

Article

The Dual Images of Nature in Robert Frost's Poems

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Abstract: Robert Frost was one of the most popular American poets of the 20th century. Most of Frost's poems are devoted to rural life in England, with nature as its subject. Nature also has a double image in his poetry. This thesis divides the natural images in his poetry into bright and dark sides, supplemented by examples to explain them. First of all, in the poems of "Birches", "Dust of Snow", "In Winter in the Woods Alone" etc., nature is beautiful, delightful and hopeful. However, in the poems of "An Old Man's Winter Night", "Once By the Pacific", "Acquainted with the Night" etc., nature is threatening, fearful, and indifferent. Hence, nature has dual images in Frost's poems. What's more, the images of nature are an important part of Frost's poetry to. It helps with our understanding of Frost's poetry and poetics and therefore deserves a careful study.

Keywords: Frost; nature; image

1. Introduction

As one of the most popular American poets of the 20th century, a four-time Pulitzer Prize winner and an American national poet, Robert Frost occupies an important position in the United States and even in the literary world. He occupies an important position in the literary field of the United States and even the world. Most of Frost's poems are devoted to rural life in England, with nature as its subject. The words are simple, starting with the description of natural scenery, and gradually entering the world of philosophy, which is thought-provoking. Thus, behind Frost's depiction of nature, his poetry often transcends itself and has practical and philosophical significance. To study Frost's poetry, we should pay more attention to the study of his natural image, which not only helps us to study his poetry and understand his poetic art. It is also essential to guide our real and literary lives.

2. Dual Images of Nature

Frost's poetry celebrates the beauty and kindness of nature, believing that nature can bring joy, comfort and hope to human-being. In most of Frost's poems, nature is beautiful to human. Following analysis cite "Birches" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" as example to illustrate this idea.

"Birches" explores children's ability to find joy and wonder in nature. The speaker contemplates ice-covered birch trees that have stopped to the ground, imagining that they're bent because a young boy has been climbing them, jumping off while holding their thin uppermost branches and then drifting slowly back to the ground. This, the speaker imagines, is what the young boy does to entertain himself when he's on his way to care for his family's cows.

Besides, the poem also depicted a picture of a natural landscape: white snowflakes cover birch trees, small icicles are covered with branches, birch trees covered with snow and hanging icicles bend over. The breeze blew slowly, and the icicles on the branches made a clanging sound. The sun rises, and the snow and ice on the trees reflect a variety of colors. The snow gradually melted, icicles fell, and the ice particles on the ground shimmered with pearls. The beauty of nature is shown by the picture. [Yet, this beauty

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also conveys a sense of otherworldly transcendence. The speaker exclaims, "I'd like to get away from earth awhile / And then come back to it" [1], implying a desire to temporarily escape from earthly life, even to embrace death, expressing a certain willingness to leave life behind. However, the speaker also rejects the theoretical allure of heaven in favor of the pull of earthly life.] It becomes clear that the speaker longs to experience the transcendent feeling of escape that death would provide, but doesn't ultimately want to give up the pleasures of being alive-and with it, the possibility of again experiencing love, wonder, and joy [2].

If the "Birches" is a way for the speaker to appreciate the beauty of nature from the perspective of an observer, then "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is an experience of the beauty of nature directly.

In "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Frost adopts the voice of a wayfarer who pauses mid-journey simply to watch snow filtering through the trees. That pause becomes a meditation-not just on the scene before him, but on the relationship between the human world and the natural one. What he sees is simultaneously "lovely" and almost too vast to absorb. The very fact that the dark and cold tempt him to linger hints at a paradox: nature attracts and threatens at the same time. Yet the woods are inviting enough to make him want to stay, which challenges any simple notion that nature is wholly inhospitable. Even the gloom is softened by the only sounds breaking the silence: "the sweep / Of easy wind and downy flake." The wind feels "easy"-not harsh-and the snowflakes are "downy," as soft as the filling of a pillow or blanket. By the final stanza, the speaker admits outright: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep." That line reveals a genuine affection for the solitude the forest provides. That is to say, nature has another kind of beauty that can be enjoyed [3].

