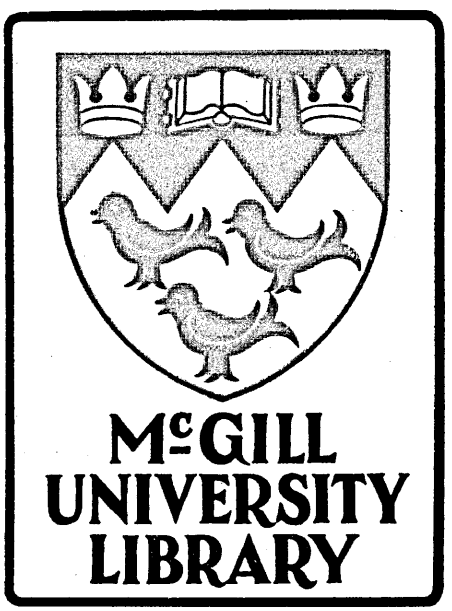
DEPOSITED BY THE FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IXM
·1H8·1945



UNACC. 1945

THE PLACE OF ROBERT FROST IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

McGill University

In Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Margaret Gwendolen Howe

April 1945

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Although Whitman is often called the father of modern American poetry, we might more correctly ascribe the position to Emerson, for it was Emerson's rallying charges which inspired Whitman. Emerson's call for intellectual freedom, self-trust, self-culture and self-development was heard by Whitman who developed his message.

In his Phi Beta Kappa address at Cambridge, Emerson shocked his listeners by declaring that they had gathered together, not for games of strength or skill, or for literary recitations, but simply as "a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more."[1] He chastized men for becoming parrots of other men's thinking, for studying too exclusively the writers of the past instead of acting and learning from personal experiences. He extolled labor as virtuous for learned as well as for unlearned hands. Emerson declared that Americans had listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe; the American Scholar must feel confidence in the unsearched and unrevealed might of man.

---

1. Emerson, R.W., The Works of , Vol.III, p.59,(1926).

Whitman continued the argument, stating his main premises in the preface to his Leaves of Grass.[2] The ideal Bard of Democracy will be marked for generosity and affection. Science, to him, will be an encouragement and support, for he will uphold truth and perfect personal candor. "As soon as histories are properly told, no more need of romances."[3] The greatest poet will have extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, hope, comparison, love of women and children, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature, and the propriety of same spirit applied to human affairs.."[4] American poets are to enclose the old and the new for America; they are to free from superstition the spiritual, the religious, the eternal soul of man.[5] To Whitman, the conception of the divine and of the ideal was inspired equally by humanity and by the nature that contains man.

This reminds us of Emerson's question in his journal. "What is there of the divine in a load of bricks?

---

2. Whitman, W., Complete Prose Works, (1907).

3. Ibid. p.264.

4. Ibid. p.265.

5. Ibid. p.279.

What is there of the divine in a barber's shop?-Much. All."[6] Both authors shocked the world by their strong emphasis on the divine in man. In Emerson's address before the Senior Class in Divinity at Harvard, he declared, "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God."[7] Whitman's conviction ran in the same direction: "It is also not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women."[8]

Continuing the argument for a national literature, Whitman upheld the Emersonian side, saying that the American form of government differed so in aims from those of Europe, one resting upon the ideal of the greatest good for all, the others upon comfort and leisure for a small class, with servitude of one kind or another for the majority. With this fundamental difference in mind, American poetry should burst the shackles of English and French lyricism, of the elegancies of rhyme and mythology to shout of the sprawling uncouth country in an independent, even a "barbaric yawp."

---

6. Knight, G.C., American Literature and Culture, p.189, (1932).

7. Emerson, R.W., Op.Cit., p.86.

8. Whitman, W., Op.cit., p. 262-3.

Whitman ascribes his irregularities of verse structure to Emerson. Either Emerson deliberately disregarded the exigencies of rhyme and metre, or his ear was not sensitive to cadences and musical values. In either case, Whitman felt this to be a breaking away from European styles of thought and expression. Emerson's famous saying "Whoso would be a man, must be a non-comformist,"[9] that is, he must think his own thoughts rather than borrowed or mechanical thoughts, finds a response in Whitman. "Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation, the great poet never stagnates."[10] Both men emphasized individualism, an individualism which might be considered as fathering the confusion of succeeding generations, the fierce business competition (free enterprise) resulting from self-reliance and freedom, and the breakdown of respect for authority. Emerson was merely trying to loosen the bonds of Calvinism that were still, in some measure, stifling his generation. He did not intend those who lacked self-discipline and unselfishness to take comfort from his dogmas, such as "Good men must not obey the laws too well,"[11] for their own personal advantage at the

---

9. Emerson, R.W., Op.Cit., Vol.I, p.33.

10. Whitman, W., Op.Cit., p. 256.

11. Emerson, R.W. Op.Cit., Vol.III, pl 372.

expense of others. The optimism which Emerson bred was far ahead of even Whitman's readers. Whitman, himself, has never been widely read by those he wrote for, the crowds, the common people. He proclaims the coming generations of healthy,strong men and women, the normal man on a high plane of freedom and dignity. He carried patriotism beyond narrow nationalism to the point where it became identified with the cause of humanity. Since his nationalism embraced all humanity it clearly amounted to internationalism. His effect upon contemporary thought was enormous, as well as the effect of his freer, exuberant utterance upon the technique of poetry.

AFTER WHITMAN (1870-1890)

During the Civil War, the expansion of the eastern factories in their effort to supply the army had put the liquid wealth of the country into the hands of the bankers. The East continued developing her new pattern of industrial economy after the war, continued in a profiteering laissez-faire manner. The vanquished South arose unsteadily, tottering on the ruins of her plantation system, continually discouraged by the corrupt rehabilitation program.. A recrudescent agriculture was, meanwhile, growing along the Middle Border, where machines were applied to the rich

prairie soil. Over all the country was spread a spider web of rails. The agrarian economy of America, which upheld a decentralized world, democratic and individualistic, was decaying after two and a half centuries. In its place was arising an industrial America, a centralized country, capitalistic and ambitious.

The opening of hitherto unexplored sections of the West to exploration and settlement, the subduing of the powerful tribes of hostile Indians, of the great roving herds of buffalo, and the harnessing of the wilderness itself brought a great wave of pioneer expansion. The material goods required for travel, clearing, and building, added a spontaneous vigor to the industrial expansion along the eastern coast. The potential resources of the country were realized for the first time in the vast exploration, for all the necessities had previously been lacking-tools, capital, transportation, technical methods and markets. Huge monoplies gained control of the oil industry, of the steel furnaces, of the flour mills and of thelive stock slaughter houses. Fortunes were amassed as never before; speculation abounded; every man tried to make money; land was parcelled out by the government. Prosperity abounded in all but the Southern states.

Machines accelerated the transition from the predominantly agrarian to a predominantly industrial society. The captain of industry and the powerful banker assumed dominant places in American life. The Middle Class improved its prosperity and its social position and greatly enlarged its numbers. "Things are in the saddle."[12] The older culture, represented by such phenomena as the plantation aristocracy in the South and by the Emersonian idealism in New England, began to give way to the pressure of ideas and standards which were more suitable in an expanding economy, more and more affected by the increasing mechanization of industry and life. The age of transition was ineveitably a period of conflicting values and of confusion.

The literary age following the Civil War has been called the Wasted Generation,[13] the Gilded Age. Generally, romanticism was still in vogue, although it was a romanticism quite unlike the healthy, lively, romanticism of Emerson and Whitman. In American fiction, for example, a weak reflection of traditional values was reproduced,a reflection congenial

---

12. Emerson, R.W., Op.Cit., Vol.V, p.140-143, "Ode inscribed to W.H.Channing."

13. Knight, G.C., Op.Cit., p.288.

to the Victorian compromise, in which only two sorts of people were recognized, the good and the bad. In this philosophy the good are always rewarded and the bad always punished. Conventions resulted which tended to melodrama- the stainless heroineand hero, and the happy ending. Love was idealized to the extreme. The general illusions and public taste of a hopeful and active America tempted writers to indulge the reading public with a strictly sentimental view of life. Such a view was, no doubt, held by many writers themselves, and it turned out to be profitable. The poetry was generally a thin drawing room verse, often chanting the glories of far distant lands, particularly of the far east, and it was generally devoid of ideas and philosophy. Bayard Taylor,[14] Richard Henry Stoddard,[15] Edmund Clarence Stedman,[16] and Thomas Bailey Aldrich[17] belong to this group. James Whitcomb Riley[18] introduced

---

14. Taylor, B., The Poetical Works of, (1878).

15. Stoddard, R.H., Poems, N.B."The Book of the East," p. 200 ff. (1880).

16. Stedman, E.C.,The Prince's Ball, (1860).

17. Aldrich, T.B., The Queen of Sheba, (1885).

18. Riley, J.W., Complete Works, (1941).

dialect verse, while Joaquin Miller[19] sang of the glories of the West Coast. With the exception of Riley (who is now read mainly by children) the aforementioned poets retained the standard rhymed stanza, but produced a jingled, theatrical verse. The mechanics of their lines causes a sing-song effect, with the result that their popularity has passed. Miller tried to speak upon a serious subject, one probably close to his heart, in "Songs of the Sun-Lands,"[20] but his rhyme and metre prevent the modern reader from appreciating his thought, as the fast lilting metre does not invoke a serious feeling. The same criticism may be applied to the other poets.

Madison Cawein produced a fanciful poetry of supernaturalism in the South. His stereotyped forms strain the sentiment; he is forced by his choice of words and rhyme scheme to emphasize the unimportant pronouns and auxiliary verbs.[22] His fault is obviousness: he tells too much in his poems, leaving nothing for the reader to imagine; his

---

19. Miller, J., Poems, (1889).

20. Ibid., pp.71-72.

21. Cawein, M., The Cup of Comus, (1915).

22. Ibid., p.13, "The Intruder."

verse is superficial.[23.]

Sidney Lanier, also a Southerner, was experimenting with verse forms during and after the Civil War.[24.] Essentially a musician, he believed that poetry should be as rhythmical and musical as possible. He uses alliteration, tone color and phrasing to make a hypnotic poetry. The thought in his poems, however, often becomes confused.[25.] He had a subtle ear for music, and an excellent ear for poetry with sound effects, but wrote poetry too vaguely suggestive, or brought ideas in too obviously practical and surprisingly incongruous with the tone of the verses that lead up to these ideas.[26.]

Throughout the Gilded Age, one figure remained untouched by the drama of American life around her, and that person, a woman, Emily Dickinson.[27.] She remained aloof in her New England hermitage, keeping secret her verses for fear no one would understand them. She had very few close friends to whom she showed her poems, and she hid them from the world at large. She once entertained thoughts of publishing her

---

23. Ibid. p. 16ff. "Lords of the Visionary Eye."

24. Lanier, S., The Science of English Verse, (1891)

25. Lanier, S., Poems, (1916).

26. Ibid. "Corn"

27. Dickinson, E., Complete Poems, (1927).

poems; however, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson showed too much dislike for their eccentricity and their lack of smoothness, so Miss Dickinson made no effort to publish them, not wishingto change her style to suit anyone.

Emily Dickinson's poems are concise little gems which shine ,sometimes with her whimsicality, sometimes with intense feeling. She had a lovely way of being humorous, of laughing at herself, as, for example, in her poem, "It dropped so low in my regard." "It" being a plated ware placed "upon my silver shelf."[28]

Although in some respects, Emily Dickinson has been compared to Walt Whitman, their differences are far more obvious than their common qualities. Both recognize beauty in both a locomotive and a butterfly, but Whitman's expression tends to be more wordy than Miss Dickinson's; however, both free themselves from the conventional subject matter and literary techniques. Miss Dickinson's poetry is one of seclusion, of inferring the whole from small evidence with a sense of Stoicism, of sadness not felt in Whitman's robust, all-embracing verse. It is obvious from the lives of the two poets that this difference whould exist; Miss Dickinson drew her knowledge of the infinite from her New England garden, while Whitman was a New York

---

28. Ibid. p.64.

newspaper reporter, a Civil War nurse, a man of the world. He embodies the general, the universal, while Miss Dickinson speaks of the unique and particular. Whitman saw a divine average in humanity, while Miss Dickinson was continually asking the question, "What makes some people so different from other?"

WHITMAN'S INFLUENCE

The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth were generally barren years for American poetry. The people were concerned with internal politics, with intervention in Mexico, a war with Spain, and with material well-being. A restlessness in the air led to a reaction against the style of writing then prevalent. The poetry was detached from the actual world, and tended to be a copied embelishment, rather than an interpretation of life. Although Whitman appears not to have immediately affected literature during and after the publication of his Leaves of Grass, nevertheless, he cast a spell over a few poets.

Edwin Markham's fame swept the nation when "The Man with the Hoe"[29] was published. This trumpet blast against the exploitation of the working man in the

---

29. Markham, E., The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems, (1902).

McKinley Era attracted such attention as to result in excess praise and overestimation of the poet. His is now known as the one-poem poet, his other verse having passed into oblivion.

Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey,[30] co-authors of the Vagabondia poems, possess something of Whitman's spirited praise of nature, although lacking his nationalism and philosphy. Their poems involve more of a desire for freedom than a desire to express a philosophy or a way of life. The freedom they coveted was a freedom from the restrictions placed upon poets during the latter years of the century, a freedom to express the natural in poetry, a freedom, to a certain degree, from the stiff, formal, technical requirements. Carman and Hovey challanged their readers to come out into the country, into the world, to be as

> "Free as the voice
> Of the wind as it passes!" 31.

In spite of calling readers to what appeared to be a new ideal, they were actually worshipping the same muses as their predecessors, but with a more athletic vigor.

---

30. Carman, B., and Hovey, R., Songs from Vagabondia, (1894).

31. Ibid., first poem.

"Readers of the Vagabondia books were swept along by their speed faster than by their philosophy."[32]

Carman and Hovey are generally regarded as transitional poets, although their revolt was one without a program. They offered the American public a way out of the increasingly materialistic world which was accompanied by a barren philosphy. Many Americans accepted their flight because they had never felt entirely at ease with materialistic and barren views. Although the invitation was stirring, however, the wanderlust poems did not offer a permanent escape. Americans desired more searching songs and valuations as they accepted more responsibility and acquired a social consciousness.

William Vaughn Moody[33] arose to fulfill this need, and undoubtedly caused many to pause in their rapid course for a little quiet thought. Although when superficially considered, he appeared to be a conventional man and writer, in his poems he expresses a criticism of the social and political order. His poetry went further in the transition than Markham, Carman or Hovey, as he approaches the methods of Frost, with the same profoundly human motivation.

---

32. Untermeyer, L. Modern American Poetry, (1925), p.11.

33. Moody, W.V., Poems & Plays, (1912).

His influence on American poetry was a revitalizing one as he attempted new literary techniques and a new poetic language, an attempt to bend the American vernacular into high poetic use. But Moody never achieved the naturalness of Frost.

CHAPTER II

FROST - THE MAN AND POET

The Robert Frosts can trace their geneology for many centuries.[1] The name itself is Scandinavian, however, their ancesters migrated to England in the fifth or ninth centuries. In 1634, Nicholas Frost arrived in America and settled in New England. His son, Charles, was a famous Indian fighter, bitterly hated by his foes, so hated, in fact, that his buried body (he was killed in ambush) was stolen and hung on a stake on Frost's Hill. The Honorable John Frost, of the next generation, married a sister of Sir William Peperill, and served the king as a commander on the man-of-war Edward. Later, he became a merchant at Newcastle, New Hampshire, and was a member of the Governor's Council. Of the fourth generation in the New World, William lived a less conspicuous life than either his father or grandfather, although he followed his father in trade. William's son saw action as a Lieutenant in the Continental Army during the American revolution. Later, he changed his family residence from New Hampshire to Massachusetts, although his son Samuel returned to the North. William Prescott Frost, the poet' s grandfather

---

1. Munson, G.B., Robert Frost, A Study in Sensibility and Good Sense, (1927).

took up residence in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where he was an overseer in a mill. He was a thrifty man, a pillar of respectability and an upholder of liberal views, his wife being one of the earliest feminists. The poet's grandmother one day divided the household tasks between herself and her husband, an equality to which he acquiesced. They had two children, a son and a daughter. The son, William Prescott, Jr., received a Bachelor's Degree cum laude from Harvard, the first of the family to receive a college training. Although his family hoped he would become a lawyer, William, Jr. had no interest in the legal profession and preferred a westward flight from his own family. He revolted against the moral and political tradition of his early environment: during the Civil War he actually considered running away from home and joining the Confederate Army. Although he restrained his copperhead tendencies, he always favored States' Rights, going so far as to declare that the United States at some time was destined to be divided into five nations. During his westward journey, William, Jr. paused in Lewiston, Pennsylvania, and taught school. While there, he met another young teacher, Isabelle Moodie.

Miss Moodie was from a lowland Scottish family residing in Edinburgh, and had emigrated from Scotland

after her sea captain father and brother had been lost at sea. After living with an uncle in Columbus, Ohio, she moved to Lewiston to teach school. She and William Frost fell in love, married, and William continued his journey westward, alone, to the Coast, where he became a reporter for a San Francisco Democratic newspaper, The Bulletin. It was a dangerous life, in that time and place, for a newspaperman of his convictions. Grim men, on one occasion, stood outside his office with their shooting irons blazing at his windows. Mr.Frost was unharmed, although the windows of his office were shot out; his paper had printed some derogatory statements concerning certain stock operations. Nevertheless, the poet's father was thrilled by the dashing, carefree atmosphere of San Francisco, and sent for his wife to join him. He delighted in playing the stock market, and played hard on the assumption that at some time he must win; he spent his money liberally, and enjoyed the ominous sight of conspicuous revolvers in holsters, at the sides of grim looking men. The Frosts, like others in that city, lived in fear and excitement.

On March 26th, 1875, Robert Lee Frost was born. His middle name was chosen in honor of that famous General of the Confederacy.

Mr.Frost was promoted to the editorship of The Bulletin, a perilous position to hold in that boom town. But there were other dangers, as well, for Mr.Frost had become a victim of consumption, and made daily trips to the stock yards to drink warm blood in hopes of alleviating the disease. Meanwhile, he drank liquor heavily to maintain his daily pace. The disease, nevertheless, would not be cured, and eventually caused his death.

Life, to Mr.Frost, continued to be a fantastic whirl. He aided the Democratic Party in elections, taking young Robert out of school for the occasions to march in torch light parades, or to visit the bars and taverns, trying to poll votes for their side. At one time, Mr.Frost attended the Democratic National Convention as a delegate, and in 1884 accepted the position as city campaign manager, when Cleveland was elected President of the United States. Although Mr.Frost ran for tax collector of San Francisco, he was defeated and never held public office.

When Robert was ten years old, his consumptive father died, leaving the family penniless. Mrs.Frost was forced to accept her father-in-law's offer of a home in the East, while she returned to her former profession of school teaching. Transplanted in this sudden way, Robert and his sister were at first disappointed in the

thriftiness of New England. For the first time, they saw pennies. They would hold up nickels and cry, "San Francisco," then hold up pennies and scornfully shout, "Boston!"

At school, Robert was a lackadaisical scholar until he was fourteen. His mother was an excellent reader and Robert is said never to have read a book alone until he reached high school. When he eventually became interested in reading, he read avidly - Bryant, Poe, Shelley and Keats.

While in high school, he fell in love with Elinor Miriam White, a young girl who completed high school in two and a half years, and who graduated co-valedictorian with Frost. Robert had begun to write poetry in high school, several of his poems appearing in the school magazine, while the hymn he wrote for the graduation was later included in a report of the superintendent of schools.

After their graduation in 1892, Elinor White went to St.Lawrence University, while Frost entered Dartmouth College, although he only remained for a few months as he found the work dull. His apparent lack of ambition, his desire to do nothing more "ambitious" than to write poetry, worried and puzzled his grandfather, who finally got him a job as a bobbin boy in a Lawrence mill where he was an overseer. As the young man showed no efforts to improve himself, his grandfather left him to shift alone. For a while the restless poet taught Latin in his mother's

school, then left home for a brief tour of the South afoot. He did odd jobs to pay his way; he even tried shoemaking. Although he was continually trying to persuade Elinor White to marry him, she remained firm in her decision to finish her course.

When Robert was nineteen years old, he had a small book printed by a job printer in Lawrence. The type was distributed after two copies had been struck off; one copy was destroyed soon afterwards, and the other was given to Elinor White, and is now in the poet's possession. Twilight consists of four poems; the title poem, "The Falls," "An Unhistoric Spot" and "My Butterfly," the latter being the only one which has been reprinted. It appeared in The Independent, November 8,1894, Frost's first poem to be published in a periodical of national circulation. Later it appeared in A Boy's Will.[2.]

William Hayes Ward, editor of the New York Independent, asked the Indiana poet Maurice Thompson to look at Frost's poem. In reply, Thompson said that he could "see the extreme beauty of that little ode."[3.] Mrs.Thompson read the poem to him when he was very tired after a day's work. He said he was ashamed that he felt discouraged when he realized that Frost was poor, for poor poets

---

2. Frost, R., A Boy's Will, (1913).

3. Thornton, R., Recognition of Robert Frost,(1937), p.17. (reprinted).

usually have a life of disappointment ahead of them. Writing from personal experience, having been a lawyer who followed the Muses, he advised Frost to choose a trade or profession, and to forget he had ever written a poem.

Mr.Ward, the editor, also wrote Frost a letter, but he advised the poet to follow the style of Lanier, who was enjoying a short popularity. Fortunately, Frost did not heed the advice of either.

The following year Robert and his childhood sweetheart were married. Although the marriage was generally expected to make Frost more settled, he still continued to work at odd jobs while editing a weekly paper, The Lawrence Sentinel. As his grandfather decided to let him try college again, Mr. and Mrs.Frost and their son Eliot (born in 1896 and died in 1900) moved to Cambridge were Frost entered Harvard, intending to specialize in the classics. Although he professed not to care for study, his marks in Greek and the classical studies were exceptionally high. Two years of a university career finished his quest for knowledge, and he returned to the maternal family tradition of teaching. Still backed by his grandfather, he moved to a farm at Derry, New Hampshire, which his grandfather had purchased, where he fought a downhill battle against the unprolific soil, while he suffered from hayfever for two months every year. During these years the Frosts had several children, a daughter, Lesley, born in

1899, a son Carol in 1902, Irma, born in the following year, and Marjorie, in 1905. Two years later they had another daughter, Elinor Bettina who died the day after birth.

Although the neighbors didn't approve of his farming, and called him an eccentric and even a lazy farmer, these years contained a good deal of pleasure for the poet. With making woodland paths, botanizing, and introducing the children into outdoor life, Frost may have had a run-down farm, but he also had a bundle of poems. The farm toughened his respect for nature and disciplined him for hard work, qualities which are shown in his poetry, the poetry which obtained his appointment at the Pinkerton Academy. The poet was invited to read one of his poems to the men's club of the Central Congregational Church at Derry. The head of the mill and the pastor of the church were among the Pinkerton Academy trustees present, and among those impressed by the reading.

Pinkerton Academy had a long, strict tradition to uphold. Students were forbidden to play cards, were obliged to attend daily religious services, and were expected to be in their homes by seven o'clock each evening, and at ten on Fridays. Each week, as the principal called the roll at the assembly meeting, the students rose and said whether they had fulfiled the requirements, or not. Into

this staid atmosphere, Frost, a younger man than the other staff members, a man without a university degree, a man who was not punctual, who arrived too late for morning chapel services, entered, but always remained an outsider. Frost hadn't a proper classroom; his very presence and informality defied tradition; he represented new things. To illustrate the innovations he brought: the dramatics department, of which Frost was in charge, had produced within a few weeks Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Milton's Comus, Sheridan's The Rivals, and Yeat's The Land of Heart's Desire and Cathleen ni Hoolihan.

During these six years at Pinkerton,[4] Frost continued writing poems, some of them accepted by The Youth's Companion, and one by The Forum; many were returned.

By 1909, the New Hampshire State Superintendent of Schools had become interested in Frost's classes, his peculiar method of questioning his students to get to know and understand them, his walks with them, and in general, his method of participating in their activities in order to draw them out. The superintendent arranged for him to speak at conventions, where he became known as an instructor of unusual individuality.

At this time, Pinkerton acquired a new principal,

---

4. 1906 - 1911.

Ernest Silver, who was deeply interested in Frost, and when he was appointed president of the New Hampshire State Normal School, insisted that Frost accompany him. For one year the poet taught psychology. While in Plymouth, he made friends with Sidney Cox, a teacher, now at Dartmouth, and the two used to take long walks and have long talks together.

Mr.Cox has written a little book about Frost, and calls him the original "ordinary man." To Cox, an ordinary man is one "whose imagination and character result from the constant impact of the irresistable force of desire against the immovable object necessity, the impact of feeling against reason, and the impact of faith against fact."[5] Frost is a sample of this "ordinary man;" that is why he speaks to and for all men.

Frost has an obstinacy which, perhaps, being a rural New Englander, he comes by naturally; he has a faculty of self-determination. According to Cox, he left Dartmouth, not because of restlessness, or the hard work, "but because he found college a mill for being made into 'decent' boards, and he was going to stay a growing tree."[6]

---

5. Cox, S., Robert Frost, (1929), p 21.

6. Ibid., p.24.

The first forty years of his life are a symbol of his obstinacy to be anything but a poet. His grandfather's efforts to launch him in a business career at the mill, to enter him into a profession, to make him a farmer, were all to no avail, for Frost silently rebelled against outside control and quietly continued writing poetry. Even with a family and the necessity of supporting them he continued striving for his goal.

