

الطبيعة "كالآخر" في شعر روبرت فروست

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الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الطبيعة كما لو أنها الآخر في شعر روبرت فروست ويتبع البحث التسلسل الزمني لشعر فروست. عادة ينظر إلى فروست على أنه شاعر طبيعة, لكنه لا يفضل أن يدعى شاعر طبيعة. تعتبر تلك نقطة البداية من البحث للتفكير في الحضور القوي للطبيعة في شعره. كلمات فروست تتضمن فكرة أن استخدامه للطبيعة له بعد مختلف وأنه ليس هدفه الرئيسي. فخلال مهنته الطويلة كشاعر, يتطور فهم فروست للطبيعة بوضوح. ففي مراحل شعره المبكرة والوسط, تعتبر الطبيعة مصدرا للخوف والقلق ويفضل الإنسان الهروب منها. وعلى العكس من ذلك, في مرحلة لاحقة من شعر فروست, تعتبر علاقة الإنسان مع الطبيعة مختلفة ويكون الإنسان أقرب إلى الطبيعة أكثر ارتياحا وفهما لها.

كلمات مفتاحية: روبرت فروست, الطبيعة كالآخر, رموز الطبيعة, البعد الرمزي, الخوف من الطبيعة, شعر.

Nature as "The Other" in the Poetry of Robert Frost

Submitted by: Hayyan Al Ali

Abstract

This paper aims at giving a chronological analysis of nature as "the Other" in Robert Frost's poetry. Frost is usually said to be a nature poet, but he does not prefer to be called so. This is the starting point of the study to think about the extensive presence of nature in his poetry. Frost's words imply that his use of nature has a different dimension, and it is not his main interest. During his long poetic career, his understanding of nature clearly develops. This is why this paper studies this development in his sense of nature. In his early and middle periods of poetry, nature is a source of fear and unease, and the human beings prefer to escape from it. In contrast, in his late poetry, the human being's relationship with nature is different, and the human beings are closer to nature and more comfortable in it.

Key Words: Robert Frost, Nature as the Other, Nature Symbols, Symbolic dimension, Fear of nature, Poetry.

Introduction:

This paper explores Robert Frost's sense of nature as "the Other" and how this theme develops chronologically to show the pattern of Frost's developing perception of nature in his poetry. In American poetry, nature was a common theme, especially in the Romantic Period that lasted from 1820 to 1860. In his book, *Outline of American Literature*, Vanspanckeren argues, "America's vast mountains, deserts, and tropics embodied the sublime."¹ Nineteenth century American poets were influenced by how the English Romantic poets viewed Nature because American poets read books published in Britain. This is why the American classic writers like Emerson and Thoreau had a similar understanding of nature to that of the English Romantics like Wordsworth. For Emerson, nature was a source of inspiration, beauty and goodness. The snow storm, in Emerson's poem, "The snow-Storm," teaches the human beings an "astonished art." Unlike Emerson, Frost depicts the snow storm in "Snow Storm" as an enemy and a threat to the human beings.

Although he writes a lot about nature, Frost says that his main interest is human beings. This is why it is helpful to define what nature represents for Frost. Judith Oster in her book, *Toward Robert Frost: The Reader and the Poet*, says:

He also sets us problems that parallel his own: for

1.Kathryn Vanspanckeren, *Outline of American Literature* (Washington: U.S Department of State, 1994), p.26.

example, he did not want to be “just” a “nature” poet (I 34), and we feel the conflicting pulls in his poetry between love of the fact, the material, the concrete for its own sake, the use of that immediate fact as a means of saying something else.²

Frost introduces his theme of nature as in “After Apple Picking”, by saying “For I have had too much / Of apple-picking: I am overtired / Of the great harvest I myself desired.”³ In this poem, nature is the background of the main theme, which is the poet’s reflection of his tiredness after hard work. Nature engages the reader’s interest and sympathy so that he can introduce the theme of his tiredness. At other times, nature is symbolic and needs interpretation. In “The Oft-Repeated Dream,” Frost says, “And only one of the two / Was afraid in an oft-repeated dream / Of what the tree might do.”⁴ The tree is personified, and it is symbolic of external threat. Thus, the tree in this poem represents “the Other.”

Symbols can be helpful to clarify the development of nature as “the Other” in Frost’s poetry. In his book, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Northrop Frye says, “I mean by an archetype a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience.”⁵ Nature symbols in

2. Judith Oster, *Toward Robert Frost: The Reader and the Poet*, (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), p.34.

3. Edward Lathe, ed., *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969) “After Apple Picking,” lines 27-29. [Future references will be to the title of the poem and line number.]

4. “The Oft-Repeated Dream,” lines 9-12.

5. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (New Jersey :Princeton UP, 1957), p.99.

Frost's poetry can be traced to help readers understand how nature is "the Other".

Frost repeatedly uses symbols like woods, trees, flowers, stars, wind, winter, and others. Nature is understood as a main theme in Frost's poetry, but it is important to understand the symbolic dimension that connects the human being and nature, "We must be able to infer meanings that may only be suggested to understand the significance of symbolic gestures, to comprehend not just what has happened but what it means."⁶ This causes layers of meanings and complexity.

