CHAPTER – III

THEMES OF HIS POETRY

The greatest of all modern poets, T.S. Eliot was profoundly influenced by the technique and themes of the Imagists. Like the Imagists, he relentlessly surveyed the desolate and sterile world with a searching eye. To him, the modern world appeared to be an utter chaos, to be –

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief

And the dry stone no sound of water.

(The Waste Land, Lines 22-24.)

Robert Frost, however, did not come in its fold, and remained a traditionalist. He did not opt for Verse libre and stuck fast to metrical poetry. He did not join the movement, and went on singing about pastoral subjects and folklore as “a lone striker’. Having settled down at a farmhouse in New Hampshire he liked to be the poet of common man – the cause of his immense popularity. He was not the poet of the
select few. On the appearance of *North of Boston*, William Dan Howells treated it as “unaffectedly expressive of rustic New England”, and Pound thanked the poet for breaking away from “stilted pseudo-literary language” and daring to write in the “natural speech of the New England”. In *New Hampshire* (1923) and *West–Running Brook* (1928), Frost further created the illusion of a New England farmer poet writing the poetry of opinion. He was a conservative rather than a revolutionary in his poetic outlook.

Since Robert Frost strove hard towards pastoral poetry, in which “Woods are lovely, dark and deep”, in which farms and brooks shine with extraordinary glamour, and in which natural scenes and sights abound so much, he has been regarded as a poet who stands between the old order and the new. James M. Cox observes in this connection:

*The discrepancy in age between Frost the man and Frost the poet, his emergence during the interlude, between the collapse of the old order and the beginning of the new, and his own poetic strategy of returning to*
the wilderness of abandoned experience – all serve to indicate Frost's ambiguous position in relation to what we call modern literature.

Though his career fully spans the modern period and it is impossible to speak of him as anything other than a modern poet, it is difficult to place him in the main current of modern poetry. This difficulty may seem to be a problem of recent origin; actually it existed from the moment Frost achieved fame.¹

But what Cox states above is only inconclusive, and the fact remains that Robert Frost is a great modern poet, giving reflection to the real life and language of the common man in the corpus of his poetry.

Frost is primarily a lyrical poet because he held impulse above intellect, unreason above reason. To put it in the words of Laurance Thompson:

He (Frost) is primarily a subjective lyric poet, at his best in his apparently contradictory moods of response to experience and in his figurative ways of defining difference.²
And L. Untermeyer investigates the variety in Frost's lyrical art:

*Frost's lyrics range from the facetious to the philosophic; often the two extremes are combined. Mostly, however, they begin with a simple idea and hoax the reader, almost without his awareness, to extend the implication of the idea far beyond its plain presentation.*

Norman Douglas had found in Frost's first book "an image of things really heard and seen". He did little to identify himself with either the Boston or the Chicago Branch of the movement. Always a lone striker, Frost still had need of being versed in country things. He found for himself a farmhouse near Franconia in New Hampshire, where "he continued to mediate on the mysteries of birches and wild grapes, the sound of trees, and the dust of snow."

Frost is not a religious poet, nor even a Nature mystic in spite of all that Nature meant to him. Frost is a metaphysical poet in the tradition of Emerson and Emily Dickinson. Most of the poems fix on the mysterious moment
when the two planes cross. As in all great metaphysical poetry, the tension increases between the simple fact and the mystery which surrounds it, until the total meaning flashes in the final words, Frost confessed that poetry to him was essentially dramatic. Whatever his theme may be, he works to dramatize it for the reader, be it the tragedy of the hired man or the relation of the boy too far from town to learn baseball. The most dramatic moment in a Frost poem is the kind of anagnorisis or denouncement when the mundane fact achieves its full metaphysical significance.