Cox gives a vivid picture of the poet in mid-career with a "... lax but strong and masculine figure, his blunt but sensitive and interpretive, hair-backed fingers, his massive oval head, his serene and passionate and changeful face, his tender, unsubdued, blue eyes, with deep recesses and wild brows, his broad, slightly impudent nose, his thick, sensuous, often mocking, oftener questioning lips, his tousled brown and gray hair deliberately rumpled, and his come-one-come-all chin, saved from being forbidding by the quizzical cock of head and eye, now and then. His voice should be in the portrait, too. .... It can be elfin, ribald, gargoylesque, serene, sinister, utterly convinced, altogether sceptical, tender like firm fingers pressing soil around a delicate plant, and full of emotion or hilarity."[7.]

---

7. Ibid. p.23.

This description will no doubt explain why Frost is incapable of not making friends.

During this period, the poet wrote much of the verse which was later published. It was a crystallizing period; he formed his ideas on life, on living and on how poetry should be written. He became more certain of the opinions held in his youth.

> "They would not find me changed from him they knew --
> Only more sure of all I thought was true." 8.

The Derry farm was becoming more run-down each year, while Frost was becoming definitely surer that he was to be a good poet. Mrs.Frost is rumored to have made the one romantic utterance of her life when she suggested selling the farm and moving to England "to live under thatch."[9.]

Before the First World War, England was full of idealistic movements. Writers of primary importance included Shaw, Wells, Bennett, Conrad, Galsworthy and Chesterton, while D.H.Lawrence, Compton Mackenzie and Gilbert Cannan were rising. Ford Madox Hueffor, with

---

8. Frost, R., A Boy's Will, (1915), p.11.

9. The Frosts moved to England in 1912, and lived there until 1915.

liberal and catholic taste, edited a brilliant review,[10] as did A.R. Orage. Ezra Pound was striving for the Imagists: Amy Lowell, Flint, H.D., Richard Aldington; a fresh vitality was being infused into poetry. Frost had come to the right country to offer a new type of verse, although he was unaware of the turmoil.

Not knowing where to live, he visited the "department of country walks" of a weekly paper, and inquired about quiet places to live in the countryside. An ex-policeman in charge of the department suggested Beaconsfield in Buckinghamshire, whither the family repaired. Later, when Frost had composed A Boy's Will and could find no willing publisher, he visited this same ex-policeman who suggested David Nutt, the first publisher of a volume of Frost's works.

While Frost was in London one day, he noticed a sign announcing the opening of a poetry bookshop, Harold Munro's, with a reception and reading that evening. He attended, and sat on the stairs, listening. The man on the step below commented that he could tell by Frost's shoes that he was an American. The stranger was F.S.Flint.

---

10. Hueffor, F.M., English Review.

Upon learning that Frost wrote poetry, he asked if he knew Ezra Pound, also an American. The New Englander had never heard of him. Cautioned not to let Pound know this, Flint introduced them. The Imagist poet presented the newcomer with a card " At home sometimes," so some months later Frost called. Although at first slightly annoyed by the leisurely response, Pound was forced to warm up to his countryman's roguish face. He later read the proof sheets for A Boy's Will, which was received warmly by the literary press, and wrote a favorable criticism of North of Boston. Meanwhile, he escorted Frost to luncheons, studios, parties, and to Tuesday evenings at T.E.Hulme's. At Harold Munro's Poetry Bookshop they discussed the form, technique and purpose of poetry.

In the spring of 1914 the decreasing family capital forced the Frosts to move to a farm, and to live in a small cottage with scarcely enough room for the four children. Wilfred Gibson persuaded them to move near him in Gloucestershire, where Lascelles Abercrombie lived equidistant from both. Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas, who were later killed in the war, used to visit the trio. Frost and Thomas formed an especially strong

attachment for each other, which brought on a kind of anguish for Frost at Thomas' death,[11] and kept him away from England and associations with his sojourn there for many years. It was Frost who aided Thomas in the discovery that poetry was the proper medium for his own self-expression. One of Thomas' poems, "The Sun Used to Shine," is a remembrance of his walks with Frost, of the complete congeniality, the conversations about flowers, about the rumors of war, and of the passing of those rumors, and even of themselves,when

> "...other men through other flowers
> In those fields under the same moon
> Go talking and have easy hours." [12].

Wilfrid Gibson has immortalized the friendship of the summer of 1914 in his poem "The Golden Room."[13] He mentions talking and laughing in the lamplight of his home with the Abercrombies, the Frosts, the Thomases and Rupert Brooke. He tells how they enjoyed Frost's "slow New England fashion...with shrewd turns and racy quips."

---

11. 1917.

12. Thomas, E., Poems,(1917).

13. Gibson, W., "The Golden Room," The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 137:2, pp.204-205, (Feb.1926).

That was July, "August brought the war, and scattered us." Gibson summarizes the change that time has brought. Brooke now lies on the crest of an Aegean Isle, Thomas 'neath Vimy Ridge, Abercrombie toils in a black Northern town, beneath the glower of smoke, Frost farms once more in America and we (the Gibsons) sojourn by the Western sea. The last two stanzas must be quoted in entirety

"And yet
Was it for nothing that the little room
All golden in the lamplight thrilled with golden
Laughter from hearts of friends that summer night?
Darkness has fallen on it, and the shadow
May never more be lifted from the hearts
That went through those black years of death, and live.

"And still, whenever men and women gather
For talk and laughter on a summer night,
Shall not that lamp rekindle, and the room
Glow once again alive with light and laughter,
And like a singing star in time's abyss
Burn golden-hearted through oblivion?"

While Frost was still in England, A Boy's Will (1913) received favorable English criticism on all sides; especially in the Academy[14] and in The English Review.[15] He was commended for his qualities of inevitability and surprise, for his pristine vision, for breaking away from the

---

14. Anonymous, The Academy, London, Vol.85:2159, p. 360 (Sept.20, 1913).

15. Douglas, Norman, The English Review, Vol.14:56, p.505 (June, 1913).

American tradition of derivative, hypersensuous "drivel" and clearly presenting what he had seen and felt. The last mentioned review closes with this comment on the poems: "they sound that 'inevitable' response to nature which is the hall-mark of true lyric feeling."

North of Boston[16] (1914) also received a tremendous ovation. Lascelles Abercrombie[17] calls Frost one of those in whom the continual re-adjustment of poetry to life is taking place. With this re-adjustment, manner inevitably becomes obedient to matter, so the traditional manner of poetry is replaced by a peculiar adaptation of the pattern of blank verse. His poetry, like good prose, stresses and extracts "the inmost values and suggestive force of words; it elaborates simile and metaphor scarcely more than good conversation does." Nevertheless, he places in such novel relations the familiar images and acts of ordinary life that an unforeseen virtue is gradually revealed. Abercrombie calls this a poetry composed "in a language of 'things'." In agreement with the 'things' Frost talks about, he is getting back to the natural speech rhythms, the intonation, the pauses and

---

16. Frost, R., North of Boston, (1915).

17. Abercrombie, L., The Nation, London, Vol.15:11, pp.423-4, (June 13, 1914).

"hurries." The usual metrical patterns are therefore omitted. The reviewer feels that at times the metrical form goes to pieces, and that at times it becomes a little monotonous, probably because the intonation of speech is elusive and difficult to indicate by verse-movement. Mr.Abercrombie considered Frost at his best when he dispensed with the structural preliminaries of the dialogue, although the dialogue may be interesting, and used the soliloquy, as in "Mending Wall," "Home Burial," or the poem about the professor sharing a room with the news-agent. He also sees a similarity in the efforts of Frost to those desires of Theocritus in his "bucolic" poems, lending vigor to poetry by utilizing "the traits and necessities of common life, the habits of common speech, the minds and hearts of common folk."[18]

Edward Thomas wrote a short, although more sympathetic review, calling North of Boston a collection of dramatic narratives in verse. He exalts Frost for freeing himself from the "glory of words," the modern poet's embarrassing heritage, on being plain, but not mean, and in "reminding us of poetry without being

---

18. Thomas, E., The English Review, Vol.18:1, pp.142-3, (Aug.1914).

poetical." He compares this volume to an experiment like Wordsworth's,with the difference that Frost sympathises where Wordsworth contemplates. Thomas repeats Abercrombie's praises of variety, of naturalness and of intense simplicity, but vindicates the prose-like sections to which the previous reviewer objected. "There are moments when the plain language and lack of violence make the unaffected verses look like prose, except that the sentences, if spoken aloud, are most felicitously true in rhythm to the emotion."

Wilfrid Gibson enjoyed teasing Frost about the semi-literate Americans, judging them from the letters he had received praising his poems. Frost, meanwhile, received a letter from Mrs.Henry Holt, saying that she and her mother deeply enjoyed his poetry. He considered her as any farmer's wife, and displayed the letter to Gibson, as the way American farmers' wives wrote, and also to show the kind of people who read his books.

In the spring of 1915 the Frosts returned to America, bringing with them Edward Thomas' son. In January, Henry Holt had published North of Boston, and in April, A Boy's Will. Within the first year, North of Boston went through five reprintings, a phenomenal sale for a book of poetry.

While in New York, Frost picked up a magazine unfamiliar to him, The New Republic, glanced through it and discovered an appreciative article on North of Boston, by Amy Lowell.[19] Frost was unaware that Holt had published his work. Miss Lowell was full of praise. She called this the most American volume of poetry which had appeared for some time, full of local color, almost photographic with extraordinary vividness in the poeple and scenery. By using the "classic metres in a way to set the teeth of all the poets of the older school on edge," by using inversion and"clichés" out of ordinary speech he has produced "a book of unusual power and sincerity."

Other critics were exuberant, too. Frost had returned home an acknowledged poet. Ezra Pound[20] liked his humor, because he (Frost) was not its victim. He liked the pervasive humor of the presentation without the poet's trying to be funny. He saw comfort in the expression of village life when not used "to hand jokes on."

---

19. Lowell, A., The New Republic, Vol.2:16, pp.81-2, (Feb.20, 1915).

20. Pound, E., Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, Vol.5:3, pp.127-130, (Dec.1914).

Pound considered Frost's work as not "accomplished,"[21] but "the work of a man who will neither make concessions nor pretences." His subject-matter remains with the reader, and doesn't become confused, one poem with another. This book Pound considered as a contribution to American literature, and as sound enough to introduce a very interesting literary development.

The next year saw a British appreciation, published in The Atlantic Monthly[22] and followed by William Dean Howells' note the succeeding month.[23] Garnett favored the unique tempermental flavor given in the "genre" pictures of sympathy with an ironical appreciation of the grave issues. He, like Abercrombie, saw the similarity of Frost to Theocritus. Human interest is the quality by which we should judge new poets; this is the quality we find in Theocritus, Browning and Whitman. "Home Burial" is the perfection of poetic realism in observation and in deep insight into the heart. In comparing "The Mountain" and Whittier's "Snowbound," the reviewer suggests that

---

21. Quotation marks, Pound's.

22. Garnett, E., The Atlantic Monthly, Vol.116:2, pp.214-224, (Aug., 1915).

23. Howell's, Wm.Dean, "Editor's Easy Chair," Harper's Monthly Magazine, Vol.131, pl.635, (Sept.,1915).

Frost achieves a delicate atmospheric imagery at the expense of grandeur and breadth of outline or magical coloring. Commencing with the premise that "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 the subject," Garnett concludes that Frost is a true poet, for "one can return to his poems again and again without exhausting their quiet imaginative spell." Sometimes, however, the reviewer finds it difficult to grasp all the subtle meanings of his situations, as for example, in the highly figurative language of "The Self-Seeker," and considers him a little casual and long-winded in "The Generations of Man." He finds that at times the fineness of psychological truth is in excess of his poetic beauty. On the whole, both The Atlantic and Harper's gave favorable criticisms of Frost's works.

The Frost's purchased another farm, and once more settled in New Hampshire, this time near Franconia. The same year, Mr.Frost was chosen as the Phi Beta Kappa poet at Tufts College, a position he held at Harvard College the following year, when he was also elected

to honorary membership in the fraternity. Although he continued farming, he was no longer dependent upon it for a livelihood, as he was in great demand as a lecturer. He reads his own poetry well. Honors began creeping up on the returned hero; he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters,[24] and was made a member of the Advisory Board of The Seven Arts magazine, to which he contributed his only prose play, A Way Out.[25]

A new volume of verse, Mountain Interval[26] appeared, a combination of lyrics and narratives like its predecessor, North of Boston.[27] The first poem was written in England for Lascelles Abercrombie. The two roads may have been the poet's choice of remaining in old England or returning to New England. This book is a little more varied in verse forms than his other; the sonnet and the ballad forms are used. He fuses the tragic, the humorous and the bucolic,

---

24. 1916.

