

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963) was a prominent American poet, teacher, lecturer, scholar, public figure, American symbol and thinker of the 20th century. As Archibald MacLeish emphasizes, Frost was not only a poet of his time, of the American nation, but – much like William Shakespeare – a poet of the English language itself (MacLeish, 439). Frost's command of colloquial speech and the New England dialect is considered by the critics to be outstanding. Depiction of rural life is dominant in Frost's poetry and Frost himself took the life of a farmer-poet. And, as MacLeish reminds us, Frost was city-born, town-bred and his story is rather one of a stranger who falls in love with New England and makes his life in it (MacLeish, 442). However, there is a gap between the traditional pastoral poetry and Frost's oeuvre which is modernistic in many ways. Nature clearly dominates Frost's verse but it is arguably not its central theme. Rather, it serves as a shifting background for the portrait of man, for the experience of what it means to be human. The merit of Frost's poetry lies in the dramatized relationship between the character portrayed and the environment surrounding him. Rather than depicting the dominance of one over the other (e.g. of man and technology over nature or the submission of man before nature), Frost traces a delicate, balanced relationship between the two, without drawing a line between, because one is always part of the other. There is a continual reciprocity, there is a constant mirroring of semblances between the face and character of man and between the landscape and ways of nature. While in subject choice this may remind us of the Romanticists, Frost is in fact far from Romanticism as a farmer is. A farmer has no time to tarry, he must yield to various errands the land and the living demand. This, however, by no means implies that contemplation is absent in the tone of Frost's poetry. The opposite is true, though it is a different hue of reflection.