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

Beneath the deafening chorus of praise for Robert Frost which began with the publication of *A Boy’s Will* and *North of Boston* and deepened as the poet grew older, lone voices can be heard chanting their own tune, one of discord with the general eulogy. These nay-sayers, if indeed they are noticed at all, are not often heeded; but what they have to say merits an ear. Frost, they protest, was not of the modern age. Rather than looking forward, blazing fresh trails, and indicating new paths between reality and the soul, he leaned to the past, peered back longingly to an order, more idyllic time and place. A fair case can be made for accepting this view of the poet. Even more truth
would be contained in a portrait of Frost facing both ways, backward as well as forward.

The vital impression created by Frost as a topical figure in the 1950’s and in the early 1960’s may cause one to forget that of course he does belong to an earlier era. One who recalls Frost visiting Soviet Russia and conferring with Premier Khrushchev must stop for a second to reflect. It comes as something of a jolt to realize that when Frost was born in 1874 William Cullen Bryant was still writing; Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, and Holmes still had the better portion of two active decades yet before them. So did Walt Whitman, who had broken ground for new times to come but was still misunderstood and unappreciated. Emily Dickinson, another modern rebuffed in her own day, was adding to her secret lode of verse in an upstairs bedroom in Amherst. His long innings as a poet gave Frost the unique position of being in touch with both yesterday and tomorrow. If he gained by the unique literary contribution of the poets above mentioned, he also gave to coming generations a treasure trove of poems that exalted, exhilarated and enthralled.

Frost is popularly known as a New England poet because of the images in his poetry—snow scenes, stone walls, country roads, woods, farm houses—those images most easily associated with the calendar art of Currier and Ives, sentimental scenes of the poor delighting in their romantically nostalgic rusticity. The ‘Public Frost’ has long traded on such images. Like Mark Twain with his boyhood Mississippi, Frost publicly has associated himself with the simpler New England, his public image blurring the bleaker truths that North of Boston, displayed. Yet Frost did not use
such ‘sentimental’ images sentimentally. Beneath the positively assertive ‘thrust’ of his poetry—‘The Vantage Point’, ‘The Road Not Taken’, ‘Revelation’, ‘The Tuft of Flowers’ and the popular nostalgia-tinged images of that poetry, Frost expressed a reality less certain and assuredly less popular. The ‘ulteriority’ of his poetry discloses a more bleakly realistic encounter with his world. Often in his remarks, he dissociated himself from the very images he was using in his poetry avowing that his method was far different form his popularly conceived from. Thompson quotes: ‘...........there is nothing but me. And I have all the dead New England things held back by one hand...........where, many as they are though, they do not flow together by their own weight...........I hold them easily-too easily for assurance that they will go with a rush when I let them go.’72

Given his own boyhood experience, his dislike for urban experience, and his emphasis upon human survival and renewal, Frost has always associated the best poetry with the rural scene. Thompson quotes further:

‘Poetry is more often of the country than of the city. Poetry is very, very rural-rustic. It stands as a reminder of rural life-as a resource-as a recourse. It might be taken as a symbol of a man, taking its rise from individuality and seclusion........ We are now at a moment when we are getting too far out into the social-industrial, and are at the point of drawing back-drawing into renew ourselves...........................................’73

73. Ibid, P. 431.
Such a belief finds its natural expression in the New England scene as Frost came to know it and is very much a product of that scene. The ‘distilled’ quality of Frost’s verse, his emphasis stylistically on order and restraint in both thought and expression and his emphasis upon the struggle of the human soul against a bleak, dark background (very much an ethical or ‘religious’ stance) link Frost to the New England mind American poetry—the ordered stanzas of Emily Dickinson, the natural landscape of Edwin Arlington Robinson, the ‘iron metres’ of Robert Lowell. A distinct race for order, as Wallace Stevens called it, characterizes the best of Frost’s poetry, aware as he was of the dialectical, Manichaean quality of the New England mind, the struggle between order and chaos, light and darkness. He celebrated ‘any small man-made figure of order and concentration’ when viewed against ‘the background in the hugeness and confusion shading away from where we stand into black and utter chaos’ as he would celebrate the star ‘since dark is what brings out your light.’

