometimes I think you are too sure you have been.)
> And I can see that the uncertainty
> In which we act is a severity,
> A cruelty, amounting to injustice
> That nothing but God's mercy can assuage.[75]

The justice that man insists on may be injustice for it is postulated by the conception of man and may be entirely different than that conceived by God.

At the conclusion of the masque, Frost seeks reconciliation in the belief that man must have the courage to overcome the doubt within him. True mercy comes in the feeling of brotherhood for those who have striven in like effort to find the great truths and to stride toward them. The love is that of fellow mortals in action, not in passive contemplation- in courage and not from despair. It is an advance toward the irresistibility of universal love, not the retrograde step toward a satisfaction from the trivial and material wealth:

> Let the lost millions pray it in the dark!
> My failure is no different from Jonah's.
> We have both lacked the courage in the heart
> To overcome the fear within the soul
> And go ahead to any accomplishment.

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[75] Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy .

> Courage is what it takes and takes the more of
> Because the deep fear is so eternal.
> And if I say we lift him from the floor
> And lay him where you ordered him to lie
> Before the Cross, it is from fellow feeling,
> As if I asked for one more chance myself
> To learn to say
> Nothing can make injustice just but mercy.[76]

In summing up the question of character, morality and religion for Frost, it is important to insist on a limitation in Frost- that of his obliviousness to Revealed Truth. As Cardinal Newman stated:

> I speak of it, for instance, as teaching the ruined state of man; his utter inability to gain Heaven by anything he can do for himself; the moral certainty of his losing his soul if left to himself; the simple absence of all right and of all claims on the part of the creature in the presence of the Creator; the illimitable claims of the Creator on the service of the created; the imperative and obligatory force of the voice of the conscience; and the inconceivable sin of sensuality. I speak of it as teaching, that no one gains heaven except by the free grace of God, or without a regeneration of nature; that no one can please Him without faith; that the heart is the seat both of sin and obedience; that charity is the fulfilling of the Law.[77]

Frost has much the same high moral standard and conduct of the Roman emperor, Emperor Julian; like him, Frost believes in simplicity, lack of ostentation, dislike of sensuality, literary acumen, modesty, thrift, kindness, honesty, a love for and of labor, a rational belief in the existence of some Supreme Being and a higher order in a spiritual

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[76] Robert Frost, A Masque of Mercy

[77] Cardinal John Henry Newman, On the Scope and Nature of University Education ,"Liberal Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Religion."

sense. Both tried to resolve their views of the next world and of virtue in this one in the light of the intellect- their reason. Frost, unlike Julian, has some grave doubts about the efficacy of reason as an infallible guide. At the same time he is unwilling to accept a doctrine of mercy for fear that it will enable mediocrity to supplant excellence, inequality to exist on a par with superiority, failure to be equally rated with success, passive acceptance to be as valuable as courage, and hopeful submission to the mass called society to stand on even terms with the individual will that seeks to find the answer to the mysteries of God and man.

In his last two volumes , as of this date, A Masque of Reason and A Masque of Mercy, Frost has wrestled valiantly with the problem of the best resolution of the best life. Admitting the inadequacy of reason which man employs to vizualize God on man's own terms, Frost considers it, however, the best tool man has with which to go to and to live in the world of nature and man. Through reason he can advance to some success in considering the nature of things seen and unseen.

Frost reconciles the problem by granting that God's mercy will come through yielding justice in a fair fight and through the never-ceasing will to attempt the beautiful impossibility of the Sermon on the Mount. Mercy vests in a

love for all men, who, with courage to act and with desire to think, strive, in virtue, to seek the best life they can.

Like Jonah, Frost has his moments when he sees the better land beyond this world. He is, however, too honest to boast a faith he does not possess, but too courageous not to seek the faith he lacks. After the tide of battle has rolled over the stricken field of men who have tried in courage, reason and truth, then, and only then, will Frost trust in the mercy of love.

SECTION THREE

CHAPTER TEN

RECONCILIATION- THE WHOLE OF FROST

1. The Standard For Frost

This third section does not summarize the minor syntheses yielded in the two sections, the one on form, the other on content. To summarize these under the name of a total reconciliation would be at cross purposes to this thesis. This final section and chapter is an integration of the art and content revealed in the first nine chapters. Even though, for example, an intuitive standard for form has been derived and synthesized with Frost's critics, Frost's comments and Frost's poetry, the poet cannot be judged on form alone. By the same token, he cannot be evaluated on a synthesis of nature and society alone. The total impact of the man and his work must come from a careful survey and fusion of all of these. To summarize would be to bind the parts with an outer string; by definition, one must show that all parts interact in such a way as to reconcile into something larger than the parts- a philosophy of life.

To reconcile Frost and his world, one must interpret. Frost may be analyzed on two grounds: what he has said, meaning, and how he has said it-form. He can be appreciated and reconciled on the interaction of his form and philosophy. This final section is in the spirit and necessity of this interaction.

In considering Frost's critics, in considering Frost's statements, in considering the meaning of his poetry and in an intuitive value for these, the standard must be comprehensive. Even when one insists that a standard should be serious, rational, embracive and communicable, there is more. What is the basic philosophy for the evaluation of Frost? Even when the myriad of Frostian critics is sorted with respect to the frames of reference, even when the hallowed voices of art in ages past are summoned to support, there remains the question which has hurled this age into artistic and critical turmoil. Is the standard for evaluation to be historic, biographic and genetic or one of textual analysis? Because of the tendency to adopt extreme positions, the literary figure of today is forced to take a stand on one or the other poles. In the case at point, the final decision on Frost will be profoundly affected in this case- as it has been in others-by the position taken by the writer.

Apparently the only major critical work on Frost to date, attempting to picture and to delineate the many-faceted poet, to consider Frost in the historical sense is Lawrance Thompson's. The "new critics" have tended to leave Frost severely alone. The numerous articles on Frost have not been characterized by a

close textual analysis. For the most part they seem to be aimed within the narrow limits of proving a point or two. But the standard for evaluation of the point is vague. For example, one will attempt the argument that Frost dislikes cities; another article will be devoted to the idea that Frost believes that the world is centered in New Hampshire; another will state a case for loneliness; and still another will argue that Frost is opposed to Calvinism. In but few instances does there seem to be either a textual basis for appraisal or, on the other hand, an attempt to prove Frost's response to a historical sense. In fairness to both the historic and the neo-critical school, either standard is preferable to an attempt to find in Frost support for a writer's private point of view.

Without a close textual interpretation there is no doubt that Frost would suffer in one important area- his dramatic grasp of form which transcends the traditional use of figures of speech and ornaments of poetry. The seizing of the expectant, the surprising and the congruent word and phrase requires an attentive but rewarding searching of the poem. Certainly, in locating these words and phrases credence must be given to the claim that it is possible to separate the creative source from the frames created meaning. However, at this point, the writer draws a sharp and definite line. It is possible to separate the meaning of the source and the meaning of the work; when this is accomplished the poet and the reader are losers for the poet is not anonymous. His poem conveys his meaning-which relies on

form for the essential communication. It does not spring from a vacuum. What is the value of discussing idiom without relation to milieu? From Frost's poetry there is a wealth of proof of the extreme value in retaining some grip on the historical method, while using the close textual analytic method to bring out, more sharply, the communicable aspects. But few of Frost's poems have been the subject of more discussion and disagreement than his short poem, "The Road Not Taken".[1a] It has been considered to mean that Frost was leaving formal education behind, that the poet had made up his mind to return to America and to forsake England forever, that he had decided to become a farmer rather than a school teacher, that he had determined to abandon the strong Calvinistic beliefs and that he had determined to have as little to do with organized society as possible. Frost has denied that the poem means any of these; he has steadfastly refused to point out its significance.

An instructor in a New England College[1b] insisted that a close analysis of the poem showed Frost's confused state of mind. The state of mind could be resolved solely from the text. The instructor stated that certain key words revealed, on textual

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1[a] Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken", Mountain Interval

1[b] Trinity College, an English Course on "Understanding Poetry", based on the book by Brooks and Warren.

examination, not only confusion but an indecisive mind as well. From this conclusion, he advanced the theory that much of Frost's so-called independence really was a front to cover up an irresolute nature. The danger of such a method and the damage done to Frost in the presence of at least one class may be garnered from a short consideration of the whole poem:

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other , as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference. [1c]

[1c] Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken", Mountain Interval

There can be little quarrel with the key words chosen by the instructor who fastened on "yellow wood", "one traveler", "sorry", "because it was grassy and wanted wear", "how way leads on to way", "I-I" and "less traveled by." The instructor waived the question of form to get at the "yellow wood."This set the tone of the whole poem, he averred. Green reflects the joyous spirit of the questing heart; leafless suggests winter, darkness and age; but "yellow" is a more serious matter. It indicates the pathology of disease. The wood represents life and the yellow stands for fear and doubt. Using this as his frame of reference, the instructor found that"one traveler" indicates loneliness. He is a lonely spirit without the comfort and guidance of other men. "Sorry" reveals his agony at not being able to encompass all things; he must suffer the pain of making a choice. "Because it was grassy and wanted wear" represents his yielding, finally, in favour of the decision which seems less hazardous. Although he has made his decision, Frost cannot be happy because "way leads on to way." The instructor was seized with the assurance that Frost found one decision in life forced another and another, each more difficult. The repetition of "I" indicates that Frost is completely rudderless and drifting into buffeting

blows by life's problems. Finally and tragically, he took the "one less traveled by" which was the strong one. He found himself, as he is now, without spiritual comfort. The case made out, prima facie, by the instructor is powerful; it would be idle to deny it. Its very apparent strength and its concreteness , unsupported, are its very weaknesses.

It bears a significant and ominous likeness to a theory once held in science insofar as the weakness of its method is concerned. Its weakness rests in the fact that two opposite hypotheses may be explained by the same experimental data. One scientific hypothesis considered that combustion was caused by a substance called phlogiston which escaped on burning; another that substances combine with oxygen when they burn in air. Not until a wider range of information involving other elements was unfolded and synthesized was the phlogiston theory disproved. The difficulty with the instructor's version is that he refused to have recourse to Frost 's own statements and to his background. In reality, the instructor, in this instance,has no case.

Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), Middlewestern realist, cast aside the drudgery and routine of the dirt farmer to become a social and political writer. He characterized his step into the social and political arena as a travel down Main-Travelled Roads. This book gave him considerable literary standing. He left the little travelled road for those who seek a life close

to the soil. Apparently Frost came in contact with Garland's protest against the life of those who live in the rural areas. When Frost returned from England, his star was ascending and Garland's was at its zenith. In November of 1951 a letter from Robert Frost to a Major John Waggenhorn was released by R.P. T.Coffin[1d]. The significant part of the letter is below quoted:

> .... Garland was very kind and the Frost family can employ some of that commodity. He thought we should have remained in England to enjoy more of the lion hours. But I have a little poem for him in Mountain Interval . Read it and think of me, John, when you walk along one of those Aroostook paths....

It may be fruitful then, to de-emphasize biography and history, but it is fatal to eliminate and to prescribe the minor role for them. In so many instances the meaning of the source is the nexus of the meaning of the work. It is certainly catastrophic for a critic to attempt to deliver an intelligent and veracious decision if he does not have a highly developed historical sense rooted in the history of ideas.

This thesis, in its reconciliation of the whole of Robert Frost, has used the historical approach, some chronological arrangement, a close textual analysis to bring out facets of Robert Frost's philosophy and his implication to philosophy and a discussion of the idiom in relation to the milieu of the

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[1d] Robert Percival Tristram Coffin has gathered an extensive collection of Frost's letters. This letter was written January 25, 1917.

poet, the reader and the age. In order to do this, there has been an extensive survey of terms and there will be more careful sifting of the critical values. Frost, himself,with his colloquial statements, fragmentary, poorly organized and not issued for formal treatment, has not been of much assistance to the reader. His letters are the most revealing but the most difficult to obtain.

The critic has the duty to evaluate the artist correctly which implies and demands a whole and nearly exhaustive consideration. This whole consideration fuses art and meaning. The meaning must reveal the hierarchy of the natural, the rational, the social and the supernatural. An integrated standard of ideas of the artistic widening of man's horizon, a historical and biographical evaluation and an integrated study of the text must be fused to yield truth.

This section,then, the final one, is to reconcile the work of Robert Frost and Frost himself in terms outlined in the introduction of this thesis and in accordance with the standard of criticism presently stated. The largest possible view of Frost, that of his response to what he purports through his poetry to be, is kept in view when each specific point is engaged in review. Recourse to his text is employed to render the judgment complete and concrete.

2. A Statement of the Reconciliation of the Main Points Used in This Thesis as a Standard for Criticism

In each chapter of each of the two sections, the first on form and the second on content, there are usually four divisions; they correspond to the plan laid down in the"Introduction". That is, first the intuitive approach of the writer is given (of the thesis); second, the opinions and reviews of the critics are discussed; third, Frost's own statements are considered; and, fourth, Frost is evaluated from his own poetry. At the same time, the four approaches are integrated and conclusions are made concurrently.

The first section of each chapter defines the terms and standard for evaluating certain aspects of Frost. At the same time, every attempt is made to correlate the aspect discussed in terms of a whole philosophy of life. This writer evaluated his own opinion with a careful consideration of other opinions held over the past in order to test his assumptions with reputable authority. It is not claimed that the standard is correct or even that it is the best that can be obtained. It is , however, a careful attempt to marshall all rational and intuitive forces of the writer, subject to their inherent limitations,so that the whole approach will be integrated, reasonable and rational.

The first position held by the thesis is that the artist, by his very nature, cannot occupy a middle position and give an objective evaluation . Artistic experiences of beauty do not permit the artist to be in and not of life.[1] The very fact that Frost is expressing subjective experience through concrete objects[1a] is held to be the key fact in refuting Van Doren's "golden mean position".[2] At the same time, by implication and by concrete assertions, the thesis has indicated that a position based on a general philosophy is requisite to the resolution of specific problems in the appreciation of the artist. It was pointed out that such a position led to synthesis- synthesis by reconciliation is the purpose of the thesis. In refuting the use of any other approach to the criticism of a poet, it was held that the use of fragmentary philosophies to bolster a point is not valid.[3]

The second point established a working conception of synthesis as employed herein. In this, the poet is seen as "an active and alterable component in the experience and not as a catalytic agent, per se."[4] In this concept of synthesis, intuition, rationality and volition act qnantitatively and qualitatively to produce a new result

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[1] Refer to thesis, xi

[1a] Ibid, xii,also 63 ff.

[2] Ibid. "Introduction" passim.

[3] Ibid. "Chapter One" p. 1 et seq.

[4] Ibid. pp.3-4.

not possessed of the same qualities of the original components. Through later suggestions, it was held that form is used to integrate the facts so that by implication, the concrete is turned to abstract considerations of life itself on physical, intellectual, social and spiritual planes. In interpreting Frost's statements, those of the critics, and Frost's own poetry, the thesis has held to the position of synthesis throughout.

The third point established is in the area of the critical question of a "group" or an"individual" mind. It was held that the poet does not compose his works as the unconscious organism of expressing truth, goodness and beauty more ably than another; that is, he is not society's agent for yielding poetry for his fellow man, rather he is an individual who has the peculiar talent of experiencing some phase of life to which he responds wholly and as himself. He has the individual talent for rendering this experience "artistically" [5]

The fourth point disassociated the thesis from adopting the position of Poe who established the American school of "Art for Art's Sake" and also from adopting the position of Emerson who considered that poetry must impart, primarily, wisdom and instruction.

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[5] Refer to this Thesis, pp. 6 et seq.