25. Frost, R., A Way Out, (1929).

26. Frost, R., Mountain Interval, (1916).

27. Ibid., p.9, "The Road Not Taken."

the dramatic and the lyrical.[28] Snow is an excellent example of the dramatic dialogue, with a psychological study of human thoughts and feelings. The evangelist Meserve has stopped at The Cole's farmhouse one evening on his return trip from preaching in town. Meserve is a talkative man who never can tell when to leave; Helen Cole, although she detests the man, is forced to ask him to stay because of the blizzard , but is pleased at his refusal. After he has left to travel the three miles to his home, Mr.Cole says,

> "You didn't think you'd keep him after all.
> Oh, I'm not blaming you. He didn't leave you
> Much say in the matter, and I'm just as glad
> We're not in for a night of him. No sleep
> If he had stayed." [29].

Both return to bed, although worried about the safety of their departed neighbor. Mrs.Cole is awakened by the sound of her husband's voice as he talks over the telephone. Instinctively she knows it is Meserve's wife, and that he hasn't yet reached home. Mrs.Cole begins to lament ever having permitted him to leave, and Mr.Cole, at first sympathetic to his wife, ends on an accusing tone.

---

28. Ibid., pp.76-98.

29. Ibid., p.91.

" 'Don't begin that. You did the best you could
To keep him - though perhaps you didn't quite
Conceal a wish to see him show the spunk
To disobey you. Much his wife'll thank you.' " 30.

Mrs.Cole picks up the telephone to speak to Meserve's wife, but cannot get her - they can only hear the sounds in the distant room, for the receiver is off the hook. Through their conjectures about what is happening - Meserve's wife gone into the storm to search for him, ten children, one baby crying, are left alone - we feel the tenseness, the helplessness of being three miles of snowdrifts away. The telephone rings. The suspense is dropped, Meserve has arrived; his wife had been out to let him into the barn. Frost does not leave us at that climax, but makes his play true to life. The Coles discuss why his wife would want him, accuse each other of being too concerned, and end on the rising note of a lesser climax.

"But let's forgive him.
We've had a share in one night of his life.
What'll you bet he ever calls again?" 31.

---

30. Ibid., p.93.

31. Ibid., p.96.

Poems of deep tragedy are " 'Out, Out-' " the tale of the death of the boy whose hand was caught in the buzz-saw. Again, Frost does not leave us at the climax of the death of the boy, but this time at a greater climax, the spectacle of people unable to be of any more use to the boy.

> "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." 32.

"Brown's Descent" is in the humorous vein, the farmer who was blown two miles down the mountain, then got up, shook his lantern with the comment,

> " 'Ile's
> 'Bout out!' and took the long way home
> By road, a matter of several miles." 33.

For this jaunty ride Frost chose a jaunty metre, iambic tetrameter, with an a, b, c, b rhyme. We can see old Brown sliding rapidly down the slope. The verse reads quickly, keeping up with him, but the Yankee quality of Brown really tickles us.

To complete the picture of Mountain Interval,

---

32. Ibid., pp.171-172.

33. Ibid., p.70.

"Meeting and Passing,"[34] "Hyla Brook,"[35] and "The Telephone"[36] might be mentioned as beautiful lyrical expressions of friendship, nature and love.

Amherst College claimed Frost now as a professor of English for four years.[37] He conducted informal seminars rather than the regular classes, and replaced the usual Shakespeare couse by having students present one-hour personal dramatizations of Shakespeare's plays. In 1917 he received a Master of Arts Degree from Amherst. Two years later the Frosts purchased another farm and moved to South Shaftsbury, Vermont, where they lived until Frost accepted a position as fellow at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in 1921.

This new fellowship which had just been initiated at Michigan, required nothing but the poet's residence in Ann Arbor, in the hope that he would find time to write, and that students interested in writing would be encouraged. Frost saw the desirability of having such

---

34. Ibid., p.33.

35. Ibid., p.34.

36. Ibid., p.31.

37. 1916-1920. See Whicher, G.F., The Amherst Record, July 14,1937 for a discussion of New England poets and Amherst.

fellowships at all state universities if the experiment worked; that is, if both the university and the artist benefited. Unanimous student and faculty opinion considered the fellowship successful. The Detroit Free Press stated: "It means something to the whole mid-west that its largest university has gone on record as desiring to encourage artistic endeavor, that it has put its trust in a poet - to the extent of paying him cold cash for doing whatever he thinks best to do."[38] Actually, Frost had little time for creative writing, but wished to give the fellowship further trial with certain changes in his succeeding year, hoping to make it more successful. Primarily, he wanted to make his duties more definite in order that he might be more free, for as he says, he can't work unless he is utterly free. He wished to gather all students interested in writing into groups which would meet at his house in afternoons or evenings, all completely voluntary. To insure that participation would be only of those interested, however, he did not want credit to be given for his course.

---

38. Stewart, B., The Detroit Free Press, (June 25,1922).

Frost's success speaks for itself, for after his second year on the campus, he was offered a life fellowship at Michigan.

Before moving to the mid-west, the poet helped to found the Bread Loaf School at Middlebury College in Vermont. His interest has remained in the school, drawing him back to lecture there each summer. Frost feels that he has teaching in his blood, but however he comes by it, he usually has an educational project "to cherish and humorously despair of."[39] This summer school of English became one of these projects. Frost's success as a teacher lies in his unfeigned interest in people. He enjoys talking as he emphasized in "A Time to Talk."[40] But he can also be an excellent listener, an encouraging listener, a man of intuitive sympathy.

The Vermont League of Women's Clubs chose Frost the Poet Laureate of the state.[41] The same year he was awarded the Levinson Prize for Poetry for

---

39. Whicher, G.F., "Out for Stars," Atlantic Monthly, Vol.171:64-7, (May, 1943).

40. Frost, R., Mountain Interval, p.44.

41. 1922.

"The Witch of Coos."[42] He who had never graduated from a university was now honored with various university degrees.[43]

The New Englander returned once more to his home country, and once more taught at Amherst.[44] A selection of previously printed verse was now published, Selected Poems,[45] and New Hampshire[46] followed soon after.

The full title of the new book is New Hampshire, A Poem with Notes and Grace Notes. Of the succeeding poems, the longer are the notes, and the shorter, the grace notes for a fuller interpretation of the title poem.

---

42. Frost, R., Collected Poems, (1942), pp.247-252. Reference is given to Collected Poems, since the McGill Library lacks a separate volume of New Hampshire, (1923).

43. M.A. University of Michigan, 1922.
L.H.D. University of Vermont, 1923.
L.H.D. Yale University, 1924.
L.H.D. Middlebury College, 1924.
L.H.D. Bowdoin College, 1926.
L.H.D. Wesleyan, 1931.
Litt.D. Columbia, 1932.
Litt.D. Dartmouth College, 1933.
Litt.D. University of Pennsylvania, 1936.
L.H.D. Bates College, 1936.
Litt. D. Harvard, 1937.

44. 1923-1925.

45. Frost, R., Selected Poems, (1923).

46. Frost, R., New Hampshire, (1923).

The introductory narrative is an extension of the theme

> "Just specimens is all New Hampshire has,
> One each of everything as in a show case
> Which naturally she doesn't care to sell." 47.

She had her one President, her one Daniel Webster, her one Dartmouth. His humor is everywhere present.

> "She has one witch-old style. She lives in Colebrook.
> (The only other witch I ever met
> Was lately at a cut-glass dinner in Boston.
> There were four candles and fourpeople present.
> The witch was young, and beautiful (new style),
> And open-minded.....)" 48.

Readers were aroused and surprised when he declared:

> "I may as well confess myself the author
> Of several books against the world in general." 49.

Hitherto, Frost had been considered a sympathetic poet. Had people been missing something in his books? In the complete context, however, the meaning becomes clear. A Massachusetts poet gave up her summer home in New Hampshire; for she couldn't stand the little men.

---

47. Frost, R., Collected Poems, (1942), p.201.

48. Ibid., p.203.

49. Ibid., p.206.

"And when I asked to know what ailed the people,
She said, 'Go read your own books and find out.' "50.

Frost is explaining that he doesn't write against a special state, or even nation. With Marlowe's definition of Hell - everywhere - the poet concludes,

"Because I wrote my novels in New Hampshire
Is no proof that I aimed them at New Hampshire." 51.

He rambles on as if he were talking and not trying to say anything in particular. When we have finished the narrative, however, we discover that the cumulative effect of these ramblings is a fairly good picture of the state and her people as well as of the state of the world. Suggestions are made of incidents and characters which we meet in the succeeding poems. Placed in the opening narrative, they bind the book into a unified whole.

Thumbing through the "notes," we read Frost's thoughts on life. When he takes the census at a deserted house, he explains why he generally writes about the healthy New England farmer, rather than about the fading aristocracy, or the abandoned homes.

---

50. Loc.Cit.

51. Loc.Cit.

"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." 52.

"The Axe-Helve"[53] sympathetically presents the French-Canadian axeman using his own colloquial, French-accented English. "Paul's Wife,"[54] a fantasy of the logging camps, has been called a New England fairy tale. The summary at the end of Wild Grapes[55] is a study in the innocence and naivete of a young girl. Her older brother had pulled the top of a birch tree to the ground so she could pick the wild grapes. As soon as he let go of the tree, the little girl was carried into the air. Although he kept telling her to drop to the ground, she hung on until he lowered the tree again. Looking back on the situation, she concludes that the cause of the trouble was her lack of knowledge, not of weight. She had not learned to let go with the hands, as she still has not learned, and sees no need and has no desire to learn to let go with the heart.

---

52. Ibid., p.217, "The Census Taker."

53. Ibid., pp.228-231.

54. Ibid., pp.235-236.

55. Ibid., pp.240-243.

"The Witch of Coös," for which Frost was awarded the Levinson Prize, is the first part of a longer narrative, "Two Witches."[56] A gruesome humor is depicted in the dramatic dialogue between mother and son telling the story of the skeleton in the attic, the remains of one of the woman's lovers, killed by her husband. On a memorable night when the boy was a baby, the skeleton had walked from his grave in the cellar to his present abode in the attic. As he mounted the stairs into the kitchen, "A tongue of fire flashed out and licked along his upper teeth," while "smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes;" he made a lunge at the mother, to strike her as he had done once in life, but she hit his hand. "The finer-pieces slid in all directions." The woman, too, fell back on the floor. At this exciting moment, Frost adds a little whimsical "realism":

> "Where did I see one of those pieces lately?
> Hand me my button-box -- it must be there" [57].

---

56. Ibid., pp.247-255.

57. Ibid., p.249.

The woman called to warn her husband in the bedroom. He saw nothing. When she arrived, she could only hear steps mounting the attic stairs, so slammed the door and made her husband nail it shut, then pushed the headboard of the bed against it. Her husband had heard nothing. In quite a commonplace manner they asked each other if there was anything in the attic they would ever want again.

> "The attic was less to us than the cellar.
> If the bones liked the attic, let them have it."58.

The woman's conversation is left trailing, with the poet's after-note that she hadn't found the finger bone she wanted, but that the next day he verified her husband's name on the letter-box.

The realistic treatment of the supernatural makes it seem more real than if Frost had retained the fanciful throughout. He solves no questions, he is merely telling a tale as he heard it; he does not force the truth of the situation upon the reader, neither does he discredit it. Frost has succeeded in writing about the supernatural for the very reasons that account for Cawein's failure.

The oft quoted "Fire and Ice," that short poem so

---

58. Ibid., p.251.

reminiscent of Emily Dickinson, is in this volume, as well as the elegy "To E.T." (Edward Thomas) with its expression of true friendship and deep grief. Of the lyrics, "Fragmentary Blue," and "Nothing Gold Can Stay," are particularly lovely. Both are about nature, both are short, and both can be expanded and held as symbolical of wider meaning. In "To Earthward" we hear the poet expressing his deep love of the land, but not just of the sweet:that sufficed when he was young. Now he craves tears with joy, and

> "When stiff and sore and scarred
> I take away my hand
> From leaning on it hard
> In grass and sand,
>
> The hurt is not enough:
> I long for weight and strength
> To feel the earth is rough
> To all my length." 59.

"Two Look at Two" is a beautiful love story of a couple who climbed high up the mountain. A barbed -wire binding and tumbled wall halted them, and while they stood, a doe walked by on the other side of the wall, and slowly, an antlered buck came out of the spruce, looked at them, and as slowly followed the doe.

---

59. Ibid., pp.279-280.

Another poem reminiscent of Dickinson,is "The Kitchen Chimney." The whimsicality brings to mind "It dropped so low in my regard."[60] Frost asks the builder to build the chimney up from the ground, not to place it on a shelf. After giving household reasons for his wish to avoid a false chimney - the stain of tar on the papered walls, and the smell of the fire drowned in rain, he concludes with,

> "A shelf's for a clock or a vase or a picture,
> But I don't see why it should have to bear
> A chimney that only would serve to remind me
> Of castles I used to build in the air." 61.