Discussion of Frost in relation to ‘classic’ New England writers tends to stop with these precursors. That is understandable enough. After all, they have been the canonical figures in the history of New England poetics since the time Frost achieved eminence in the 1920’s; Frost’s critics, memoirists, biographers, and live audiences have thus taken special interest in his affinities with them; and eagerly, and he defended it well after it had become unfashionable. As a turn-of-the-century teacher Frost assigned to his students. The Courtship of Miles Standish, Evangeline, and other works; and he wrote an imitation—Longfellow’s commemorative poem for the school’s commemoration of the century of Longfellow’s birth in 1907. He encouraged
his children to memorize several Longfellow poems; he attended the Bowdoin College Century of Longfellow’s graduation in 1925; and he selected the little-known Lawrance Thompson as his official biographer partly on the strength of Thompson’s 1938 biography of Longfellow. Although Frost did not specify what pleased him about that book, it is striking that Young Longfellow—the most penetrating and incisive study of that poet ever written already evidences the Melvillian probing of the demonic underside of the writer’s persona that Thompson went on to pursue more famously—and very controversially in a critic book on Melville and his three-volume biography of Frost. Since Thompson was also a younger colleague and friend at the Bread Loaf School of English. Frost may not have realized that he was inviting psychography, not hagiography; but in any case it tells something both about Frost and about latter-day obliviousness to Longfellow’s range that Longfellow was one of the bridges that brought the two men together.

With one exception, the other nineteenth-century New England verse and prose poets, who died before Frost reached maturity, he did not know or care much about. Emerson’s sometime proteges, Jones Very and Ellery Channing, did not exist for him, nor did their hinterland contemporary, Frederick Goddard Tuckerman. Nathaniel Hawthorne mattered to Frost only in the general sense of being as a precursor in the regional gothic line, and by the 1920’s he retained only the most shadowy recollection of Hawthorne’s work. And Frost paid no attention to all to such less canonical writers of antebellum regional prose as Catharine- Maria Sedgwick, Sarah Joseph Hale, and Lydia Maria Child. Harriet Beecher Stowe meant ‘abolitionist’ to him rather than ‘regionalist’. The one exception mentioned above was the
Connecticut-born adoptive Californian Edward Rowland Sill, whose poems collected in the 1880s impressed the youthful Frost for their restrained philosophical expression of elegiac melancholy.

The other New England poet of Frost’s own era now reckoned as truly great, Wallace Stevens, published his first book only after Frost’s mature style crystallized and his international reputation was secured; and despite half-hearted attempts at making acquaintance, they did not get along either biographically or artistically, but wound up patronizing each other. Frost was flustered by Stevens’ urbanity, and Stevens was actuately self-conscious of Frost’s being much more of literary lion than he. Poet-critics like Amy Lowell mattered mainly to Frost for her condescending commendation of him as an authentic New England primitive.

Altogether, the regionalism of ‘A Boy’s Will’ was persuasive enough to set the Yankee farmer-poet image going among his reviewers. But without the hindsight advantage of knowing Frost to be a New England bard, these echoes do not seem much more telling than others from ‘the worn book of old-golden song’ mentioned in another poem (doubtless Palgrave’s Golden Treasury of English poetry: Frost’s favorite anthology, which as a teenage he had read ‘literally to rags and tatters’)74 a poem whose rhetoric is redolent of Keats and even the preromantic William Collins.

So Frost’s pilgrimage toward regional identification entailed a double movement: from one form of ‘naivete’ to another from more-or-less ungrounded romantic aestheticism of the ‘I dwell with a strongly aching heart / In that vanished abode there for apart’ variety to another

74 Barry ed; Robert Frost on Writing, p.75.
(affectionate-satirical regionalism of the ‘trust New Hampshire not to have enough / Of radium or anything to sell’ variety). The typical weaknesses of his mature repertoire, both of which mar ‘New Hampshire’, are sententiousness on the first wavelength and triviality on the second.