In Frost's poem entitled "Wind and Window Flower," a cold wind and a flower are both personified, and they are symbol images and vocabulary, " She a window flower / He a winter breeze." The use of these images is complex. Winter breeze has an intention of seducing the flower and getting her to fly away with him. The narrator sees the wind as the other, which is concerned with "ice," "snow," "dead weeds," and "unmated birds." For the flower, the breeze is the alien other; the breeze is personified as masculine, belonging to the winter and existing outdoors. In contrast, the flower is feminine and belongs indoors in a warm room. Thus, they are the "other" to each other, and no relationship is formed. We have two levels of otherness because nature itself is also "the Other" as the first lines remind the readers.

6. Carol Jago, et al. , *Literature and Composition* (New York: St. Martin's, 2011), p.2.

In Frost's poetry, the human beings are often afraid of nature itself. In "An Old Man's Winter Night," the old man lives isolated in a house. Human beings in Frost's poems, who prefer isolation and escape from nature, see nature as "the Other"; it is a threat or a danger that they cannot control. In "An Old Man's Winter Night" nature looks at the old man in a threatening way, "All out-of-doors looked darkly in at him"⁷ Nature is clearly "the Other" from the start of the poem. The old man is isolated in "empty rooms" and "no one but himself." The sound of nature outside is "the roar of trees." Clearly, the old man is sleeping indoors, and he is separated from nature. What increases the old man's isolation is his lack of control over nature and his lack of understanding of its phenomena. In this poem, nature is not a symbol of something else, but it is "the Other" that the old man fears. Carl Jung insists that modern human beings' problem is that they cannot understand nature. Jung says, "However, human beings do not understand all the phenomena of nature, and this makes them isolated in it."⁸ The human beings in Frost's poetry cannot understand all the phenomena of nature, and this makes them isolated from it.

Clearly, nature represents otherness. Robert Frost wrote for over fifty years, and during this period his ideas and themes evolved. It is therefore helpful to look at otherness in Frost's poetry

7. "An Old Man's Winter Night", line 1.

8. Carl Jung, et al., *Man and his Symbols* (New York: Anchor Press Doubleday, 1964), p.95.

chronologically. For this reason, this paper will consider nature as the other during the early, middle and late periods of Frost's work.

I. Early Poetry :

Robert Frost is often classified as a nature poet by his readers. "Frost's attention to natural settings and his remarkable skill in describing them characterize him as a nature poet,"⁹ Michael Little argues. However, Frost himself does not accept this classification. In one of his interviews with journalists, Frost was asked whether he is a "Nature Poet", "New England Yankee", "Symbolist", "Humanist," and his answer was "I guess I am not a nature poet."¹⁰ Indeed, nature is a clear theme in his poetry, and Frost invites his readers to think carefully about what nature represents in his poetry when he refuses this classification.

Nature is not always a background of his poems, nor is it always an entrance to other different themes. On the contrary, in his early poetry, Frost presents nature as a main theme and repeatedly puts his personae in conflict with nature. In his early poetry, Frost produced many poems in which nature is clearly present in the form of symbols such as trees, flowers, wind, roses, and others, and it is impossible to understand those poems without thinking about what these nature symbols mean. In other words, personifying a tree and

9. Michael Little, *Bloom's How to Write About Robert Frost* (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2010), p.51.

10. *Conversation with Robert Frost*, Interviewed by Bela Kornitzer (1952; The National Broadcasting Company of New York), 9:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qwCEnkb2_E.

describing it as having intentions is better thought of symbolically because this image needs a deeper understanding. The tree in “The Oft-Repeated Dream” is personified and has intentions of attacking the woman and her husband. So thinking about the significance of this nature symbol gives the text another layer of meaning in the light of “Otherness”. The tree is the other because it is outside the house, and it is threatening.

Jung, the Swiss psychoanalyst, thinks that nature symbols normally represent a pattern in human life and that nature appears repeatedly in human consciousness. Therefore, nature symbols are understood in terms of these manifestations of nature which he calls ‘the archetypes.’ Archetypes are the similar or recurrent patterns, themes and symbols that most cultures and religions share. Understanding these archetypes clarifies what nature is in Frost’s poetry since the poet repeats the same symbols of nature throughout his poetry. In his book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M. H. Abrams says:

In literary criticism the term archetype denotes recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes, and images which are identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams, and even social rituals. Such recurrent items are usually held to be the result of elemental and universal patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the attentive reader, because he or she shares the

psychic archetypes expressed by the author.¹¹

Nature, as a symbol, exists in all cultures and appears in arts, literature and human life in general. Water, for example, is a source of life, while the snake represents wisdom in some cultures. Giving nature this symbolic dimension gives it a different deeper meaning. Frost's poetry has a lot of nature symbols like trees , flowers, and wind, but what is interesting in Frost's early poetry is that these nature symbols often form a kind of "Otherness" to the human beings like when the poet is worried about flowers, or a woman is afraid of a tree. Following and understanding these repeated archetypes in Frost's poetry enables the readers to understand what they represent and how they serve the meaning of the poems. In Frost's early poem, "A Dream Pang," the woman is afraid of entering the forest, so the following paragraph explores what this archetype means.

I.1 "A Dream Pang"

In his first collection *A Boy's Will* (1913), Frost's theme of nature appears repeatedly in a lot of his poems. The forest could be considered to be either a symbol of the unknown or a symbol of the human desire, especially sexuality as in "A Dream Pang." The forest is a nature archetype, which appears a lot in Frost's poetry. Frost says:

11.M.H. Abrams , *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), p.15.