Frost's verse is in the great tradition of pastoral poetry from Theocritus to Wordsworth, though his pastoralism is never, like Virgil's or Milton's, decorative or political. Frost is a learned poet, but, as in Housman's poetry, his learning is muted to "an echoic beauty". He was not partisan of his plowmen, mowers, hired men, gatherers of huckleberries and tree gum, for all his sympathy with them and his gift of psychological penetration into their lives. He looked on them with a detachment which was ironic, humorous, or ruthless. He made of their toil and defeat what they would never have
imagined for themselves. Frost was, above all, a Nature poet. But, again, he was not a Nature - mystic, as Wordsworth was. In his early verse one feels the joy in sensuous pleasure which Nature has given most modern poets.

Though Frost was in favour of impulse rather than reason in his poems, he selected the revelation of Truth in his art. Frost's poetry is overall an attempt at seeking the truth and at representing it in precise detail and poetic stature. But, Truth, for Frost, is not a philosophical concept; it is rather a rational observation of facts. There is little of philosophy or abstractions in him, yet so much of wit and 'racy turns'?

Truth is to be sought, in an impersonal, detached fashion. So Frost employs the dramatic technique in his poetry. In the dramatic method the experience ceases to be personal, for then everything is conveyed through the dramatic character's reactions to a situation. In this technique, Frost is very close to Robert Browning. Frost never wanted to intervene in the experience of the speaker
concerned; he allowed him full freedom of utterance. For this reason, he withdrew himself into the back-ground when his character spoke, he used to put on a mark, a symbolic coat to hide his personality. So much so that even in his lyrics, which are the most personal utterances; Frost spoke through a character. He tries his best to realize his experience as of the character's and not the poet's. In this way, the total effect of the poem is not moral or philosophical; it is dramatic.

For Frost, externals attract most and form his subject matter. Sometimes it is 'snow', sometimes it is 'storm', sometimes it is 'woods' and 'brooks, valleys, mountains, rivers, flowers, tufts of grass, withered leaves, wintry night, stars, the moon, the old age; all find utterance in this poetry in one or the other form. At his best, Frost is a pastoral poet, who is driven irresistibly by the beauties of Nature, though his love of Nature is different in essence from the Romantics in many respects.

Frost emphasizes the significance of an event of the mind. He takes up a single mood or situation, and throws it
about in a dramatic form. He exploits to the fullest an event, a mood, or an idea in his poetry. He examines the inner goings on in the mind of the protagonist. He studies a character’s response to a situation. Frost actually makes poetry out of the dramatic, startling contest with the negative blackness that begins everywhere outside the hard won human order. In brief, it is not the situation, the theme that is of primary importance, but its dramatic possibilities. He lends the moment a glow of imagination. He often picks up ordinary, common situations. As poetic themes, they are already a beaten track but he handles them in a peculiar fashion. After creating a scene, he creates “persons” who start taking like sensible men and women. The poet moves his theme in the direction of action drama. Frost is not so much original in the choice of themes as in the handling of them.

Frost was indeed advocating something different not only from Victorian poets but also from modernist poets, particularly Eliot and Pound, who often saw only a divorce possible between rhythm and metre. What Frost formulated
here was an intricate entangling of rhythm and metre. Frost discusses the "sound of sense" and "tones of voice" in the context of a strong interest in human intimacy, in people, and in the colloquial as the source of knowledge. Frost as most interested in the complexities of ordinary language, and those complexities of ordinary language, and those complexities, of course, must include everyday speech. He conceived colloquial and dialogue as an essential part of his poetry.

Frost's theory of "the sound of sense" becomes relational in his practice of the poems. Frost attempted to create bodies of sound in which the fundamental components—sentences—varied in tone one from the other but always dramatically. The limits of iambic metre, and often of the pentameter line, enabled him to create remarkable variations. It is not hard to notice the slight metrical variations in the following lines from "Birches". Slight though they are, the affect on the rhythm and, therefore, the tone of the lines is likely to be considerable:
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish, Kicking his way down through the air to the ground. So was I once myself a swinger of birches. And so I dream of going back to be. It’s when I’m weary of considerations, And life is too much like a pathless wood where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs Broken across it, and one eye is weeping From a twig’s having lashed across it open.