In rejecting these schools, a compromise position is impossible. Instead, the term "synthesis" as employed by I.A Richards was chosen and explained.[6] In the modification of his concept of "synthesis" to that of reconciliation, it was pointed out that while synthesis may refer to the discordant elements of an experience fused together by the imagination, not all synthesis involves contraries and discordancies; quite often an artistic experience involves elements of like nature. The term "reconciliation" adopted for this thesis, then, includes the reconciliation of both "likes" and "contraries." [7]

The fifth point comprised a series of definitions relating to the technical construction in order that the reader, in dealing with the terms which various schools and critics have used with various meanings, would have- and will have- a clear cut standard of reference. The terms defined were: imagery, sound, rhythm, metre, assonance, personification, irony, versification, allusion, anaphora, analogy, antithesis, chiaroscuro, color, enjambement,inversion, litotes, metaphor, mood, periphrasis, simile, stichomythia, substitution, synecdoche, thematic development, simile

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6 Refer to pages 8 and 9

7 Ibid, p. 10 as well

and stichomythia. It is not claimed that these definitions are necessarily the best. After considering the divers interpretations previously used for these terms, this writer considered that the terms and their definitions herein were the most suitable to an interpretation of Frost. At the very least, the reader has a clear cut guide for this instance; none of these terms have been given unique nor bizarre twists in meaning.

The sixth point was resolved to interpret "art" not only in terms of formal construction but in the light over the whole field. The principle of "ars simia naturae" adopted in principle by Dryden and Pope, among others was rejected as denying the creative and intuitive,both essential to the genius of the artist. At the same time,[8]the school of "emotion" and of pure "expression", as seen through the eyes of Sterne, Rousseau and Wordsworth, in theory, and happily not always in practice, is rejected because it denies, in essence, the importance of truth and wisdom, both of which depend, for postulation, to a very major degree,on the use of the rational processes. That is,extreme aestheticism vitiates distinction which depends on connation. One major reason for rejecting this latter school is because of its failure to differentiate, not only on rational but also on supernatural grounds.[9]

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[8] Refer p. 11.

[9] Ibid, p.12ff.

The over-all standard for consideration of art and form is that which reconciles the physical, the rational and the emotional into the "mia praxis".[10] By this greater art, some phase of reality is intensified and interpreted to and by the poet.

The seventh point was the position taken about the medium by which poetry is expressed-language. The position taken is important in denying the claims of a poetry which is pure emotion. While human symbols can be subjective and expressive of various states of feeling, purely affectional elements are antipathetic to cultural development.[11] It was concluded that the language should and must be couched in symbols, which, while capable of exhibiting variety, must be universal so that communication will result. It was also laid down that the language should be such as to arouse states of feeling and attitudes, all of which, however, must be rationally apprehended in terms of universal judgment.[12] The formal elements must outline and accentuate through arrangement of words, but "No weight nor mass nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought."[12a] In other words, any arrangements of words (language) which enable the experience to be communicated artistically are valid insofar as they are comprehensible.

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[10] Cf. p. 14

[11] Refer to Thesis, p. 15ff.

[12] Ibid., pp.16-19

[12a] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, quoting Ruskin, in Emily Dickinson :Poems, N.Y., 1951, World Publishing Company, p.25.

The eighth point evolved as a part of the standard for synthesis of art concerns the philosophical aspect of reconciliation. In considering and rejecting the approaches of nature-centering, man-centering and God-centering, it was concluded that none of these , alone, will suffice, for all judgments are rendered and communicated by rational process. This process is expressed in language, whether or not the concepts of life are expressed in terms of nature, man and God. That is, the standard of criticism, insofar as philosophy is concerned, in this thesis, rests on the assumption that it is not important whether the poet is, or is not, a "nature- addict", an"anthropocentrist" or one who divorces himself from all but spiritual considerations. It is vital, however, that the poet's work is reconcilable on these three grounds. He must have considered- even though he rejected. His poetry must not only state, it must imply. That is the essence of meaning. In each section, this question of philosophy has been brought to the fore. Frost and his work have been discussed, again, and again, with reference to how his facts reconcile into implications which suggest his concern with life and with the reader. The latter is urged to extension into universal values.

In apprehending his experience in whole terms, the poet relies on the key factor of "imagination". In the ninth point, it was developed that artistic comprehension, and communication rely on it. Six prominent theories were discussed- that of Schelling and Coleridge was adopted [13] because it was the most complete and because of its insistence on the "balance and reconciliation of opposites and discordant qualities." [14]

In working from nine points of an overall philosophy, art and reconciliation, this thesis has proceeded from the general to the particular. Frost, in each section on him, has been carefully evaluated according to this standard. In the first section, dealing with art, all the formal aspects of poetry were discussed and a standard adopted for criticism. This standard was considered with reference to Frost's critics, to his own statements and to his poetry.

In Chapter Two, "Reconciliation Through Rhythm, Rhyme and Verse Forms", certain critical terms were discussed and derived as follows: form was considered and is characterized as the design of the poem which carries a certain wave length to which the reader must be attuned for full communication- alliteration, onomatopoeia and the allied terms of poetry [15]

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[13] Refer to Thesis, p. 28 et seq.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid, p. 10

previously discussed and defined. It was discovered, based on the theory of I.A Richards and the elaborations of the writer, that rhythm is not a separable form of poetry but is the overt transmitter of form through inner and outer qualities. The inner core of form consists of expectancy, surprise and congruity; and the outer core consists of pace, timing and duration. The inner core, while integrated with the outer core in expression ,communicates the philosophical aspects of the poem; the outer core renders these to the reader in such a dramatic medium as to evoke the response in the whole terms of thought, attitude, emotion and judgment. The use of the traditional terms [16] is important only in the sense of intensifying expectancy, surprise, congruity, pace, timing and duration. The poem is held to have complete texture when the form communicates the poem so as to involve the whole reader and poet.

That which the artist has to communicate is the experience of nature, man, thought or spirit which have given him the state of "beauty". After considering alternative theories, the thesis fell back on an integrative theory of beauty as supported by Goethe, C.D.Lewis and Dr. Alexander.[17] In this, the sense percept becomes an image through impression,

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[16] Refer to Thesis, p. 491, note 13.

[17] Ibid. pp. 60-63.

after which the congruent images are reconciled until, through focusing of emotion, intuition and cognition, a reconciliation takes place, giving rise to a sudden experience of beauty. Finally, and of the utmost importance, beauty as subjective and beauty as objective is discussed and reconciled. In summary, there is a reconciliation of objective matter as real with the subjective view that the qualities of the mind are perceived as existing in objective phenomena, although beauty is intrinsically in the subjective mind of the poet and reader. The long chapter carefully examines the critics' statements on rhythm ,rhyme and verse forms, Frost's statements and synthesizes some of Frost's verse ,as well, with reference to the standard outlined.

Chapter Three, "Reconciliation Through Figures of Speech and Ornaments of Poetry" completes the"First Section" which is on form. In keeping with the general theory, it was considered that the figures of speech and ornaments of poetry are the manifestations of form and not of importance for what whey are but for what they do. The various figures used in sound have, as their first function, the expressiveness of the dramatic experience and, to a bare minimum, pleasantness in themselves.

Because of the considerable attention devoted to synecdoche and irony by the critics, Frost, and his poetry, careful consideration was given to the aspects of form. It was found that they are of crucial value. Synecdoche is the technique, not only by which the whole is technically related to its parts and contra, but it is the means, also, by which the reader is leading himself and is led to make implications from general truths to specific examples, and from specific incidents to universal speculations. Irony is considered in two lights. In its traditionally narrow sense, irony is limited to the character and the incident. The standard considered applicable, from the viewpoint of this thesis, and from Frost's, is that irony is utilized to cause the reader to examine the values abstractly, which, in a narrow sense, the individual has placed in question. Both synecdoche and irony were shown to be of extreme importance in the poet who refuses to tell the meaning, but who furnishes the clues for the implication.

Next, the salient point of metaphor was discussed completely and resolved.[18] The concepts of metaphor as decorative and as, oppositely, unjustifiable, were discarded. Metaphor is held to assist the artist qualitatively inasmuch as metaphor does not help the word;it is the word;it is the poem.

[18] Refer to thesis, pp. 159ff.

" Section Two " entered the realm of philosophy and there, as with the section on form and art, the standards for the important Frostian philosophic elements were outlined under the same general nine points previously defined.

It is held throughout the thesis, as a standard, that the poem must "mean." The verbal expression, the form, make the thought come alive and travel to communicate. The poem has both beauty and wisdom reconciled. The standard is set so that Frost is compared with the highest standard possible and not in terms of his locality and his contemporaries. In the introduction to the chapter, Chapter Four, "Reconciliation of Fact and Fancy", the unique skill of the greater poets in fusing form and content is shown by the use of the formal key word to force the reader, whether he would or would not, to make the implication- he must come to some decision, not with reference to the single incident portrayed but on an abstract plane, or vice versa he must feel impelled to consider specific instances in his experience that stem from the general truth portrayed. This is the test of the greatness of a poet.
The question of fact and fancy is closely related and fused with the idea of form and content as inseparable. The fact is the incident concise in nature and accurately depicted , but at the same time invested by the use of the inner and outer core of form

with the poetic process which yields both beauty and wisdom. It is held that the greater poets have had the consummate ability to render beautiful and profound experiences so naturally that pleasure and instruction invariably result. This is possible because the true poet knows the fact so well and presents it so cleanly that the reader, in each age, is able to accept the experience rationally. The fancy inherent in good form fuses with the fact to yield a poem which is so powerfully manifested that the reader is impelled, always, to extension. He can experience the poem as beautiful for the fact, beautiful in its fancy; but, as well, he goes on to the greater satisfaction, the poem means something when discovered in the light of an attitude to the complete life. In clarifying and detailing "fact" and "fancy", recourse was had to the idea of belief; knowledge corresponds to the fact and attitude to the fancy. The more the poet can persuade the reader that he "knows", the more the reader will move toward communication, even though the "fact" may not be reality itself; but, just as effective, in the short run, it appears to be true. The greater poets not only convince the reader of the phenomena of verisimilitude, by their art, but, they do, in reality, have an unusual ability to discover truth. Finally, it was shown that such apparent opposites as "fact and fancy" are integrated to lead to extension and that they are not elements which can only be handled by compromise.

Because the critics have fastened on the question of traditionalism and radicalism as paradoxical in Frost, the question was discussed and defined so as to lead to the following stand- that which appears to be paradoxical is not when the question is extended to a wider view of life. Tradition then comes to represent that which has meaning for people, in that it can satisfy them as to security and affection. Security and affection, two of the main drives in man, are coupled with, in conflict, apparently, love for adventure and avidity for power. The youth, the pioneer and the adventurer are those most likely to become dissatisfied with the "status quo!" This is not likely to change unless the majority, who have hitherto found happiness in the old, no longer find that it meets their needs- then change will come. It is the position here that neither the traditionalist nor the conservative position is the answer- nor is the position of the "golden mean" the answer. The frame of reference adopted is that traditionalism and radicalism are best apprehended as being two essential parts of the person. These two parts do not work on a 1:1 basis. The tried and true values are kept alive, guarded, and acted upon, insofar as they yield complete freedom of mind and will to the individual. Traditionalism represents respect and duty to

the individual from himself and to society; progressiveness represents the urge to change the existing order and to assert the inevitable claim of the superiority of the individual. Both are essential, not as a happy balance, but as manifestations of life to assert and to maintain themselves at the right time. In short, the time for the dominance of one over the other is an "all or nothing response" on each particular occasion. The two terms are reconciled by Frost in much the same way as Matthew Arnold fused the Hebraic and the Hellenic cultures.[19]

Chapter Six, "Reconciliation of Observation and Implication" lays stress on what is observed and how much is implied; it is a more philosophic treatment of these questions than that yielded in "Reconciliation of Fact and Fancy". The latter chapter was primarily a transition chapter from art to content- admitting, of course, that neither is separable.

In this philosophic sense, the observations are not only based on the fact, but they are couched in such terms and in such settings that they are known to the reader. At the same time, in the first line poet, the observations, in addition to being congruous to the reader, are wonderfully diverse with all the detail of everyday life itself. It was shown that the poets who achieved

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[19] Refer to Thesis, p. 275

more or less permanent stature had a large number among them who invested the everyday event and incident, unimportant in themselves, but adding up impressively to life itself, with an observation so effective that the reader considers them "true to life." He extends them as such. It is significant to note that the observation does not find the reader at a precise point; indeed, he is often far removed in extension. The example of Chaucer's "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" was cited as being in point. The observations of each incident therein are so accurate that the reader extends the individual character to a group of his acquaintances of like character. In one phase of implication, Chaucer, like Frost, is far removed from his characters. His observations are so accurate that the twentieth century considers him as a social historian of his time and as a historian of manners of all time. Frost is considered, weighed and evaluated in this light.

Chapter Seven, "Reconciliation of Nature and Man in Frost" is important. Frost, the critics and Frost's own poetry lean heavily on nature, the natural environment and on man's relation to it. After discussing the various ways and views held by the great poets on nature, on the subjective, on the pantheistic,

on the love of nature for her physical beauty, on the pictures of nature that hold up a mirror for the poet's moods,and on the poet who sees beauty in nature for what it is, a part of the experiencing world of man, it was concluded that the critic cannot be just if he adopts but one of these for his measure. The test is the recognition of the school to which the poet belongs and the evaluation of the poet's faithfulness in form and content to the school whose disciple he professes to be.

The poet who has mastered fact and fancy, observation and implication and the traditional and the liberal in the approach to fusion will use her integrative results to reflect man's concern with nature, with man and with God. The extent to which this is done is such as to show, by example and by name, the forms that such extensions into nature have taken.[20] The highest position must be awarded to the poets who can find beauty and wisdom, together with the exaltation of the spirit, in nature. To those who hold that nature may be considered as real, and who hold that she, at the same time, reflects the subjective view that the qualities of the mind are perceived as existing in objective phenomena, although they believe that beauty is intrinsically in the subjective mind of the poet and reader,

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[20] Refer to this thesis, pp. 343, et sequentia.

implication follows naturally.

Chapter Eight, "Reconciliation of Man and Society" in Frost" is mainly concerned with the attitude of man toward himself and toward society. The two opposing theories of "social contract" and " social organism" were discussed and rejected as the standard most desirable, but here, again, the poet is not to be condemned for preferring one standard to another. However, he is expected to state or imply a standard and to be judged according to his faithfulness to this. It is held, in this thesis, that the poet must meet the test of "meaning." It is also held, throughout, that the meaning is to be discussed and integrated on the levels of the physical, the intellectual, the social and the spiritual. Therefore, the critic looks at Frost, or should, and inquires into his treatment of the various aspects of life; he also demands to know Frost's whole approach. In this chapter, as in the others, Frost's response in evaluated in the stated approaches.

The reconciliation, as the standard for man and society, was arrived at so that society and the individual exist as real, inasmuch as man is not intelligible to man except through social development. This development involves conflict as well as cooperation.[21] Temporal reconciliation may be obtained, not through the acceptance of a compromise position, but in the

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[21] Refer to this discussion on page 383 et sequentia.

resolution of the conflict of man and society by finding, despite never ceasing frustrations, that the beauty of the fact of nature, the like sympathy of man for man in a common plight and the act of living are incommensurably greater than man's retreat from himself and from society.