And to the forest edge you came one day
(This was my dream) and looked and pondered long,
But did not enter, though the wish was strong:
You shook your pensive head as who should say,
'I dare not_ too far in the footsteps stray_
He must seek me would he undo the wrong.¹²

In this poem, the woman seems to be afraid of entering this forest with the man as if it were a risk. She has a strong desire of entering the forest with this man, but she does not enter it “though the wish was strong.” The forest seems to be frightening in the man’s dream. One might think of the forest as a dangerous yet attractive place as the human beings might suggest , and it may represent male sexuality in the relationship of the two. The forest in the light of otherness represents a frightening alien other to the woman in the dream of this man.

This forest represents a kind of “Otherness” which the woman fears, and this may be seen as male sexuality. In fact, this poem reminds readers of Frost’s relationship with his wife Elinor. “He tried to persuade Elinor to leave St. Lawrence University and marry him, but she was determined to complete her degree,”¹³ Harold Bloom stated. Frost’s relationship with Elinor , his wife, was complex when they were students. She declined to marry him because she said he had no work at that time . One might say that this poem represents the relationship between the two because Frost used to write a lot of his poetry to Elinor in his early life. However,

12.“A Dream Pang”, lines 3-8.

13.Harold Bloom, *Robert Frost* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999), p.12.

the forest in the poem may be seen as a symbol of the unknown life or the unknown future that Elinor fears by marrying Frost. The unknown life is the other as opposed to the known life and the familiar. Indeed, the 'forest' acquires more significance in Frost's early poetry when it becomes a symbol of a frightening yet attractive other.

This fear of nature symbols appears again in Frost's early poems. For example, the wind is usually a source of threat in his early phase. This is clear in Frost's poem, "Wind and Window Flower."

I.2 "Wind and Window Flower"

Another early poem from *A Boy's Will* is "Wind and Window Flower." Frost uses the technique of personification of both the wind and the window flower in this poem, and this gives the readers another layer of otherness; the window flower is warm and feminine and belongs inside, while the wind is cold and masculine and belongs outside. The 'flower' is referred to as 'she', while the 'wind' is referred to as 'he':

Perchance he half prevailed
To win her for the flight
From the firelit looking-glass
And warm stove-window light
But the flower leaned aside
And thought of naught to say,
And morning found the breeze

A hundred miles away.¹⁴

The wind is trying to seduce the flower and take her away ‘for the flight’ at night. In this poem, the wind is a nature symbol of the dangerous other. It is an outside power that is threatening, while the flower is safe inside the house. Frost repeats this idea a lot in his poetry, and there is an outer other threatening whilst the human beings are sheltering inside a house brings safety. The human beings in Frost’s poetry have this issue of uneasiness and worry from the danger that comes from the alien other. Similarly, the wind appears again as an archetype in Frost’s poem, “Locked Out,” and it represents a threat to the human beings.

I.3. “ Locked Out”

This poem is published in Frost’s collection, *Mountain Interval* (1916). The same nature symbol, which is the flower, appears in this early poem. Unlike “Wind and Window Flower,” the flowers are left outside the house in “Locked Out.” Frost says:

When we locked up the house at night
We always locked the flowers outside
And cut them off from window light.
The time I dreamed the door was tried
And brushed with buttons upon sleeves,
The flowers were out there with the thieves.
Yet nobody molested them!¹⁵

14.“wind and Window Flower”, lines 20-28.

15.“Locked Out”, lines 1-7.

The repeated manifestation of the flower as a symbol is interesting to consider. As always in Frost's early poetry, the outside world is threatening. Since the flowers are outside, they are vulnerable to the threat of some thief taking them away. In both poems, "Locked Out" and "Wind and Window Flower," the flower stands for the vulnerable element that might be taken away or stolen. In "Locked Out," the flowers may represent children about whom the speaker is worried. The speaker remembers that he leaves the flowers outside where he thinks there is some kind of outer danger 'Thieves'. Thinking about nature outside as "the Other", one can notice again how Frost "locked up the house at night" because he finds the outer night to be a source of danger. The night and darkness are clearly a source of unease in Frost's life.

This poem recalls Frost's own life because it is said that Frost blames himself for the death of one of his children. Leaving the flowers outside is what the speaker blames himself for, "Upon the steps with bitten stem. / I may have been to blame for that"¹⁶ Therefore, flowers may represent children in this poem. In Frost's biography, he is said to blame himself for the death of his child, "For months, Frost blamed himself for Carol's death."¹⁷ Thus, the outside world in Frost's early poetry is not a safe place and may represent the unknown and alien other.

16. "Locked Out", lines 10-11.

17. Mark Richardson, *Robert Frost in Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.200.

I.4. "The Oft-Repeated Dream"

"The Oft-Repeated Dream" is another early poem in *Mountain Interval*. In this poem, the tree symbolizes the dark and frightening "Other". The idea of sheltering inside a house and looking at a threat coming from outside is clear in Frost's early poems. "The Oft-Repeated Dream" is another dream poem where a woman repeatedly has a dream of a tree trying to open the window of the room and enter. Frost says:

She had no saying dark enough
For the dark pine that kept
Forever trying the window-latch
Of the room where they slept
The tireless but ineffectual hands.¹⁸

Frost uses this personification to describe the tree having hands and having intentions of entering the room. This woman is afraid of what "the tree might do" as we read in the last line of the poem, "And only one of the two / Was afraid in an oft-repeated dream / Of what the tree might do."¹⁹ In this poem, the tree seems to be a symbol of some alien and outer danger. Indeed, the fear of the woman who is sleeping next to her husband in bed may represent male sexuality. This means that the woman projects her mood and sense of fear over the tree. The tree is not the real enemy although it looks so.