In the above lines, Frost carefully encamps one sentence over four lines, intensifying the sense of “pathless” wandering. Trochaic inversions also slow down the pace of the iambic pentameter, underscoring the resistance of the woods. But all the lines work within the range of blanked verse, and it is that form and underlying metric that gives the variations so much dramatic power.

The kind of flexibility also occurs in the beginning of “Mending Wall”, also in blank verse. Some have argued that Frost mimes the disordered quality of the wall in the opening lines with not only an initial trochaic substitution for an iamb but with additional spondees and psychics.
substitutions. The initial trochaic substitution aside ("something", of course, is trochaic, and so is "under" in the second line), the lines remain regularly blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter. The reader hears the difference in relative stress pulling against that in the rhythm. The breaks in the fact of the second and third lines, the words being complete in the following feet, suggest falling rhythm, but the essential iambic metre is there all the way through. One cannot comfortably read the lines as strictly iambic:

_Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that sends the frozen – ground – swell under it, And spills the upper boulders in the sum; And makes gaps even two can pass abreast. The work of hunters in another thing:_

_I have come after them and made repair where they have left not one stone on a stone, But they would have the rabbit out of hiding, to please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean .....
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean ... Frost skillfully keeps the tonal drama in tension with the metre in his narrative dramatic poems. Frost contributed to the confusion about the interpretation of how his prosody works by some of his own comments. Frost imagined the tonal shape or posture of a sentence. Frost imagined the tonal shape or posture of a sentence without the words.

Frost's poetry lays with the conventions and questions of pastoral in profound and interesting ways. "Into My Own" and "Ghost House", the first two poems of A Boy's Will, raise the pastoral themes of retreat and locus amoenus own", the speaker expresses only his wish to "steal away/Fearless of ever finding open land,/or highway where the slow wheel pours the sand." The wilderness of the forest fascinates him but he also appears as much interested in threatening or at least wondering whether those who love him would seek him and he concludes by suggesting if not a return, an experience that would leave him unchanged:

I do not see why I should ever turn back, or those should not set forth upon my track to overtake me, who
should miss me here and long to know if still I held them dear.

They would not find me changed from him they knew – only move sure of all I thought was true.

"Ghost House", the poem that follows "Into My Own", meditates upon a landscape of extinction. It is keynote poem in the book and for Frost's work generally because what it describes so haunts his work. The speaker has situated himself in the cellar of a vanished house: it and the farm of which it was once a part are now part of a wilderness that has grown back. He describes the fences in the first line of the second stanza as "ruined" but characterizes the now overgrown footpath as "healed":

O'er ruined fences the grapevines shield the woods come back to the moving field; the orchard tree has grown one copse of new wood and old where the woodpecker chops; the footpath down to the well is healed.

There is an emotional ambivalence about where he is, though it is hard to tell whether from his imagined sense of
loss of the house and the lives or from his own estrangement from others:

I dwell with a strangely aching heart

In that vanished abode there for apart

On that disused and forgotten road

That has no dust – bath now for the toad.

The life in the country bears a memento moiré, a remembrance of death, yet even the names have become obscured by growth:

It is under the small, dim, summer star.

I know not who these mute folk are

Who share the unlit place with me -

These stones under the low-limbed tree

Doubtless bear names that the mosses mar.

He must, instead, imagine love starting fertile life somehow surviving and starting a new despite the recognition from the past that the future leads to oblivion.
One wonders what in the speaker's life would be such, "in view of how many things," would make these ghostly companions "as sweet... as might be had":

They are tireless folk, but slow and sad, though two, close-keeping, are lass and lad, with none among them that ever sings, and yet, in view of how many things, as sweet companions as might be had.

So many Frost poems meditate upon the fragility of the home, looking synchronically and diachronically into the lives of forgotten and abandoned rural New England. Frost's focus was particularly poignant as New England farm populations were dwindling rapidly at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, abandoning farm life, and moving increasingly into urban areas. "Ghost House" strikes a chord that Frost will develop in many poems including "The Generations of Men", "Home Burial", "In the Home Stretch", "The Black Cottage", or "The Wood Pile", "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things", "The Census Taker", "A Fountain, A Bottle, a Donkey's Ears and Some Books", and "Directive". All of these poems evoke
the loss or abandonment of home, the threat and fragility of human life with extinction, and the difficulty of country life.