Nature can lighten people's mood, save them from shadow of depression.

In "Dust of Snow", the poem's speaker, possibly the poet himself, is initially unhappy. But a sprinkling of snow, dislodged by a crow in the tree above the speaker, brings an element of surprise that partly save the speaker's bad day. The poem thus shows how nature can lift people's mood, if only temporarily. When the crow shakes snow down onto the speaker, it's like a cold shock of reality. It's almost as if the crow knew this was what the speaker needed. The crow's timing is so comically perfect that it pulls the speaker out of this bad mood, almost as if to tell the speaker to stop worrying and look at the beauty around them. It's not just the snow itself that save the speaker's day, either. It's the way the crow makes it fall. Crows are often seen as bad omens, but here it's almost as if the crow has a sense of comic timing, shaking down snow just when the speaker needs it most.

In this poem, the snow-covered land is boundless and filled with silence. A crow flutters its wings from a hemlock tree, and the snow dust falls, and the birds, snow and trees are full of movement. The crows are black, the earth is white, the hemlock is green, and this natural scene is clearly colored. The person in the poem was originally depressed and restless, but the appearance of this natural scenery helped him get out of the shadow of regret and regain some happy mood. Snow often symbolizes purity and renewal, and that's what's going on here [4]. Think of snow's real-world ability to transform a landscape. In the poem, that trans-formative power is applied to the speaker's mood: the snow's cold shock wakes the speaker out a stupor and redeems some part of a bad day. It's as if the snow is a fairy dust that magically refreshes the speaker's perspective. More generally, the snow, like the crow, represents the non-human natural world. The speaker's comically timed interaction with nature places their troubles in a wider context. The snow thus speaks to nature's capacity to brighten people's moods [5].

Nature can bring people hope, which can be seen clearly in "In Winter in the Woods Alone" and "To the Thawing Wind".

"In Winter in the Woods Alone" is actually a narrative poem. The speaker walked alone in the winter woods. He picked a red maple and cut it down. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the temperature is most suitable for the winter day. The speaker carried an axe on his shoulder and met afterglow. Walking on the colored snow, leaving a trail of footprints to prove the speaker's existence. The speaker cut down a maple tree, but did

not defeat nature. Just as the speaker went home to rest in the evening is the preparation for the next ordeal. Nature was not frustrated by the poet who cut down a maple tree, and the speaker drew strength from this wisdom of nature and saw new hope. The speaker went home to rest, not to retreat, but to recharge for the next setback [6].

Unlike "In Winter in the Woods Alone", nature is tolerant to mankind that inspired and encouraged the speaker, in "To the Thawing Wind", the speaker was influenced by the vigorous vitality of nature.

The first stanza depicted the changes in nature caused by the arrival of the southwest winds in spring as the rains fall: birds begin to sing and built new nests; frozen river banks begin to thaw; brown soil begins to emerge under the snow, and flowers buried in snow are ready to move [7].

As soon as the cold winter comes, the monotonous white tightly wraps the earth. But many people like it to be quiet, pale, with a unique beauty. Moreover, this bleak winter also means that the cold is about to pass, and spring is not far away. Life is not easy, there will always be setbacks and troubles of one kind or another, but as long as we persist in the coldest time, we can immediately feel the warm breeze and see the spring blossoms. The warm breeze brews out of nowhere with an unfathomable force and brings back birds singing, flowers blooming, and flowing water.

Meanwhile, in Frost's poetry, nature is often terrifying, threatening, and emotionless.

In Frost's poems, nature is threatening to human sometime. In his poem "Storm Fear" and "An Old Man's Winter Night", he depicted the fear that the devastating force of the storm brought to the hearts of people.