18. "The Oft-Repeated Dream", lines 1-5./

19. "The Oft-Repeated Dream", lines 10-12.

The dream of the woman in “The Oft-Repeated Dream” is a message from the unconscious that represents some fear of something that she tries to hide. “Dream displacement occurs whenever we use a safe person, event, or object as a “stand in” to represent a more threatening person, event, or object,”²⁰ states Lois Tyson. So the tree personified as having hands may represent the man’s sexuality which the woman feels afraid of. The woman is anxious. “One could, on the contrary, see sexuality as a source of the anxiety,”²¹ states Dickstein. The man’s presence does not help the woman to rid herself of her worries. It, on the contrary, increases it.

I.5. “Now Close the Windows”

“Now Close the Windows” is published in *A Boy’s Will*. The sounds of nature in Frost’s early poetry are irritating. In “Now Close the Windows,” the narrator wants to shut out the sound of the wind. The sound of the wind refers to the coming of winter. Fagan argues, “There is a keen and frightening recognition of what nature can bring and will, as seasons pass and winter grows nearer.”²² The main question in this poem, “Now Close the Windows,” is why the poet is afraid or does not like the sound of the wind. It seems that these sounds of nature outside remind the poet of the passing of

20. Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.18.

21. Morris Dickstein, ed., *Critical Insights: Robert Frost*, New Jersey: Salem Press, 2010, p.187.

22. Deirdre Fagan, *Critical Companion to Robert Frost* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), P.41.

time and ageing. Frost says, "Now close the windows and hush all the fields."²³ The speaker wants to shut the outside world out and stay safe inside a house. It is clear that the person in the poem does not like to hear the sounds of the wind, and he feels unable to control nature.

The poet is not worried or afraid of what happens outside when the windows are closed and the house is quiet. He accepts seeing the trees "silently toss," and watching the world outside "wind-stirred." The sound of the wind in this poem represents winter, ageing and death. Thus, he does not want to hear this sound, and be constantly be reminded of its significance. "So even when nature's sounds are not so pleasing and we do not have control over nature, we can still "hush all the fields" and watch with the sound off,"²⁴ argues Fagan. However, there is a symbolic dimension in the poem. The sound of the wind is the alien other that the poet cannot control but likes to forget by shutting it out. Furthermore, it is not nature or its sounds in general which distress the narrator. The poet says, "Be it my loss," and he is referring to the fact that he will lose the sound of birds which he likes. Later in the poem, he says, "it will be long ere the earliest bird" meaning it is a long time before the spring time.

I.6. "Storm Fear"

23. "Now Close the Windows", line 1.

24. Fagan, 2007, P.243.

In “Storm Fear,” which was published in *A Boy’s Will*, the storm is compared to a beast which is inviting the human beings inside the house to come out and perhaps fight with it. In this poem, the wind is actually attacking the house, it “works against us in the dark,” and it “pelts with snow.” The wind and the snow are aggressive. The sense of threat is explained by the way the “cold creeps” and the snow “drifts are piled” hiding the land marks of the doorway and the road. These human beings are cut off from their barn and the narrator doubts whether the small family “two and a child” are coping without help. William Adams says, “Nature is an enemy, and if man is to hold his own, to survive the struggle against extinction, he must fight Nature.”²⁵ In this poem, it is the snow storm itself which is the real challenge of a small family living in a countryside.

Although the storm is personified and whispers, challenging the people to come out. It is a real threat, and it is not symbolic of something else. Nature in the form of the snowstorm is the frightening other which attacks the windows of the house, causes the fire to die and drifts to pile up, isolating the family who cannot resist it. The narrator indeed doubts their ability to deal with the challenge “And save ourselves unaided.”²⁶

In conclusion, nature phenomena like the wind, trees, and night time represent the other in the early poetry in Frost’s poetry.

25. William W. Adams, “The Concept of Man in the Poetry of Robert Frost,” Diss., Loyola U Chicago, 1954, 40.

26. “Storm Fear”, line 18.

Human beings feel uneasy when they are faced with dealing with storms, the sound of wind or other natural events. Pauline Allen says, "In his themes of fear, isolation and acceptance, Frost is often in conflict with nature."²⁷

In his early poetry, Frost sees nature as a source of fear which causes human beings to isolate themselves indoors. Nature is the threatening and alien other at this period. One needs to read and understand the symbolic dimension of nature symbols in the poems to see what may represent and how Frost's sense of nature develop. His perception of nature changes through his middle and later periods, and the later parts of the chapter discuss how Frost's sense of nature developed throughout his work.