Although these are far from all the "notes" in New Hampshire, they will suffice to show the varied quality of the work. Many emotions are touched upon, love, joy, sorrow, grief. A marked difference is noticeable, however, between this and the preceding volume (Mountain Interval): none of these poems contain the type of humor found in "A Girl's Garden," or "Brown's Descent," the humor which inspires uproarious laughter. In its stead is the chuckling type of humor, as in

---

60. Dickinson, E., Op.Cit. p.64.

61. Frost, R., Collected Poems, p.286.

"The Kitchen Chimney." As the humor is becoming more quiet, the sadness is becoming less ominous. With the exception of "To E.T.," which, after all, is a personal expression, and not part of the general theme, there is nothing to compare with the pathos of "Out,Out --." The nature lyrics still follow "The Tuft of Flowers" in A Boy's Will, while the love poems have many precedents in his own work. Speaking of the book as a whole, Frost had become more subtle.

In 1924, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for New Hampshire.

In March, 1925, some friends arranged a dinner to celebrate Frost's fiftieth birthday. Mr.Newdick[62] reports that high spirits and gay banter ruled the evening. Carl Van Doren presided, while Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Louis Untermeyer and others told humorous stories about the poet,of catching him playing tennis in his stocking feet, and of the squash court he had built in his cellar. Mr.Frost rose, and announced that he would like to read a new one-act play of his, written in New England dialect. It turned out to be

---

62. Newdick, R.S. "Robert Frost and the Dramatic," The New England Quarterly, Vol.10:2, (Spring, 1937).

The Cow's in the Corn,[63] in the Irish dialect. Four years later, the couple to whom it was dedicated had a private printing of the play, and in the introduction Frost wrote: "This, my sole contribution to the Celtic Drama (no one so unromantic as not to have made at least one), illustrates the latter day tendency of all drama to become smaller and smaller and to be acted in smaller and smaller theatres to smaller and smaller audiences."

For the college year 1925-1926 the poet became a Fellow in Letters at Michigan, but returned to lecture at Wesleyan and to continue as a professor of English at Amherst (1926). The Unitarian Layman's League of Boston awarded him the Jeux Floreaux in 1928.

This same year, he revisited England. He returned to Gloucestershire, where he walked with a friend, covering the same ground as they did when Frost lived there. They climbed the hill he and Thomas used to climb, and gazed on the same country...."but the wraith of that dead friend was ever before us, 'and the tender grace of a day that is dead' could never come back to us." 64.

---

63. Frost, R., The Cow's in the Corn, (1929).

64. Haines, J.W., Op.Cit.

West-running Brook,[65] published in 1928, was received with varying enthusiasm. The book contains only one long narrative in a small group of short poems. These poems, however, show the progression of the poet's thought and expression: more of them are subtle and carry greater symbolical significance in a fewer lines than in any previous collection of Frost's.[66] The humor is continuing in the quiet manner of New Hampshire. In this seeming conglomoration of poems, two are dated "As of about 1880," when the poet would have been about five years old! These two poems about the west are of quite different types. In "A Peck of Gold," the poet says that as a child he was told that some of the dust that blew around the Golden Gate was gold dust, although against the sun all of it appeared like gold.

> "Gold dusted all we drank or ate,
> And I was one of the children told,
> 'We all must eat our peck of gold.'" 67.

"Once by the Pacific" is a vivid description of a brooding storm on the ocean.

---

65. Frost, R., West-running Brook, (1928).

66. See particularly "The Peaceful Shephard," p.26.

67. Frost, R., Op.Cit., p.14.

"The Door in the Dark" and "The Armfull" are short descriptions of incidents which occurred to Frost, the first, when he "had his native simile jarred," and the second when he tried to carry too many packages. Some critics were surprised to see Frost using the lyric form; they forgot that his first book was lyrical. As a whole, the book is not unified. In Untermeyer's defense of the slender volume, he declares: "It is not the technique nor even the thought, but the essence which finally convinces; the reader is fortified by Frost's serenity, strengthened by his strength."[68.]

This same year, a single poem, "The Lovely Shall Be Choosers,"[69] was published. The following year Frost sent his Collected Poems[70] to press, and won the Pulitzer Prize for them in 1931. During these years, he received many honors,[71] and in 1933 he was made an Associate Fellow at

---

68. Untermeyer, L., Modern American Poetry,(1942),p.208.

69. Frost, R., The Lovely Shall be Choosers, (1929).

70. Frost, R., Collected Poems, (1939).

71. Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1930.
Named the national honor poet of Poetry Week by the General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1931.

(continued on page 57)

Pierson College, Yale. Another single poem was released, The Lone Striker,[72] which was later incorporated into A Further Range[73] (1936). As Frost was still teaching in Amherst, he bought a home there.

The Charles Eliot Norton lectures took Frost to Harvard in 1936, where he was a successful public lecturer.[74] In the Alumni Bulletin, the editor states that "it is a question whether any such audiences as Mr.Frost has attracted have before gathered since the inauguration of the Norton chair." The group was a

---

72. Frost, R., The Lone Striker, (1933).

73. Frost, R., A Further Range, (1936).

74. The Harvard Alumni Bulletin, ed., (March 20, 1936).

(continued from page 56)

71. Lecturer, Writers' Conference, University of Colorado, 1931 and 1935.
Lecturer, The New School for Social Research, 1931, 1933 and 1935.
Russell Loines Memorial Prize for Poetry, 1931.
Honorary President, California Writer's Guild, 1932.
Phi Beta Kappa Poet, Columbia University, 1932.
Awarded Mark Twain Medal, 1937.
Guest of Honor, Annual Dinner, The Poetry Society of America, 1937.
Elected to the American Philosophical Society, 1937.
Gold Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1938.
Poetry Society of America Medals, 1941.

heterogeneous one, students, teachers, poets, readers, all interested in poetry. John Holmes[75] reports that Frost spoke to the general audience as if to poets, as many of them were. He took his audience through all varieties of feeling: one minute he had their throats choked with emotion, and the next, he turned it off with a laugh. After one lecture the poet was detained to read his poems to the hundreds who wanted to hear more than the allotted time would permit. This is indeed a great tribute to a poet, and especially so to a living one.

A Further Range[76] (1936), a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, was hailed with enthusiasm on both sides of the Atlantic. Christopher Morley[77] intended a high compliment to the poet by saying that the book could almost be read without realizing it is in verse, for the metres come naturally and simply. He comments on the subtlety of these apparently casual narratives, and on the startling, "unexpected twinge of meaning" at the end of the poems.

---

75. Holmes, J., The Boston Transcript, Book Section, (March 21,1936).

76. Frost, R., A Further Range, (1936).

77. Morley, C., The-Book-of-the-Month Club News, (May, 1936).

Morley emphasizes once more Frost's power of using everyday experiences, such as chopping wood ("Two Tramps in Mud Time"), seeing an ant on the table cloth ("Departmental"), or an old pair of shoes in the closet ("A Record Stride") and adding to them a higher power of meaning and suggestion. This power of symbolism has been noted in his previous works.

The following year in England, Basil de Selincourt said in his review[78] that Frost's poetry had an appropriate message, one which "has a special aptitude to the critical conditions of our day." His advice, similar to Morley's, was that we enjoy it, ponder it, and make it our own example.

A Further Range is all these two critics have said. The longest poem, Build Soil[79] is a long dialogue between a farmer, Meliboeus, and a poet Tityrus, on public affairs. Frost called this a political pastoral. The poet tells the farmer to go to his sheep farm in the mountains, but not to bring his produce to the market. He is to use it, and what he can't use he is to "turn it under," to "build soil." The poet is going to be as unsocial as he can be.

---

78. de Selincourt, B., review of A Further Range, The Observer, London, (April 4, 1937).

79. Frost, R., Op.Cit., pp.85-95.

"The thought I have, and my first impulse is
To take to market - I will turn it under.
The thought from that thought - I will turn
it under."80.

He tells us that

"We are too much out, and if we won't draw in
We shall be driven in." 81.

To Frost, the producing of the thought and the food are more important than the product itself.

"Let me be the one
To do what is done --" 82.

If the poet meets someone who is a much better speaker and thinker than he, someone who can produce more beautiful verse, he doesn't become discouraged and allow his superior, the most economical producer, to work for all: he moves off, far enough for his "thought-flow to resume."

He bids the farmer to start a one-man revolution: to move away from his fellow-men. Frost considers our gregarious instincts as arising as much from distrust as from love, and pushing us

"too close in to strike
And he so very striking."83.

---

80. Ibid., p.94.

81. Loc.Cit.

82. Loc.Cit.

83. Ibid., p.95.

His revolutionary advice is summed up:

"Don't join too many gangs. Join few if any.
Join the United States and join the family --
But not much in between unless a college."84.

Frost hasn't changed. This goes back several years to his questioning of the old farmer's philosophy in A Boy's Will:

"Good fences make good neighbors." 85.

He doesn't like confining ties of any kind, social or physical. Perhaps the length of time which he held and developed these ideas caused him to offer his suggestion to Melobeous as a five year plan,

"not because
It takes ten years or so to carry out,
Rather because it took five years at least
To think it out." 86.

The same year (1936), Frost put out a small volume of previously published verse, From Snow to Snow,[87] one poem for each month.[88] A new English edition of Selected Poems with introductory essays was released in London.

---

84. Loc.Cit.

85. Frost, R.,North of Boston, "Mending Wall," p.13.

86. Frost, R., A Further Range, p.93.

87. Frost, R., From Snow to Snow, (1936).

88. Frost, R., Selected Poems, Jonathan Cape, London, (1936).

In 1937 when Frost went to St.Louis to accept the Mark Twain Medal, he upheld the philosophy of Build Soil. He said that the worst thing about the world was a lack of faith in disinterestedness.[89] He also refused to become the chairman of the Mark Twain Society on the ground that he prefers to hold no responsible job in connection with the arts. He will write poetry and will read it in public, but will not accept offices and positions in societies.

Mrs.Frost died in 1938. The poet resigned his position at Amherst, sold his house there, and went to Harvard as an associate at Adams House. He was also elected to the board of overseers of Harvard.

During this time Frost published no poetry. When A Witness Tree[90] was published in 1942, a noticeable change was perceptible in the poet. He seemed more mature than in his previous works, he seemed concerned with grief more than he was in his earlier poems. He had lost his daughter in 1935, and a few years later, his wife. In the first part

---

89. Clemens, C., A Chat With Robert Frost, (1940).

90. Frost, R., A Witness Tree, (1942).

of the book, Frost seems always to have this grief before him.

In one of the earlier poems, "Carpe Diem," he repeats the "gather-roses" philosophy, to warn against the danger that lovers, overflooded with happiness, might not realize that they have it at all.

"But bid life seize the present?
It lives less in the present
Than in the future always,
And less in both together
Than in the past. The present
Is too much for the senses,
Too crowding, too confusing --
Too present to imagine" 91

In the next poem, "The Wind and the Rain," Frost asks if the child should be unwarned

"That any song in which he mourned
Would be as if he prophesied?" 92.

for

"what is sung
In happiness by the young
Fate has no choice but to fulfill."93.

All the poems are not of this type. "A Cloud Shadow" goes back to the whimsicality of some of the

---

91. Ibid., pp.18-19.

92. Ibid.; p.21

93. Loc.cit.

earlier poems. A breeze discovered his open book and began to flutter the leaves to search for a poem on Spring. The poet tried to tell the breeze that no such poem existed, and inquired who might have written it, but the breeze answered not;

"a cloud shadow crossed her face
For fear I would make her miss the place." 94.

A Witness Tree is a compound of all the forms he has previously used.[95] "The Discovery of the Madeiras" is a narrative description of two lovers stealing away from Africa, of their voyage, of their love for each other. The lady became ill and listless, so the couple were placed on an island for a while to allow her to recover. The ship sailed and left them. Her sense of him, and even of love grew dim; she died of thought. The man escaped from the isle in a clumsy boat made from a gouged-out tree, and the boy was named for him instead of for the stolen lady. And here Frost seems to moralize:

---

94. Ibid, p.29.

95. Frost, R., A Witness Tree, (1942), p.32-37.

"But so is history like to err.
And it is neither here nor there
Whether time's rewards are fair or unfair." 96.

None of the poems in A Witness Tree are particularly humorous, although some, such as "To a Young Wretch," have a tinge of fun. Frost is lamenting that his daughter has taken his axe and helped herself to a spruce in his woods. He could have bought her a tree,

"But tree by charity is not the same
As tree by enterprise and expedition."97.

He hopes that the symbol-star atop of the tree, now a captive in the bay window, may help him to "accept its fate with Christmas feeling."98.

Although there is a tinge of humor in this poem, the whole gives the feeling of contemplation, a feeling aroused by all of these poems. One poem is only two lines long, yet it expresses and arouses much thought:

"We dance round in a ring and suppose,
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows."99.