*A Boy’s Will* provides differing *loci amoebae*, each critically charged in a different way. “Rose Pagonis”, takes us far off the civilized path to “A Saturated meadow/Sun-shaped and jewel-small,/A circle scarcely wider/Than the trees around were tall...” In this little paradise of a bog has sprung “a thousand “of the delicate” bearded lady” orchids, also known as rose Pagonis. The speaker with his lover or perhaps with a fellow worker, treats the spot as holy, to be left untouched” in the general mowing”, by which perhaps more is suggested than the literal harvest:

*We raised a simple prayer*

*Before we left the spot,*

*That in the general mowing*

*That place might be forgot,*

*Or if not all so favoured,*

*Obtain such grace of hours,*
That none should mow the grass there,

While so confused with flowers.

One might ask of the final line whether the place or the mowers may be the ones "confused" with flowers. Be that as may be, the orchid came to occupy a special place in Frost's imagination. Hardly an unusual preoccupation in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the fascination with orchids became associated with obsessions with rare beauty. Orchid hunters could go to great length to find and preserve rare and beautiful breeds. Frost made a point that he was interested in wild orchids and not in the cultivation of orchids for sale. But the orchids in the nineteenth century also came to represent the scientific aspect of botany; Darwin's famous study of orchids initiated all those who studied wild flowers in the knowledge that beauty was part of the engine for the dissemination of seeds.

The steamy bog temple of "Rose Pagonis" has a sultry quality. Season's cycle in A Boy's Will and the possibility of a locus amounts appears to fade. It may not be the change in season, alone, that produces some skepticism about the
pastoral. The double perspective always appears present in Frost as in “The Vintage Point”, The sonnet surprises even within the octave, we learn that when “tired of trees”, and seeking mankind, he does so at a distance. What he sees of mankind brings homes into focus with graves;

*If tired of trees I seek again mankind,*

*Well I knew where to hit me- in the dawn,*

*To a slope where the cattle keep the lawn,*

*There amid the lolling juniper reclined,*

*Myself unseen, I see in white defined*

*Far off the homes of men, and farther still,*

*The graves of men on an opposing hill,*

*Living or dead, whichever are to mind.*

Living or dead, whichever are to mind. His restlessness with even this distance turns with the sestet. What kind of alternative does nature provide? Noon day heat has for centuries been a troupe of the moment of contemplation for the pastoral poet. Here it has the quality of something more
actual and empirical; a sun-burned hillside. The poem ends with three sensuous acts, the last of which appears to call attention to an almost lunar insect analogy to the dwellings of men

And if by noon I have too much of these,

I have but to turn my arm, and lo,

The sun-burned hillside sets my face aglow,

My breathing shakes the blue like a breeze,

I smell the earth; I smell the bruised plant,

I look into the crater of the ant.

Pan had been the classical god of the pastoral world, a figure empowered through his erotic power and his skill at piping to transform the world around him. In the mysterious lyric “Pan with Us”, Frost depicts the god emerging from the woods satisfied at the remoteness of the pasture he surveys but something causes him to “toss his pipes”, perhaps satisfied with the sounds of birds, perhaps dissatisfied with the remoteness of anyone also to teach:
He tossed his pipes, too hard to teach

A new-world song, far out of reach,

For a sylvan sign that the blue jay’s screech

And the whimper of hawks beside the sun

were music enough for him for one.

The elusive and pressing question is what is meant by “a new world song”? By “new-world” does Frost mean America and its pre-occupations with industry as opposed to art and play? The landscape with which the poem concludes no longer seems fertile but “sun-burned”, and deeply subjected to the forces of the elements:

They were pipes of pagan mirth,

And the world had found new terms of worth.