II. Middle Poetry:

In Frost's middle poetry, the feeling of unease or fear of nature expressed in his early work seems to turn into a deeper fear, and the threat is more clearly defined. It seems to view a similar pattern of nature, which represents the alien other. Nature symbols such as trees, leaves, snow, dark evening, woods appear again in Frost's middle poetry and represent otherness as the fear of death and worry about the passing of time. There is a clear development of the relationship between human beings and nature, which they experience as the alien and frightening other. The otherness of

27. Pauline Elaine Allen, "Robert Frost: A Twentieth Century Poet of Man and Nature," Diss., U of Rhode Island, 1978, II.

nature is experienced much more closely than the man-nature relationship in Frost's early poetry, where nature is shut outside and the human beings are safely indoors with the windows shut and protected from wind and snow.

In the "Oft-Repeated Dream," an early poem, the tree is trying to enter the room for some reason, but the glass of the window prevents it from doing so. However, in the middle period poems such as "Bereft," nature is closer and more frightening, and it touches the human being directly. There is a kind of a physical contact with the human beings by nature as Frost says in "Bereft," "Leaves got up in a coil and hissed, / Blindly struck at my knee and missed."²⁸ The leaves act aggressively and this personification requires the readers to understand the symbolic meaning they hold. Indeed, understanding this image literally gives no clear meaning; this is why it is important to see what this nature symbol, the leaves, represents in this poem. Likewise, the wood symbol appears again in Frost's middle poetry and it is what the human being is afraid of. The woods are the unknown but attractive "Other" that the human being does not want to enter as in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." This asserts that nature in Frost's middle poetry is not the sublime where the Romantic poets, for example, want to be.

II.1. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

28. "Bereft", lines 9-10.

In "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," the wood in this poem is at the center of the meaning. In the poem, the traveler is alone in nature, and this is a repeated image in Frost's middle period. The human being-nature relationship in this poem is symbolic and needs interpretation. The woods are what the human being in the poem looks at and thinks about. "The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,"²⁹ the poet says. The woods are attractive, but this human being does not enter them. This question why this human being refuses to enter the woods although they are attractive can be answered by knowing what these woods represent.

Frost's readers and critics argue that the speaker in this poem feels tired of the responsibilities of life and thinks about having a rest throughout entering these dark and snowy woods at night.

Fagan argues:

The sort of sleep to which the poem alludes is the deepest of all sleeps. The speaker might be taken for a weary traveler, relishing the solitude of the woods on this dark evening when the snow, which brings a winter's death, has an opiate affect. The speaker has his moment of reflection and then snaps back to the everyday.³⁰

So it is a possible reading to say that the woods might represent death because it is a way out of the problems and difficulties of life. However, the woods are more likely to represent loss because by entering the woods, there is a

29.Frost, "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening", line13.

30.Fagan, 2007, p. 318.

sense of being outside the passing of time, place, emotions and responsibilities. This reflects the title because everything stops for this moment. Indeed, although the human being is excited by the woods, the decision is not to follow his desire of entering them. Nature in Frost's middle poetry is the unknown and alien other that puts the human beings in a kind of loss and fear. The natural elements in the poem such as the woods, snow and darkness have no limitations and deepen the sense of loss in front of the traveler. Entering the woods creates a sense of loss and lack of control over the human life. The speaker realizes that being in the woods leads to loss.

II.2 "Bereft"

"Bereft" is published in *West-Running Brook* (1928). Frost's readers usually argue that nature in Frost's poetry is threatening. "In "Bereft" the speaker is left without human comfort, in a dilapidated house before vast and threatening natural forces,"³¹ argues Faggen. However, it is important to understand why it is threatening and what it may represent.

In "Bereft," the leaves are personified and signify a messenger, hissing the secret of why the narrator is bereft and alone. Nature is the other when the poet is struck by the leaves

31. Robert Faggen, *Robert Frost and the Challenge of Darwin* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997) p.246.

which come to remind him of what he considers a secret. The leaves in this poem have a physical form of communicating and affecting the life of human beings.

Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone³²

The leaves are threatening and attack the human being, but the leaves may represent the narrator's memories of loneliness in life. They stand for what the narrator is afraid of and wants to forget; he is afraid that his secret of being bereft is discovered by others. This is the fact that he wants to forget about.

II.3. "A Leaf Treader"

"A Leaf Treader" is published in *A Further Range* (1936). In "A Leaf Treader," the leaves are personified and affect the narrator in a direct and physical way.

All summer long they were overhead, more lifted
up than I.
To come to their final place in earth they had to
pass me by.
All summer long I thought I heard them
threatening under their breath.
And when they came it seemed with a will to carry
me with them to death.³³

32. "Bereft", lines 9-13.

33. "A Leaf Treader", lines 5-8.

Nature, in the shape of leaves, seems to be the threatening other, but there is a symbolic dimension. The leaves should represent something else that makes the poet think about death. Frost's readers argue that the leaves in this poem are threatening and that the speaker wants to avoid them because they have an intention of taking this human being with them toward death. Kearns argues that "A Leaf-Treader" is about being mired down, being dragged toward death ..."³⁴ Death is what the poet is thinking about.

To avoid the threat of leaves, the human being in the poem has to tread on them. The element of time is clearly significant when the leaves were overhead in summer, but they are falling to earth in the time of the speaking which is autumn. The leaves communicate physically, "tapped my eyelids and touched my lips" and try to make the poet sleepy, uneasy, and ready to death, but he rejects the message of the leaves. It is not time for him to die because he is not tired enough to want to leave life. This is why the poet is treading on the leaves although at the start of the poem he is "autumn-tired." By the end of the poem, he is urging himself on "Now up, my knee" to stride through the snowdrifts of winter. Again, it is not nature itself which is threatening but what it represents. The leaves may represent the passing of time, ageing or worries of life. Autumn in the poem seems to relate to the autumn of the treader's life.

