




*The voice of romantic nature in Robert Frost's "Stopping by  
Woods on a Snowy Evening" Poem: Analytical Studies*


*Lecturer: Majeed Hammadi Khalifa  
Tikrit University/ College of Education for Women/  
English Department E-mail: [maj50715@tu.edu.iq](mailto:maj50715@tu.edu.iq)*



صوت الطبيعة الرومانسية في قصيدة "التوقف عند الغابة في أمسية ثلجية"  
لروبرت فروست: دراسات تحليلية

المدرس. مجيد حمادي خليفة

جامعة تكريت/ كلية التربية للبنات/ قسم اللغة الانجليزية



### **Abstract:**

*This case study deals with Robert Frost as an American poet from the perspective of his symbolism. Robert Frost's poetry is notable for its use of symbolism. Frost's extensive experience in using literary expressions to critique the material world and write about the beauty of nature is evident in his use of symbolism in his poems. This study aims to reveal the skillfulness of Frost in poetry writing and his love of nature. However, this research argues the gap between modern societies and the beauty of nature through an analysis of Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". This study examines the symbols and images that Frost used in his poetry. Moreover, this study analyses the spiritual relationship between Frost's poetry and the romance of nature. These images will be studied through his poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" as an analytical study. The qualitative method of analysis sheds light on how Robert Frost used the images of nature to criticize modern society and his role in destroying pure nature.*

**KeyWords:** Robert Frost, Romantic nature, Stopping by woods, symbolism and image

### **المخلص:**

تتناول هذه الدراسة الرمزية في شعر روبرت فروست كشاعر أمريكي من من وجهة النظر الرمزية. حيث يتميز شعر روبرت فروست باستخدامه لرموز الطبيعة التي جعلت من شعره جدير بالاهتمام. تتجلى خبرة فروست الواسعة في استخدام التعبيرات الأدبية لنقد العالم المادي والكتابة عن جمال الطبيعة في استخدامه للرمزية في قصائده. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن مهارة فروست في كتابة الشعر وحيه للطبيعة. إلا أن هذا البحث يناقش الفجوة بين المجتمعات الحديثة وجمال الطبيعة من خلال تحليل قصيدة فروست "التوقف عند الغابة في أمسية ثلجية" تتناول هذه الدراسة الرموز والصور التي استخدمها فروست في شعره. علاوة على ذلك، تحلل هذه الدراسة العلاقة الروحية بين شعر فروست ورومانسية الطبيعة. وسيتم دراسة هذه الصور من خلال قصيدته "وقفمة عند الغابة في مساء مثلج" دراسة تحليلية. يلقي المنهج النوعي في التحليل الضوء على كيفية استخدام روبرت فروست لصور الطبيعة في انتقاد المجتمع الحديث ودوره في تدمير الطبيعة النقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: روبرت فروست، الطبيعة الرومانسية، التوقف عند الغابة، الرمزية والصورة

## INTRODUCTION

This poem demonstrates the influence on Frost by American poets in the use of nature's elements in his poetry. Frost in this poem tried to speak with the beauty of nature and wrote about the grandeur of the forest and prairie through his poetic 'hymns'. This poem demonstrates the influence on Frost by other poets like Bryant, Wordsworth and Whittier who used nature as the objective in their poetry. Frost was inclined to write this poem in romantic style, because he was influenced by the poets who came before him through the nineteenth century. These poets wrote about romantic nature and used their poetical tools to reflect nature. Frost's reading of these poets and his love of nature encouraged him to make nature the objective in his poetry. Romanticism influenced Frost by way of a reaction to modern life, which was affected by the industrial revolution. This poem includes some of the most famous American poetry, which celebrates nature and the human condition.

