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Dr. Shyam Kumar Thakur
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Kalidas Vidyapati Science
College, Uchchaith, Benipatti,
Madhubani, Bihar, India

Character: Portrayal of Robert Frost

Dr. Shyam Kumar Thakur

Abstract

Robert Frost's poems contain many characters who the reader easily recognizes as a country folk without any pretensions. North of Boston" contain numerous such characters. In the poem The Death of the Hired Man, we come across a person who clings to the irresponsibility and to decline to his need for self-respect. In the poem The Black Cottage the poet depicts the old fashioned New England lady in an interesting manner. Frost believed that "All the fun's in how you say a thing," and we find on the river voicing the same view in the poem The Mountain. These people cannot be seen separate from their original surroundings. They represent the country folk and possess all the shrewd, wry, tough minded Yankee perceptions. They are universal because of their timeless human traits of stubborn pride, or humour, or integrity.

Keywords: Poem humour, integrity, human

Introduction

Even though in some of his poems, Frost has subordinated both drama and character to straightforward poetic narrative in most cases he employed dramatically imagined sketch or tale. A humorously gruesome story appears in The Witch of Goods. In the poem The Code an anecdote is sketched out without losing the flavour of local customs and odd describes how a lumber-hand got a wife in a dramatic way. In all these poems and in many others we find Robert Frost more as a dramatist than a poet. This ability to blend poetry with dramatics is another feather on the cap of Frost which made him to famous.

In a literary age made nervous by the tugging conflicts of factions. Robert Frost has been able to win the admiration and respect of opposed individuals even while he has stultically refused to take sides in the controversies. Almost miraculously he has moved about in the conflagration unscathed. A glance at his sojourn among poets will reveal the paradox of his friendships. Before the turn of the century his; early verse was praised by Richard Hovey. Before the First World War, he had earned and returned; the warm affections of such English poet as Edward Thomas, W.W. Gibson, and Lascelles Abercrombie,. In 1913 that American renegade in London, Ezra Pound, had sent to his countrymen an enthusiastic review of "North of Boston" and Harriet Monroe printed it in poetry. Returning how Frost found that he had been praised warmly in an early issue of the New Republic by Army Lowell, Leader of the free-verse Imagists. More understandably, Edwin Arlington Robinson sent a letter of rich praise in 1917. Poets so diverse in method as Ransom, Decleish, and Hillyer revealed their obligation to Frost's Poetry in their early work. And in 1939 an English edition of his selected poems was issued with introductory essays by a curious foursome: W.H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Paule Engle, and Edwin Muir. The secret of Frost's wide appeal seems to have been that his poetry, from the beginning caught fresh vitality without recourse to the fads and limitations of modern experimental techniques.

Robert Frost did not bother to articulate more than fragments of his poetic theory, and yet certain essentials of it can be reduced from his poetic practice. If we remember that his wide acclaim has been earned during an era of artistic innovation and experiment, we marvel at his having achieved such distinction merely by letting his idiom discover old ways to be new, within the traditional conventions of lyric and dramatic and thematic modes. While Wordsworth, Eliot, Pound, and others invoked or invented elaborate mythic frames of reference which have enriched and complicated artistic strategies, Frost would seem to have risked successfully the purification of poetic utterance, in complicating simple forms.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Shyam Kumar Thakur
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Kalidas Vidyapati Science
College, Uchchaith, Benipatti,
Madhubani, Bihar, India

As We have seen however, he quite consciously assimilates to his own new England idiom such varieties of classical conventions as the relaxed modes of the scitan idylls, the verse epigrammatic brevity of Martial, the contemplative serenity of Haarlem the sharply satirical intensity with and admiration for the classics have not been displayed in ways which make his meanings depend on esoteric scholarship. Quite clearly, he has deliberately chosen to address himself to the common reader.

Perhaps without his realizing it, Frost's own Puritan heritage has made him find congenial the related theories of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Emerson, Particularly in matters related to the organic, growth of a poem and the organic relationship between imagery and symbol. "When I see birches bend to left and right." says Frost." I like to think. In spite of shortcomings, rests on his blending of thought and; emotion and symbolic imagery within the confines of the lyric. It would seem to be an essential part of both his theory and practice to start with single images, or to start with an image of an action, and then to endow either or both with a figurativeness of meanng., which is not fully understood by the reader until the extensions of meaning are found to transcend the physical.

If one is hot on the trail of actual evidences concerning Frost's heretical views, of course some of his brief epigrams will tentatively serve:

They say the truth will make you free,
My truth will kind you salve to me.

Here again the serious play of wit involves antithetically opposed points of view. The initial assertion directly quotes from the familiar words of Jesus in John 8:32. But the covering assertion implicitly inverts the meaning, of those familiar words by suggesting that the acceptance of any so called ultimate "truth" can be viewed as a limiting action and therefore as a form of enslavement. It would seem that for Frost the ultimate truth does indeed lie at the bottom of a very deep well that he refuses to find the kind of truth subsumed.

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