Though Frost has a unique historical place as New England’s first great returnee after the invention and canonization of New England as the nation’s dominant culture region, virtually all the traits so far described, and more, are already visible in the work of his regional forebears, notwithstanding his swervers in ‘The Black Cottage’ and ‘New Hampshire’ away from Whittier, Emerson, Bryant, and others.

Like his New England precursors, Frost favors either bound prosodic forms or blank verse. When he praised Robinson for staying ‘content’ with the old-fashioned way to be new’ he was both being true to the taste that prompted him to rate Whitman’s poetry below Emerson’s because Whitman could not write good conventional verse, as well as to his own poetic practice.75 One marks that this commitment of Frost was a faith in the possibilities of highly formal verse structures like the rondeau ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening’ the narrative sequence in stanzas of couplets ‘The Tuft of Flowers’ or triplets ‘A Star in a Stone-Boat’ and especially the sonnet ‘Mowing’, ‘Design’, ‘For Once, Then, Something’ and so on, which was a well-established England genre thanks to Longfellow, Lowell and Robinson.

Any thinking person at the turn of the twenty first century who starts to press the connection very far between Frost and traditional New England poetics must confront a host of real or imagined adversaries. Who wants to listen, anyhow? Who cares about Longfellow and Whittier anymore? And as for Emerson and Thoreau, has it not been established that their real poetry was in their prose and that their verse was ‘Klunky’ by comparison? And even if we can find a certain amount of really good verse in that traditional New England archive, why bother? Is not the American poetic tradition that really counts a more experimental form-resistant tradition—the Whitman tradition, particularly? And among poets who favored more traditional metrics is not Dickinson a far more interesting case of form-resistance examination centered on Frost and the Brahmins that leaves us in an anti-modernist cul-de-sac of white male Anglo-Saxon Protestants? Surely, if we want to do right by Frost- what we ought to stress are his quasiaffiliations with the modernists instead: we ought to do our best to establish Frost as an inhabitant, albeit uneasy, of the moment of Pound, H.D., Williams, Stevens, Crane, Cummings, and that laureate of African American urban folklife, Langston Hughes.

In short, Frost believed, as for the most part did the Fireside group as a whole, in a species of poetics colloquiality which would be locally nuanced, but which would also, and by the same token, take its place in an Anglophonic symposium to which Yeats and Hardy and Robinson, Emerson and Longfellow and Arnold, Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Keats, all rightfully belonged. The assumption of a shared Anglophone poetic and the goal of a publicly accessible poetic communication were the two most basic
coordinates of Frost’s conception of what the historical and social position of posies should be. This ethos of cosmopolitan localism or localist cosmopolitanism may not, as doctrine, sound particularly striking or glamorous; but its best poetic results have been admirable, and in a deeply divided but intractably global world it merits a fresh look.

The fact that Frost equates his love of American with ‘self-love’, whereas he regards his love of England only as ‘love of friend’, demonstrates the ‘bifocal concept’ underlying his cultural and national identity formation: In order to determine his own identity, it is necessary for him to define ‘the other’. It also shows how closely Frost’s self-awareness linked to his sense of belonging to a particular region or nation, a sense of local rootedness.

Frost focuses on the independent individual as a prerequisite for a creative exchange between individuals, regions, nations, or cultures: “Poetry is written first for the person that writes and then going out into its social appeal and use............. I should expect life to be back and forward........now more individual on the farm now more social in the city- striving to get the balance.”

Going to Europe, the poet experienced cultural differences first hand which opened his eyes to the peculiarities of the respective cultural identities. It was there that Frost grew aware of his American identity and claimed that he ‘never saw New England as clearly as when he was in old England’.

Frost insists that it is necessary to know one’s own identity as a person, region or nation. Frost regards region as subareas of the

geographically more expansive nation. He therefore views his reputation as
the ‘poet of New England’ as limiting, and wonders whether he will ever be
allowed to write about anything other than New England for the rest of his
life. In subsequent years, Frost often repeats ‘that there was no rule of place
laid down’ and insists that he talks ‘about the whole world in terms of New
England’.