Finally, Chapter Nine, "Reconciliation in Terms of Character, Morality and Religion" deals with ethics and religion, together with a speculation on the nature of the supernatural. Here, most of all, it is virtually impossible for the critic to evaluate a poet's work to a set standard, for religion is difficult to criticize scientifically, rationally and intuitively. So much of the critic himself is involved in a personal frame of reference. With respect to nature and society, objectivity is possible because it is in the nature of rational evaluation to weigh opinions against others without involving too much attitude. However, can it actually be possible to weigh "faiths?". At least one crucial standard can be held for both character and morality. This involves for each, the dual requirements: first,that the artist concerns himself with "character",that entity which causes man to hold fast to that which he knows as the right; second, morality, that aspect of man which impels his coherent choice to "ought" and not to "want." Less satisfactorily, both "character" and "morality" may be weighed objectively in

considering the relations of man to man and man to society. The writer states " less satisfactory", because both character and morality cannot, in the highest sense, be divorced from religion. However, so many shades of thought are prevalent on this score, or, more unfortunate ,too little concern is given to the higher values of religion over ethics, that no one critic can impose his judgment of a poet on a public when he cannot communicate his standard.

With regard to a poet, or with respect to any artist who may claim stature, the critic should insist on at least an admission that higher values exist than one can prove rationally. There may be considerable difference as to the number of such deities; there may be dispute over the nature of a Supreme Being", nevertheless, the critic, in order to be consistent to a whole philosophy of life, which can be apprehended at least through reason, must insist that the poet does concern himself with religion, even though the approach is negative. The writer insists that a poet who communicates his experience of beauty in terms of beauty and wisdom becomes excellent to the extent that life is revealed in terms of nature, man, society and God. Again, it is not requisite that there be agreement between critic and poet but there must be an active and earnest concern on the part of both. As well, while the critic and poet may, and will, disagree about mercy, justice, charity, love and honor, both must concur

that, while one may settle for mercy, justice, charity and love on the levels of man to man and man to society, that the relations of these abstractions are higher when they are referrable to the supernatural.

Thus, in art and philosophy, these statements in Chapter Ten represent the standard, in terms of philosophy and art, by which Frost, the critics and his verse are probed, discussed and synthesized into one whole pattern.

The pattern and the standard , summed up, are that the artist conveys an essential meaning by form- this is not separable. This form has an inner and outer core which communicates the philosophy through a medium of an artistic experience called "beautiful." The inner and outer core are, respectively: expectancy, surprise and congruency, all interwoven with stress, pace and duration. Aiding the inner core and working as means, not as ends, are the numerous figures of speech and ornaments of poetry. The form, then, is considered the poetic element without which the experience of meaning cannot traverse to the poet and to the reader.

Art and philosophy are inseparably linked in that no poetry can exist without thought, and no experience of beauty, which actualizes the experience for communication, can exist without intuition. The physical, the intellectual and the qualities of

imagination, volition and intuition are involved, concurrently in producing the poem.

It is held that the artist has the duty of communication; the greater poet is the one who can communicate his experience in terms which the reader both knows and enjoys. At the same time, the poet need not tell; but, if he is a first rate poet, he must find and furnish clues for the reader so that the latter may approach, subject to inherent limitations, the experience enjoyed by the poet.

It is held that the greater poet is the one who can communicate his art dramatically and yet coherently. That is, the great poet renders the common experience in uncommon terms by means of which an uncommon experience of beauty and wisdom is obtained. Implied in this statement is the question of language. Poetry is made up of words ; these words,known or else capable of being known,are all that can express thought or intuition-they are all that can make the experience communicable to the reader. From this point of reference,metaphor is the word which is the poem. The quality of metaphor and not metaphor itself is the standard, for by the effectiveness of the quality, the poem becomes or does not become intelligible.

The standard for philosophy involves the fact, the fancy, the observation, the implication-both pairs involve

art and meaning. Nature is apprehended as habitually harbouring two elements- the physical fact itself and the repository of qualities of the mind which make it singularly effective for implication in terms of philosophy. The same general stand is made on man and society; there is the fact of the relation; then there is the fact of the meaning of such a relation-this latter must be resolved in abstractions and on terms of philosophic unity.

Finally, the questions of character, morality and religion are considered as the test for the poet. His duty is a concern to consider and to communicate an artistic experience by means of which the reader enjoys the fact, and is invested with, at the same time, a problem which requires rational resolution.

What is the synthesis? What is the reconciliation? The synthesis is the unifying of the opposites and discordant elements revealed in the poem. The reconciliation is more. This involves the fusion, into a new product, of the opposites, the discordancies and the similarities, so that the integration results in a unified experience of beauty and wisdom by means of which some phase of life is observed and implied in terms of(not a fragmentary and isolated fact) a whole philosophy of life in thought and in action.

3. Frost's General Position and Standard in Reconciliation

This short section will evaluate Frost's position with respect to the standard of criticism, which, it must be recalled, is not only the writer's intuitive stand but is based on consideration of permanent schools of thought, Frost's critics, Frost's statements ,and on poetry in general- Frost's in particular. The fourth and final section to this chapter will completely synthesize one of Frost's poems in view of his total art and philosophy. The poem chosen will be one that answers this purpose—with the note made that many others could be used for the same purpose. It is considered that this section, together with the standard, will set the stage for a concrete example and explanation, in terms of his own poetry, of Frost,and his art and meaning.

Frost can rightfully take a position among the top poets and dramatists in his standards for form. In refuting "forms" and insisting on form as integral with content [22], Robert Frost relies on the mental reaction which gives the words meaning; thence on to the words which are the poem. Form, Frost holds,integrates the experience into a communicable pattern. In this light, form is considered as suitable to the experience.[23]

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[22] Refer to page 52 ff of this thesis.

[23] Ibid, p. 54.

Frost will go so far as to urge that without the proper form, no communication will take place which will be in terms of the poet's own reaction- that is, no truth. In denying the use of the traditional forms of verse and the importance of the figures of speech as such, Frost relies on the congruency of words and the speaking quality of the verse. He achieves remarkable success in that his poems have been successfully and widely adapted for the stage. His formal organization bears close resemblance, as has been shown, to Richard's expectancy, surprise and congruency theory. As well, Frost relies on the stress of the word, on the total pace of the poem and on the duration on the word or phrase so as to invite or shut out implication. Frost denies emphatically,he insists that form must convey the"meaning" while effacing itself.[24]

Frost considers, and the critics concur, generally, on his concept of beauty.[25]It is not the immediate result of sense stimulation but the reaction of the cognitive and the intuitive as well, by means of which reaction, beauty becomes an active state. In this respect, there is little disagreement. Frost goes on to refute, and this thesis has devoted attention to this refutation, the idea that his poetry compromises between the form and the content. As hitherto developed, the form is that which communicates and ensures the implication.

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[24] Refer to thesis, pp. 52-60

[25] Ibid.

There is general agreement on the fact that Frost is correct on his assertion that the whole self enters the poem insofar as the sensory, the cognitive and the connative are concerned, but that the ego must be excluded- that is, the poet is not to make himself the object of contemplation for the sake of the self.

Frost considers, and it is granted, that his poems show, justly , an infinite variety of experience within an apparent narrow geographical sector and mode of life. The element of form achieves the success for him because of the inner and outer core of rhythm by which he is able to attain an infinite variety of dramatic and implicative effects . These effects come from common incidents, trivial when considered as isolated facts of everyday experience. The critics have seized on the apparent contradictions of thought and fact served up by Frost; some have considered that he teases unfairly. However, the opposite are aspects of the same thing seen in different lights when viewed singly, in terms of belief and attitude, and when fused into an inquiry into the meaning of some part of life itself.

The only serious attack on some part of Frost's form has come from Thompson who questioned the liberties and impertinences taken by Frost with the number of lines in the sonnet. Yet, it is Frost who is consistent and philosophic.

With Frost, there is no argument with the practice of calling a short verse, devoted to high and lofty matters, a sonnet. His contention is that the poem will take the form best suited to express the experience in terms of the most suitable rhythm for communication. This may take fifteen lines, fourteen, or even thirteen.

Thompson, and other critics, have fastened on the idea of "sound" as a major aspect of Frost's art. In so doing,they stress the use of alliteration and assonance as figures used extensively. Actually, the term used by Frost is interpreted in the vocal manifestation of form requisite to carry the subject matter. Frost claims that all that can be done with words is soon told; the importance of having something to say is the important factor. Sound sense is important for it focuses the attention on what is said and how. How it is said is only important insofar as it motivates the reader to consider what was meant. Frost considers sound as that element of form which, dramatically rendered, achieves an extension into implication. Thus, it is clear that the question of sound goes back to the element of congruity.

Frost's theory on metaphor is that the metaphor is the word and the word is the poem. Metaphor, therefore, is a sense of discrimination which is required to give shape and order, not only to meaning itself, but to the art of the verse.

Frost ties in synecdoche,very carefully,with his concept of metaphor. His use of synecdoche is not frivilous and fanciful for the sake of technique; rather, it is related to the basic philosophy of his poem as rhythmically conveyed. In order to give complete texture to the poem, the synecdoche ensures that the metaphor will not break down under the heavy load of fact and extension.

Irony, an important ingredient of his poetry, carries the same relation of art to philosophy that exists in the use of synecdoche. The ironic figure, the metaphor, stands in congruity to the meaning. The pivot, around which the Frostian dilemma of irony swings,is the speculation as to whether the observable fact, in its limited context, is as much truth as the unverifiable possibility in terms of implication. The word "speculation" is crucial in that it separates the poetry of Frost from that of a man whose art is very close to Frost's- Hardy. Thomas Hardy judges where Frost speculates; thereby, in one not unimportant sense Frost is the more satisfactory, for Hardy's judgment closes the door to the reader who does not concur.

In summing up the art of Frost, it may be said, on solid grounds, that Frost's formal composition bears the same relation to his content that the lines and apprehension of a bird in flight do to the bird itself; neither are intelligible without the other. Intelligence is that which Frost insists on. In lieu

of developing the traditional elements called forms- which attract the attention of the reader, and often divert it, Frost considers form as that communicable element's inner and outer core which depend on the dramatic tonal qualities to place poet and reader in conjunction. Through the inner core of the expectant, the surprise and the congruous metaphor, rendered ironically and synecdochally, and through the outer core of stress, timing and tempo rendered effective with the figures of speech and the ornament of poetry, Frost creates three experiences, each on higher levels of appreciation; first, an appreciation of the fact; second, a speculation into implication, and third, the reader appreciates the poem on a philosophic plane by which the fact and the fancy are symbolically fused into some judgment of life.

The fourth and final section of this chapter will find this summary of art integrated with the following consideration of Frost's content and philosophy. Frost begins and ends his ideas of poetry, fragmentarily expressed, with the idea that poetry must mean- it must always say something which is worthy of saying. This is a refreshing, although not a new approach. For Frost, poetry is not the creation of a series of states of feeling. The feeling that is genuine is that which intensifies the process of poetry into communicability. That which is the most important in the communicated is the thought.

The poet's actual verbal expression makes the thought come alive, but novelty, felicity and beauty of the word are shunned by Frost, if they come at the expense of thought. Insofar as fact and fancy are concerned, the fact is realistically portrayed so that fanciful speculation by Frost will reveal some important experience, both beautiful and wise; the fusion of the two lead from speculation into implication. His form and philosophy are so harmoniously conceived and put into action that the "expectant " fact is clothed with the "surprise" fancy so that some aspect of life is implied in terms which are congruent to the poet and to the reader.

Frost resolves his paradoxes involving the "traditional" and the "progressive" with the form of expectancy, surprise and congruency. Frost asserts that he does not glorify the traditional, the conservative, the custom, the habit, the mores and the ancients ways and rule. He show them. He implies; he does not judge. On the other hand, he loathes, beyond all mere disgust, the practice of using poetry for political harangues. He throws up his hands in disgust at the idea of supporting tradition simply because of the implied numerical superiority of its position. On the other hand, he

reveals through the fact, and implies through fancy, that change for the sake of change is chaos because man must fall back on the essential parts of his nature. To refute the traditional, merely because of its age and apparent shackling effect, is to throw aside part of the individual himself- an obvious impossibility. How the problem is resolved is not in accord with the "golden mean"- compromise. Frost considers tradition the bedrock of security and meaning-from which changes not only can be made, but they must be made. They must be made through the resolution of the individual, however, thus, affording man's rational powers their mandatory free play. Consent for change should not come from society for , with Frost, there is no group mind in a rational sense. The justification for change vests in the individual judgment that the status quo has lost its ability to meet the demands of the individual, keeping in mind, so very vital, that the needs of the people, and the individual and society are generally inseparable and mutually sustaining. The progressive is continually the watch-dog in action to assure and ensure that the individual is intellectually emancipated from tradition for its own sake. Frost really emphasizes the point that tradition and progress are inevitably in conflict in each individual; however, normally, the conflict is not destructive. The reason they are not mutually atavistic

results from the fact that man desires that his life has permanent meaning; most desire for progress results from the fact that he does not, in his life, obtain the satisfaction of such needs as work, play, religion and love. When he has obtained these by change; they satisfy his needs and become traditional to him. In other words, the problem is resolved when Frost implies that"traditional"can only result from man's rational series of goals and needs which require a progressive outlook, in that new standards are often opposed by those who are pleased with the old. Again, the traditional depends, in the long run- a life time- on the dynamic behavior of the individual. The reformer who has his needs satisfied becomes the traditionalist.

The fusion of art, by fact and fancy, results in Frost's crowning glory- his seldom paralleled accuracy of observation with the concurrent implication spring from it. The fact, scientifically and artistically rendered, becomes an observation as soon as the poet and reader are subjectively engaged. From this point on, the reader cannot extricate himself from the experience until he has made implications ; that is, until he has passed an opinion. With Frost, the reader cannot refrain from engaging with "attitude" as well as with "belief." According to the stature of the reader, in sensory, cognitive and volitional terms, the experience of observation and implication

varies in scope and intensity. Frost insists, always, that much has to be left to the reader; to a large extent the poem becomes what the reader is and becomes. The observation opens the way for the reader if he but takes it. Frost has often stated that the "implication" is his permanent invitation to adventure and exploration into life itself. In an important sense, the union of the two is " the greatest attempt to say one thing in terms of another; it is the philosophic attempt to say matter in terms of spirit, or spirit in terms of matter, to make the final unity. That is the greatest attempt that ever failed.... but it is the heighth of all poetry, the heighth of all thinking." [26]

Frost stands with Hardy, Housman and Pratt in restricting his geographical environment, his acute powers of observation and accurate rendering of natural phenomena, and his projection of qualities of the mind into the objects of nature. Their ability to make these objects come alive, to a large extent is a re-incarnation of their philosophy through nature. That is not the same thing as using nature for the repository of moods. Frost is unique with his peculiar brand of pessimism. His observation and implication on nature are presented with such accuracy and force; but no conclusion is passed by Frost. He forces the reader to make extensions

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[26] Refer to thesis, p. 326

by which man, comparing himself with nature, despairs of his own powers to assert his will and to gain any important purpose on earth. The factual evidence in nature that Frost supplies as to life and death without purpose is the point to which the reader must return each time with more despair. The reconciliation Frost offers is his admission that there is something superior to nature and man beyond, although he has not sufficient empirical proof to supply the fact. At the same time, he reconciles man and nature in this world in terms of courage; at least man knows that life in nature ever springs anew-with that empirical assurance, man can plan on at least one solid foundation- the courage with which man deals with the problem. He can, armed with an eager approach to temporal life, enjoy the beauty of nature for what it means physically. He can, as well, speculate on the greater meaning of existence. In short, Frost urges his fellow man to love the world for what it is to man materially, and for what it can offer in beauty, pleasure and challenge.

