

## Robert frost as a regional poet

<sup>1</sup> Alka Bhise, <sup>2</sup> Amol A Fartode

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor in English, Indirabai Meghe Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Amravati, Maharashtra, India

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer in English, Government Polytechnic, Yavatma, Maharashtra, India

### Abstract

The present paper deals Robert Frost as a regional poet. Frost regional art is creative and symbolic. His regionalism shows the environment, the region acting on the mind of his people, and determining their natures and attitudes. A strong link is established between the individual mind and the land itself. He constantly associates aspect of landscape and psychological traits. His regionalism is thoroughly social. It is concerned more with rural way of life than with its scenery, more with the sense of values shared by the local society than the intuitions of single mind.

The region North of Boston becomes symbolic not only of New England as a whole, but also of human life at large Frost achieves universality by the simplest of means and raises regionalism to the level of the highest art. He explores other world and other levels of experience, through the rural world that he has chosen as the basis of his poetry.

**Keywords:** region, regional, regionalism, rural, symbolic, environment

### Introduction

Regional art is an art, which deals with the physical features, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, language, etc., of some particular locality. However, this does not mean that regionalism is mere factual reporting or photographic reproduction. The regional artist emphasizes the unique features of a particular locality, its uniqueness, the various ways in which it differs from other localities. But as in all other art, so also in regional art, there is a constant selection and ordering of material. In other words, regional art is also creative. Through proper selection and ordering of his material the artist stresses the distinctive spirit of his chosen region and shows, further, that life in its essentials is the same everywhere. The differences are used as a means of revealing similarities, from the particular and the local, the artist arises to the general and the universal. The selected region becomes a symbol of the world at large, a microcosm which reflects the great world beyond. Frost is a regional poet in this creative sense.

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco California in 1874 and then returned as a mature poet to New England 1912. When he arrived in England on September 1912 he had not thought of himself as a Yankee farmer poet. It mattered little where the "aberrant" poet went. When his soul needed to "go apart by itself", he was not partial certainly not attached, to any special "Location". From Frost's point of view in 1912, New England had only been a setting for his sentimental education. Consequently, the product of this period, 'A Boys Will', lack the regional concern that characterizes the work of leading New England authors like Jewett, Robinson, Stowe, and Whittier. Even Longfellow's nostalgic poem, 'My Lost Youth' \_\_\_ Frost sources for the title of A Boy's will \_\_\_ give much more attention to an identifiably regional setting [Port-land Maine] than does Frost's book.

New England, or more strictly speaking that part of it which lies North of Boston provides the rural context, within which Frost's most characteristic poems are presented. It is this rural world which provides him not only with the setting but also

with the objects, the incidents, the events, and the characters he writes about. His personages, are all New Englanders and his poetry is a record of their characters and habits, as well as of the various aspects of their life and activity, their beliefs, ideals, traditions and codes of conduct. In "After Apple \_\_ Picking", we get a true and interesting picture of the tired farmer going home for rest after the day's labour of picking apples. The element in the nature such as, apple orchard gives background to Frost's regional choice:

"That struck the earth,  
 No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,  
 Went sure to the cider-apple heap  
 As of no worth."

Unlike the neighbour in 'Mending Wall' this farmer has a sense of humor, but the observer still finds himself baffled and frustrated by regional character, Garrulity, he learns, can be as impenetrable as taciturnity, the conflict is essentially unchanged. The local figure lacks the outsider's curiosity. He has no desire to climb the peak that dominates his world; nor does he need to see the miraculous mountaintop fountain or spring\_\_ any more than the neighbour of 'Mending Wall' needed to know, why good fences make good neighbours. We suspect, furthermore, that this droll Lunenburg farmer would be no more interested in the beauties of a pasture spring than he is in this one on a mountaintop.

"A Servant to Servants", north of Boston's central poem, is a pivotal piece in the books development. In the first half of the collection Frost maintained a balance between the autonomy and independence of some characters [including his persona] and the restrictions and constraints imposed by others, that is, those who represent regional norms and expectations. After this crucial poem, however, the balance shifts, and the burden of restraint and confinement weighs more heavily\_\_ often too heavily\_\_ on the shoulders both of the persona and of the individuals he encounters in his travels. In this poem the implied author listens silently while the distraught speaker

delivers her monologue. He hardly has a role in the poem yet his character as a meditative, anything explore of the regional world is reinforced.

The particular region which he has selected for his purposes is New England and he has represented and interpreted this region, accurately and precisely, in one poem after another. Its physical features, its people, its ways and manners, its habits, traditions, customs, beliefs, and codes of conduct, appear and reappear in one poem after another. But he does not render and interpret the whole of New England. He deals only with that part of it which lies to the north of Boston. The other parts of New England such as Massachusettes, Connecticut, and Maine appear only rarely in his poems. Further, the industrial sites and fishing villages are ignored by him. There is no mention of railway train and automobiles, and factories giving out smoke and gas, or of radios or of large-scale migration to the cities. As J. F. Lynen points out, "He chooses, not simply what is real in the region, what is there, but what is to his mind the most essential, what is representative. The delimiting of rural New England is only the first step. Even within the area we still find the great mass of detail suppressed in favour of a few significant local traits. Now it should be clear that this process of representing the locality as a whole through a limited set of visual images and of portraying the culture and mentality of the region through a particular kind of character is really a mode of symbolism. What emerges from Frost's scrupulous selection is not reality itself, but a symbolic picture expressing the essence of that reality. Frost's regionalism is both symbolic and creative."