A similar combination of the local and the universal reappears in an
address on ‘American Literature and the American Language’ delivered by
Eliot at Washington University in 1953. In this lecture, Eliot tried to define
American literature by selecting three authors whom he considers
‘landmark...........for the identification of American literature’, namely Poe,
Whitman, and Twain. Despite an initial disclaimer, condemning any attempts
at defining their common American characteristics as ‘folly’, Eliot proceeds to
explain why he singled them out: “Here we arrive at two characteristics
which I think must be found together, in any author whom I should
single out as one of the landmarks of a national literature: the strong
local flavour combined with unconscious universality.” 77 In other words,
Eliot considers them truly American authors because their work reflects a
strong sense of locality while at the same time dealing with universal themes.
In this way, Eliot offers a definition of national literature which carefully avoids
any specific statement about national characteristics. At the same time,
however, he explicitly rejects Frost as a possible landmark, thus ignoring that
Frost’s poetry wants to combine both a ‘strong local flavour’ and

77. T.S. Eliot, American Literature and the American Language: An Address
delivered at Washington University on June 9, 1953, St. Louis Washington,
1953, p.17.
‘universality’. Calling Frost one of ‘the last of the pure New Englanders’, Eliot views him exclusively as the poet of a region that has ‘its own particular civilized landscape and the ethos of a local society of English origin........representative of New England, rather than of America’, thus denying what Frost so emphatically insists upon: the possibility to see New England as a pars pro toto for America. Being convinced that Frost’s work appeals mostly to people of New England origin.......for whom it possess a ‘peculiar nostalgic charm’.......Eliot cautions against ‘overvaluing the local product just because it is local.’

Eliot’s views may not find argument with many as Frost’s work did not appeal only to people of New England, he found admires among all Americans and even those from other countries of the world. The local milieu in Frost’s poetry is just a means to address the general populace all over the world to give them a peep into his beloved New England, to familiarize them with the Yankee temper and speech. In no way can it be called on overvaluation of the local flavour in his poetry.

Hence it is not surprising that the regionalist Frost favors the concept of diverse regional cultures united by American ideals, and that he declares his regional poetry to be national, i.e., American poetry. As a regionalist, he pleads the cause of a distinct region united by the American Creed, pointing out that diversity is an inherent quality of the American nation and should be considered an asset.

What finally gives his best poems their tremendous effectiveness is a sense of local detail so sharp, so fully controlled, so wholly the poet’s own, as

to make us know once and forever the gulf between his world and all others. Above all, Frost can call up a sense of place and of the working of an individual sensibility when limited by and therefore complementary to it.

Rather than identity himself with any of the popular poetic movements in America, most notably the 'new poetry' he preferred to return to a farm in New Hampshire and continued to write about country aspects. Frost's regionalism is of a special variety; he finds meaning through experience in New England, but that meaning is not purely local; he speaks of the individual yet universal concerns of man's role in the world and of the spiritual and physical demands made upon him. His attitude towards the world put him in the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Emily Dickinson; all three try to penetrate the veil of natural fact for the spiritual truth which it reflects. It is not surprising that his most frequent themes in his attempt to deal with this nature-spirit dualism are the juxtaposition of man and nature.

Most of the writers whose works one considers as constituting the mainstream of modern American literature were not even born until Robert Frost had entered young manhood. In fact some of the most prominent writers were born after Frost had already begun to publish his verses in the Independent. And not a few of these 'moderns' had died—Wolfe, Faulkner, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald—well before Frost's own day on earth ended.