Frost rejects any theory that he acts as an unconscious agency of a social mind, intuition or morality. There is, in Frost, a firm rejection of the G.B.Shaw theory of an "evolutionary becomingness" which works through certain individuals. For this New England poet there can be no becoming which is not rationally

understood and directed by the individual himself. While denying a group and social mind, Frost would be the last to assert that man can realize his potential apart from society. He must develop through society insofar as he is social. Insofar as he is social, Frost considers that like interests unite man in common effort. Like interests involve the cooperation necessary in physical preservation and social gregariousness. On a higher level, the love and sympathy of man for man in common plight is a social manifestation. Frost is forever fond of using the reality of the fact of labor for the unifying and harmonizing bond between man and another man. Come what may, Frost is adamant in stressing that society cannot reach a decision on life for the individual; although the individual, in any decision on life, must take his status as a social being into consideration, society is a scaffold to assist in man's clambering, but not a substitute for it.[27] Man's relation in brotherhood with man demands mutual aid and love but, even though it is not possible, and even though grave doubts arise, the individual must have within himself the will to arise and try to save himself unaided. That he does not have to go alone is true. The social bond of sympathy, affection and help is an empirical truth. Man has that both to fall back on and to spring from.

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[27] Robert Frost, refer to thesis p.406.

To a non-Christian, but to one believing in a Supreme Being-according to an organized creed and dogma which involve faith and a better after-life- Frost stands with a fatal indictment against him. To a non-Christian he may appear as a man of "good character" and a "moral man", but he will be considered insufficient because his values are centered on a man-dominated plane. He is an anthropocentrist. To a Christian, Frost stands even more precariously. Frost, operating in a Christian country which is imbued with an intense concern with the after-life, undoubtedly, by his mastery of art and implication, has done much to influence the people of his country.

To a Catholic who requires that all lives be examined in the light of achieving the union of man with his Creator in Heaven, Frost is less acceptable yet. Because of his implicative powers, it does matter what his religion is. A lesser poet,revealing a fact and leaving it as such, might hope to escape the flight into an examination of higher values. It is the real large and ugly flaw in Frost. He is not condemned because he is honest enough to say, in effect, "I feel there must be God and Heaven, but I cannot, according to my rational and artistic apprehension,make that proof, so I must settle for less." He is not condemned because he is a non-Christian; he is not censured for being a Christian without faith; he is not

to be deprecated because he refuses to hearken to formal religious doctrines. In the supreme test, he fails his art and philosophy. In all aspects of his art; in fact and fancy, in observation and implication, in the traditional and the progressive, in man and nature, in man and society, and, even, in the ethics of character and morality, he wrought excellent reconciliations, based on the verifiability of the fact whose implications lifted the poetry to universal truths.

Frost, on spiritual grounds, is in a more serious dilemma than Hardy, and so are Frost's readers. Thomas Hardy accepted a God, whether on rational or intuitive terms is not really ascertainable as far as this writer knows; however, he denied that God took an interest in the world of nature and man-in the terms man thought he should. Frost feels that there must be "something there", probably God; he neither accepts nor rejects; yet he persists in implication on this supernatural plane. His failure rests, in all probability, on the lack of spiritual largeness of the man himself. Technically, his failure rests on the phenomena that, for the observable fact, he could empirically postulate what God has done and should have implied what He is- leaving man to make the judgment.

The most that can be said for him, on religious grounds, is that he did not compromise; he tried and failed because he placed his power in reason. Even when he shifted to mercy in A

Masque of Mercy when he reluctantly considered that his reason would not hold up, he discusses the question of God's great love in purely rational terms. The tragedy lies in the fact that his rational discussion of charity turns the reader away instead of toward acceptance.

Insofar as the relation of what man owes to man in a purely temporal design for living, Frost's ethic is as lofty as that of Emperor Julian. Frost considers that character inheres positively when there is a knowledge of the correct choice to make , when there is the good will to make the choice, and when the choice is realized through action.

Frost's moral outlook is healthy, although naturally limited and unsatisfactory in the total run. Frost considers man has the moral obligation to aid himself, to aid his fellow man and to try to establish a spiritual empathy with the supernatural. In the acceptance that all men must look to some higher value, although it might not be found, Frost asserts his belief that moral law prevails when the individual will, when the occasion demands and when he is convinced, sacrifice to the common good of all men. At the same time, Frost does not concur that society,itself, can achieve morality through any set of rules not considered by its individuals as right, just and , at the end, merciful.

4. The Fusion of Frost's Art and Philosophy From His Poetry

By comparison with his contemporaries, Frost must be accounted a considerable poet in this age, and most likely in future evaluation of American Literature, he will stand out as the voice of the common man during the first half century of this, a confused, busy and brawling twentieth century. He is considerable on several grounds: first, he has considerable to say which is worth saying; second, what he has to say is revealed to the reader in terms of beauty which irradiate the common everyday fact to common people , so that an uncommon experience is theirs- this is a great art, indeed-;third, he has, unparalleled on this continent, and seldom surpassed on the major arena of letters, the consummate artistry to postulate an artistic experience on three levels- the level of the fact of nature, the level of the fact and man and the level on which man inquires into what significance the poem has to life. His reconciliation is always on progressively higher levels. In this, he is happily like Chaucer, Hardy and Arnold. That is not, of course, to give him total ranking with them. But, like them , he is able to obtain a new product from ingredients which, in themselves, are independent and meaningful objects. For example, the birch tree, the subject of Frost's poem by that name, invites, through sense stimulation, an appreciation of its details which, although always at hand,

afford the reader the joy that comes from the beauty in physical nature. In addition to the natural phenomena involved, Frost presents the fact of man in action with nature. This presentation is so sensitively delivered and so vested with truth that the readers remember "like and common experiences." Thus man, in addition to his consideration and delight with and in nature for itself, is impelled to consider the experience with reference to its social and intellectual implications. Through this active speculation, which must, essentially, involve reason, the experience with the fact and the following evaluation of it, in terms of himself and fellow man and the supernatural, become something entirely different. The new and final product is an out- and out query into the nature of things; sometimes it results in an attitude as well as a judgment. In the poem, "Birches", the tree, rendered intimately physical, is the fact which first delights the reader. By use of his fusion of form and content, the reader, as the poet, recalls personal experiences with the tree, such as climbing, bending, cutting initials, hiding and swinging. Such experiences soon involve remembrances of other things and other people. Finally, the poem implies the struggle between cutting oneself loose from the ties that bind one to the earth, to custom, to work, to the material, to family ties, "or what have you," on the one hand, and the need for security, custom, steadiness, "earth-rootedness, restraint and reason instead of fancy. The implications are varied according to

the frame of reference of the reader, according to his attitude, according to his intellectual stature, with reference to his intuitive acuity, and always in the light of a final response through a judgment by which the reader resolves some paradox- as best he may.

He has these qualities- poetic and philosophic. As well, he has the high art and ability to refresh continually the spirit of nature by restating the "beloved" old in new terms, both provocative and endearing. He constantly and happily refreshes those who have recourse to his treatment of the commonplace, for he operates by stimulating the reader into surprise. The reader invariably exclaims to himself in wonder: "I have known this all my life, but I never knew that it meant this way. The reader, drawn by congruent experience , is surprised into implication. Frost is not the phenomena of an artist who satisfies the need for those who keep returning for the same kind of a favorite dessert; he is the considerable poet who reshuffles in man's own hands, for him, the cards of his own experience and reveals new and wonderful patterns.

Frost is not, however, this reader concludes, likely to gain a place with the highest rank of poets in English speaking literature. He has the art and philosophy of reconciliation which few of the best can approach. He has an infinite variety which

communicates and implies at many points, yielding pleasure, wisdom and implication. Still, his poetry runs thin; it covers a wide scope, but at no particular point does it give comfort to the soul. His strength of the observed fact, with the reconciliation which it obtains, is not sufficient to soar high enough to stir man with a breathless ecstasy of response. His spiritual implications, lacking faith, do not move man as profoundly as he should be disturbed; his poetry is not of the heart and soul. He makes neither the daring affirmation nor the thundering and scornful furious denial. The difference in quality between Frost, on the one hand, and Chaucer and Shakespeare, for example, on the other, is, for the most part, one of the ability to capture the spirit of man. Frost moves to implication and reconciliation on all levels common to the other two; but where Frost scratches the surface and makes a faint noise, the other two ensure that man makes the exploration unto God with the heart fully open on the great occasion, or that man is fully defiant in rejecting a denial of any force, even God's, to thwart the will of man.

There is never any doubt but that Frost means and means seriously. Seldom, however, does the reader feel how Frost means; seldom does the reader feel either exaltation or anguish about how he feels toward that which he means. It is difficult to see how Frost can ever lack permanence; yet his permanence must be a stature still below the peaks of yet loftier spirits and poets.

The poem chosen for the reconciliation of Frost's poetry is from the Pulitzer Prize volume of poems, New Hampshire. The poem, "Good-by and Keep Cold" is invested with an intense faithfulness to the fact of nature- the requirement for the physical well-being of the young apple orchard during the winter months. The concern passes from the fact to the plane where man muses on his own experiences in the light of society, man, and nature. Finally, the whole is resolved by a judgment about some phase of life, which is sprung from, but independent of, the original facts. There is an abstract judgment on philosophic values. One plane merges up to another so naturally and so inevitably that the poem cannot be regarded as a parable developed by parallel and analogy. The poet does not preach-not even indirectly; he furnishes no decision. However, he appeals to the reader in such a total manner as to evoke the reader's entire faculty of appreciation. If the reader elects to enter the poetic game, he must see the thing through; in fact, he is impelled by Frost's communicable art to give his opinion with himself as a part of the poem.

The poem has all the virtues previously mentioned as belonging to Frost. It stirs, but not deeply; this is an offense in great poetry. The stirring is the sign of a lesser poet who lacks the will and ability to give everything. His real shortcoming is a tacit denial of the great truths of intuition.

"Good-By and Keep Cold"

This saying good-by on the edge of the dark
And the cold to an orchard so young in the bark
Reminds me of all that can happen to harm
An orchard away at the end of the farm
All winter, cut off by a hill from the house.
I don't want it girdled by rabbit and mouse,
Indeed, I don't want it dreamily nibbled for browse
By deer, and I don't want it budded by grouse.
(If certain it wouldn't be idle to call
I'd summon grouse, rabbit and deer to the wall
And warn them away with a stick for a gun.)
I don't want it stirred by the heat of the sun.
(We made it secure against being, I hope,
By setting it out on a northerly slope.)
No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm;
But one thing about it, it musn't get warm.
'How often already you've had to be told,
Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold.
Dread fifty above more than fifty below.'
I have to be gone for a season or so.
My business awhile is with different trees,
Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these,
And such is done to their wood with an ax-
Maples and birches and tamaracks.
I wish I could promise to lie in the night
And think of an orchard's arboreal plight
When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)
Its heart sinks lower under the sod.
But something has to be left to God. [28]

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[28] Robert Frost, "Good-By and Keep Cold", from New Hampshire .

It will be noted that where the element of surprise enters, there is a shift in the kind of metaphor. The surprise which involves the transfer of a word from one meaning to another is the central metaphor.[29] In the poem now undergoing synthesis, the words " so young" shuttle the meaning from nature to that of man who induces an attitude of sympathy by the use of the "so." The same central(metaphorically) transitional event occurs with the surprise words "dreamily nibbled". The destruction of trees by deer is widespread and terribly destructive. That Frost wishes to mitigate the cold physical fact of deer ravage, and that he holds no material grudge against the deer is implied in a shift of meaning through the sympathy and love incorporated in the gentle words.

The complex metaphor[30], which piles up one comparison with another and invests each surprise with another is the transitional and integrative stage, wherein and whereby the reader himself is impelled to enter the experience subjectively. The final result, in terms of a philosophic judgment, is the functional metaphor.[31] Such phrases and words as "so young", "dreamily nibbled", and "stick for a gun" shift the meaning from the orchard to man directly, so that the complex metaphor is a resultant on human terms:" How often you've had to be told."

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29 Refer to thesis, p. 9.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

From this point on, in the poem, the metaphor shifts away from the fact of nature, from the fact of man to an abstraction concerning man, nature and the ultimate. The functional metaphor is that reconciliation ending in: "Its heart sinks lower under the sod. But something has to be left to God." It is at this point that the organic whole is akin to Richard's poetic meaning.[32] In this sense, as well, the unity of the poem is now a fusion of the physical, the rational and the emotional into the "mia praxis."[33] In his use of the fusion of central metaphor, complex metaphor and functional metaphor, Frost ensures that the senses are not credited with a monopoly on the perception of beauty; beauty in art is not only discoverable by the eye and ear , but also by the force of the imagination.[34] By projecting human qualities, qualities of the mind into the concrete fact, the orchard, whatever meaning there is in the poem is brought into existence by the reader and given life in his mind.[35]

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[32] Refer to thesis, p. 9.

[33] Ibid. p. 14

[34] Ibid. p.57

[35] Ibid. p.62ff.

In his formal treatment of this poem, Frost, as before, ignores the external and superficial aspects of rhythm for the real rhythmic core. This inner core is considered to be expectancy, surprise and congruency; the outer core is revealed in the light of stress, duration and pace. The whole rhythm gives to and receives meaning from the whole poem.

The poem opens with the expectant and thoroughly congruous approach, in the first line and in the title. "This saying good-by" and "Good-By" is commonplace, yet,even in its simplicity, the connotation in "good-by" is interesting. The intellectual faculties, curiosity and imagination swell into surprise in " on the edge of the dark" and "Keep Cold." Yet, rationally, the whole line and title are congruous. The surprise vests in the fact that one has not usually thought of the beginning of winter in terms of " the edge of the dark." Feeling is also invoked in the idea that the phrase might refer to the time between the day and the night; finally, the surprise element becomes strong enough to cause the reader, now in the picture, to consider whether good-by may not refer to the dismissing of certain ways of life because of the entering of the latter stages of his life. On the highest level, may this not refer to the disappearance of values

one held in great respect, honour and love? In the title " and Keep Cold," the surprise effect is stunning. The reader, for the most part, is used to being told, " and keep warm." Warmth from the sun, from the stove and from the idea of summer have conditioned to such a frame of reference. The idea that one should keep cold, although unusual, is certainly congruent. Again, the reader, through curiosity, and through seeing something common and ordinary revealed with imaginative effect, enters the poem,himself . "Keep Cold" may refer, may it not, to keeping an intelligent personal and social distance? It may refer to employing the mind rather than to letting go with the heart. Finally, on the abstract level of philosophic thinking, it may refer to the Greek faith in reason rather than in feeling. It may give a vote in favor of thought rather than action.