34.Katherine Kearns, *Robert Frost and a Poetics of Appetite* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.76.

II.4. "Fire and Ice"

"Fire and Ice" is published in *New Hampshire*, and it raises an interesting question about the end of the world. The title of this poem seems to be about nature, but Frost uses these two nature elements as metaphors to the human desire and hatred. "Of course his poetry is metaphoric, and this can be easily seen in "Fire and Ice," where fire is a metaphor for destructive passion and ice a metaphor for hate."³⁵ The poem has a metaphoric dimension when he relates the human desire to fire and the human hatred to ice. Thus, Frost sees relates the destructive side of the human being to nature, which, he thinks, is destructive too. The poem has a main theme which may be a call for a better world that is free of hatred and greed, but Frost's fear of these two nature elements, fire and ice, pops up on the surface to introduce a secondary theme.

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.³⁶

This is a universal question that all cultures try to find a reply to. The two main symbols in the poem are 'fire' and 'ice'. Frost says,"

35.Little, 2010, p.62.

36."Fire and Ice", lines 1-9.

some say the world will end in fire” and then “Some say in ice.” These two images reflect the collective unconscious which says that the world will end either by fire or by ice. It could be said that the fear of nature is a minor theme in Frost’s poetry. Following on from what is said before, in Frost’s poetry , human beings may experience nature as aggressive and destructive, and it is "the Other" which will end their existence on Earth. In brief, in an indirect way, nature is the destructive “Other" which its power can destroy mankind and the world.

II.5.“Lodged”

“Lodged” is a middle period poem, which was published in *West-Running Brook*. Frost’s fear and unease concerning nature do appear in this period of his poetry. In “The Wind and the Flower,” which is an early poem, the relationship between the wind and the flower is symbolic. Similarly, the relationship between the flowers and the other aggressive nature elements, the rain and the wind, is symbolic too. In this poem, the poet says that he knows how the flowers felt after they were attacked by the rain and the wind.

The rain to the wind said,
"You push and I'll pelt."
They so smote the garden bed
That the flowers actually knelt,
And lay lodged—though not dead.
I know how the flowers felt.³⁷

37.“Lodged,” lines 1-6.

The flowers are lodged not dead after surviving this threat which comes from the rain and the wind. This links the human beings and the flowers which are both vulnerable to danger. Like the flowers, the human beings are vulnerable to the outside threat from nature. The human being in the poem says that he knows "how the flowers felt." The poet links the flowers to the human beings. The personification in the poem reflects the mood of the poet. Frost usually sees the relationship between nature elements as if it were a relationship among human beings. The poet usually projects on nature human feelings of fear and danger too. The flowers are attacked by the rain and the wind, and this is what the poet experienced too. The human beings, like the flowers, are usually attacked by the rain and the wind.

In his middle period, Frost has a sense of fear and unease within nature. The fear of nature increases, and nature appears to be more threatening and closer to the human beings in his poems. This puts the human beings in a conflict with nature as the alien other. Another clear idea is that the human beings' fear of nature alienates them within it and away from society as one sees in "Bereft" and in "A Leaf Treader." The human beings are alone in nature and usually are away from other human beings. Frost presents the alienation from nature to be a reason of alienation from society or at least a result of it.

III. Late Poetry:

This section of the paper discusses how nature as “the Other” appears in Frost’s late poetry. The question is whether nature represents the same thing as in his early and middle poetry or not. Clearly, the relationship between nature and the human beings is different from that in Frost’s early and middle poetry. The human beings in Frost’s late poetry seem to be more relaxed and more united with it. Frost announces this change of feeling towards nature, “we went from house to wood \ For change of solitude.”³⁸ This means that nature is a place of warmth, peace and light. The human beings understand nature better and enjoy being in it instead of running away from it and isolating themselves inside a house. In Frost’s early and middle periods and in poems such as “ Now Close the Windows” and “Storm Fear,” the wind, for example, is the alien and threatening other that represents aging, destruction and fear. Unlike in his early and middle periods, the wind in his late poetry has a different dimension. In “The Wind and the Rain,” the wind is not an enemy to run away from, “I leaned on with a singing trust / And let it drive me deathward too.”³⁹ The wind, on the contrary, is a friendly other which the poet trusts and lets the wind lead him toward death. This will be explained in detail throughout this section.

III.1. “The Wind and the Rain”

38. “Happiness Makes Up in Height for What it Lacks in Length”, lines 24-25.

39. “The Wind and the Rain”, lines 3-6.

In "The Wind and the Rain," which was published in *A Witness Tree* (1942), Frost uses nature as an entrance to another theme. The human being is the main interest in this poem although the title is about nature. The speaker in the poem thinks about life and death. The poem consists of two sections. In the first section, the poet focuses on the life of the human being. The poet remembers being a child and being in nature, and he adds that the human life has two parts; the good and the evil. However, the wind in this poem represents the other which takes the child towards death.