'Stopping by woods on a snowy evening' was written at the end of the fourth decade of Frost's life, in 1922. It is an exaltation of nature's loveliness and was published as one of the *New Hampshire* collection. It is one of the most popular among Frost's poems. At the beginning of this poem, the reader feels that he reads an ode to the beauty of nature, because the speaker

appeared as a simple farmer on his homeward journey. The theme is that man is caught between nature and civilization. The message of the poem is that the lonely traveller stops his horse in the dark winter evening to watch the snow falling in the wood. He is afraid the owner of the property will be upset by his presence. Then, the narrator remembers that the owner lives far from the wood, so he is free to enjoy the beauty of the falling snow. However, his

stopping place is far away from any farmhouse. After some few minutes the traveller reluctantly continues on his way. According to Cox (1971, p. 30):

The haunting rhythms of 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' express the powerful fascination the woods have upon the lonely traveller, who, in the face of a long journey, descending night, and falling snow, pauses in the gathering gloom of the darkest evening of the year, transfixed by the compelling invitation of the forest.

The beauty of nature is described in this poem. Frost tried to visualise pure nature far from the civilization, when he imagined it alone at the darkest night in winter. The traveller was alone with his horse looking at this beautiful sight. He stopped to look at the falling snow on the trees and the lake. The traveller showed his

imagination when he was feeling that nature invited him to look on its purity and beauty.

Analysis of the poem

This poem represents the shapes and form of beautiful nature, using words like woods, snow, lake and weather, all that appear in the 7th and 8th lines, 'Between the woods and frozen lake / The darkest evening of the year'. Generally, this poem concentrates on the charming nature of the woods. The reader can sense that the forest was owned by the traveller, but the situation of alienation between traveller and woods makes a different sense to the reader, because the traveller's reluctance indicates something wrong has happened. The poem explains the relationship between the narrator and nature. The beauty of the woods influenced the traveller, when he was a passerby and stopped at night to contemplate the greatness of nature and its beauty, as he said in line 13 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep'. He was unsure if he knew it or not. It appeared alien to him; there is not any harmony

between them as mentioned in the 5th and 6th lines of the poem, 'My little horse must think it queer / To stop without a farmhouse near'. This alienation was caused by the isolation, when humans abandoned beautiful nature. Frost, in this poem 'Stopping by

Woods on a Snowy Evening‘ and other poem of ‘After Apple-picking‘ tried to represent the purity of nature, which is not found in urban areas. But this purity is polluted out by modern humans and that caused the feelings of alienation in this poem. These poems are similar in the use of symbolism like ‘sleep‘, although this word has many meanings as mentioned before, because they are nearer to being sleepy than being frightened at the end of poems. For example, in the poem ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening‘, Frost wrote:

But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep.

Also, Frost mentioned sleep at the end of his poem ‘After Apple-Picking‘ as:

The woodchuck could say whether it's like his Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,

Or just some human sleep.

Frost in these lines describes the meaning of sleep, which indicates many connotations like long sleep, or perhaps sleep signifies human death or perhaps just normal human sleep. Frost wrote his poem to make his readers think and analyse the meaning of the poem at all times.

The first stanza referred to the tension between what appears to be a more than common happiness in the beauties of nature, and the fear of the traveller from the owner of these woods, as in these lines:

Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village  
though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

This stanza explains the gap between modern societies and the beauty of nature. Frost criticized the tendency of humans to move to cities and abandon beautiful nature. Also, it reveals the deliberate negligence of nature by people who created the feeling of alienation and fear between humans and nature. The traveller felt alienated, when he was stopping at night in the woods. This feeling appeared from the first line, when the traveller wondered 'Whose woods these are I think I know'. He appeared unsure of his knowledge about this place, when he was stopping in it. The traveller here felt that all things in the woods were strange for him; the silent woods and the disused place, which caused an internal reaction for him towards this strange situation. Moreover, he was afraid that the owner might see him in spite of there being nobody there. Also, this poem referred to the fact that the village is beside the woods, as in the 2nd line of the poem, 'His house is in the

village though'. The people are not far from the beauty of nature, but they do not care for it. The beautiful sight of snow falling on the woods is watched by nobody. Nature is alone, because all the people are busy with the modern and noisy life.