If any change characterized Robert Frost during his lifetime, it was a long subtle alteration of his image from national critic to national hero. At the beginning of his public career he was known for his grim approach to life, his facing up to the unpleasant realities which were destroying New England and
its people. By contrast, in his later years he was known mainly as a sunshine poet: one who could be trusted to assure his readers that the cloud, however dark, did indeed possess a silver living. This perceptible reversal of image was produced not only by Frost’s readers, although they did experience a desperate need to see him as a poet of affirmation but also by others. It was not produced by the anthologists, although they played an undeniable part in it. The metamorphosis was produced chiefly and apparently in full consciousness by Robert Frost himself. He crystallized at the last into the amiable Yankee of ‘A Tuft of Flowers’ and ‘Birches’. Nature appeared almost to be copying art. The flowering of nature that he saw in abundance in his beloved New England seemed to have entered his personality too and leaving the grim, solemn persona of his earlier poems he became the sunny good-natured farmer Yankee poet of his later poems and that have become the abiding image of Frost to this day.

That this ‘new’ image had become a thoroughly ingrained bit of American folklore was dramatized in 1959 at Frost’s eighty-fifth birthday dinner, Lionel Trilling, the principal speaker at this testimonial affair, expressed the compelling need to bring balance into the currently popular view of Frost. The need, he felt, was similar to that experienced by Untermeyer forty years previously; but, interestingly enough, it was the exact converse. Whereas Untermeyer had been disturbed at the prospect of Frost’s becoming labelled a flinty pessimist Trilling feared that the populace heard nothing from Frost’s pipe but bucolic notes.

Americans, he was certain, found Robert Frost representative of an ideal somewhat removed from the realities both of actual life and of Frost’s
own poetry. ‘The manifest America of Mr. Frost’s poem is...........rural in a highly moralized way, in an aggressively moralized way.’\textsuperscript{79} It was the America of an idyllic past that readers found in the man’s work, a past which had never really existed, but which men desperately needed to believe had existed—and still did exist. From Frost’s poems they took only what they must take, elements which tallied comfortably with their need to escape from an overly complex, overly anxious, overly urbanized society.

Trilling’s Frost was not at all the Frost of his many admirers. Trilling was quite explicit about his view. Not for him the Frost who reassured the masses by ‘affirmation of old virtues, simplicities, pieties, and ways of feeling’. ‘I think of Robert Frost as a terrifying poet. Call him, if it makes things any easier, a tragic poet, but it might be useful every now and then to come out from under the shelter of that literary word. The universe that he conceives is a terrifying universe.’\textsuperscript{80} Doubters might read the poem ‘Design’. Trilling advised them to try it, to see if it in anyway induced a more tranquil sleep. Or they might study another verse, ‘Neither Out Far Nor In Deep’, and see whether terrors were thereby laid to rest. One could read, Trilling might well have added ‘Desert Places’ or ‘Once by the Pacific’ to find out whether Frost was actually the confident American poet he was commonly thought to be.

A terrifying poet! With those words Trilling stripped away the protective shell of pastoralism in which the popular mind and encased its chosen poet-laureate. With the same phrase he forced attention to the unsettling tragic


\textsuperscript{80.} Ibid, p. 451.
vision which had so mightily impressed Frost's earliest critics. The storm broke at once. Was nothing sacred and inviolate? One might as easily have proposed the demolition of the White House as the de-mythizing of America's beloved white-headed poet. Letters of dismay flooded in upon the editors of the literary reviews. Imagine comparing Robert Frost, already canonized the patron saint of American tradition, with Sophocles. Imagine so much as intimating that only a poet who would anatomize the terrifying aspects of life could then provide comfort from them.

J. Donald Adams defended Frost in his article ‘Speaking of Books’ in ‘The New York Times Book Review of April 12, 1959, by saying that Trilling had shown little understanding of the United States and that this view was shared by other American intellectuals. Trilling had said that his Frost was different from the one existing in the minds of so many of the poets admirers, and Adams thought that the former may have held this view after studying D.H. Lawrance’s criticism of American literature. He wanted Trilling to read Emerson instead, ‘for a goodly part of Frost the man and Frost the poet is rooted, deeply rooted, in Emerson, who was his intellectual and spiritual god father. He further pointed out that ‘Frost simply sees the universe as it is and accepts it. He isn’t terrified by what he sees, and neither should we do.’81 The outcry that followed Lionel Trilling’s views was testimony to the immense love and regard that Frost got from the American people. Americans high and low were outraged at this attempt to pull down their beloved poet from the pedestal they had put him on. They were not in the least ready to hear anything detrimental to the public image that they had

created for Frost as the bard of America, the farmer-poet, the singer of local rhapsodies, the delineator of the beautiful New England landscape. And nothing anyone said could change that view.