I sang of death—but had I known
The many deaths one must have died
Before he came to meet his own!
Oh, should a child be left unwarned
That any song in which he mourned
Would be as if he prophesied?
It were unworthy of the tongue
To let the half of life alone
And play the good without the ill.
And yet 'twould seem that what is sung
In happy sadness by the young,
Fate has no choice but to fulfill.⁴⁰

The human being in this poem thinks of his own life; the speaker ages but realizes that every human being will suffer and die one day. The human being does not have any control over ageing, suffering and death. As a child, the narrator does not run away from the wind, but he surrenders to "the wind" to take him deathward.

40. "The Wind and the Rain", lines 9-20.

This means that the wind in this poem may represent time which is the uncontrolled other. The wind as a nature symbol appears in this poem. As discussed earlier in Frost's early poetry, the wind in "Now Close the Windows" represents aging and time, so the human being wants to shut out the sound of the wind because he wants to forget this fact and because he cannot control time and aging. In contrast, this human being in, "The Wind and the Rain," lets the wind drive him deathward "with a singing trust." Wind represents the passing of time and aging in Frost's late poetry, but the human being does accept it instead of trying to reject this fact of the human life.

In the second section of the poem, the poet starts with the cycle of the life of flowers. Like in the life of the human being, the life of flowers has a lot of suffering because of the drought . The poet wishes to be able to take care of the flowers and to bring them water from the oceans. This is a clear change in the relationship between the human beings and nature in Frost's late period. Nature is no longer the threatening other from which the human beings run away. Frost adds:

I have been one no dwelling could contain
When there was rain
But I must forth at dusk, my time of day
To see to unburdening of skies
Rain was the tears adopted by my eyes

That have none left to say.⁴¹

When the speaker has no place to dwell, he shelters in nature. He uses the image of rain as a metaphor for his tears. Rain may represent the emotions of the poet. Frost acknowledges this physical unity with nature and asserts that human nature is part of nature in his late period.

III.2. "Closed For Good"

"Closed For Good" is published in *In The Clearing* (1962). In "Closed For Good," Frost gives a different view of nature from that in his early and middle poetry. It is not the frightening other that the human beings fear and run away from, but it is a safe place to be in. In this poem, the human being is outside in nature, and he is happy to be alone in it. He says:

Much as I own I owe
The passers of the past
Because their to and fro
Has cut this road to last,
I owe them more today
Because they've gone away⁴²

Frost is happy because the people who used to come and hurt mother nature by cutting a road do not come any longer, and that he is alone in nature. He adds:

They leave the road to me
To walk in saying naught

41. "The Wind and the Rain", lines 43-48.

42. "Closed For Good", lines 1-6.

Perhaps but to a tree
Inaudibly in thought,
"From you the road receives
A priming coat of leaves."⁴³

Frost sees nature as a safe place to walk alone and communicate with the trees as if he were part of nature. Directly talking to a tree reveals a change in the poet's attitude towards it. In the early poetry, the woman in "The Oft-Repeated Dream" sees that a tree is trying to enter the room and has a bad intention. However, the trees are not a source of fear in Frost's late poetry. Nature is the other, and in addressing the tree, Frost sees nature as the friendly other.

Frost describes the beauty of the Birch tree in one of his late poems. The poem is all about this white tree contrasts with the darkness around it. The tree in "A young Birch," which is published in *Steeple Bush* (1947), is not dark like the tree in "The Oft-Repeated Dream," and it is not darkening nature as in "Spring Pools." In contrast, it cuts "in half the dark" in the wood with its white colour. Besides, the poet is concerned about its fate. The poet says, "And zeal would not be thanked that cut it down."⁴⁴ In the early and middle poetry of Frost, the tree is a source of unease, whereas it is a source of lightness in his late poetry, and it brings relief and peace.

43. "Closed For Good", lines 13-18.

44. "A Young Birch", line 19.

The poet feels that he is part of nature, "So mousy or so foxy / Shall print there as my proxy."⁴⁵ The poet thinks that even if he cannot come to visit nature in winter time, other animals such as mouses and foxes will come to this place to be his own proxy.

III.3. "Happiness Makes Up in Height for What it Lacks in Length"

"Happiness Makes Up in Height for What it Lacks in Length" is another late poem which was collected in *A Witness Tree* (1942). Frost shows nature as a shelter and as a place of warmth and happiness. The title of the poem refers to the importance of happiness itself and not the length of happiness. Unlike nature in Frost's early and middle periods, nature is a source of happiness and warmth in his late period, "I get the lasting sense / Of so much warmth and light."⁴⁶ This image of nature tells the readers about the change in Frost's sense of nature as the friendly other. In this poem, Frost addresses nature directly once again rather than talking about it, "O stormy, stormy world, \ The days you were not swirl"⁴⁷ The poet acknowledges that nature is not always pleasant. The world is stormy, misty and cloudy, but there is the sun which is a source of happiness. He realises that "one day's perfect weather" is more memorable than many days of dull weather.

45. "Closed For Good", lines 29-30.

46. "Happiness Makes Up in Height for What it Lacks in Length", lines 10-11.

47. "Happiness Makes Up in Height for What it Lacks in Length", lines 1-2.