The poem resumes the expectant when " and cold to an orchard" occurs. The threat of winter to the well-being of an orchard is a very real thing to man. It is congruent in his experience. The two words, poignant in effect, " so young" indeed surprise the reader from observation to concern. The words " in the bark" reinforce this concern. The idea of the utter dependence on the whims of nature that confronts the growing orchard is reinforced by the picture, with its emotional sign, of bark barely thick enough to foster protection even in the summer time. The words " so young" transfer the

reader's consideration from the objective plane of nature to the anthropocentric level. The reader's imagination and his cognitive faculties cause him to picture a young child abandoned, without protection of family, clothing and food, to the severities of an unsympathizing nature. On another level, the implication extends to the idea that affection should impregnate man's relations toward the youthful and the inexperienced rather than the cold light of reason. The three lines which follow blend expectancy, surprise and congruity into a reinforcement and a restatement of the implications and facts suggested by the title line and the following two. The three lines:

> " Reminds me of all that can happen to harm
> An orchard away at the end of the farm
> All winter, cut off by a hill from the house."

complete the first side of the paradox- the unhappy attitude raised by the cold. Three facts are developed: first, it is usual, and known, particularly to farmers, that orchards are far removed from the farm proper; second, whereas chickens, cows, farm buildings and farming factors adjacent to the farm house receive the most attention, there is a certain isolation and neglect of far flung fields and orchards over the winter months; and, third, there is the fact of the orchard facing into the forward cold slope, while the house rests back on the protected slope. The words which turn the fact of knowledge into

implication by surprise evolve from the attitudinal words, both unpleasant and sinister, " harm" and "cut off." These two words are congruous to all experience, but in an attitudinal way; " cut off" not only has the factual significance of amputation, but also the sign of removal and isolation from man's interests. "Harm" has a threatening tinge. These two words are sufficient to wrest the picture from the orchard and to parallel it with the human world. People are gregarious; they become frightened, despairing and "harmed" when left alone. To be cut off from the house means to be bereft of affection and protection. On the universal level, the hill is that barrier to security and affection; the block is set-up by the cold and towering demands of reason. These key words in Frost generally take on the implications suggested through their emotional effects. At the same time,it must be remembered that the external elements of rhythm have come into play. The strong accentuation on "this saying good-by" with its deliberate timing and the long duration on these expectant words focus the reader's attention. The light stress, the delicate timing and the long duration on the words "cold" and "so young" serve an emotional purpose. The short duration, the quick timing, but the bitter stress on "cut off" and "harm" arouse resentment, surprise, sadness and then a quick

flare of anger . On completion of the first five lines, Frost returns from implication to the world of fact and reason. He explains, expectantly and congruently,that there are many things which afflict the tree beside the cold weather, but which come with the winter season. The following lines are a transition from the first part of the paradox to the second part where "coldness" will be seen as a blessing rather than as a menace. This is merely another example of the Frostian opposite method:

> I don't want it girdled by rabbit and mouse,
> Indeed, I don't want it dreamily nibbled for browse
> By deer, and I don't want it budded by grouse.
> (If certain it wouldn't be idle to call
> I'd summon grouse, rabbit and deer to the wall
> And warn them away with a stick for a gun.)

These lines have been discussed from the point of central, complex and functional metaphor; these are now discussed, not separably, from the question of rhythm-the inner and outer core. The facts of nibbling and girdling by the winter pests, rabbit, mouse and deer are known to the reader who has even a cursory knowledge of animal and plant life. The surprising part is the gentle, yet, most congruous, verb usage for the destruction accomplished, for "girdling","dreamily nibbled" and "budded" are poetic words used to attract the readers' attention to the way in which the damage was accomplished ,in terms of grace and whimsy, rather

than to direct attention to the animals as sources of material damage to crops and plant life. The triple occasion of "I don't want" does not receive a strong accentuation from stress, timing and duration, but from the repetition; as a matter of fact, there is a long light stress on the three words; the effect of the external rhythm is such as to belie the words. It is as if he doesn't want them to harm the trees, but, at the same time, there is the impression that he objects only to their girdling, nibbling and budding. This impression is confirmed by the surprise words of " summon" and "warn." Both words are lightly stressed, slow in timing but of considerable duration; the treatment is such as to divest them of menace. "Summon" is wonderfully used in surprise, for surely that is the last thing one would do to these enemies of the orchard. "Warn" is a charitable substitute for killing them with a gun. These six lines have shifted from the botanical side to the zoological side. The words "warn", "summon" and "dreamily" fuse the thought on the plane of man and society. The animals represent the troubles which afflict the child and the man through the petty problems which arise from day to day; especially the type brought on by education through the use of reason. Yet, he wouldn't want man freed from these troubles entirely; he would want them warned off with the heart, not with violence, hate and discord, as represented by the "gun."

The second side of the problem is introduced with a startling and surprising effect, supported immediately by the fact:

> I don't want it stirred by the heat of the sun.
> (We made it secure against being, I hope,
> By setting it out on a northerly slope.)
> No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm;
> But one thing about it, it musn't get warm.
> 'How often already you've had to be told,
> Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold.
> Dread fifty above more than fifty below.'

The sudden effect is secured by a sharp, quick and dramatic stress, time and duration on the "want" of "I don't want it". The same accentuation comes back on an extremely sharp "heat." The long stress, and duration comes on the word "stirred." The reader, then, is suddenly, but dramatically told that the problem of cold isn't really pertinent. Trees should be kept cold. The next two lines are characterized by an almost entire absence of stress, a quick tempo and a short duration. They inform the reader of a "fact." In order to prevent their being stirred by the sun, the farmer went to the task of, scientifically, setting them where they wouldn't get much heat- on the northerly slope. Two words check this speed, "secure" and "setting". They are stressed sharply, of moderate duration and of fairly slow tempo. The two words are most definite- they are as definite as reason itself, for they represent reason.

The following two lines are delivered with the slowness, the deliberation and the ponderous measure of a weighty revelation of fact:

> No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm;
> But one thing about it, it musn't get warm.

The heavy stress comes on the surprise words of "worse" and "warm." At this point, Frost has completed a series of lines well confined to the problem of the orchard itself and the factual statement that trees must not get warm in the winter. The next three lines fuse the statement into the thought on a human level. The pivotal word which does this is the key word "you've". The stress on this surprise element is moderately sharp and short. The swift pace of 'How often already you've had to be told, is brought up sharply with the consonants"t,l and d ." That word is stressed with a tone the admixture of lecture and anger.

The same combination of solicitude and lecturing is contained in the sharply stressed line whose consonants keep the tempo moderate and the timing of the duration rather jerky through a "school-teacherish emphasis:" "Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold." In the final line, he passes a definite judgment as to whether too much heat is better than too little: "Dread fifty above more than fifty below!"

The word "you've" and the last two lines turn the reader's

attention toward himself, toward man. Telling-from "told", after all, is a rational word. The repeated "keep cold" is the invitation to reason rather than to emotion. The good-by is the sad, but stern and inevitable warning that the lad must, sooner or later, reach the stage when he has to go forth on his own. Reason must be his guide. "Keep cold", "Good-by and keep cold." The final statement in these series of lines, "Dread fifty above more than fifty below", makes the judgment on three levels: first, extreme heat is more dangerous to the young tree; second, it is more dangerous for man to trust his heart more than his mind; and, third, reason is superior to emotion. This is solving the poem, presently, philosophically, as well as artistically. However, it is impossible to separate both. The inner and outer core of rhythm convey meaning.

For a spell the poet leaves the realm of fact and enters fancy with a series of surprise lines; these three lines are characterized by an absence of stress, by a drawling tempo and by a moderate duration. It acts as though the poet is talking in a calm and conversational tone to a young child:

> I have to be gone for a season or so.
> My business awhile is with different trees,
> Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these,

As if in answer to the child's question "what can they be?", the poet explains

sadly, bitterly and wrathfully. The short Anglo-Saxon words are sharply accentuated with full duration and tempo, as Frost blends the fact and his dismay of it:

> And such is done to their wood with an ax-
> Maples and birches and tamaracks.

In the final line there, the speculation and curiosity are answered and congruency extends to the three previous lines and to these two. For maples, birches and tamaracks do not bear fruit but are trees of the forest. Because they are not so materially rewarding, they are not protected and cared for. Their fate is the ax. The surprise-laden words " and such is done" lends additional emotion to the context. These words indicate that the poet is concerned; because he is concerned, obviously more is in his mind than the fuel they will provide.

Because he has a business with the forest trees, other than with their utility and because he resents their fate of the ax, his attitude turns the reader toward extension. Does Frost mean, the reader ponders, that the different trees mean things, to men, which have little material profit? Or does Frost imply that there is a sad fate, in which man should concern himself, about the young who are not loved, protected and who fall to the ax of competition and indifference? Frost does not give the answer to these lines which are so

taut and charged with stress and quick angry notes- these are over-emphasized by the unusual length Frost gives the short words in "And such is done to their wood with an ax." Can there be an answer when the resentment is charged with so much emotion. Apparently not! The heart is rejected when wisdom invests the next lines. This is conveyed with a light stress and a musing length. The pace is reverently and resignedly slow and even:

> "I wish I could promise to lie in the night
> And think of an orchard's arboreal plight."

No sooner does the note of emotion die out, unanswered, than reason itself is called into question. The surprise words,"I wish I could promise ," by the lingering external rhythm start out with negation. He would "lie", not "toss", in the bed, therefore, he would "think." The lines are congruent, then. He cannot be hopeful. Hopeful of what:

> When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)
> Its heart sinks lower under the sod.

The quietly stressed and lengthy words "slowly" and "sinks lower" are expectant in terms of death and decay of trees. The surprise elements: "and nobody comes with a light" and "heart" shift the emphasis to man and away from sympathy with nature. This takes place in

two ways and on two planes. " and nobody comes with a light" refers to the failure of wisdom and reason to illuminate the cause of death and beauty together with man's love for the material and his rejection of the aesthetic; " heart" refers to the spirit of man as well as to the failure of kindness, charity and love to answer man's problems. Neither wisdom nor emotion can keep man from the death of his ideals. One must think, one must love, but the ultimate solution then must be unattainable. The emphasis on "something" and on "left" complete the functional metaphor and the final implication: "But something has to be left to God." Operating within the framework of a congruent, a reasonable and experienced phase of life, incident, pinpointed and anchored with the expectant word and phrase, Frost established a liason with the reader. Then with the sudden infusion of the surprise word, phrase or clause, he forces the reader to speculate on some hitherto unrevealed fact, known, but not known to him before. The surprise word always carries an attitude with it. The external elements of rhythm, stress, duration and tempo convey the inner elements to the reader. The integration of both inform and extend the reader of the experience of the poet. The reader is self-involved and finishes with a judgment on a universal question. The judgment is the reader's.

The poem appears to be written in iambic pentameter with each pair of lines rhymed in the Dryden fashion. The traditionalist would attempt to mark the poem off in regular feet. This is not, as we have seen, possible with Frost. This poem, in fact, from a purely metrical standpoint, would show a baffling array of iambic, trochaic, dactylic and anapestic feet. Not until the inner and outer core of rhythm are applied, does the poem become poetry and meaningful. With the couplets, Frost obtains freedom by the use of enjambement. This open line lends more speed to the action and yet is conducive to the conversational tone. The speed is checked,when Frost wishes to impose time for reflection, by a strong noun or a verb at the end of the line, for example, "bark", "harm", "farm", "wall", "storm", "ax", "night" and "plight."

Reinforcing the rhythm are the ornaments of poetry and figures of speech. Frost relies heavily on "sound sense" and the "sense of sound"- because of his emphasis on dramatic rhythm, one would expect to find, and does find, considerable versatility in the range of his onomatopoetic effect. Correlated in producing this sound effect are assonance and alliteration which are integrated intimately with the meaning of the poem. The sounds in this poem are muted to tie in with the remoteness of the scene, its isolation.

It would be difficult to find sounds more muted and yet sounds than "girdled", "nibbled" "budded" and "sinks slowly." Yet, the sound of sense is stiffened through the assonance in "browse", "grouse", "house" and "mouse", "sod" and "God." It makes a sound of life in the desolation of the orchard. There is a crying aloud to the reader. The poem is in contrast(the poem is outlined on page 170 of the thesis) to the brawling, crowded and noisy scene of "Out-Out." The sound of sense gains effect from the leisurely rise from the beginning of the sentence. The ascent into the dramatic sound of meaning spurns reliance on the effects of alliteration. It is significant to note that there is none in this poem, although it was stronger in"Out-Out." Nevertheless, the human sound of man and his sympathy for all life is much present. The leisurely rise from the beginning of the sentence is revealed in the anacrusis of such approaches as: "and the cold", "and such is done", " and think of."

The limited amount of anaphora is artfully worked out so as to emphasize elements of emotion conveyed in the word "want." The phrase, repreated four times,is one which rejects, not in terms of reason, but in emotion, " I don't want." The use of apostrophe, a valued Frostian device, is restrained yet relevant. In addressing the orchard or spirit of the world,as though at hand, he used the assonantal quality of the long"o". This, in itself, gives the sound impression of

an invocation as in "oh! ". Both surprise and appeal are involved-as in "Keep cold." The long "o" sound in that apostrophic utterance serves the purpose of an appeal; the inclusion of the long "o" in the harsh consonantal "keep "cold" has an additional dual effect; first, it gives the crisp effect of a reliance on reason; second, it has the demanding character of a command. Here again, Frost is able to invest his art on the levels of emotion, reason and volition.

The opposites of "cold" and "warmth", "emotion and reason", and the "heart and the mind" are focused, differentiated and then blended by the sound of sense. Therefore, Frost maintains his policy of not relying on cacophony to pinpoint opposites. To do this, would , in the eyes of Frost, compete with thought for attention.

His penchant for keeping the whole poem,with its beauty and meaning, to the fore is well demonstrated in "Good-By and Keep Cold". Instead of using synecdoche as a figure of speech and an ornament, which use would splinter the reader's appreciation into form as such, Frost employs the synecdoche so that it immediately engages on the philosophic level. " On the edge of the dark", "so young in the bark", "done with their wood with an ax" and "the heart sinks" are all, in themselves, finely chiseled and conceived examples of synecdoche. But Frost ensures that they appeal to the attitude the reader has toward

something larger. For example, with Frost's art, the reader can see, according to his stature, that "edge of the dark" stands for a universal stepping-off into the unknown, the uncharted and the unprotected. It could, in a lesser, and formal sense, represent a colorful way of indicating twilight or the entrance into winter. Of course, there is a little more to it than this. The word "edge" itself helps to reader to implication,for edge represents the extremely fine point at which it is dangerous to"teeter on" and as hazardous to fall off. Frostian synecdoche manifests itself in such reference that the reader finds the key word interpretable on the natural, the human, the social, the moral and the rational levels. The synecdoche which vests from the whole to the part, or vice versa, in "edge of the dark" finds the word "dark" at point. Does "dark" show the absence of daylight? Does it mean social disintegration? Does it refer to moral ill-doing? Or does it indicate the absence of reason?

Irony? Much of irony stems from the question, why is that which seems to be true, not true? Or why is that which appears to be truth, on the surface, interpretable in an entirely different sense when extension enters? Irony, with Frost,bears the same relation of art to philosophy that exists in the use of synecdoche. By use of an ironic figure, meta-

phorically stated, he reveals that there is no clear cut answer to the truth of the observable fact and that of the believable one. The objective truth is liable to get short shift if some subjective impression of reality has meaning for another individual. The entire irony in "Good-By and Keep Cold" resides and emanates through the idea of the rationalist that emotion clouds the apprehension of truth, through the ideal that sympathy and love, emotively grounded, can solve the problems of man by the heart and not the mind, and through the refutation of both, by each, in terms of resignation of the responsibility of resolving the dilemma. The final test is that "something must be left to God." After centuries of development of reason and after ages of faith in the power of the intuition, all that man can say is that "something" must be left for God. Is it not ironical that the something is "all?".

One could fasten on the use of "girdled", "dreamily and nibbled" and "budded" as examples of ironical metaphor in which the gentle and colorful verbs mask the life-sapping activity of animals on arboreal life. But, as we have seen, the surprise elements of these words reach to a deeper ironic implication- an implication which causes the critic to evaluate not the words of irony, but the whole effect as part of the warp and woof of the poem.

Closely associated with his figures of irony and synecdoche are litotes and a form of them called meiosis. Litotes represent types of understatement, whereby a thing is represented as less important than it really it. "Meiosis" is that form of litotes which represents a thing as less than it is to divert the attention from the thing to its implications. In the poem under discussion, Frost does not want the reader to stop and dwell on the destruction of the tree life by winter enemies. The word "destruction" has a final note that demands a full stop. Instead Frost inserts the understated "harm"- " Reminds me of all that can happen to harm an orchard away at the end of the farm. Now, it is critical to note that litotes were not used in the traditional sense- to make the damage seem the greater by mentioning it in such terms of insignificance so that the minimizing seems ironical to the reader. Rather it is used to inform the reader that , terrible as the destruction may be, the whole problem of hostility to young life is not to be left in and with such a narrow restriction to trees in the orchard.