"An Old Man's Winter Night" is a poem about an old man living alone in his house in the winter. Age has rendered him unaware of why he is in the house or even what his identity is, but he still persists. He walks into his cellar and is unable to remember why he came into the cellar. Because of his old age he walks slowly, "clomping" while he walks. He has no one in his life and he feels alone as he sits outside his house looking towards the moon. He then goes to sleep where he's only awakened by the shifting of a log, after which he drifts off into a deeper sleep, which may symbolize death.

The poem showed that nature is threatening to human beings, especially for senior citizen. In this poem, the old man cannot remember anything and walked slowly. Besides, he has no children with him. Therefore, what the old man faced not only the long winter, but also his age and inconvenience caused by his poor physical condition. There is no denying fact that an old and lonely man could survive with poor physical condition. In short, nature is fatal to human beings sometimes [8].

This kind of destructive power of the nature is also shown in "Storm Fear". "Storm Fear" is an ambiguous and powerful poem that describes a father and husband caring for his family while a storm rages outside their home.

In the first lines of the poem, the speaker describes waiting out a storm. It's beast-like, continually working to make it inside their home. And, as the following lines suggest, it appears to be working. The fire is dying, and the cold is creeping steadily inside. There's nothing the speaker, who is likely the father, can do to prevent the cold from reaching his family. He admits this at the end of the poem, saying that he isn't sure they'll make it through the night without help.

Frost is very fond of describing the shocking destructive power of nature and the misfortunes and disasters that nature brings to mankind.

In "Once by the Pacific," Frost sets the scene on a nighttime beach where the waves appear to gather strength for an assault on both the land and the people living there. The shoreline, the cliffs, and the entire continent seem to form a fragile alliance against the approaching storm. Yet the speaker harbors serious doubts: this unified front is unlikely to hold back the ocean's destructive rage. What makes the threat even more chilling is its duration-the onslaught will not end after one night. Instead, the poem warns, it could continue for an "age."

This poem draws directly on a troubling incident from Frost's early years in San Francisco. While walking with his family on a crowded beach, his parents unintentionally

walked off without him. Suddenly alone, young Frost watched a menacing storm roll in from the sea. That frightening moment stayed with him, and it only grew worse because of repeated trips to the ocean. On those later visits, his father would go on long swims, leaving Frost alone on the sand for extended periods. Each time, the boy became convinced he had been abandoned, and he would wait-anxious and afraid-until his father finally emerged from the waves.

In "Once by the Pacific," Frost channels that childhood dread, but he also magnifies it. What began as a personal fear becomes a universal threat: the ocean's fury is no longer directed at one small boy, but at all of humanity. The waves seem to possess a will of their own, focused entirely on destruction. As Frost writes, "Great waves...thought of doing something to the shore / That water never did to land before" [1]. In this clash between the rising titans of water and land, it is easy to imagine a terrified little boy trapped between the two, unable to escape and doomed to destruction by one of the two forces.

Above all, Frost makes it clear that the ocean waves are not a threat to be faced by an individual, let alone a child. He describes a fear that should be felt by all people on a universal level and provides a general warning: "Someone had better be prepared for rage" [1].

The dangers in the "Once By the Pacific" still have traces to follow, then the dangerous forces in "Design", if carefully considered, are extremely terrifying.

Robert Frost's "Design" describes a white spider on a white flower holding a dead white moth. Musing on who or what brought these three "characters" together in this gruesome scene, the speaker wonders whether life is brutally random or if there's a higher power with an intelligent "design" for the universe pulling the strings. The poem ultimately implies that the existence of such a power isn't necessarily any more comforting than the idea that people are all alone; on the contrary, such a "designer" must have a twisted taste for darkness and evil [8].

On the one hand, the sight of these three white figures might mean that the world is the product of intelligent design-that all of nature's complex parts have been finely tuned by an outside force into one miraculous system. The speaker wonders if something or someone "steered" the moth to the flower at the exact moment the spider was on top of it and ready to pounce. Other elements of the scene also might suggest that it's more than mere coincidence: "heal-all" flowers are usually blue, for example, but this one is white, just like the spider and moth atop it [10].