He laid him down on the sun – burned earth

And raveled a flower and looked away

Play- Play? – What should he play?
The repetition of “play” in the final line underscores an important aspect of pastoral thought, the realm of play in opposition to labour and struggle, “work and play”, “labor and optimum”. But Frost’s poetry dramatizes as much the world of labour as it does of play and often seems to struggle to bridge those two seemingly incommensurate realms. This blending of work and play has an ancient tradition, too, that extends as far back as Hesiod’s *Theology* and, most particularly, to Virgil’s four extended poems about farming, the *Georgics*. The Georgics may be about farming on one level but suggest much more about politics, history, and man’s place in nature.

Frost’s poetry draws the reader into a rustic, mysterious, and, to a large extent, lost New England landscape. Frost’s New England particularly New Hampshire and Vermont may be both part real and part invented, Place names – Bow, Coos, Lancaster, Woodsville, and Mount Hour- beguile us with their literary and mythic romances.

One would not to say that the world of *North of Boston* and *Mountain Interval* are imagined landscapes; Frost’s
vanishing, turn of the twentieth-century New England could be recognized by many. Frost once said that he “first heard the speaking voice in poetry in Virgil’s *Eclogues*, a group of ten dialogues or dramatic monologues of shepherds dwelling in Arcadia, a land of innocence and beauty.

Frost thought of the intimacy of gossip about the unconsidered person as a new way or rather his way of writing narrative poetry about heroes, and many of the narrative poems from *North of Boston* blend elements of pastoral and georgic traditions to depict these characters. Writing in the pastoral mode, authors from Theocritus and Virgil to Dante and Milton as well as Wordsworth and Thoreau have explored questions of human equality, man’s place in nature, and the nature of faith. A tension between city and country, innocence of one kind and experience or learning and sophistication of another, has always been a part of the pastoral and georgic mode. The pastoral has had an important place in American ideology but by no means a singular meaning. The puritan pursuit of renewal through rebellion against ecclesiastical corruption invokes what may
be called a pastoral longing for perfection through simplicity. Frost's complex version of the pastoral does not involve a complete retreat into wilderness (one version), nor a faith in pure agrarianism, nor social reform.

The poems may raise questions though of how one should take the rustic world of New England and to consider the reality of that world. Frost living in the midst of these changes witnessed the dissonance between the way New England was imagined by outsiders and the way it was in its deepest recesses, filled with all manner of tensions - economic, racial, and domestic. It is important to keep this context in mind when reading. "A Servant to Servants", "The Mountain", "The Self-Seeker", "A Hundred Collars", "Blueberries", "The Ax - Helve", or "The Generations of Men", where we see real rural isolation, pain, suffering, racial tension, and madness.

Frost published poems appear to be framed by poems embodying the pastoral mythology of retreat. In, *In the Clearing* (1962), the concluding poem provides a powerful image of retreat and being “wastefully alone”: 
In winter in the woods alone

Against the trees I go.

I mark a maple for my own

And lay the maple low.

...

I see for Nature no defeat

In one tree's overthrow

Or for myself in my retreat

for yet another blow.

One might ask whether "nature" and "defeat" includes both the tree's "over-throw" (battle-rich metaphors) and the speaker's retreat from cutting down the maple (one kind of blow) as well as from one of life's blows that sends him returning to the woods for yet another maple?

Much of the criticism directed against Frost came from his lack of political activism. Frost certainly was not a political activist, and his attitude toward the New Deal seemed to stem from a variety of attitudes about human
history and human nature. Frost always regarded the New Testament as a book focused on both mercy and the poor. Always he referred to something Jesus says in Matthew and elsewhere, "The poor you will always have with you but you will not always have me," as an argument against too much focus on the poor and poverty in poetry:

It says, "For Christ's sake, forget the poor some of the time." There are many beautiful things in the world besides poverty. I have praised poverty and spoken of its beauty and its use for the arts, but there is other things.  