Perhaps the most common thing in life, and, assuredly, one of the most disappointing and deflating is the coming "back to earth" from flights of thought and flights of emotion. Frost is fond of anchoring man to the reality of the earth of his temporal existence. In this poem, after arousing the intense

participation of the reader, first, on the side of the heart, and, second, on the side of the mind, Frost abruptly brings him back to the world of common affairs; apparently, he drops the thing for a while. He finishes with the anti-climatic "I have to be gone for a season or so. My business awhile is with different trees." He is able to engage in such anti-climax effectively for what he is doing, throughout the poem, is appealing to the dual aspects of mind and emotion in the same person- not to people, who are, on the one hand, entirely rational, and not to people, who are, on the other hand, entirely emotive. If he did, and if there were, could there be- implication.

In this poem, as in the majority of his poems, Frost personifies. In addition to rendering the facts of the orchard, the forest trees and the affectant result of weather on them, Frost gives them qualities of human life. In enlivening them with the accuracy of the fact, he engages the reader. Then the reader implies , with the Frostian clues, the qualities of his subjective mind as reflected in the natural objects considered as objectively real. The discussion of temperature to the trees, as in "Keep Cold.....Good-By and Keep Cold" and the entire personification of the first two lines of the poem suggest the ability of the natural object to respond to human attributes of the mind. In verity, to enable the reader to

embrace the hierarchy of values in the appreciation of the entire poem, Frost must employ personification; but the employment must be organized so deftly that the reader appreciates the reality of the natural object so as to be convinced of the personified address and response. It is an objective fact that trees are harmed by the heat of the sun if the temperature is too high during the wintertime. If there is unseasonal warmth, the sap in the tree begins to flow, the budding commences,and the tree begins too early a preparation for the vernal season. Soon winter reasserts itself; the premature budding is nipped and the tree suffers irreparable damage. The communication established by poet with nature as objectively real and subjectively responsive to the mind bears fruit. The reader sees another picture; this time it is dressed in human vestments. To thrust the young out before maturation is to risk a sudden return to the dangers from a cold and unreceptive world. The person who ventures before he is ready and able to meet life, with its harsh terms, is often defeated before he starts.

By presenting these opposites of adventure and security, the heart and the mind, the idea and the ideal and the emotional and the rational, often via personification, Frost's range of poetry is an unobstrusive chiaroscuro- the sort of writing in which opposites are not so much stated as mingled.

In the poem under discussion, the circle of doubt as to the resolution of the problem in terms of mind and heart, heat and cold, daring and withdrawal and imagination and cognition is entirely enlivened by chiaroscuro. Chiaroscuro, in Frost, is not obvious for he wishes to establish the fact before the implication; thus, Frost introduces the technique of employing this ornament of poetry on such universal levels as imagination and cognition, rather than in such restrictive terms as joy and sorrow.

This slanting and bias by irony, synecdoche, personification and chiaroscuro is to be considered, integratively, from the vantages of "point of view", "color" and "local color." The "local color" is Frost's treatment of the orchard and the forest as real. This was "colored" into "point of view" by irony, synecdoche, personification and chiaroscuro. The tonal qualities of the "surprise" words, are, in fact, the whole aspect of "color." "Color" and "local color" are the two elements, of these three, for which Frost accepts responsibility. They set the stage for the "point of view" which is the responsibility of the reader. What he does with the implication is his own affair! In this question of color, there resides a flaw in Frost- from the point of view of the writer of this thesis. The local color is so factual and so subdued that often

the reader does not apprehend the fact with sufficient warmth and depth. In "Good-By and Keep Cold" all the elements of form and philosophy are there but they are inclined to be thin in emotive content. They are there; they work, but not with enough depth and richness. The reader cannot help but reach the philosophical level. Does he care enough when he gets there? Does Frost? It seems a fair conclusion that his habit of anti-climax indicates that he doesn't let go enough with the heart on the fact. Is his whole art not the lesser for that restraint? Frost's answer might well be, with force and justice, that each reader, according to his stature, will find what he can find. He may stop at the fact, at beauty or at wisdom; in effect, he may have some of all. Nevertheless the masters give the reader a feeling of ecstasy and exaltation even with the natural fact.

However, that is not to say he does not engage in diatyposis. His surprise words give life to the inanimate and they evoke imagination and intuition. The objective elements of orchard and forest move toward the human level of attitudes through such words as "harm", " and such is done to their wood with an ax." The point laboured is that the excitement evolves from a rational excitement arising in the reader as he mulls over each new implication. Frost could have undoubtedly increased his stature by arousing the reader's sense intoxication.

This range, if a little thin, is wide. Each new reading yields a new thought, a new sense of beauty of the fact, a new review of the implication and a re-evaluation of the judgment made. In reconciling the poem philosophically, it will become apparent that much of the task has been completed through the synthesis of the formal elements. It is a great achievement by Frost that" how his poem is " is what it means. It has been shown, previously, that it is extremely difficult to view Frost's art from an analysis of the single metaphor or the single figure. These are interpretable through the inner and outer core of rhythm. Once the rhythm, with its developing figures and ornaments, is surveyed closely that meaning accompanies- each reinforcing the other.

It must be stressed that Frost has said, and his poems reveal, that his work has dramatic quality. He relies on the speaking voice to render his fact implicative. The reader, having acquainted himself with the Frostian art, may, by viewing the poem in the light of tonal emphasis, experience variation within the limits prescribed by extension of the fact. Proper understanding of expectancy, surprise and congruity as fused with stress, timing and duration will accomplish this variety. The depth and richness , the extension and implication come from the communication quickened by the figures and ornaments which complete the texture with rhythm.

Frost's poem yields it secrets slowly because wisdom as well as delight is involved. Frost assures the reader, time and time again, that he wants the reader to find out in the latter's judgment. If the reader attends carefully, he will find key words which will imply considerable. As we have seen, the "surprise" words are the key words- such as "so young", "harm", "dreamily" "ax", "heart sinks lowers" and the others cited. These words, through context and through tonal emphasis,do more than the ordinary words will do. In this poem, they shift the meaning from belief to attitude, from reason to emotion and from both to supernatural speculation. Depending always on the common word and the common incident, his art invests these uncommonly. The facts, imaginatively dressed and afforded variety, constitute the pivot of his poetry. The earthly realism of the physical world and man's close tie with it are the twin facts which are at the core of his content.

In resolving the conflict between fact and fancy, the difficulty is dissipated when the reader considers that fact contains the elements of thought, understanding, and sense stimulation through careful observation and belief. The fancy refers to opinion, desire and wish- each intensified.

The orchard, the cold and the depredations of the enemies of trees are grounded on resolvable phenomena, and these facts exist independently of the color, bias and temperament of the observer. The concern about "harm", "heart", "stirred" and "musn't" with other such attitudinal tenor evoke moods, emotions and actions through a visual and imaginative consideration. The fact is " that which is"; the fancy is "what we wish were" and the fusion is "what should be." In the lines:

> "My business awhile is with different trees,
> Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these"

fact invests both lines.

However, the fancy intrudes:

> "And such is done to their wood with an ax-
> Maples and birches and tamaracks."

at this point, the reader's feelings have been invoked. The fancy in the first line is such as to arouse concern, resentment and anger. The reader no longer is content to see; he feels and feels strongly. The reconciliation attends when the reader wants to do something about it and passes a judgment in terms of "should."

The question of the traditional and the progressive is nicely handled incidentally. The traditionalist states his case; so does the progressive. Which is which? Consider the first two lines:

"This saying good-by on the edge of the dark
And the cold to an orchard so young in the bark"

Is this the complaint of the traditionalist that old values are fading away in "good-by" and in the "edge of the dark." Is the latter the turning away from the security of the old and tried and true? Does the turning loose at a considerable distance,to embark on an adventurous flight, from love and affection of the young represent the complaint of the reactionary? Or is this the statement of the progressive? Do the words " cold" ,and "so young" contain an indictment of the upholder of the status quo? Is "cold" a protest against the behavior of the traditionalist who is indifferent to other's plight and who has no sympathy for the young? In the following lines:

'How often already you've had to be told,
Keep cold, young orchard.Good-by and keep cold.
Dread fifty above more than fifty below.'

This could be the warning of the traditionalist to the adventurous spirit. Avoid the urge of the heart and the unreasoned impulse to depart from security. On the other hand it could be the injunction of the liberal against the fierce attitude of the traditionalist to his own accepted values- this fierce attitude involves heat and passion when there is a threat to his standards. The "cold", from this point of view, would be the appeal of the "Hellene" to evaluate life in terms of a reasonable view of life rather than a blind acceptance of passed-on values.

The beauty of this lies in the effect that no matter how the lines are arranged by the reader, both sides are presented. There is really no paradox; the opposites do not pose the question of compromise. The traditional and the progressive are not reconciled in terms of a compromise. They are phases of each individual, as in the case of the orchard and forest, each is resolved in the light of "when." In the winter, intense cold is but both necessary and desirable; in the summer, all the warmth of the sun is needed for the trees. The maples, birches and tamaracks have two functions to fulfill- beauty and use. It is not a "fifty-fifty" proposition. When reason is needed, it is needed in its utmost capacity; when the heart is required, half measures do not suffice. It all depends on the individual knowing when each is required. As this seems difficult to resolve, this question of "when", then,"But something has to be left to God." is the implication Frost rests on.

How much extension is justifiable in the poet? How much should he observe and how much should he imply? The framework of this thesis, in a definitive and critical sense, invoked , as a support (and, admittedly, as an assumption) that a poem should not only have beauty but that it should also have wisdom as its ultimate aim. It also insisted that should be couched in congruent language- with ascertainable imagery and metaphor. That is, the poet must communicate certain truths.

There is an advantage, quite subtle, in relying on the common fact and truth for the core of the poem. In an accurate observation, much of the detail reveals the total environment. Frost has taken a small sector of terrain and a limited number of people for his observation; but he has revealed in a faithfulness to his material the social history of his small segment of the world. The detail of the orchard and the hill, the house, the rabbit, the deer and the mouse are so presented that the reader experiences more than the recognition of things known and expectant to him. He has the experience of surprise. They mean more than the observation itself. They are more than recognition. He thinks on them and the reader passes judgment on a universal level in the light of a philosophy of life. For example, he observes with verisimilitude the difference between the treatment accorded the orchard and that accorded the hardwood trees of the forest, both in nurture and in the end result. The very preciseness of that poetic phase serves to call attention and speculation to this variance between the fruit tree and the forest tree. By use of surprise words the speculation enters the realm of implication. Finally, on the occasion when observation has completed its part and when it has gone as far as its implicative metaphor will bear the load, the problem is handed on to God. There is no compromise between what is observed and what is implied.

Frost's treatment of nature is one of his finest achievements. Postulating objects as real in nature, he gives them faithful observation. He invests them with the qualities of the esoteric which man commonly and universally recognizes as beautiful; and, finally, he projects qualities of the mind in the objects; as these qualities represent the opposites at work in the individual, man has nature as the mirror for implication and reconciliation. In the poem, "Good-By and Keep Cold", Frost portrays the reality of the orchard, the cold, the northerly slope, the protected house, the habits of the animals with their depredations on the trees, the neglect of hardwood trees, their toppling by the ax and the danger of the heat when it comes prematurely and stirs up life,when it should remain dormant.

His personification of nature and its response to his address enable him to reconcile the subjective and the objective- the one in man, the other in nature. Nature is more than the recipient of qualities which man calls"beautiful." In man's relation to her, certain qualities of man,man and society, man and nature, and man and God are evoked. Frost's weakness in his treatment of nature is in his refusal to consider her in relation to God in a manner more than possible. "Something has to be left to God." What that may be, Frost does not develop.

In addition to reconciling the subjective and the objective so that the congruent experiences in an implicative sense are evolved as philosophy, Frost shows a love for nature in a sense, not of beauty, but of concern and responsibility. He is concerned with the well-being of the orchard, not because of its material return, but from the view point of avoiding injury to its young and growing fruit trees. He implies a condemnation of love of a tree merely for its fruit: " My business awhile is with different trees, Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these." The implication on the tonal accentuation of "less fruitful" will reveal his scorn of the neglect of the maple and the birch. As noted before, one of the key lines, from both fact and surprise is that sharp " and such is done to their wood with an ax." The angry human voice protests the despoilation of the forest by the instruments of man for forest products.

Frost's Hardy-like devotion to the truth of the earth and its teeming life and continuous cycle of death extends to the analogy and parallel of man and plant and animal life. The comparison of nature's arrangement of her thermostat for her children is likened to the affect of the heart and mind on man. The sinking of life under the sod is obviously extension to man's death. However, the real cause of this is not in the hands of man and nature, but in something higher.

Emotion and reason are not social agents operating through the individual. Society is a fundamental condition for the development of individuality, but that condition can never substitute society for the individual. This implication is strong in this poem. The discussion, through personification, is in social terms. Even the concern for nature itself is socially derived. But the apprehension and comprehension are individual; this is always, this writer states, why Frost does not pass judgment, but always leaves that for the reader to do.

The concern for the young, whether in adhering to the heart or to the mind, is a social act and concern. The judgment is by the individual but directed away from himself. That would seem to be the real test for "social." In Frost, his "I" is always directed at what he "wants" for "you" and not for "me." The anger at the ruthless bite of the axe implies, strongly, that the "different trees" are members representing "social" in a universal sense and not those in one family and from one locale. While his judicial advice is certainly dictatorial:

> 'How often already you've had to be told,
> Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold.
> Dread fifty above more than fifty below.'

His social conscience is deciding to leave clues, not along the line of heart and mind, insofar as man and society is concerned, but along the understood "you" between "keep and cold" and in front of "dread." More important, the tonal aspects of rhythm will reveal the charitable solicitude which finds "me" entirely omitted.

The decision for this extraversion, however, is made on individual bases. There is no question of compromise between the person and the community of man; the whole is resolvable in the apprehension that man expresses his social being through a concern for his fellow man- he has business with him. However, his evolution is not in social frames of reference, but, instead, the complete life, temporally speaking, comes from a personal and individual judgment which admits that his fellow man completes and gives meaning to his life.

Poetry has always been judged, and probably always will be evaluated, by some standard which involves character, morality and religion. It is very well for the critic and for the artist to urge "privilege" and artistic license. But it will not, the writer thinks, avail. As the poem is communicated to the reader so as to yield both beauty and wisdom, there is no valid reason for holding that the truth of nature has any more poetic experience for the reader than the truths of man and God. The reader must approach the poem, as he approaches other experiences in life, with his whole capacity. This includes an ability to perceive physical beauty, to apprehend, according to his frame of reference, the good and moral act, and to pass judgment on the intuitive apprehension of the supernatural.

It is on this question that Frost can adduce a strong point for individualism. The moral judgments on the work of

artists are primarily based on the standards accepted by his concurrent generation. As morals concern the ways in which men consider themselves bound to treat their fellow men, in terms of a temporal right and wrong, these often vary from generation to generation. Frost will reconcile the question of character, the individual standard of right and wrong, with that of morality, in social standards, by pointing out that the test is the concern and the love for one's fellow man, whether it comes from reason or from the heart. In this way, and in this light of thinking, the character of the individual is more staunch, more permanent and more lofty than the shifting standards of that which society terms moral. Frost will answer objections to his philosophy of having the individual take upon himself the presumption that the individual can, by himself, evolve an ethic which, although binding his action to another man, can bind man's actions to him. In other words, Frost must answer the objection that what one man feels about his duty to another man need not be reciprocally true. Frost would respond, in essence, that the question would suggest that the critic had missed the crux of the problem. The test of character lies in man's adherence to good and evil, not from the individual's concern for the material well-being of self, but from a consideration of man's relations to his fellow man. In fact, the character and the ethic vests in the individual's ability to see the

problem in terms of right and wrong, from his desire to adhere to the right, from his will to pursue the well-being of his fellow man and from his commitment of his ethical principles to action in a social milieu,but from an individual decision. Morality, to Frost, reaches its most desirable position when the community is not the abstract repository and agent of a standard set of regulations from an adherence to which man will be considered as"moral" He will not compromise by granting that morality is the social judgment passed on the individual's agreement to rules of conduct suggested and given sanction by the individual. What is morality for Frost? It is the community of man, each acting by using reason to ascertain right and wrong,each acting to use emotion and attitude to desire the right, each acting and willing to pursue the well-being of his fellow man, - all operating in a social environment but from the individual will.