In this poem, nature is no longer the embodiment of brightness and pleasure, but a source of grotesque and fear. That the spider, moth, and flower are all white in color might also symbolically link these creatures with purity and divinity. Perhaps, then, the white scene is meant to be a sign of God's hand in guiding the world. But the scene is also brutal: a creature is being eaten, after all. To the speaker, there's thus something unnerving and grotesque about all this whiteness because it's so clearly tied to suffering and destruction; it evokes not heavenly purity and divine love, but deathly pallor. These "characters", the speaker continues, are more like the "ingredients" in a creepy witches' potion than proof of God's love for creation [11].

Nature is indifferent to human's sufferings. Mankind is abandoned by nature sometimes.

"Desert Places" can be read both as a meditation on humanity's isolation in the grand scheme of the cosmos and as a reflection of the speaker's personal loneliness. This speaker, traveling at night in a snowstorm, feels profoundly alone while watching white "blankness" cover a nearby field. This blankness seems to reflect nature's general indifference toward humanity.

"Desert Places" presents a desolate and lonely natural world while "Acquainted with the Night" shows a deep sense of loneliness from the inner world.

Frost repeatedly gives human qualities to the environment in "Acquainted with the Night," and this technique serves one central purpose: to expose the speaker's deep longing for companionship. Twice-at the very beginning and again at the end-the speaker says he is "acquainted with the night." Ordinarily, we use the word "acquainted" to

describe knowing another person: a neighbor, a colleague, a friend. By applying it to the night, the speaker turns darkness into a kind of acquaintance. But this is a hollow substitute for real human contact. What the speaker actually knows is not another person, but his own despair, sorrow, and isolation. The personification creates the illusion of connection, yet what lies beneath is nothing at all.

The natural world mirrors the speaker's emotional state in another way as well. Near the end of the poem, the moon becomes a "luminary clock" that "proclaim[s] the time neither wrong nor right." Here the moon is given a voice-it "proclaims"-as if it could speak directly to the speaker. But the message it delivers brings no reassurance. It offers neither certainty about the speaker's situation nor any sense of direction for getting out of it.

Overall, these personifications reveal a painful truth. The speaker wants human connection so badly that he begins to see human qualities everywhere: the night becomes an acquaintance, the moon becomes a clock that speaks. He is searching for a person, so everything looks like a person. Yet no matter how much the world is dressed up in human form, it never provides the real connection or comfort he craves. In the end, the very act of personification only underscores how utterly alone the speaker truly is [12].

3. Conclusion

As one of the most outstanding American poets of the 20th century, Robert Frost left many famous poems and excellent masterpieces. Frost lived in the countryside in New England for most of his time, nature as the source of inspiration and writing subject at the same time plays a significant role in his writing career. Frost denies being a nature poet, in fact, nature is an important theme in Robert Frost's poetry.

Frost loves, appreciates and is willing to be close to nature. However, in many close encounters with nature, he discovered that nature is not always being delightful and bring people hope. There is something hidden under the peaceful appearance. In his poetry, nature is also hostile and indifferent to human. Therefore, Frost combines these two sides of nature to present the true face of nature.

Frost's unique view of nature can be seen in his poems. He loves nature, but does not just exaggerate the beauty and tenderness of nature like other poets who praise nature, but objectively tries his best to describe the tyrannical side of nature. He believes that nature is a complex of beauty and evil, and human beings long to be close to nature, eager to feel emotions in nature that modern society cannot feel, but also very afraid of the unparalleled destructive power of nature.

In twentieth-century American literature, Frost's poems contain a philosophy of life while avoiding boring and monotonous expression, respecting traditional forms while infusing content full of era and local characteristics. The idyllic has been further developed and enriched in Frost's writing, which is worth studying.

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