---

96. Ibid., p.37.

97. Ibid., p.44.

98. Ibid., p.45.

99. Ibid., p.71.

The most didactic poem in the book, "The Lesson for Today,"[100] is an argument between the poet (as a schoolman of repute) against the Master of the Palace School in the reign of Charlemagne. The two are trying to decide what age is the darkest: the medieval, or the present. Both agree that "The groundwork of all faith is human woe." Now they come to their own particular problems regarding human ailments. The poet says that "we are sick with space" and that contemplation of it makes us as small "as a brief epidemic of microbes" seen in a microscope. But the people of Charles' era

> "were belittled into vilest worms
> God hardly tolerated with his feet," [101]

So we conclude that "we both are the belittled human race."

> "The cloister and the observatory saint
> Take comfort in about the same complaint.
> So science and religion really meet." [102].

Frost hears the Master calling his Palace class together to write Horatian verse with a Christian turn,

---

100. Ibid., pp.46-52.

101. Ibid., p.49.

102. Loc.cit.

always remembering the end -- memento mori; Frost concludes that "one age is like another for the soul."[103] He contemplates death, and the broken-off careers to which we are doomed, and holds with the early doctrine of memento mori. For his own epitaph he writes:

"I had a lover's quarrel with the world." 104.

On the poet's seventieth birthday, March 26th, 1945, his newest book of poetry is to be published, A Masque of Reason.[105] The publishers announcement[106] says that it is unlike anything he has ever done before, showing a rich variety of mature powers. From a study of his works, which show a progression of his thoughts and of his manner of expression, it will be interesting to see if he has produced an entirely new volume. In each of his previous books, Frost has placed poems which were written many years before. Many poems, though not

---

103. Ibid., p.50.

104. Ibid., p.52.

105. Frost, R., A Masque of Reason, announced by Henry Holt for publication in the spring of 1945.

106. Saturday Review of Literature, (Feb.26, 1945).

designated as written in earlier years show a marked resemblance to poems in earlier volumes. Although the Publisher's advertisement says A Masque of Reason is "witty, unorthodox and challenging in idea and form," it need not be assumed that Frost will be revolutionary in any sense, or inconsistent with his long record of wit and nonconformity. Unfortunately, the book has not appeared in time to be included in this discussion.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF ROBERT FROST IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

To study the position occupied by Frost in poetry, we must return to the last decade of the nineteenth century, when Frost was writing poems for the high school magazine, and finally succeeded in getting one of them published in The New York Independent. The popular poets of the day were Markham, Hovey, Carman and Moody. Edward Arlington Robinson had The Torrent and the Night Before[1] privately printed in 1896. Five years later, Captain Craig[2] attracted the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt, who offered him a clerkship in the New York Custom House. He had been an inspector in the New York subway then in construction; he accepted and held the position in the Custom House until 1910 when he was able to support himself by his books.

The fact that Robinson is also a New Englander who wrote about his own people, invites a comparison between the two men.

---

1. Robinson, E.A., The Torrent and the Night Before, (1896).
2. Robinson, E.A., Captain Craig, (1901).

Robinson was using the old rhymed verse, often reminiscent of Browning, but telling a new type of narrative, a narrative of failure. Throughout Robinson's long career, he has continually spun tales comparable to the prose tales of Miss Jewett and Miss Freeman, of New Englanders who have lost their worldly and then their spiritual possessions. His poems are commonly of defeat, of the big houses growing more empty every year, of the wilderness encroaching upon the one-time civilization, of aloneness. "Isaac and Archibald"[3], "Richard Cory,"[4] "Flammonde,"[5] are all symbols or symptons of the defeated old generation dying out more quickly than they care to admit. He is telling of the people who once owned large shares of land, who lived in houses with colonnades, who had at least one sea-going ship in the family, of people who read widely, who didn't allow dust to collect on their bookshelves, of people who were leaders. What happened to them? They were unable to change in a changing world. Those formerly prosperous New Englanders who were able to lower themselves not too awkwardly to become "Small-House"[6] people, those who

---

3. Robinson, E.A., Collected Poems, (1927), Vol. 1, pp. 86-104.

4. Ibid, p. 16.

5. Ibid, Vol. II, pp. 1-5.

6. Coffin, R.P.T., New Poetry of New England, (1938).

had never built high hopes on wealth from the sea or the large towns, or had a code too hard to live up to, were able to retain health and survive. Those who couldn't make the changes have become eccentric and queer.

George F. Whicher, in a review of Coffin's book,[7] criticizes him for calling Frost a "Small-House" dweller. Whicher asserts that in New Hampshire, Vermont, and western Massachusetts there were few mansions to decay, and that a vigorous, indigenous, and continuing tradition of back country New England, neither "Big-House," nor "Small-House," has persisted, and from this tradition Frost has sprung.

In either case, whether we consider Frost as of the "Small-House" tradition, or of the back country tradition, each is vital, living, and healthy, and Frost, rather than Robinson, has voiced this instinctive vitality.

According to Coffin, the old New England "Big-House" code proved insufficient for the whole world to live by. Courage, reticence and a peculiar kind of tenderness fused with a loyalty to the past and to tradition is part of the essence of that code. In the old days, the standards had become ambitious to improve both the mind

---

7. Whicher, G.F., Review of New Poetry of New England, Modern Language Notes, 54:8, (Dec., 1939), pp. 614-615.

and the manner; that ambition, however, is diminishing. The people are now trying to live upon the laurels of the past. They are confused because they cannot find the absolutes their grandfathers believed in, the sense of self-sufficiency and righteousness, and the sense of extreme rightness possessed by the Puritans. Though circumstances had once favored their rise, the "Big-House" people are decaying. No longer do their ships sail the seven seas, fill their homes with the treasures of China, Africa or Europe, for the days of New England shipbuilding have passed; the days of the Clipper Ships have passed. Science, itself, may in part be accused of their decay. As the economic change removed their claim to aristocracy of wealth, the leveling process of liberal rationalism removed their claim to a spiritual aristocracy; and science brought a new kind of knowledge. The final reason for their disintegration is the insufficiency of their code itself.

Robinson is from Maine, a sea-board state, where these "Big-House" people are found. He gives them ironical names, Theophilus, Amaranth and Atlas, although the names of the actual people he wrote about are ironical in a different way. They tended to be Old Testament names, fit for heads of clans or givers of laws, but now there are no clans to head or need of laws

to be made. Most of the people E. A. R. wrote about are passing into history, for they are the people he knew as a boy in Tilbury Town.[8]

Frost writes about New Hampshire, a state lacking in sea ports (except for Portsmouth) and large navigable rivers; a state lacking in good fertile soil.

> "Just specimens is all New Hampshire has,
> One each of everything as in a show-case."[9]

Because these people have never put too much emphasis upon worldly possessions, they have not become disillusioned by the change affecting New England in general. Perhaps they have not been as seriously affected by this change, for they never became too optimistic; they couldn't be. Frost writes about the farmer whose feet ache as he lies in bed, ache with the feeling of ladder rungs still pressing against them, for he has had a large apple harvest. He writes of the man who knows how to tag each forkfull of hay as he places it on the wagon, so he won't have to lift the whole hayrack with each unloading forkfull at the barn. This poem turns to pathos as he tells of the hired man

---

8. Coffin, R. P. T., Op. Cit., pp. 38-39.

9. Frost, R., Collected Poems, p. 201.

come home to die. Also in the sad vein is the story of the boy whose hand was mangled by the wood-cutting machine, and of his early death. He speaks of the loneliness, too, of the rural dweller learning to rattle the lock and key when he returns to his darkened home at night; he rattles the key and waits

> "To give whatever might chance to be
> Warning and time to be off in flight:
> And preferring the out- to the in-door night,
> They learned to leave the house door wide
> Untilthey had lit the lamp inside." 10

Usually, Frost's loneliness is relieved by a lighter mood running through the poem, as in "A Fountain, a Bottle, a Donkey's Ears and Some Books."11 Although he tells here about the deserted house of a dead poet, he does not make this the whole story. He has a rather humorous introductory conversation between Davis, the old guide, and himself. On the way up the hill, the guide gets lost and finds a bottle instead of the fountain which they were seeking. A sense, perhaps, of foreboding enters, with the statement:

> "I won't accept the substitute. It's empty."
> "So's everything." 12

---

10. Frost, R., Mountain Interval, p. 50, "The Hill Wife."

11. Frost, R., Collected Poems, pp. 258-263.

12. Ibid., pp. 259-260.

In the dead poet's home, the pathos of the invalid's life, of finding the trunkful of books of poetry -- all the same volume -- is tempered by the repartee, which shows that the people Frost writes about are not pining away, but are very much alive and active, and can observe and overcome pathos.

A difference is noticeable between Robinson's and Frost's loneliness. Robinson's tends to be the loneliness of a defeated, dying race, searching, trying to return to the past. Frost's tends to be that of a thriving humanity and usually has a saving sense of humor; Frost's is the loneliness of the present-day world. But generalities are dangerous, for Frost himself has said that the "object of writing poetry is to make all poems sound as different from each other as possible."[13]

Robinson often writes long poetic narratives, whereas Frost creates shorter poems, but the works of both may have symbolical meaning. In Merlin[14] and Lancelot,[15] Robinson is revaluing the Arthurian legend in the light of modern consciousness. When the down-

---

13. Ibid., "The Figure a Poem Makes."

14. Robinson, E. A., Ibid., Vol. III.

15. Loc. Cit.

fall of the old order occurs, we see it as a defeat through changed circumstances of those qualities which might have created or saved it in an earlier age. This is the very essence of the fall of the "Big-House" people in New England. Their present decline is due to the same qualities that once raised them up -- their staunch code of life, in changed circumstances now. The crumbling of beauty and idealism might be symbolical of the destruction, physical and mental, after the last war.

So with Frost; his famous poem "Mending Wall,"[16] is a sermon on neighborliness, or on a larger scale, on international peace. Both poets can speak in terms of small incidents, but speak with a deep and broad allegorical significance.

Like his characters, Robinson's settings are grey, and lacking in individuality or style; by accentuating the colorlessness, he accentuates the forlornness of the inhabitants. In writing of the doom of a people vanquished by their own inadequacy he is essentially a sad poet. His astringent characters seem as restrained as his passions, for the Puritan influence on his life was strong.

---

16. Frost, R., North of Boston, pp. 11-13.

Frost draws places where people really live and work, not perhaps in the brightest hues, that wouldn't be New England, but in appropriate tints. Where Robinson paints trees, Frost paints maples and pines.[17] With their characters, also, Robinson's become repetitive, all have the same speech; they impress the reader as having a common likeness; although in different situations and centuries. Frost's characters are more heterogeneous, variations on the small farmer, and those few poems of the people who are shutting themselves away from life. All his poems, however, arenot character studies. Some are just lovely thoughts, lyrical outbursts that express what so many of us have seen or thought before. That is precisely Frost's definition of how to write good poetry: the common in experience expressed in an uncommon way.[18] His uncommon manner of expression catches our attention, and years afterwards comes drifting up from the depths of our memories when similar situations arise. The conversational quality of his verse makes us wonder why we had never strung

---

17. Coffin, R. P. T., Op. Cit., p. 30.

18. Munson, Op. Cit., p. 48.

those same sentences together, but it is just that twist which Frost uses to make his expression a little out of the ordinary, and more than a little appealing.

His nature poems, too, add variety to his volumes. In making poems sound as different as possible from each other, "the resources ..... of vowels, consonants, punctuation, syntax, words, sentences, meter are not enough. We need the help of context -- meaning -- subject matter."[19]

Although perhaps more readers enjoy Frost upon first reading than enjoy Robinson, Robinson's clarity is noticeable after successive readings. Hidden meanings and added symbolism are obtained from rereading both poets, but Robinson often requires the second effort before any meaning whatsoever is obtained. "In an effort for brightest clarity, he ends in a dazzling obscurity."[20] At times, Robinson almost loses the meaning in an effort for a finely chiseled piece of verse.

In a notable way he has set down for posterity the story of the defeat of the type of aristocratic

---

19. Frost, R., Collected Poems, "The Figure a Poem Makes."

20. Untermeyer, L., American Poetry Since 1900,

New Englander who couldn't adapt himself to technological and spiritual changes. In spite of all criticism, Robinson shares with Frost the distinction of ranking at the top of recent American poetry.

Before the last war, a few American poets were striving for recognition. Some were using poetry for social reform of one sort or another; some were experimenting with unusual verse structures. With the breaking down of traditional metrical and rhythmical requirements, many felt moved to write verse. Lazy verse, inferior verse, was a frequent result.

The last war and the aftermath made many Americans cynical. The returning soldiers who had fought to defend political and human ideals were unpleasantly surprised by the huge war profits made at home. Others were disappointed by the failure of Wilson's efforts. The cynicism was shown in various ways: in a tendency to disparage and weaken faith in existing institutions; to paint a black picture of general moral breakdown; to see human nature as essentially weak and hopeless.