In "Good-by and Keep Cold" this concept of character and morality is dominant. His concern is always for the "you" of plant life, of animal life and for his fellow man. Yet, he will not surrender his freedom and his duty to the agency of society for resolution. He will try to resolve "should" and "ought" in terms of the heart ; failing this, he sees that feeling and love are not enough. There must be the rational apprehension of other values- reason and thought for example. There he , individually, and on his own

responsibility, declares that the problem of what ought to be done must be done in terms of ratiocination, entirely divested of emotion. Finally, in retrospect, he finds that he cannot get the answer to his own satisfaction, either in the form of emotional phenomena or in the form of cognitive conclusion. In the case of the heart and the mind, neither love nor thought will serve to answer the question"why?!" He confesses, that while he, as a person, will try to do what he can by thought and feeling, that the permanent solution is beyond him. If he cannot resolve it, he "... has to be gone for a season or so. My business awhile is with different trees."

His confession of a religious faith comes when he states: "But something has to be left to God." But the tragedy lies in the fact that the religious faith is not his. He decides that when empirical and intuitive faculties cannot resolve the dilemma of what man does to himself and to nature and to others, some higher value holds the solution-God. He cannot even admit to the stirrings of this thing which must exist in the hand of God:

> "I wish that I could promise to lie in the night
> And think of an orchard's arboreal plight
> When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)
> Its heart sinks lower under the sod.
> But something has to be left to God.

As the lights of reason and feeling cannot point out the solution of this mystery to him, he will not promise, even, to consider the matter further.

The light of faith has been denied to him for he will not accept that which he cannot hold as proven and real in his temporal world of consciousness. Therefore, it would be fruitless to him, as well as dishonest, to promise to do that which is impossible for him. But is this a reason for him to stop? Never, for Frost will have other business with other things which he may resolve according to his admittedly lesser philosophy.

Is this an example of colossal egoism on the part of Robert Frost? Is this something to be left to God virtually impossible for solution because Frost cannot resolve the problem? Is the "something" deprecatory in tone? If so, then Frost's whole art is indicted. From what is known of Frost's poetry, from what is thought of him as the man, and from his general statements, the indictment can hardly stand. He has admitted a failure to grasp the nature of that which he is sure exists- a Supreme Being-God. But he cannot confess to a faith he does not feel and which he does not see. In fact, his confession is rather an example of true humility, for confessing as an individual, and accepting full responsibility as such, he has the greater stature. In the poem at hand, his finest sentiments are expressed in terms of "you"; his weakness and failure is confessed, in true humility, in terms of "I". What a deep poignancy and bitterness of feeling of loss may there not be in "I wish I could promise."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In order to synthesize the art and philosophy of the living American poet, Robert Frost, research was done on four important levels. First, Robert Frost is considered from the intuitive apprehension of art and content of poetry from the point of view of the writer of the thesis. This intuitive view, however, is considered carefully with reference to established standards and critics in the field of poetry. Second, Frost is considered from the point of view of the numerous critics and their essays written on Frost over some forty years. Third, Frost is evaluated from his numerous, yet fragmentary, statements and quotations. Finally, Frost is considered from a considerable synthesis of a number of his poems. In the light of these four approaches, the poet is appreciated on the level of form, on the level of meaning and through the reconciliation of both.

Research indicates, and this thesis shows, that the critics, in considering that Frost's opposites and paradoxes of form, fact and fancy, traditionalism and liberalism, observation and implication, man and nature, man and society and character, morality and religion, erred in insisting that Frost accepts a life and philosophy of compromise and "golden means." Frost's formal and meaningful aspects of poetry synthesize, then reconcile into a product to be evaluated

as revealing a universal truth about some phase of life , revealed in an artistic experience which yields both beauty and wisdom. This reconciliation is obtained through an art which, fused with content, communicates to tne reader the experience through a rhythm, greater than that traditionally apprehended. The rhythm comprises the inner and outer core; the inner core is comprised of the expectant, the surprising and the congruent. These elements are conveyed by the outer rhythmic core of stress, tempo and duration. The dramatic tone in which the poems are rendered integrates the core into a unity of communication in action. The figures of speech and the ornaments of poetry are means to the end product. This product comes into being for the reader when the reader passes judgment in terms of a whole philosophy based on the specific incident. The artistic elements, thus fused, start with observation which surprise changes to implication on the evolving levels from nature to supernatural considerations.

The critics, numbering among them the principal Frostian commentators, Louis Untermeyer, Mark Van Doren and Lawrance Thompson, have disagreed on Frost. This dissent stems from the fact that he always presents two sides to each incident; they disagree as to which side he emphasizes, as to his compromise and as to the level of appreciation. Many of the critics value him

as the poet of New England. This thesis has shown, it is urged, that these opposites and paradoxes blend into the picture of qualities existing in the individual. They are reconciled toward a view of life resulting from their interaction.

The fact establishes communication with the reader through expectancy and congruency; the fancy of the imaginative moves the reader to imply that the experience "means." In showing the forces of traditionalism and liberalism at war in the individual, Frost leads the reader to judge that life is a continuous process of upheaval, change and consolidation of custom and habit, all directed toward obtaining needs, goals and satisfaction for the individual in terms of beauty and wisdom. In the reconciliation of man and nature, Frost employs natural objects as real; the mind projects its qualities into nature and parallels these with a judgment as to man, man and nature and as to man and nature in the larger philosophy of life. Man and society are reconciled so that man is seen as a free individual who realizes reason for being through the community of men which must always be appreciated by the individual feeling,reason and will. In the final problem of character, morality and religion, Frost reconciles by declaring that right and wrong must be the decision of the man and not of society. The test of character for the individual is his faithfulness to reason, to desire, to will and to act with the

good heart, not in terms of his well-being, but from a concern for his fellow man. Morality, for Frost, is inherent in that community of men who act, not from the dictates of a collective society but who, in individual tests of character, act for the benefit of "you" and not for "self." There is no compromise required between man and society in morality for there is no real conflict when it is realized that Frost implies that man has a dual entity toward an ethic-privilege of a free man to do duty for love of others.

Despite the urgings of Lawrance Thompson and Louis Untermeyer, among other critics, Frost cannot be granted to be a believer in God- that requires faith. He has no faith and admits to a loss in stature thereby. He will not embrace that which will not satisfy his apprehension and his comprehension; though he judges that "something greater" must exist. Not being satisfied in his own mind and heart that he can prove the supernatural as real, he accepts the world of temporal experience. With this, the lesser, he is committed, through reason, courage and love to do his best.

The art and philosophy of reconciliation of Frost's poetry is that of the man himself. In the twilight of a long service to art, he has reconciled his life, with its strengths and limitations, by and through a communication to his fellow man of the beauty, truth and wisdom of his world as he has found it.

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Kilkpatrick, W.H. Group Education for a Democracy , N.Y, Association Press, 1940, xi, 287 p.

This book focuses on the need for a rational approach to moral problems , with the responsibility vesting in the individual. Frost is in this tradition.

Krech and Krutchfield, Theory and Problems of Social Psychology, N.Y., McGraw-Hill, 1948, xv,639 p.

This is the first modern attack on the idea of the group mind and the group morality. Frost is much impressed with the theory of individualism as urged in this volume's theorems.

Kreymborg, Alfred, "Our Singing Strength", America in Verse, 1929, N.Y., Coward, Inc, 306 p.

Lambuth, David, "II. A Foreword", from Robert Frost A Bibliography, Green, C and W. Clymer, Amherst, Jones Library, 1939.

Lewis, C.Day, The Poetic Image, London, Hogarth, 1947, 157 p.

This small volume analyzes the need for congruency in poetic imagery, which, combined with surprise and expectancy, renders the poem communicable and implicative.

Leightville, Walter, a stenographic report on Frost's address, "Cavalier Pilgrimage", delivered at the University of Virginia, October 26, 1936.

Lewisohn, Ludwig, "Revolt Against Convention", from Expression in America, N.Y., Harper, 1932, 593 p.

Legouis and Cazamian, History of English Literature, London, Dent, 1951, xvii, 1,396 p.

This volume treats of artistic movements in English Literature from a philosophical point of view. The information on the greater English poets, cited in this thesis, is based on this authority to no inconsiderable degree.

"Literature and the Colleges", article in the Literary Digest of the United States, Vol.66, No. 3, issue of July 17, 1920, pp.32-33.

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Markerly, Robert, " Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson, article in the American Mercury, Vol. 14, No. 9, issue of August 1929, pp.234 ff. and 317.

Modern British Poetry and Modern American Poetry, Combined Mid-Century Edition , edited by Louis Untermeyer, N.Y, Harcourt, 1950, xxiii, 1209 p.

Moore, Harold, A, "Robert Frost, New England Poet and the Genesis of His Poetry", article in The Sunday Springfield Republican , issue of January 4, 1925, Section D, p. 4, 7 and 8.

Morton, David, "The Poet of the New Hampshire Hills", article in The Outlook , Vol. 135, No. 16, issue of December 19, 1923, pp. 688-689.

Munson, G.B, "Against the World in General", from Robert Frost: A Study , a chapter in Sensibility and Common Sense (an anthology) N.Y., Doran, 1927, 453 p.

----------"Robert Frost", article in The Saturday Review of Literature , Vol. 5, No. 1, issue of March 28, 1925, pp. 626 ff.

----------"Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg", as reported by the Kansas City Times, Kansas, from his address on July 17, 1935 at the Kansas City Municipal Auditorium.

Murry, Middleton, "The Image is Metaphorical", article in The Pandarus , University of Liverpool, Vol. 11, No.8, issue of Spring, 1937, pp. 11-14.

McAllister, Ralph, "A Friendly Farmer", article in the Macon (Vt.) Monitor , issue of Jan. 17, 1946, p.6,7.

McClellan, William, "Malbrouck" from Songs of Old Canada. N.Y., Putnam, 1886, p.87.

McIver, R.M., Society, N.Y, Rinehart, 1948, xi, 602 p.

Excellent treatment of customs, mores, forms of society and social ethics. Useful as a careful and objective treatment of man and society, in a historico-philosophical sense, this book was used as background for the intuitive approach, and for the opinions of recognized critics.

Newdick, Robert S, "Lecture Notes from Frost's Address to the New Hampshire State Normal School ", article in the New England Quarterly, Vol. 10, No. 2, issue of Spring, 1937,(no pages)

----------, "Robert Frost and the Sound of Sense" article in American Literature , issue of November, 1937, Vol.6, No. 14, pp.33-38

----------, "Some Notes on Robert Frost", from the Shakespeare Association Bulletin of Concord, (no volume), No. 5, pp. 3-5.

Newman, John Henry,(Cardinal), On the Scope and Nature of University Education, London, Dent, 1915, lxi, 258p.

Nicholl, Louise, "From the New Poetry", article in The Outlook , issue of December 10, 1930, Vol.156, No. 15, p. 590 ff.

Ogden, C.K, and I.A.Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 1923, 5th Ed., London, Kegan and Paul, xviii, 278 p.

This is an attempt to settle on basic terms and ideas for the evaluation of literary works. Richards' over-emphasis on the psychological aspects, not precisely defined and differentiated, is one drawback.

O'Day, Wayne, "Bonds on the Artist", editorial in The San Francisco Examiner , issue of Sept. 29, 1951, p.7,14.

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Phelps, William, survey in The Bookman, Vol. 47, No. 2, issue of April, 1918, pp. 135-138.

Pound, Ezra, article in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse , Vol. 5, No. 3, issue of December, 1914, pp. 127-130.

-------- , non-titled review in the New Republic, Vol. 2,No.16 1916, , reprint from Vol. 2, No 10, issue of Feb. 20, 1915.

Pratt, E.J, Brebeuf and His Brethren , Detroit, The Basilian Press, 1943, 66p.

Ray, Ruth, "Robert Frost Speaks to Students", article in the Daily Californian, University of California at Berkeley, issue of March 26, 1947, p.6

Read, Herbert, The Meaning of Art , London, Cumberlege, 1953, 323 p.

This book is a survey of art and a survey of the bases of aesthetic judgments There is especial attention given to beauty, line, tone, colour, unity and form.

Recognition of Robert Frost , edited by Richard Thornton, N.Y, Holt, 1937, xx, 312 p.

This collection of over fifty essays on Frost is particularly valuable for it includes the finer critics on Frost. The essays range from his earliest recognition. There are English, American, French and German critics listed. Their articles are presented in unabridged form.

Redden and Ryan, A Catholic Philosophy of Education , Milwaukee, Bruce, 1942, xii, 604 p.

This book is a pertinent and relevant background for the evaluation of the difference between a man-made ethic for temporal life and that spiritual hierarchy which insists that a total morality must be attuned to supernatural considerations and standards. This book has been used in this thesis to indicate Frost's deficiency in matters of religion,insofar as his stature as a poet is concerned.

Richards, I.A, Principles of Literary Criticism , London, Paul, Trench, Trubner, Ltd, 1945, xi, 295 p.

Richards and C.D.Lewis are two critics who insist that art and poetry must be communicable, dramatic and implicative. While Richards has revised some of his psychological assumptions on the cognitive process in poetry, this book is probably the most solid evaluation of the necessity for integration of form and content in the past half-century.

Ridge, Lola, "Covered Roads", article in the New Republic, Vol.25, (no number), issue of June 23, 1920, pp. 131-132.

Robinson, E.A, King Jasper, N.Y, Harcourt, 1935, v, 79 p.

"Robert Frost, 60, Reflects an Era", article in The New York Times, issue of March 26, 1935, p.22

Selincourt, Basil, De, "Poet of Sanity", a review of A Further Range, from the Observer of London, issue of April 4, 1937, pp.8,11.

Schwarz, Karl, from Hochschule und Ausland , Vol. 13, No.3, issue of March, 1935, pp. 234-246.

Sergeant, Elizabeth, "Good Greek Out of New England", from Fire Under the Andes , N.Y., Knopf, 1927, xxi, 379 p.

Shanks, Edward, "Literary Affairs in London", article in The Dial, Vol.63, No. 127, issue of December 20, 1917, pp. 631-633.

Shakespeare, William, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, N.Y., Oxford Press, 1938, xxi, 1300 p.

Snow, Wilbur, "Cheerful New England Poems", article in New York Herald Tribune Books , issue of June 7, 1936, p.4,8.

Thomas, C.W, "Double Wisdom", summary in the Wisconsin State College Journal, Vol. 2, No. 5, issue of June, 1936, pp. 13-17.

Thomas, Edward, unsigned article in the English Review, Vol. 18, No. 1, issue of August, 1914, pp. 142-143.

Thompson, Lawrance, "Irony in Frost and Swift", article in the Devonian of Delaware University, Vol. 6, No. 8, issue of March, 1940, pp. 188ff.

Thompson, Lawrance, Fire and Ice, N.Y., Holt, 1942, ix, 242 p.

This is the most detailed study and appreciation on Robert Frost to date. This thesis has differed widely and sharply with Thompson's lack of whole treatment in terms of a wide view of art and content.