The dissatisfaction is clear in the second stanza. The traveller indicates strange things that happened in the woods, because there is not a farmhouse, no people to interest him. This discontent appears in the 5th and 6th lines of poem like 'My little horse must think it queer / To stop without a farmhouse near'. The woods and frozen lake appeared abandoned in 'the darkest evening of the year'. This beautiful nature appears abandoned without houses or people. The traveller feels strange and fearful, when he was stopping with his horse at night in the isolated woods. Frost refers to the

relationship between humans and nature in modern life through this poem. The isolation and darkness control the tone of the poem. The woods and frozen lake appeared empty, nobody takes an interest in it, and all people are busy in the urban world far from the beauty of nature.

Silence covers the third quatrain in this poem except the sound 'of easy wind and downy flake'. The traveller's horse gives a message of protestation on their stopping alone in abandoned forest. For example, in the 9th and 10th line of the poem 'He gives his harness



bells a shake / To ask if there is some mistake'. There is something wrong in this human relationship with nature; it makes this a strange isolation. Even the animals wonder about this frightening silence. Frost expresses the sense of internal alienation, which is evoked by the isolated woods. These events mean that nothing really happened; it is a reflection of the mind and feelings of the traveller. Frost used the deep imagination in this poem to symbolize the relationship between humans and beautiful nature, he tried to emphasise that there is something wrong in this relationship. The humans did not care about the beautiful nature, because they were very busy with technological development and urbanization. These changes destroyed people`s enjoyment of the beauty of nature. Frost considered that the negligence of nature by people affected the relationship between humans and nature.

In the fourth quatrain, the word 'dark' is repeated once again, as in line 8 'darkest evening' and in line 13th of the poem 'lovely, dark and deep', but they have a different meaning. The dark is mentioned by the traveller as a lovely time and gives a deep feeling of the beauty of nature. The traveller was happy when he was watching the beautiful woods on that evening. This juxtaposition between the frozen lake, downy flake, easy wind and snow in the woods, at darkest evening made a strong

impact on the traveller. This feeling comes in two different ways. The first way comes as a frightened sense as in stanza two, and the other comes as a wonderful sense as in stanza four. Although the traveller enjoyed the beautiful sight of the woods, he must keep going in his way as he said to himself in the last three lines in the poem 'But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep / And miles to go before I sleep'. This quatrain gives us a glimpse that the traveller has woken up from his dream, especially when he begins his repetition in the last two lines, 'And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep'. He repeated it as if he was an insomniac. Frost used the word 'dark' to exhibit deep imagination in the beautiful nature through the lovely dark that he mentioned explicitly in the poem; he considered the dark has hidden meanings relating to natural beauty. Frost symbolized the alienation of nature through his description of its isolation. It expresses the internal isolation of humans.

The traveller in this poem began his story in some confusion. He staggered in his thinking and feeling from the first section of the poem. This situation continues to the end of the fourth quatrain. The traveller appeared unsure about everything as though he was under the effect of anaesthesia. The feeling of alienation affected him along his journey. The reader can find the isolation in each line in the poem; for example, in the 6th line of the poem \_To stop

without a farmhouse near' and in the 11th line of the poem, 'The only other sound's the sweep'. The traveller's stopping alone with his horse indicates there is nobody in the woods and that give him the feeling of aloneness; even the woods appear lonely in that night. There are no sounds, nor people, everything there is quiet and alone. Therefore, loneliness is used by Frost to represent the relationship between nature and civilization. This poem is crowded with symbols. For example, the use of the horse in lines 5th and 6th of the poem,

symbolizes something to guide the traveller through his life like an amiable person or perhaps his conscience. Frost used imagery in this poem, as in the 4th line of the poem, 'To watch his woods fill up with snow'; this represents the sight for the reader to imagine woods with snow. The metaphors are clearly used by Frost in this poem, as in the 13th line of the poem 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep'. Frost indicated the afterlife by the use of woods, as it could be considered that the man desires to escape from the pressure of life. Frost tried to reflect the difficulties of life in this poem, when he used his deep imagination to describe the lovely dark woods. He referred to the beautiful ambiguity of the dark woods, a place which was abandoned by people who do not enjoy that beautiful sight.