Though A Boy's Will, Frost's first book, consisted primarily of short lyrics, North of Boston, his second, developed the complexities of the pastoral in narrative poems of remarkable variety, tonal range, dramatic compression, and psychological depth. The drama often centers on an object which becomes a synecdoche or form teasing or drawing out the relationships between the speakers or conflicting characters of the poem. As an artist,
Frost sought to capture the human voice as a means to understanding drama.

Frost explored the intimacy of human psychology and the tensions between labour and contemplation as well as the anxiety of human inequality and strife in an idyllic and remote world. The highly dramatic impulse in all of Frost's lyrics, his pastoral dramas dramatize tensions between the hierarchy of rural and city and, ultimately, the possibilities of harmony in a democracy. Looking at in other way, Frost puts to the test basic assumptions of cultural difference, communication, boundary and understanding as his characters confront each other. Tension about human hierarchy and human equality remains an important aspect of "Mending Wall" but it becomes an unquestionably strong theme throughout Frost's dramatic poems.

Frost's pastoral mode reaches its darkest and most ironic in *The Vanishing Red* (1916), a time when a sense of the inevitability of racial absorption had replaced the frontier hatred and desire to exterminate Indians. Discussions of Indian citizenship also gained momentum
because of their service in World War I. Depictions of Thanksgiving, which had formerly focused, predominantly on the landing at Plymouth, shifted to the feast of Pilgrims and Indians. Fear of immigrant populations and racial mixing had fueled the growth of interest in eugenics and the rhetoric of Aryan purity. It seems that Frost’s poem would have been particularly poignant at that moment as an ironic rhetorical gesture.

Some of the Frost’s most compelling narrative and lyric poems dramatize women on the border of nature and wildness, including “Paul’s Wife”, “Wild Grapes”, “The Witch of Coos”, “The Pauper Witch of Grafton”, “Maple”, “The Hill Wife”, and “A Servant to Servants”. No simple paradigm runs through all these poems, and it should be obvious from reading them that more often than not Frost gives women in his poetry enormous vocal presence and power: they speak for themselves. Few modern poets give women as much vocal prominence as Frost in lyrics, dramatic narratives, and dramatic monologues in which we find the
speakers struggling against the entanglements of social and sexual domination for their own voice and sanity.

"Paul's Wife", one of the most spectacularly strange narratives of *New Hampshire*, adds a new dimension to the legend of Paul Bunyan. Despite his great powers and skills, Frost's Paul is unusually susceptible to being teased by his fellow lumberjacks about his wife or his lack of one. Sexual competition and jealousy among the lumbermen proves to be a great driving force among them, and a far greater weakness in Paul than any popular legend about his strength would have indicated. Paul must have a wife suited to his greatness, and he creates one – Pygmalion – lie:

*Paul was what's called a terrible possessor.*

*Owning a wife with him meant owning her.*

*She wasn't anybody else's business,*

*Either to praise her, or so much as name her,*

*And he'd thank people not to think of her.*

Paul "the terrible possessor" appears an idealist in the extreme in his idea of his wife, one who cannot possibly live
in the world or live with someone in the world because of the terror and fear of his wife being anything other than his private dream.

In “Wild Grapes”, a “little boyish girl” narrator becomes associated with wildness but in another sense she, like Paul, could also be said to be something of an uncompromising idealist. The poem also presents a complex mythology of the feminine relationship with Nature. In this lyric, which was a complement to “Birches”, a girl recollects a traumatic childhood experience of nearly being carried away by a birch tree. Beginning with the title, the poem is replete with gnomic and suggestion references to biblical, classical (Bacchus, Dionysus, and Orphens), and scientific literature, which all become stories whirling around her defiance and her desire for independence.

The uncertainty and sadness behind the domestic story of Maple’s name underlies almost all of Frost’s dramas of “home”. Home remained one of Frost’s most important figures:
“All science is domestic science, our domestication on and our hold on the planet”. Frost ripped open the home and allowed women and men not only to speak but allowed their words to act on each other's deeds. At his best, Frost allows us to see the psychological forces at work behind the sayings, of his men and women as they struggle to maintain power and fragile domestic order. Elinor and Robert Frost were co-valedictorians at their Lawrence High School graduation, and Elinor’s address was entitled “Conversation as Force in Life”. It might have been poetry.