Tietjens, Eunice, "Thoughts on Robert Frost,"article in the Los Angeles Graphic of California, issue of August 28, 1915

Tilley, M.P, "Notes From Conversations With Robert Frost", in The Inlander , Vol.20, No. 4, issue of Feb. 1918, pp. 11ff.

Untermeyer, Louis, "Still Robert Frost", article in the Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. 5, No. 22, pp.533, 536, issue of December 22, 1928, also in Poetry, A Magazine of Verse , Vol.33, No. 6, issue of March, 1929, pp.333-336.

-------- "Man and Poet", from Modern American Poetry,5th Edition, Revised, N.Y., Harcourt, 1936, pp.xxxi-xlv.

-------- The Road Not Taken , N.Y, Holt, 1943, xxxvii,232 p.

This book offers a running commentary on Frost and his poetry by interspersing remarks with excerpts from Frost's poems. There is no effort to make a profound critical study of poet or poetry.

Van Doren, Mark, "The Permanence of Robert Frost", in The American Scholar, Vol. 5, No. 2, Spring Issue,1936, (no pages)

---------- "Robert Frost, The Evergreen Poet", a report of Van Doren's address at Wesleyan College as reported by Samuel Shapiro on October 18, 1950.

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Ward, A.C, "Pan With a Difference", from American Literature, N.Y., The Dial Press, 1932, pp. 312-319.

Warren, Henry C, "An Original Ordinary Man", article in The Bookman of London, Vol.79, No. 472, issue of Jan. 1931, pp. 242-244.

---------- "An American Poet", an appreciation in The Fortnightly Review, Vol. 135, No. 2, issue of Feb. 1931, pp. 282,284,285.

Webster, John, Duchess of Malfi , London, A.Dyce & Sons, 1830, iii,101 p.

Wells, Mrs. Luard C, non-titled article in the Manchester University Review, Vol. 14, No. 187, issue of April, 1939, pp. 11, 12, 22.

West, Allan, stenographic report of an address by Robert Frost (no title) delivered at Michigan State Teachers College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Feb. 18, 1925.

Weygandt,Cornelius, "New Hampshire" from The White Hills , N.Y, Holt, 1934, xiii, 489 p.

Whicher, G.F, "Manifest Destiny" from the Amherst Record, issue of July 14, 1933, pp. 8ff.

Whipple, T.H, article in The Literary Review of The New York Evening Post under "Poetry", issue of March 22, 1924, pp. 605, 606, 608.

Whitehead, A.N, Adventure of Ideas, London, Cumberlege, 1947, 238 p.

This book stresses the important role played by form in the transferrence of ideas in art. Mr. Whitehead refutes the assumption of great art which is non-communicable. Poetry is not "art-for-art's sake;" it cannot consist of a series of feelings without a preponderance of thought.

Wilkinson, Marguerite, "Poets of the People", article in The Touchstone of Margate, England, Vol. 3, No. 1, issue of April, 1918, pp. 71-74.

Willis, Dorothy, and Manuel Carolan, "Robert Frost", Chicago and New England: Some Contemporary Americans , Decatur, Ill., University of Chicago Press, 1924, xix,343 p.

Williams, A.R., "A Charitable Heart", address at the Will Rogers Foundation Day, Tulsa, Okla., Jan. 8, 1939.

Wilson, J.S, "In Human Terms", from the Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. 7, No. 3, issue of April, 1937, pp. 316 et sequitur.

Wilton, Jane, "Robert Frost" as reported from his notes on a lecture of himself at the University of Vermont, April, 18, 1939.

Winslea, John, R, "Two Traveled West", a report on this address by Robert Frost at Ann Arbor, October, 12, 1924, Columbus Day.

Winslow, Sandor, Structure and Variety in Language, N.Y., Holt, 1931, 414 pages.

This is a technical consideration of the role of language in the communication of ideas so that attitudes can change them to ideals. The treatment embraces many fields, scientific and artistic as well. As with Frost in his poetry, Winslow feels that the justification of a word is in terms of clarifying an experience in one individual so that it is comprehensible by another. In this sense, the author maintains, throughout the book, that words, for their own value, have little merit per se.

Winters, Mrs Eileen, "Robert Frost" as reported and titled from his notes given at the Bread Loaf School of English. These notes were recorded during the afternoon and evening lectures by Frost on August the 11th, 1951.

APPENDIX 1

POEMS BY ROBERT FROST USED IN THIS THESIS

POEM	VOLUME	PAGE IN THESIS
"Love and a Question"	A Boy's Will	294ff.
"A Late Walk"	A Boy's Will	372
"Storm Fear"	A Boy's Will	296 ff
"To The Thawing Wind"	A Boy's Will	297
"The Tuft of Flowers"	A Boy's Will	398 ff.
"In Hardwood Groves"	A Boy's Will	253
"A Line-Storm Song"	A Boy's Will	370
"Reluctance"	A Boy's Will	410
"Mending Wall"	North of Boston	100 ff.
"The Death of the Hired Man".....	North of Boston	297
"Home Burial"	North of Boston	438
"The Black Cottage"	North of Boston	176
"Blueberries"	North of Boston	327ff.
"A Servant to Servants"	North of Boston	439ff.
"The Code"	North of Boston	298,299
"The Self-Seeker"	North of Boston	440
"The Wood-Pile"	North of Boston	256ff.
"A Patch of Old Snow"	Mountain Interval	138
"Hyla Brook"	Mountain Interval	127ff
"Bond and Free"	Mountain Interval	300
"Birches "	Mountain Interval	204ff
"A Time to Talk"	Mountain Interval	181
"The Cow in Apple Time"	Mountain Interval	260
"The Last Word of a Bluebird".....	Mountain Interval	182
"Out,Out-"	Mountain Interval	168ff.
"The Line-Gang"	Mountain Interval	262
"The Vanishing Red"	Mountain Interval	441
"Snow"	Mountain Interval	335ff.
"New Hampshire"	New Hampshire	442
"The Census-Taker"	New Hampshire	411
"The Star-Splitter"	New Hampshire	280
"Wild Grapes"	New Hampshire	332ff
"The Runaway"	New Hampshire	193ff
"Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening"	New Hampshire	265

POEM	VOLUME	PAGE IN THESIS
"For Once, Then Something"	New Hampshire	265,266
"The Onset"	New Hampshire	116
"Not To Keep"	New Hampshire	443
"Misgiving"	New Hampshire	444
"Plowmen"	New Hampshire	445
"On a Tree Fallen Across the Road".....	New Hampshire	446
"Acceptance"	West-Running Brook	373
"Once by the Pacific"	West-Running Brook	175ff.
"Lodged"	West-Running Brook	224
"Tree at My Window"	West-Running Brook	375
"The Peaceful Shepherd"	West-Running Brook	447
"The Flood"	West-Running Brook	448
"Canis Major"	West-Running Brook	375
"A Soldier"	West-Running Brook	449
"Hannibal"	West-Running Brook	449
"The Door in the Dark"	West-Running Brook	267
"Sitting by a Bush in Broad Sunlight".....	West-Running Brook	450
"On Looking up by Chance at the Constellations"..	West-Running Brook	346
"Two Tramps in Mud Time"	A Further Range	451
"In Time of Cloudburst"	A Further Range	376
"Departmental"	A Further Range	412
(These Three were from A Further Range , Taken Doubly)		
"Lost in Heaven"	A Further Range	230
"Neither Out Far Nor in Deep"	A Further Range	394
(These two were from A Further Range , Taken Singly		
"A Cloud Shadow"	One or Two	187
"The Rabbit Hunter"	Time Out	479
"A Semi-Revolution"	Quantula	301
"A Serious Step Lightly Taken"	Over Back	304
"I. The Night Light"	Five Nocturnes	457

POEM	VOLUME	PAGE IN THESIS
"A Steeple on the House"	A Spire and a Belfry	377
"It Bids Pretty Fair"	Out and Away	458
"The Planners"	Editorials	413
"No Holy Wars for Them"	Editorials	414
"Masque of Reason"	A Masque of Reason	459 ff
"Masque of Mercy"	A Masque of Mercy	464

APPENDIX 2

ROBERT FROST'S POEMS USED IN THIS THESIS ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF EACH CHAPTER

Poem	Subject of Chapter	Thesis Page on Poem
"Mending Wall"	Rhythm, Rhyme and Verse Forms (Reconciled)	100 ff
"The Onset"		116
"Hyla Brook"		
"The Rabbit Hunter"		
"Out,Out-"	Figures of Speech and Ornaments of Poetry (Reconciled)	168ff
"Once By the Pacific"		175
"The Black Cottage"		176
"Time to Talk"		181
"The Last Word of a Bluebird"		182
"A Cloud Shadow"		187
"The Runaway"		193ff
"Birches"		204ff
"Lodged"	Fact and Fancy (Reconciled)	224
"Lost In Heaven"		230
"In Hardwood Groves"		253
"The Wood-Pile"		256ff.
"The Cow in Apple Time"		260,261
"The Line-Gang"		262
"For Once, Then, Something"		265
"The Door In the Dark"		267 ff.
"The Star-Splitter"	Traditional and Progressive (Reconciled)	280
"Love and a Question"		294 ff.
"Storm Fear"		296
"To The Thawing Wind"		297
"The Death of the Hired Man"		297
"The Code"		298
"Bond and Free"		300,301
"A Semi-Revolution"		302
"A Serious Step Lightly Taken"		304 ff.
"Blueberries"	Observation and Implication (Reconciled)	327 ff.
"Wild Grapes"		332,333
"Snow"		335,336,337ff.

ROBERT FROST'S POEMS USED IN THIS THESIS ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF EACH CHAPTER

Poem	Subject of Chapter	Thesis Page on Poem
"A Line-Storm"	Nature and Man(Reconciled)	370 ff.
"On Looking Up by Chance at the Constellations".....		371,372
"A Late Walk"		372
"Loneliness"		372
"Acceptance"		373
"Tree at My Window"		374,375
"Canis Major"		375
"In The Time of Cloudburst"		375,376
"A Steeple on the House"		377,378
"The Tuft of Flowers"	Man and Society(Reconciled)	398
"Storm Fear"		409
"Reluctance"		410
"The Star-Splitter"		411
"The Census-Taker"		411, 412
"Departmental"		412
"The Fear"		412
"The Planners"		413
"No Holy Wars for Them"		414
	Character, Morality, Religion (Reconciled)	
"The Death of the Hired Man"		437,438
"Home Burial"		438
"Servant to Servants"		439,440
"The Self-Seeker"		440
"The Vanishing Red"		441
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"The Peaceful Shepherd"		447
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"A Soldier"		449
"Hannibal"		449,450
"Sitting By a Bush in Broad Sunlight"		450,451
"Two Tramps in Mud Time"		451
"I. The Night Light"		457
"It Bids Pretty Fair"		458
"A Masque of Reason"		459ff.
"A Masque of Mercy"		464ff.
"Good-By and Keep Cold"	Total Reconciliation	526 ff.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF STATEMENTS BY FROST AS RECORDED IN THE THESIS

Subject Matter	Chapter Number	Thesis Page
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Metaphor	Chapter 3	162
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Training for Self-Reliance	Chapter 8	405
Duty to Society	Chapter 8	407
Individualism and Society	Chapter 8	408
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LIST OF STATEMENTS BY FROST AS RECORDED IN THIS THESIS

Subject Matter	Chapter Number	Thesis Page
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Self Belief, Love Belief, and Art Belief.....	Chapter 9	456

The problem to be resolved by the thesis is the reconciliation of the poetry and statements written and made by the American poet, Robert Lee Frost. The poetry and statements are to be considered under the main headings of form and content. The reconciliation embraces more than synthesis; synthesis is considered to fuse the opposites of paradox, while reconciliation adds to this concept the unifying of the like as well as the opposite.

This reconciliation is considered essential because little has been done to view the considerable poet from a fused theory of art and philosophy. The opinions of the critics vary, and they are fragmentary in their diversity. Frost has not laid down formal standards for a philosophy of life and poetry. The two books written on Frost, to date, one by Lawrance Thompson and the other by Louis Untermeyer, do not contain, nor imply, a view of life wide enough in scope, nor profound enough, to serve as an appreciation of Robert Frost.

With this in view, this thesis purports to reconcile Frost's poetry and quotations in relation to an examination of his critics, an intuitive standard of the writer, a carefully weighted survey of a standard of criticism for art and poetry and an examination of Frost's poems in the light of these appraisals.

The "Introduction" states the problem and centres the attack on the idea that Frost adopts a position of compromise

on the art of poetry and in his poetic treatment of the experiences in life.

"Chapter One" evaluates the writer's standard of criticism, Frost's position and the position of established critics on art, philosophy, synthesis, reconciliation, language, key critical terms in art and the problem of beauty and wisdom in poetry. It is concluded that poetry must mean, that it must be communicated in language surprising, dramatic and thought-provoking. Poetry must not only yield a state of feeling called beauty, but it must reveal to the reader some phase of life which is interpretable on successively higher planes from that of nature to that of the human spirit.

Admitting, from the very stand of the thesis, that art and philosophy are not separable, the first section considers that the fusion of the artistic elements moves the reader and poet through beauty to understanding. The dramatic force of the common experience, rendered uncommon by art, renders the experience of life from the concrete fact to the abstract implication. Chapters Two and Three, "Reconciliation Through Rhythm, Rhyme and Verse Forms" and "Reconciliation of Figures of Speech and Ornaments of Poetry", respectively, demonstrate that the dramatic fusion does not ensue from the traditional ideas of rhythm, rhyme, verse forms, figures of speech and ornaments of poetry but through the

rhythm of sound sense which is fused from the outer elements of expectancy, surprise and congruency, and which is communicated by stress, duration and tempo. The figures of speech and the ornaments of poetry serve as means to extend the reader, through metaphorical emphasis, to implication from the fact.

Chapter Four, "Reconciliation of Fact and Fancy" reveals how Frost leads from the simple concrete fact, whose beauty is conveyed by form, to the implication in terms of nature, man, society and morality.

Chapter Five, "Reconciliation of the Traditional and the Progressive" resolves these opposites in the light of new arrangements and views of the fundamental principles which have been meaningful to man in his temporal existence.

Chapter Six, " Reconciliation of Observation and Implication", shows how Frost employs the phenomena of physical and social verisimilitude in objective reality to force the reader to make judgments on life in whole terms.

Chapter Seven, "Reconciliation of Man and Nature" reconciles Frost's treatment of nature on a dual basis; first, man is accorded an artistic experience of nature and her phenomena, second, the fact of nature reflects, by Frost's art, qualities and principles projected into nature by the human mind. This ensures implication by the reader.

Chapter Eight, "Reconciliation of Man and Society" shows that Frost considers man's individuality as paramount. In order to realize his potentialities, man must do so in a social medium, but with reference to an individual responsibility.

Chapter Nine, "Reconciliation in Terms of Character, Morality and Religion", reconciles Frost as declaring that character is the individual will to perceive and to act in reference to duty. Morality issues from a society of individuals, each conscious of what "ought" to be done by one toward the other. Frost's confession that he cannot accept a religion based on faith in God is the admission of his lack of highest stature. He denies God because he cannot prove him in rational terms. His lack of faith shows up in his poetry in thinly-spread feeling.

Chapter Ten, "Reconciliation- The Whole of Frost" considers, in total reconciliation, that Frost employs, superbly, an inseparable sound sense of rhythm to reveal the beauty of the objective fact in such vesture that it reconciles on, successively, more philosophically profound planes- the physical, the intellectual, the social and the moral. The reconciliation stops short of the ultimate which is man's concern for the greater world of God.

The whole reconciliation issues from an intuitive approach, a standard of recognized artistic criticism, Frost's critics and from the reconciliation, in each chapter, of his poems. His art leads, through fusion, to the universal truth extending from the indisputable fact.

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