Robert Frost occupies a unique position in modern poetry. Unlike most contemporary poets, he has managed to win a wide popular audience while earning the almost universal acclaim of critics and scholars. There are doubtless three or four other modern poets, whose claims to a permanent place in literature are equally secure, but none is better known than Frost, and few, if any, better loved. Yet despite this wide recognition he has not received the careful, critical evaluation his work deserves. The reader who takes the trouble to leaf through the numerous articles and the books which have so far appeared will find much in the way of biographical sketch, regional vignette, and appreciation, but very few efforts to explore the poetry itself.

Frost’s poetry abounds in the element of regionalism, and he can be regarded as a regional poet, because he sets most of his poems against the background of the New England region of America. The landscape life, customs, manners and speech of the people of this region are finely recaptured by him and depicted realistically in a language really used by these people, and in an artistic manner. Frost is the interpreter and representative of his regional culture. His poetry portrays the rural world North of Boston. Frost’s rural world is interesting because it symbolizes the world American themselves know. The reader will object that Frost does not claim to describe the whole of New England. His subject is the region north of Boston, and within that region only the rural areas and farm villages. But to admit this is to recognize that his selection by Nature is creative. He has taken one particular kind of Yankee to stand for the essential character of the
New England mind, while he seems more of a realist, his regional picture is actually far more stylized. He seems to discriminate by a stricter standard. He chooses, not simply what is real in the region, what is there, but what is representative.

Robert Lee Frost was born on March 26, 1874 in San Francisco, California. His mother took him to New England after his father’s death in 1885. Frost is not a New Englander because his grandparents lived in New England or that he himself lived and wrote poetry in that region; he is a New Englander by the very temper he reveals in his poems, though he does bind himself with unnecessary and constraining conventions of New England. He is the poetic interpreter of New England. He presents the scenes, moods, and life of New England and this presentation is interfused with his reflections.

Frost was desperate for the peace and freedom of country life after leaving Amherst, convinced that his poetry had suffered while he toiled in the academy. He was suddenly intent upon hurling ‘fistfuls (of poem) right and left, as he wrote to Wilbur Cross, The Amherst experience had stifled him, as a poet- although he admitted that it had appealed to his ‘philosopher’ side. Now that he had liberated himself from care and intellectuality, he could face the blank page again, and listen to the inner voice that was caught, at times accidentally, as he walked in the woods or sat, idly, expecting nothing .

The entire countryside around west Derry stimulated his creative faculties. Hills, valleys, farms, cabins, open sky woods, field, west running brook and Rose Pogonias became grist for his mill. And in the landscape inevitably stood the people, the lonely, introspective, self reliant or self-
destructive natives - the rural men and women whose tragedies, primarily, fill his poem. By the time *Mountain Interval* appeared in late 1916, Frost had conclusively severed his slight ties with England. He was 'home' for good in the New England with which his countrymen would always afterwards identify him. His publisher now was Henry Holt and would be even beyond his death.

My acquaintance with American literature started at the time of my postgraduation, when I opted for it as an optional paper. It allured me to an unimaginable extent. Robert Frost has been the most widely known and perhaps the most fully appreciated American poet of the twentieth century. This fact underscores, the temerity of presuming to write and publish a critical study of a man whom so many feel they know very intimately already. Even those unfamiliar with either Frost's publics reading or with his books of poems know his name and feel well grounded in an understanding of his unique position as national bard. He set out to lodge a few poems where they might endure, and he ended by lodging himself in the hearts of his countryman as an American symbol. When I disclosed my intense desire in front of my guide, she suggested a topic on this great poet.

Originally I submitted my synopsis under the title, Robert Frost; A Study of the Regional Element is His Poetry; it was an effort to analyze the whole regional element that provided the poetry of Frost. But my title was changed to 'Robert Frost: A Study of the Local Milieu in His Poetry' and I was permitted to work in this direction. When I saw this new angle, it felt as if limitations had been put upon me but on deeper thought, I realized that Frost's regionalism was basically a study of the local milieu in which he had ensconced himself. It was this local aspect that erupted up time and again in events, in conversation, in the sights and sounds of the locality, in the
relationships of the rustic folk of that area. Basically it was the identification of a particular area in the whole region that Frost had made his own. This angle gave a new incisiveness to my study as now I had to look for the small nuances that go in making an area local to one's thoughts, one's ideas, and one's memories. This is what Frost brought out in his poetry and it is my humble attempt to delve into Frost's fascination for the local in his poetry.

The study has been divided in the following six chapters as detailed below. In the opening chapter, I have discussed the poet's life, and works, aspects of his poetry and at the end of this chapter a glance has been thrown at the widespread reputation of the poet. Robert Frost has been the most widely known and perhaps the most fully appreciated American poet of the twentieth century. He is an unequal poet, who has left behind him many excellent poems. He has certainly earned a place of distinction, at home and abroad, as a major American poet. The second chapter deals with New England in which I have discussed the situation of New England, reflections of country life and the beauty of New England. Robert Frost's love of New England extended to the vivid and beautiful descriptions he gave of the countryside. The region, as he depicts it, is not just a place, the New England of *Mending Wall*, is the same New England we find in *Birches*, the New England of *The Code* is the New England of *Stopping by Woods*, *Home Burial*, *The Star Splitter*, *An Old Man's Winter Night*, *The Cow in Apple Time* all exist within a single world. The third chapter considers Frost's nature poetry, local scenery and backdrop in his poems and visual and verbal images are discussed. Nature in all its bounty as seen in that region is described in loving detail. Frost's love of nature is more comprehensive, many sided, and all-inclusive than that of Wordsworth. The backdrop to his poetry
is provided by country-scenes and sights. The fourth chapter deals with pastoralism. His poetry is in the great tradition of pastoral poetry from Theocritus to Wordsworth, though his pastoralism is never, like Virgil’s or Milton’s, decorative and political. He is a learned poet but, as in Houseman’s poetry, his learning is muted to an echoic beauty. He was not the partisan of his plowman, mowers, hired men, gatherers of huckleberries and tree gum, for all his sympathy with them and his gift of psychological penetration into their lives. And in the fifth chapter an attempt has been made to depict the local milieu in his poetry in which I have discussed Yankee mannerisms, social values, and contrast to urban life. Frost’s local milieu is quite social. His regionalism is more concerned with the sense of values shared and enjoyed by society of a locality than with the desire and intentions of an individual. Every poet creates his own idiom. Frost did not lag behind in this respect. Frost won laurels for his Yankee manner and it was through this mode that he expressed himself in the *North of Boston*. In the final chapter, I intend to show that the local milieu was paramount in Frost’s poetry. He deliberately sought to create the image of a farmer poet and through his attempts he has familiarized one and all with the locales and sights and sounds of New England and in particular of the farms that he lived on. The familiar sights come alive through his enthralling words and afford recognition to all his reader who identify easily with whatever he presents through his poems.

All I can say, in all humility, is that I am fortunate to have gained this opportunity to enhance my knowledge of this great poet. The experience has been an enriching and an ennobling one that has given a profound meaning and sense of direction to me. I deem it a privilege to have been given the opportunity to study this poet whose work will remain a source of inspiration throughout my life.