"The Fear", “The Death of the Hired Man”, “Home Burial”, “A Servant to Servants”, “West-Running Brook”, and “In the Home Stretch” allow dialogue in general, and the dialogue between men and women in particular, to unfold without resolution of the question of what it means to be human. These poems show Frost at his dramatic best, allowing his characters to reveal themselves and each other. More important, the poems become ongoing philosophical dramas about the boundaries of home and what it means to be human.
Some readers call him as “nature poet” because of the landscape of Frost’s poetry. Frost, aware of this epithet, was quick to challenge it: “Some have called me a nature poet, because of the background, but I’m not a nature poet. There’s always something else in my poetry.”10 In the pastoral dramas Frost will depict a close ecological relationship between man and nature, Plant and human ecology become inextricable parts of pastoral drama in “Blueberries”. It is certainly sound and this lovely vision of country life appears as native about human relations as it is about the struggle among species of flora and fauna for survival.

In this poetry, Frost creates a drama between human and non-human nature. In other words, there is always the questions of the perception of non-human nature, whether of other creatures or of the landscape and matter. The flux and fluidity of the natural world, for which the water and the simple are metaphors, indicate the difficulty of perceiving phenomena in anything but a momentary way. The very concepts of surface and depth, which have long
been important in distinguishing aspects of human thought, may themselves be only metaphoric constructs or the metaphors may aptly describe, within limits, the pursuit of the real.

Frost's poetry draws analogies between the mind of man and the rest of the creaturely world and animate world. Fluidity, transience, and metamorphosis in nature haunt some of Frost's most memorable poems. Frost considered the question of whether nature was non-moral and whether we were merely projecting our consciousness on to nature in evaluating its morality.

Frost deployed the humanist stance that distanced itself from science and the kind of penetration into matter that science championed. Frost discussed Darwin's work and science in general as one of the humanities because of its reliance on metaphor. Frost's interest in Darwin went beyond the epistemology of observing small natural details from which to infer a larger picture. The tension between the meaning of the small event and its larger implications and the place of the human mind in interpreting "the facts"
of the scene forms the background of Frost's sonnet "Design". The argument from design had long been used to prove the existence of divinity by analogy; Paul in Romans had talked of God's two books—scripture and his creation. "Design", one of Frost's most memorable sonnets, invokes a little drama of someone observing a little scene in nature and trying to find some design in it, perhaps some indication of a larger meaning. The sense of "waste" haunted Frost in human and non-human nature. His poems often explored the limits of both sympathy and empathy about the fact of waste. Frost dramatizes the extent and limit of human sympathy to the creaturely world poignantly in "to a Moth Seen in winter."

Frost always thought that "Waste" presented itself as an essential fact of natural process. Not only did he not lament it, he appeared as time went on both to accept and even to insist on its virtues. He became more vocal about waste as a principle of life in the years after World War I. Frost's sense of the universality of "Wanton waste in peace and war", as he called it in "Pod of the Milkweed", in
knowledge of the ways of both human and non-human nature, inspired Frost to write as complex a sonnet as "Range - Finding", one of a number of war poems written and published around the time of World War I. The human world of battle recedes into the background and becomes part of the general ecology of nature. Remarkably, Frost rather unselfconsciously invests the non-human world with a sense of life and emotional struggle.

Frost could also write poems in which scientific theories, conjectures, or other intellectual presumptions had gone too far, leaving man, ironically, in a hopeless skeptical position. Frost distinguished himself from most modernist poets in not taking the view that the world was somehow worse at the dawn of the twentieth century than it ever had been. Frost appeared to wrestle with aspects of science as an arbiter of reality since he began writing.
References

2. Laurance Thompson, Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost.
3. Louis Untermeyer, Robert Frost’s Poems.
4. Norman Douglas,