Frost was a self declared environmentalist and he showed this concern in most of his poems. Frost’s works with details of environment drew specific statement and conclusions at the end of every poem. He did not tend to become a total philosopher like Emerson or a robust optimist like Browning. He always walked on a middle path. Frost combined all these attitudes to nature and more. He was appreciative of New England’s assets and liabilities. Like Thoreau, he concentrated on both the beautiful and the awful aspects of nature. New England is the Wessex of Robert Frost. He finds in New England the clue to his poetry. It is from here that he draws his poetic characters. W.H. Auden is of the opinion that it is difficult to find any other poet who uses language more simply than Frost. Frost loves frugality in the use of words and understatement. The words he uses and the poetic diction which he employs are of New England mode and hence do not command extra-ordinary linguistic skill on the part of the readers as is needed in the case of many modern poets.

Robert Frost lays an emphasis upon the need of being versed in the country things. It came to him on account of the result of his close identification of nature as an instructive agent like Marvel and secondly because of the intimate interaction between man and nature, each tending to mirror the other. His poetry being pastoral, he deals with rural life and nature always provides the background. In ‘Pasture’ Frost uses the symbols of ‘spring’ and the ‘calf’ which came to mean the simple, pure, innocent beginning of things. Frost portrays in the poem the rural life with reference to
the great world beyond. By employing the above-said symbols, he is able to establish a comparison between the pasture and the outside world which as a pastoral poet, he ought to do. Frost uses in the poem pastoral analogy, this is why it is hard to tie down his symbolism to specific and particular things. He nourishes his thoughts on Man’s relationship to natural order of the world. He is convinced that the human being belongs to the animal kingdom and that his initial behaviour is regulated by instincts. Man is endowed with a mind, which leads to a choice between either yielding to his instincts, especially to the sixth sense, or establishing the victory of his reason. Frost’s personages live in the countryside and turn to the exterior world of nature for an understanding of their inner conflicts.

After a close study of Robert Frost poems we see that woods and stone-walls, pasture-springs and precarious farms, birches and wild-flowers, mountains and rivers, wood and gardens, seeds and buds and the snow of Northern New England provide not merely the locale but also the substance of his poetry. Frost describes nature as a phenomenon. Human eyes observed the dark woods, the pasture, the snow, the horse, the cow and the rocks. Man is tempted to cross the woods, climb the birches, mend the walls. Frostian characters always insist upon combining both the human side with nature. External nature and man define, mirror, co-ordinate, affirm, contrast and oppose each other. In an early poem ‘Blue-Butterfly’ the poet contrives a friendly relationship between man and nature. The poet largely depends on the senses. He demonstrates here, his capacity to concentrate on a particular type of sensation. He finds a certain discrepancy between intimate and remote nature. He studies nature from various angles and his thoughts move back and forth continuously. His keen perceptive eyes find
bewilderment in nature. To solve this bewilderment, he wanders endlessly in the misty environment. As a nature poet Frost reminds us of the 18th century poet William Cowper with whom he has many striking similarities. Both possess a love for the simple rustic life of countryside as against the life of the city which has nothing to provide except a mode of life full of sick-hurry and divided aims.

Frost's concern with nature sprang from his childhood and periods of his adult life spent in the lap of New England's natural world where he grew aware of the activity beauty and mystery of the exterior world. Frost has often been termed a New England poet because of his vivid portrayal of the New England countryside, its flora and fauna, and above all, its people. Frost has been called the best interpreter of the New England temperament, as 'one versed in country things'. However, he was not quite at ease with this appealation. In New Hampshire he says rather impishly:

Because I wrote my novels in New Hampshire
Is no proof that I aimed them at New Hampshire.