Carl Sandburg, poet of the mid-west, shouts in Whitmanesque manner of the brawling, wicked, vital and creative, big city. Both Sandburg and Frost are sympathetic to the lower, underpriveleged classes, to the workers and unemployed, rather than to aristocracy and wealth. Their differences are partly regional, partly tempermental. Sandburg, though he writes much of the mid-west, is less specialized, on the whole, in his setting and idiom. Sandburg's life has included a greater variety of external experiences than Frost's, for Sandburg has been a truckman, a barbershop porter, a dishwasher, as well as a newspaper reporter in a mid-west metropolis; he was stimulated by city life. Frost, in his later poetry, spoke to and of America in a wider sense, and yet, this statement may be misleading since Frost, although he wrote of New England, wrote essentially of man. Sandburg has faithfully crystallized the emotions and indignations of the people, and has shown his own sensitive perceptiveness in a great spectacle of American life, but his humor is more repressed and less pervasive than Frost's, nor does he score a comparable and consistent triumph over monotony.

Another mid-west poet appeared for a time to rival Frost and Sandburg in popularity, Vachel Lindsay, a revivalist of the gospel of beauty. He had a sympathy in common with Frost's, but less penetrating and more facile. Although Lindsay was caught by the fanfare, the noise and spectacle of America, he shares Frost's wish to bring poetry to the people, to bring to the common man his dreams, his heroes, his sense of zest. Lindsay was more emotional than Frost, and filled his verse with the noise of drums, tamborines and horns. Lindsay was trying to return to the old Greek precedent of chanted verse, and was trying to catch the sound of America in that chant. In his methods of bringing poetry to the common man, Lindsay is more superficial than Sandburg or Frost. To Lindsay, poetry was a lively art, rather than a profound one.

Sometimes associated with these men as a popular poet of the common man is Edgar Lee Masters, Chicago Lawyer, who was also writing poetry before the last war. After extensive preliminary flourishes with conventional poetry about the world in general, Masters' friends, including Sandburg and the well-

known editor, William Reedy, encouraged him to make poetry of his native soil. Masters, in The Spoon River Anthology,[21] became the poet of rural Illinois. He deals, like Frost, with rural folk, but in another spirit and manner. Masters more embittered temperment prefers generally bleak themes of frustration and tragedy; he sees the blighted lives of those sleeping in the graveyard, and offers a gloomy commentary.

A more definite relation, however, can be established between Frost and the Imagists with whom he became acquainted in London. These included Ezra Pound, F. S. Flint, Amy Lowell, H. D., John Gould Fletcher, Richard Aldington and D. H. Lawrence. This group of writers, although it included several Americans, first gathered together in England in the years preceding the last war (the nucleous was formed in 1912). Their movement was intended to be a renaissance, a re-birth, not a new birth. They publicized their tenets to emphasize the use of the language of common speech, yet always to employ the exact word. New rhythms were

---

21. Masters, E. L., The Spoon River Anthology, (1915).

encouraged and practiced to suit the new age and its emotional life; free verse was championed to allow the poet to express his individuality. He was also to be free to choose his subject. Although the Imagists did not consider themselves painters, they believed that poetry should render exact particulars, that is, sharp, vivid, sense perceptions and emotional responses, or "images", as modern poets use the term, extending it to apply to all sense perceptions. The Imagists were an outgrowth of a type of modern realism: they wanted to express themselves so asnot to be misunderstood.

Although the Imagists, and especially Amy Lowell and Ezra Pound, welcomed Frost as a poet and wrote valuable commentaries on his work, and although Frost admired the virtuosity, variety, far ranging and sometimes exotic imagination and erudition of Amy Lowell and Ezra Pound, they seemed to Frost rather to be fellow travellers than as close associates in the general advancement of contemporary poetry.

Frost has become an acknowledged master of free verse, although he avails himself of the form for more purposes than presenting an image. In many of his lyrics and narratives we can experience vivid sense perceptions from both his choice of words and his

rhythms. It is unlikely, however, that Frost owes any profound debt to the Imagists; he did not become a convert to their theories in general and never voiced their dogmas for renovating poetry.

It is clear then, that Frost has neither been molded conspicuously by traditional or contemporary influences, nor been conspicuously influential through his materials or methods on the work of other poets. That modern American poetry has travelled on a variety of roads appears obvious from a general view of the subject. The most prominent aesthetic poets, for example, such as Conrad Aiken, Wallace Stevens and E. E. Cummings dispense with the human and humorous touch which is at the heart of Frost's poetry. Their values are more specialized. Aiken writes verbal symphonies; his poetry invades the reader rather than attacks him. He makes frequent and accurate references to music, and presents his emotions, not to persuade the reader of a reality, but rather to employ the emotion or the sense of reality, as a composer employs notes or chords.[22] Wallace Stevens is a painter, dependent upon tone color. One of the most original impressionists of our time, he vividly presents images

---

22. Untermeyer, L., Modern American Poetry, (1942), p. 458.

and perceptions. E. E. Cummings is the one member of the aesthetic group with a sense of humor, although he is more elfish and less humane than Frost, Cummings, an experimentalist in verse, is striving for the pure in poetry, and uses typographical peculiarities to achieve distinction.

T. S. Eliot has been concerned with presenting the futility of the post-war world, "the waste-land." He writes for scholars; he uses phrases and incidents from authors of the past. Frost presents his emotions and perceptions in the present day idiom, often with a subtle meaning. Where Frost can be understood by any intelligent reader of the English language, Eliot's reader should be a scholar acquainted with a wide range of western and eastern literature. Although both men were educated in New England, Eliot did not accept the Emersonian tradition of non-conformity, as Frost did. Frost retained the idea of inner light, whereas Eliot, after a long and careful consideration, repudiated it in favor of authoritatianism.

John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren, all Southerners, are metaphysical poets of modern America. They are critics as well as writers of intellectual verse. Their verse often tends to be

abstruse, and to work around the emotion, rather than touching it directly, as Frost does. In his later works, however, Frost has become more and more metaphysical. His thought has deepened as he has matured; he has come to fuse thought and feeling. He has interpreted in sensuous terms his philosophical convictions. He has surpassed Ransom, Tate and Warren, nevertheless, since he presents his material always with at least an approach to clarity, and often with perfect simplicity; that is, his poem may be superficially appreciated, even if the symbolical significance is not fully perceived.

CHAPTER IV

SOME GENERALIZATIONS

After such a general view of American poetry, it becomes evident that Robert Frost is a middle-of-the-road poet. He keeps away from all extremes, but at the same time touches them, and understands them. He appeals to and is enjoyed by several different types of readers, whether trained or untrained in the art of poetry. Frost has been hailed by various schools and various critics: by the Imagists, Pound and Lowell; by Louis Untermeyer; by William Dean Howells, and by countless others. Since Frost appeals to such a variety of people, the prospect is very good that he may be enjoyed by posterity.

Frost's appeal to most readers lies in the conversational tone of his verse, in the homely common sense backing so much of it. His appeal to the thoughtful reader lies in his subtlety, in the richness and truth of his symbolism, in the rare human insight that reveals itself through simple or homely words.

When Frost first began writing, the speech-like intonations of his poetry were strange to

readers; his was different from the conventional poetry. Frost made this difference from other poets his special distinction, and developed it into that poetry which carried the idiom found north of Boston. Many modern poets are rejected by the general public because their "strangeness," or individuality is one to which readers either do not or will not adapt themselves. During the second decade of Frost's life, when he wrote so many of his poems, he encountered this trouble, and had difficulty getting his poems accepted for publication. When the first volume was published, however, he was immediately acclaimed a poet of promising merit by the critics of poetry. His peculiar quality of forcing the accent to fall on the right words, of making his verse easy, flowing and not strained into rhyme or metre has been lauded by the critical reader, while at the same time, has endeared him to the common reader.

His method of giving the part for the whole, of saying one thing while he means something greater, makes him, in a way, a Symbolist. He always seems to see more deeply into his subject than he literally expresses. Superficially, his poems may usually be

understood immediately, but the indirection, the deeper implication of the verse, becomes more and more clear upon successive readings. The image or the event is offered in a suggestive and brooding way, that tempts the reader to meditate, and upon successive readings to add more and more to his interpretation of the poem.

Frost does not, however, retreat into a shadowy world of his own experience and of private and eccentric meanings. He does not write as many of the Symbolists have done, for himself alone, and so become increasingly unintelligible. On the contrary, he writes about the world in very clear terms, of whatever in life itself is clear. But the essential mystery of life is often behind his poems, the unseen as well as the seen, and the obvious. It is in presenting this obscurer side of our existence that Frost is called a Symbolist. Because of these deeper interpretations, Frost has become a poet, not only of New England, but of the United States, of "the world in general."

Although Frost has been called a realist, he does not present the sordid horrors of depraved humanity as do Sandburg, Masters and Eliot. As Frost has said, he likes his potatoe sound and scrubbed.

Frost is also fond of playing pranks. He likes to play with words, and to play with the reader; he likes an element of surprise which gives a fresh vitality to his poems. But while he is toying with and twisting ideas, images and words, he never uses a fancy word where a plain one will do. He keeps his language as simple, as understandable as possible. Usually in the last line or two of his poems, he turns the natural order of speech so as to condense the thought of the whole poem into those two lines. Those two lines very often become the key to the abstraction which had grown in the poet's mind as he considered the concrete spectacle.

Frost's definition of a poem is that "it begins with a lump in the throat; a homesickness or a love-sickness. It is a reaching out toward expression, an effort to find fulfilment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought, and the thought has found the word."[23] Frost has experienced such a variety of emotions, and displayed

---

23. Current Biography, p. 282, (1942).

such a gift of projecting himself into the lives of the people he writes about, that when we read his expression of the emotion, we can, by empathy, relive and perceive the incidents or emotions. Art, to Frost, is to clean life and strip it into form.

When a gushing woman said to Frost, after one of his poetry readings, that now she understood his poems and knew how to read them, he was not at all complimented, for to him, the great art in poetry-writing is to write so as not to be misunderstood.

Frost is a spiritual descendent of Emerson and Dickinson. He is carrying on the Emersonian optimism which had been pushed out of sight, and lost. He wants "life to go on living." Other contemporary poets, with their pessimism, have had little or no effect upon Frost; the converse is also true. After the last war, when poets had to construct an ideal basis for life and poetry, Frost followed Emily Dickinson and focused his attention on the native, local scene -- the farm, the pasture, the brook -- so intently as to perceive the infinite in that limited

space. When other poets have been writing about the city, and the evils of mechanization, Frost seems to have remained away, to have stayed on his farm. One of the few times that he mentions our gregarious instincts is in "Build Soil,"[24] and he advocates a one-man revolution to move "further out."

Although he never seems to dwell upon city life, and although his settings are usually country scenes, Frost is no merely pastoral poet in a provincial sense, for he is writing about human nature, which is essentially the same in any setting. The symbolism behind The Runaway,[25] the poem about the new colt who had wandered away from his mother in his first snowstorm, is as applicable to a lost city child as to a lost country youngster. And so with his poetry generally, Frost is more than a nature poet; he is a poet of the people.

An amusing anecdote about Frost's coat-of-arms has been related by Padraic Colum.[26] When Frost

---

24. Frost, R., A Further Range, pp. 85-95.

25. Frost, R., Collected Poems, p. 273, (1942).

26. Colum, P., Book-of-the-Month Club News, (May, 1936).

was visiting Dublin Castle he asked for his geneology. Although he did not know to which family of Frost's he belonged, the name "Robert" placed him with the Lincolnshire Frosts. The arms: a grey squirrel and a pine tree.

It is difficult to come to any generally acceptable conclusion about the modern poets. In the past, many poets who produced voluminous quantities of work have been forgotten, as well as the many who produced but little. Frost is so self-critical as to have published comparatively few of his poems in his three score years and ten. The fact that he was not prematurely popular as a young poet, may have saved him from publishing the inferior stuff that young poets often produce. All of Frost's published poems are those of a mature man, and have passed a mature man's scrutiny. Because he is not writing about and for a narrow section of the country, and is not concerned specifically with contemporary social and economic problems, and because he has chosen an idiom familiar to the common reader, it seems likely that Robert Frost's poetry is in a more favorable position than that of the majority of his contemporaries to endure.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Abercrombie, Lascelles, review of North of Boston, The Nation (London), Vol. 15:11, pp. 423-424 (June 13, 1914).

The Academy (London, ed., Vol. 85:2159, p. 360 (Sept. 20, 1913).

Aiken, Conrad, Scepticisms, New York, A.A. Knoff, (1919)
---------- Selected Poems, New York, C. Scribner's Sons, (1929).

Aldington, Mrs. Hilda, Collected Poems, New York, H. Liveright, (1929).

Aldington, Richard, Collected Poems, London, G. Allen & Unwin, (1933).

Aldrich, T. B., The Queen of Sheba, Edinburgh, David Douglas, (1885).

Auden, W. H. preface to Collected Poems by Robert Frost, London, Jonathon Cape, (1936).

Blankenship, Russell, The Realist, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1931).

Boynton, Percy H., Some Contemporary Americans, University of Chicago Press, (1924).

