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## A study of Robert frost poetry

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### Abstract

In this paper, it (a poem) begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion. It has denouement. It has an outcome that though unforeseen was predestined from the first image of the original mood and indeed from the very mood... It finds its own name as it goes and discovers the best waiting for it in some final phrase at once wise and sad—the happy-sad blend of the drinking song.

**Keywords:** Robert frost poetry, drinking song, Eliot

### Introduction

Robert Frost is one of the most highly admired poets of America. To talk about Frost's poetic theory, it may be said that Frost tries to outline the hidden meaning which a reader finds through the close reading and minute observation of the text. A poem should not appear as a replica of the poet's preconceived notions. Rather, it should have a natural flow and ends with the discovery of some philosophical thought. Hence, Frost stresses on the spontaneous flow of the poem with the finding of an ultimate truth of life—if not an abstract one, then a momentary stay against confusion. Frost avoided sticking to any particular poetic theory. Unlike other modern poets—Eliot, Pound, Lowell and others; Frost put a limitation on modern experimental techniques. On the contrary,

Frost carried on his own distinct experiments, emphasizing speech rhythms and “the sound of sense”. He has called attention to “those dramatic tones of voice which had hitherto constituted the better half of poetry”. In Frost's theory of poetry, the self-imposed restrictions of meter in form and of coherence in content stand not halfway down the scale of grace. He has made many casual references to the general quality of those limitations which work to the advantage, not to the disadvantage, of new and lively poetry.

Certainly, Frost practices his own distinct experiments by means of his emphasis on sound in poetry or which he defined as “the sound of sense”, “education by metaphor” and poetry as a “momentary stay against confusion” as is clear from the above mentioned definition by Frost.

Indeed, poetry was composed in every age and in every society. Poetry has gone through several experiments. It was composed without meter, without capital letters, without the use of punctuation, without sentiments but poetic lines were always inherent in it and it distinguishes it from all the other genres of literature. But Frost asserts that “meter is the basic norm or paradigm of a line...rhythm, on the other hand, is the realization in speech of this pattern”. Thus, poetry which delights its readers should be combined with meter, rhythm, words and sound. Frost has well defined the parameters of poetry for a better comprehension:

Poetry is prowess

Poetry is the renewal of words

Poetry is the dawning of an idea

Poetry is that which tends to evaporate from both prose and verse when translated.

Poetry is the Liberal Arts. The Liberal Arts are Poetry. A poem is a momentary stay against confusion

Rhymes and meter are an excess

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Words and syntax interpose resistance enough you would think. Rhyme and meter are taken on extra to show- Rhymes are less limited than is apparent. They are merely the last syllable on the various phrases just as “ly” and “ation” are on the ends of many words. Many more phrases than you would think have any off hand chosen word for an ending.

Apart from the intricate mingling of meter and rhythm, Frost’s emphasis on “sentence sounds” makes him different from others. Hence, writing should be adjacent to hearing. Frost’s deep interest in everyday speech is equally another aspect of his sentence sounds. These sounds are audible to imagination and to the proper voice-tone of the reader. The sound of sense gives liveliness to our speech and in order to make it livelier Frost opted the everyday speech of the New Englanders. The sound of sense refers to the tone of speaking. Frost’s poems are rich in the admirable tones of the lively speeches. Mention can be made of the opening poem of his poetic volume *A Boy’s Will* entitled “The Pasture” which is decorated with various tones:

I’m going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I’ll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I shan’t be gone long-you come too.  
I’m going to fetch the little calf  
That’s standing by the mother. It’s so young,  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I shan’t be gone long.-you come too.

The first line deplores light, informing tone while the second line is composed in reserving tone. The third line of the poem shows the possibility and the fourth line is written in free and inviting tone. Throughout the second stanza the tone is free, persuasive, assuring and inviting. Another well-known sonnet of Frost “Mowing” starts with the light/ informative tone too which continues in the second line. The third line is written in the questioning or curious tone. The fourth and fifth lines contain the word “perhaps” and thus suggest the possibility. The sixth line is having empathetic tone. The seventh and eight lines are evasive (unclear) in tone and thereby arise excitement within the reader. The following four lines are light in tone. The last second line is pensive (philosophical) in tone as it suggests that life with all its labour is the greatest gift of a man’s life. The last line is in free tone.

There was never a sound beside the wood but one,  
And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground.  
What was it whispered? I knew not well myself;  
Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,  
Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound-  
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.  
It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,  
Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:  
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak  
To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,  
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers  
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.  
The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.  
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

Frost’s “Mending Wall” from *North of Boston* at an outer level depicts an account of two neighbours who are contradictory in their attitude. One desires for a wall between their fields while the other considers it unnecessary. But at the inner level, the wall metaphorically represented the man-made boundaries of nationalism, racial difference, economic apartness, political distinction and Frost puts up the question that whether man should pull down the barriers which alienate the individuals from one another or is it necessary to keep limits among individuals? Robert Frost presented this clash of view through this poem. The neighbour is the advocate building the wall and explains, “Good fences make good neighbours” (Lathem 23). The speaker, on the other hand, considers it worthless as they are two different individuals but are human beings so there should be a feeling of brotherhood between them.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast...  
There where it is we do not need the wall:  
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.

### Conclusion

Frost a poem should be a combination of artistic capability and poetic impulse. Whereas he advocates the spontaneity of art, the matter of the philosophical discovery of life has not been left untouched by him. Thus, to study Frost’s art is to experience the hope that poets of the future may be able to heal the terrible breach between rhythm and meter that occurred in twentieth century poetry. As do all outstanding poets, Frost delights in putting personal rhythm and impersonal meter into, as he says to John Cournos, “strained relation”. But unlike such younger contemporaries as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, Frost never suggests that rhythm and meter get a divorce. Frost is preeminently the modern poet who demonstrates, memorable poem by memorable poem, that the rhythms of colloquial speech can vitally coexist with normative metrical structure.

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