This is also true in Frost's early and middle periods, but at those periods nature is frightening. In this poem, even the days when the world is swirling in mist, nature does not threaten the narrator in the same way. He identifies with nature and with the world "wrapped as in a shroud" and unable to see the sun just as the human beings cannot. The poet is sympathising with nature. The speaker in the poem says that he finds both warmth and light in nature although the sunny and warm days are rare. Thus, nature is a shelter where the poet likes to stay. He adds, "we went from house to wood \ For change of solitude."⁴⁸ Frost finds himself united with nature where he is not alone. The poem ends with a human story of either love or friendship. "Suddenly the warmth and light and, in this case, happiness comes not just from the perfect weather of that one day but from the day their shadows crossed each other's paths."⁴⁹ This means that in, this poem, nature is clearly recognized to be a suitable place for the human love or friendship. The human beings in Frost's late period looks at nature as the friendly other, it is no longer the source of worry and fear.

III.4. "Our Hold on the Planet"

Frost asserts the idea that human nature is part of nature in "Our Hold on the Planet." This poem was collected in *A Witness Tree*. In his late period, Frost has a different feeling towards nature. The human beings like to be in nature and see nature a safe place to be

. "Happiness Makes Up in Height for What it Lacks in Length", lines 24-25.48
49. Fagan, 2007, p.151.

in. In "Our Hold on the Planet," nature is in "favor of man." The poet still sees both sides of nature; the good one and the bad one. The poem opens with these lines :

We asked for rain. It didn't flash and roar.
It didn't lose its temper at our demand
And blow a gale. It didn't misunderstand
And give us more than our spokesman bargained for;⁵⁰

Nature is generous and friendly to the human beings, and it provides rain which represents the source of life.

Take nature altogether since time began,
Including human nature, in peace and war,
And it must be a little more in favor of man,
Say a fraction of one per cent at the very least,
Or our number living wouldn't be steadily more,
Our hold on the planet wouldn't have so increased.⁵¹

The poet considers human beings to be a part of nature and asserts that nature must be more friendly to human beings than hostile to them. Otherwise, the population would not be increasing. This gives a sense of unity with nature. It is generous and nurturing in Frost's late period, whereas it is the destructive other in his early and middle period poetry.

III.5. "Astrometaphysical"

"Astrometaphysical" is collected in Frost's late collection *Steeple Bush* . In "this poem ," Frost addresses God and asserts his

50. "Our Hold on the Planet", lines 1-4.

. "Our Hold on the Planet", lines 13-18.51

love for nature in all its aspects. Nature is controlled by God, and both the human being and nature are created by God. The poet loves this nature because even its stormy weather is sent by God:

Lord, I have loved your sky,
Be it said against or for me,
Have loved it clear and high,
Or low and stormy;⁵²

The poet tells God that he loves the good and the bad side of nature. The sky might be an image of the spiritual heaven, and it might refer to the existence of God in Frost's collective unconscious as well as in most cultures in the world. The poet perhaps wants to show his fear of God in this poem. Frost makes it clearer:

It may not give me hope
That when I am translated
My scalp will in the cope
Be constellated.
But if that seems to tend
To my undue renown,
At least it ought to send
Me up, not down.⁵³

Frost uses a nice image, which shows human union with nature because both are created by God. He also believes in the power of stars, an archetype in past and modern cultures, which stand for the human destiny or soul as we see in astrology. Frost thinks that he will be a star in the sky as a reward from God instead of being buried under the ground. Even if this idea is not part of Frost's

52. "Astrometaphysical", lines 10-14.

53. "Astrometaphysical", lines 13-20.

theology, he has it in his collective unconscious. The article, "Analysis on Nature in Robert Frost's Poetry," says, "According to him, nature is in harmony with mankind, nature and man are in the spiritual union."⁵⁴ This asserts that there is a unity or a shared destiny between man and nature. In his late poetry, Frost accepts both the bad and good sides in nature, and it seems to be a safe place to shelter in. The poet seems to have a better understanding of nature in this late phase of his poetry. Nature is no longer the threatening other, but it is friendly in this late period.

A clear development in Frost's view of nature can be seen throughout his fifty years as a poet. In his early and middle poetry, nature represents the threatening Other. There is a sense of fear of nature and a wish to run away from it. The human beings in Frost's poems prefer to stay safe inside a house because they do not understand nature and its phenomena. The strange powers, frightening elements and sounds of nature represent a threat. Natural elements such as leaves, wind, and winter represent ageing, the passing of time and even death. In Frost's poems, the human beings close windows and stay safe indoors to avoid dealing with nature.

In Frost's late poetry, his view of nature shows a distinct change. In his later work, he finds himself to be a part of nature. His feeling of unity or having a bond with nature enables him to

54. Yuanli Zhang, Wei Ding and Lixia Jia, "Analysis on Nature in Robert Frost's Poetry," *English Language, Literature & Culture* 2 (2017): 25-30.

find a shelter in it. As discussed earlier, Frost in his late poetry has a spiritual connection with stars like in “Astrometaphysical,” wanting to be a star after death. He also walks alone in nature talking to the trees as in “Closed for Good,” and surrenders his body to the wind as in “ The Wind and the Rain.” This paper, therefore, concludes that, in Frost’s late poetry, nature is not considered to be the frightening other. Frost as a human being, seems to be physically and spiritually part of it. The development of Frost’s view of nature reflects his development as a writer and as a person. As the poet matures, the way in which he sees the things around him evolves.

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