Brenner, Rita, Ten Modern Poets, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1930).

Brooks, Van Wyck, The Flowering of New England, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., (1936).
---------- New England: Indian Summer, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., (1940).
---------- On Literature Today, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., (1941).

Brooks, C. M. and Warren, R. P., Understanding Poetry, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1938).

Carman, Bliss & Hovey, Richard, Songs from Vagabondia, Copeland & Day, Boston, (1894).

Cawein, M., The Cup of Comus, New York, The Cameo Press, (1915).

Chamaillard, P., Article, Revue Anglo-Américaine, Vol. 10:5, pp. 452-3, (June, 1933).

Clemens, Cyril, A Chat With Robert Frost, International Mark Twain Society, Webster Groves, Mo., (1940).

Clymer, U.B.S. & Green, C.R., Robert Frost. A Bibliography, Amherst, Mass., The Jones Library Inc., (1937).

Coffin, R. P. T., New Poetry of New England: Frost and Robinson, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, (1938).

Cohen, Helen Louise, More One-Act Plays by Modern Authors, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., pp. 353-370, (1927).

Colum, Padraic, The Book-of-the-Month Club News, (May, 1936).

Cowley, M., "Frost a Dissenting Opinion," New Republic, 111:312-3, 345-7, (Sept. 11-18, 1944).

Cox, Sidney, Robert Frost Original "Ordinary Man", New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1929).

Cummings, E. E., Collected Poems, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1938).

Current Biography, New York, The H. W. Wilson Co., pp. 279-283, (1942).

Dabbs, J. McBride,"The Dark Woods", The Yale Review, Vol. 23:3 pp. 514-20, (Spring, 1934).

Daly, Thomas Augustine, Selected Poems, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., (1936).

Damon, S. F., Amy Lowell, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., (1935).

de Selincourt, Basil, review of A Further Range, The Observer (London), (April 4, 1937).

Deutsch, Babitte, This Modern Poetry, New York, W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., (1935).

DeVoto, Bernard, "The Critics and Robert Frost," Saturday Review of Literature, pp. 1, 2, 14 ff., (Jan. 1, 1938).

Dickinson, Emily, Complete Poems, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., (1927).

Douglas, Norman, The English Review, Vol. 14:56, p. 505, (June, 1913).

Einsenhard, J., "Robert Frost, Peasant Poet", Scholastic, 24:28-9, (April 28, 1934).

Eliot, T. S., Collected Poems, London, Faber & Faber, (1936).

Elliott, G. R., "The Neighborliness of R. F," The Nation, Vol. 190:2840, pp. 713-5, (Dec. 6, 1919).

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, The Works of, New York, Bigelow, Smith & Co., (1926).

Engle, Paul, preface to Selected Poems, London, Jonathan Cape, (1936).

Farrar, John, The Literary Spotlight, G. H. Doran, (1924).

Feuillerat, Albert, Article, Revue des deux Mondes, Series 7, Vol. 17:1, pp. 185-210, (Sept. 1, 1923).

Fletcher, John Gould, Selected Poems, New York, Farrar & Rinehart, (1938).

Flint, F. S., Otherworld Cadences, London, The Poetry Bookshop, (1920).

Freeman, John, Contemporary American Authors, ed. by J. C. Squire, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1928).

Frost, Robert, A Boy's Will, London, David Nutt, (1913): N.Y., Henry Holt & Co., (1915).

---------- A Further Range, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1936).

---------- A Way Out, New York, The Harbor Press, (1929).

---------- A Witness Tree, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1942).

---------- Collected Poems, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1930).

---------- Collected Poems, Garden City, N.Y., Halcyon House, (1942).

---------- Come In and Other Poems, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1943); Selection, biographical introduction and commentary by Louis Untermeyer.

Frost, Robert, The Cow's in the Corn, Gaylordsville, Conn., The Slide Mountain Press, (1929).

---------- From Snow to Snow, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1936).

---------- The Lone Striker, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, (1933).

---------- The Lovely Shall Be Choosers, New York, Random House, (1929).

---------- Mountain Interval, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1916).

---------- New Hampshire, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1923).

---------- North of Boston, London, David Nutt, (1914); New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1915).

---------- Selected Poems, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1923).

---------- Selected Poems (revised edition), New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1928).

---------- Selected Poems, London, Jonathon Cape, (1937).

---------- Twilight, Lawrence, Mass., (1894).

---------- West-running Brook, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1928).

Garnett, Edward, article, The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 116:2, pp. 214-224, (Aug. 1915).

Gibson, Wilfrid,"The Golden Room", The Atlantic Monthly, vol. 137:2, pp. 204-5, (Feb. 1926).

Haines, John W., Article, Gloucester Journal, (England), (Feb. 2, 1935).

Hall, J. N., "Reading and Meditating Robert Frost's Poems," Atlantic Monthly, 174:59, (Sept., 1944).

The Harvard Alumni Bulletin (ed.), "The Norton Lectures," (March 20, 1936).

Holmes, John, "Harvard: Robert Frost & the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures on Poetry," The Boston Transcript, Book Section, (March 21, 1936).

Howells, William Dean, "Editor's Easy Chair," Harper's Monthly Magazine, Vol. 131, p. 635, (Sept. 1915).

Hueffer, F. M., English Review

Imagist, Anthology, New York, Covici, Friede, (1930).

Jones, Llewellyn, First Impressions, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., (1925).

Knight, Grant, C, American Literature and Culture, New York, Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., (1932).

Kreymborg, Alfred, Our Singing Strength, New York, Coward, McCann, Inc., (1929).

Krutch, Joseph Wood, The Modern Temper, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1929).

Kunitz, S. J. and Haycraft, H., eds., Twentieth Century Authors, New York, H. W. Wilson Co., (1942).

Lambuth, David, foreward to Robert Frost. A Bibliography, by Clymer, W. B. S. & Green, C. R., Amherst, Mass., The Jones Library Inc., (1937).

Lanier, Sidney, Music and Poetry, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, (1898).

---------- Poems, New York, Scribner's Sons, (1916).

---------- The Science of English Verse, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, (1891).

Lewis, C. Day, preface to Selected Poems by Robert Frost, London, Jonathan Cape, (1936).

Lewisohn, Ludwig, Expression in America, New York, Harper and Brothers, (1932).

Lindsay, Nicholas Vachel, Collected Poems, New York, The Macmillan Co., (1929).

Lowell, Amy, Poetry & Poets, New York, Houghton Nufflin Co., (1930).

---------- "Review of North of Boston," The New Republic, Vol. 2:16, pp. 81-2, (Feb. 20, 1915).

---------- Selected Poems, New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., (1928).

---------- Tendencies in Modern American Poetry, New York, The Macmillan Co., (1917).

MacCarthy, Desmond, review of Selected Poems, Jonathon Cape edition, (London, 1937), Sunday Times, (London), (May 16, 1937).

Markham, Edwin, The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems, New York, McClure, Phillips & Co., (1902).

Masters, Edgar Lee, Selected Poems, New York, The Macmillan Co., (1925).

---------- Spoon River Anthology, New York, The Macmillan Co., (1915).

Melcher, Frederic, "Robert Frost & His Books," The Colophon, Part II, (May 1930).

Miller, Joaquin, Poems, Boston, Roberts Brothers, (1889).

Monroe, Harriet, Poets and Their Art, New York, The Macmillan Co., (1926).

Moody, William Vaughn, Poems and Plays, Vols. I and II., Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., (1912).

Morley, Christopher, article, The Book-of-the-Month Club News, (May, 1936).

Morse, S., "Wholeness of Robert Frost," Virginia Quarterly Review, 19 No. 3:412-16, (July, 1943).

Muir, Edwin, preface to Selected Poems by Robert Frost, London, Jonathon Cape, (1936).

Mumford, Louis, The Golden Day, New York, W. W. Norton & Co., (1926).

Munson, Gorham B., Destinations, New York, J. H. Sears & Co., Inc., (1928).

---------- Robert Frost, A Study in Sensibility and Good Sense, New York, George H. Doran, (1927).

Newdick, R. S., "Early Verse of Robert Frost and Some of his Revisions," American Literature, 7:181 - 7, (May, 1935).

---------- "Robert Frost and the Dramatic," The New England Quarterly, Vol. 10:2,(June, 1937).

---------- "Robert Frost and the Sound of Sense," American Literature, 9:289-300, (Nov., 1937).

Overstreet, Bonaro Wilkinson, The Poetic Way of Release, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, (1931).

Parrington, Vernon Louis, Main Currents in American Thought, Vols. II & III, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1930).

Pound, Ezra, Personae, New York, Boni & Liveright, (1926).
---------- article, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, Vol. 5:3, pp. 127-30, (Dec., 1914).

Ransom, John Crowe, Grace After Meat, London, L. & V. Woolf, (1924).

Redman, Ben Ray, Edwin Arlington Robinson, New York, R. M. McBride & Co., (1926).

Riding, Laura, & Graves, Robert, A Survey of Modernist Poetry, London, William Heinemann, Ltd., (1929).

Riley, James Whitcomb, Complete Poetical Works, Garden City, N. Y., Garden City Publishing Company, (1941).

Rittenhouse, Jessie, "Portraits of Women," Anthology of Magazine Verse, (ed.) A. S. Braithwaite, New York, G. Sully & Co., Inc., (1926).

Roberts, Michael, New Country; Prose & Poetry, London, L.& Virginia Woolf, (1933).

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, Captain Craig, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., (1901).
---------- Collected Poems, New York, The Macmillan Co., (1927).
---------- The Torrent and the Night Before, Cambridge,Mass. The Riverside Press, (1896).

Sandburg, Carl, Selected Poems, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1926).

Sarett, Lew, Many Many Moons, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1920).

Saturday Review of Literature, publisher's announcement of A Masque of Reason, by Robert Frost, p. 36., (Feb. 24, 1945).

Schwarz, Karl, article, Hoschschule und Ausland, Vol. 13:3, (March, 1935).

Scott, W. T., "Frost's Seventh Book," Poetry, 60:146-149, (June, 1942).

Sergeant, Elizabeth Shepley, Fire Under the Andes, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, (1927).

Sitwell, E., "Lecture on Poetry Since 1920," Life and Letters Today, 39:70-97, (Nov., 1943).

Snyder, Edward D., Hypnotic Poetry, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, (1930).

Some Imagist Poets, 1915; 1916; 1917; Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co.

Stedman, Edmund Clarence, The Prince's Ball, New York, Rudd & Carleton, (1860).

Stephens, James, "Review of A Further Range," The Sunday Times, (London), (April 4, 1937).

Stevens, Wallace, Harmonium, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, (1931).

Stewart, Bernice, article, The Detroit Free Press, (June 25, 1922).

Stoddard, Richard Henry, Poems, New York, C. Scribnor's Sons, (1880).

Symonds, John Addington, Walt Whitman, A Study, London, John C. Nimmo, (1893).

Tate, Allen, (ed.) The Language of Poetry, Princeton, Princeton University Press, (1942).

---------- Poems, New York, C. Scribner's Sons, (1932).

Taylor, Bayard, Poetical Works, Boston, Houghton, Osgood & Co., (1880).

Thomas, Edward, Poems, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1917).

---------- "Review of A Boy's Will, The English Review, Vol. 18:1, pp. 142-3, (Aug., 1914).

Thompson, Maurice, Letter to William Hayes Ward, editor of the New York Independent, (1894).

Thornton, Richard, Recognition of Robert Frost, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1937).

Time, Review of A Witness Tree, 39:90-91, (May 18, 1942).

Untermeyer, Louis, American Poetry Since 1900, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1934).

---------- A New Era in American Poetry, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1919)

---------- Modern American Poetry, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, (1925 and 1942).

---------- "One Singing Faith," Saturday Review of Literature, pp. 529-530, (Jan. 17, 1931).

Van Doren, Carl & Mark, American and British Literature Since 1890, New York, The Century Co., (1925).

Van Doren, Mark, "The Permanence of Robert Frost, "The American Scholar, Vol. 5:2, pp. 190-198 (Spring, 1936).

Ward, A. C., American Literature, New York, The Dial Press, (1932).

Warren, Robert Penn, Selected Poems, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1944).

Weygandt, Cornelius, The White Hills, New York, Henry Holt & Co., (1934).

Whicher, George F. article, The Amherst Record, (July 14, 1937).
---------- "Out of Stars", Atlantic Monthly;171-64-7, (May, 1934).
---------- review of R. P. T. Coffin's New Poetry of New England, Modern Language Notes, pp. 614-615, (Dec. 1939).

Whipple, T. K., Spokesman: Modern Writers and American Life, New York, D. Appleton - Century Company, (1928).

Whitman, Walt, Complete Prose Works, Boston, Small, Maynard & Co., (1907).
---------- The Uncollected Poetry & Prose, collected & edited by Emory Halloway, New York, Doubleday, Page & Co., (1921).

Wilson, James Southall, "In Human Terms," The Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. 7:2, pp. 316-320, (April, 1931).