It is the region, which lies north of Boston, which forms the background to the poems of Frost, "It is a landscape, pearly in tone, and lonely to those who do not recognize its friendliness. It is a landscape broken in outline, with views but not giant views, mountains but not too high ones, pastures, swamps, farms deserted and farms occupied."

The scenery Frost describes, the people and their occupations, which he presents, and language which he uses, are all peculiar to this selected region. The massive birches swinging in fierce winter storms is a common sight in New England and Frost has immortalized it in his famous poem, 'The Birches'. 'Blueberrie' brings out skill and vividity of New England berry-pickers. Similarly, true is Frost's picture of the tired farmer going home for rest after day's labour of picking apples:

"My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree  
Towards heaven still,  
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill  
Beside it, and there may be two or three  
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.  
But I am done with apple-picking now.  
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,  
The scent of apples; I am drowsing off."

Thrift is the recognized trait of the inhabitants of New England. "Perhaps the rugged land fostered in the settlers of New England an attitude of making the most of what was available to them. Whatever the causes, the Yankees early developed the fine art of making the best of things. Thrifty and hard-working, they had little time for idle talk." The farmer in 'Blueberries', who fed his entire family on blueberries, is thrifty, one who has put to use Shakespeare's adage, "Sweet are the uses of adversity":

He seem to be thrifty; and hasn't he need,  
With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed?  
He has brought them all up on wild berries, they say  
Like birds...  
They eat them the year round, and those they don't eat  
They sell in the store and buy shoes for their feet."

In a similar way, the farmer in 'Mending wall' who would say no more than, "Good fences make good neighbours", is not being silly or adamant, but is merely trying to make secure for himself the land he has acquired, the garden he has reared, through hard work and dedication. The swinger of birches too has the New England spirit of adjustment in him. He lives far away from the city where alone he could learn to play baseball. So he makes do with what was at hand \_\_\_ playing on the birches:

"Some boy too far from town to learn baseball  
Whose only play was what he found himself  
Summer or winter, and could play alone.  
One by one he subdued his father's trees  
By riding them down over and over again."

The idea of adjustment to situations and determination in the face of adversities is again the keynote of Mowing. 'Two Tramps in Mud Time' illustrates the resourcefulness \_\_\_ the Yankee ingenuity \_\_\_ of the tramps in making theirs what others have a right to.

In 'The Code', the hired man will not be taught how best he should work and drives a severe lesson into his master for having attempted to teach him. It is a Yankee speech that we constantly hear in Frost's poetry. He has succeeded in capturing the very tone, accent, and rhythm, idiom and phraseology, of the conversation of New Englanders.

Frost suggests much more than he actually describes, with the result that the impression created is that a whole region has been completely described in all its facets. There is much selecting of material, yet the impression of wholeness is created, and this impression is an important aspect of Frost's regional art. The New England in 'Mending wall' is the same New England as we find in 'Birches', the New England in 'The Code' is the New England of 'Stopping by woods', 'Home Burial', 'An Old Man's Winter Night', 'The Cow In Apple Time', all exist within a single world.

Another important aspect of Frost's regionalism is the fact that he shows the environment, the region acting on the mind of his people, and determining their natures and attitudes. Thus a strong link is established between the individual mind and the land itself. He constantly associates aspects of landscape and psychological traits. In another words, Frost's regionalism is thoroughly social. It is concerned more with the rural way of life than with its scenery, more with the sense of values shared by the local society than with the intuitions of a single mind. Not that the community and the individual are opposed: the speaking voice in Frost's lyrics is certainly that of a particular person, but this person is also the spokesman for a community. We can conclude here that Frost's regional art is creative and symbolic. He deals with a particular region and through careful selection of material its significant aspects and its spirit are brought out. The distinctive features are stressed, but this very uniqueness is made to reveal the similarities that exist between the life in that region, and human life taken as a whole. In this

way the region north of Boston becomes symbolic not only of New England as a whole, but also of human life at large. Frost achieves universality by the simplest of means and raises regionalism to the level of the highest art. He explores other world and other levels of experience, through the rural world that he has chosen as the basis of his poetry. The greatness of his regionalism lies in the fact that he surmounts the limitations of regional, art, and makes it universal in its appeal. That is why even those who are not familiar with New England love and enjoy his poems.

### References

1. Brooks, Cleanth, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*
2. Brower RA. *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1963.
3. Jarrell Randall. *Poetry and the Age*, New York, Vintage Books, 1962.
4. Jennings, Elizabeth, *Frost*.
5. Kemp John C. *Robert Frost and New England, The Poet as Regionalist*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1979.
6. Lynen John F. *The pastoral Arts of Robert Frost*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1960.
7. Oliver Egbert S. *An Anthology American Literature 1890-1965*, New Delhi, Eurasia Publishing House. Untermeyer, Louis, *Robert Frost's Poems*, 2002.