John C. Kemp thinks that Frost is at his best where there is a tension between his worldly, pragmatic, and New England self and the contemplative, impractical and visionary part of him. According to Kemp, Frost lays on a Yankee veneer only when he has nothing worthwhile to say. Indeed in much of Frost's poetry there is a tension between shrewd worldliness and staunch idealism. In his most memorable poems he transcends New England and recaptures the core of universal experience.82

For the present, the matter rests here. Robert Frost himself declared that his ultimate goal was that of any serious poet: ‘to lodge a few poems where they will be hard to get ride of.’\textsuperscript{83} This he had already done long before he died. Whether in making the great effort his salesmanship had also lodged a reputation which would be hard to get rid of is yet to be seen. ‘There seems little doubt that Frost will be remembered. But only time will tell whether he is to be recalled as a physician who distributed placebos to his troubled age, or as a good Greek out of New England who drew back the dark curtain of eternity and directed men’s eyes into the realm of final mysteries.’\textsuperscript{84}

To detractors who accuse Frost of having limited himself to the New England locals only, the answer can very well be given in the understanding of his poems. It is the readers instinct and depth that is able to imbibe the message given by the poet through his poems. While talking of the local countryside, the local people, their lives, their hardships, their triumphs, their stoicism and courage, the poet is talking to the whole of mankind. As Southworth says—‘The poet has turned from the problems of the personal to those of the universal and abstract. No modern poet has made the transition with more graciousness, because no one else possess in such large measure the saving grace of humour................’\textsuperscript{85}

The poets America has produced are very varied, and the excellence of many of them has been deservedly crowned, but, when the tumult and the shouting has died, the still small voice has been heard above the thunder and the earthquakes, and intellectual pride been recognised for a sin rather


than a sanctity, even taken the quiet muse of Robert Frost, which seems to diffuse the light of the sun with nothing of its blistering heat, like the religion of the kindly Quakers, will remain with us as an abiding inheritance.

In his honesty, Frost the seer penetrated only as far as he was too honest either to deny the existence of the dark woods or to ignore its appeal. He was too honest also to affirm a solution to a puzzle he felt no human can solve and still be flesh and blood. In 1963 his opportunity came, and he did enter the woods bound away ‘for the outer dark’, promising whimsically to return if dissatisfied with what the forest had to offer.

The years after Frost’s death have seen a lot of swings in his reputation. The downsurge of the 70’s was replaced once again by the recognition of the great genius that he was. Today in the first decade of the 21st century, the Frost mania lives on. No student of American literature can consider their study complete without the study of Frost. Various angles have been debated and discussed, and subterranean meanings have been found in his poetry, many, he himself could not have imagined. Yet come what may, there is one constant factor that remains unshakeable and that is his love for his local domain, his people their characteristics, their earthy charm, their rough-tough manner and all their endearing qualities. The local milieu is so well reflected in the poetry of Robert Frost that it finds instant recognition and gratification in the reader. Granted, what many critics have claimed that there may have been other poets and writers who displayed the New England ethos more authentically than Frost but who reads them today? Frost is read the world over and will continue to do so till there are lovers of poetry. The New England depicted by Frost may have changed today after more than four decades yet the old world charm still lingers on and creates a nostalgia and emotional rapport with the reader whenever he reads the
poems written by Frost. Pictures depicted by him of a horse carriage in the woods, or a swinger of birches or a wood cutter or tramps roaming the countryside spring alive in the mind’s eye as soon as one thinks of the environs of New England. No American can remain unaffected by it and readers in faraway lands like us can vividly imagine and visit the beautiful sights that he recaptures through words. It is this knack that gives Frost the unique distinction of having created such life-like images in his poems of the area that he loved and enjoyed being in. There can be no more befitting end to this work than a poem in which he brought the sights and sounds of a rustic activity so alive to the readers that one seems a part of it. Therefore we end with the famous poem **After Apple Picking**, an early lyric of Frost’s that has charmed readers with a rich vision of an idyllic New England harvest.

My long two-pointed ladder’s sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there’s a barrel that I didn’t fill
Besides it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn’t pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it’s like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.