Symbolically, woods represent the country of the traveller. They have a clear and crisp appearance through filling up with snow, as in line 4, 'To watch his woods fill up with snow'. The poem tells us that the forest is full of hidden obstacles. For example, the traveller mentioned in the 2nd and 3rd line of the poem 'His house is in the village though / He will not see me stopping here', that refers to the speaker who is not alone, so there is a mysterious element to these woods as well. Nature is powerful in this poem and that is apparent through the image of the snowy woods and frozen lake at night, and the sound of wind, as in 'sound's the sweep'. The text reveals that Frost tries to send a message in this poem that the natural world is both compelling and good at convincing the traveller to forget about civilization. Although Frost mentioned the village and farmhouse, and these things are symbols of society and civilization, he refers to the fact that they are far from the woods. These symbols indicate the distant relationship between nature and civilization through the development of modern life, which makes more isolation between nature and humans. In this way, Frost criticized the modern, industrialized life in this poem.

Frost used some metaphors in this poem to indicate deeper meanings. The horse appears in this poem to represent other ideas,

when 'He gives his harness bells a shake, to ask if there is some mistake'. This sound represents the animal as a part of nature. It also protested about that strange situation. The horse tries to break the frightened silence, when he moves his harness bell. 'Sleep' is a solitary activity, which could be interpreted as a metaphor for death. Frost's characters represent a type of problem between beautiful nature and daily obligations; this representation appears in the last stanza, as a conflict between the enjoyment of beauty and the practical pressures of the daily life for people, as in the lines:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,

The persona 'I' in the poem gives us an affirmation that the traveller has a deep love for nature. When he was surrounded by nature, he felt in a state of harmony. Frost in this poem refers to the fact that there are many things' humans need to do before their death. This obligation illustrates the authentic life which he should live even he is dissatisfied about his life. According to Qiu (2010, p. 146):

Someone at this point would be bound to bring up the last clause, 'before I sleep', and those forces a re-examination of the abstraction 'beauty'. It is obvious that the persona is not speaking

about beauty in general, but about this particular kind of experience: the woods are not only 'lovely' but 'dark and deep.' It may be considered that the dark is not a sign of happiness or beauty. In this poem Frost used 'lovely', 'dark' and 'deep' to express his ideas about the hidden obstacle in the woods as mentioned above, and that he should continue in his life. He has some tasks to do before he dies. 'This pastoral poem reveals modern man's indifference and detachment from nature: the poem is symptomatic of humanity's materialistic relationship with nature' (Pedersen 1991, p. 56). The modern human is interested in the developments of technology and urbanization and that has led to negligence of the beauty of nature. Industrial tools have affected the pure nature through the contamination of the natural environment. Therefore, fear, mystery and misery may be the symbols of the poem. The traveller passes his road between 'the woods and the frozen lake' in the winter season. The frozen lake gives us more than sense, it represents what a frozen lake means, it indicates there is no movement, which symbolizes the cool relationship between humans and nature. Also, the coldness of the lake symbolizes the coldness of the relationship between beautiful nature and humans. The sight of the frozen lake in the bosom of the woods looks like an attractive vision that gives a sympathetic feeling. In this case

Frost criticizes civilization, because it ignored the beauty of nature. The frozen lake is made by pure snow, which falls down from the sky; it is a beautiful gift. The traveller has a conflict in his mind like a dramatic conflict in play; high conflict concentrates at the end of stanza three, for example, 'The only other sound's the sweep / Of easy wind and downy flake.'

### Form of the poem

This poem was written in traditional form of poetry writing; nevertheless, it has a complex method in the rhyme and tone. 'Stopping by Woods' represents the perfection of Frost's art in the straight lyric mood, his 'best bid for remembrance' ((Parini 1999, p. 212). The form of this poem is important to complete the understanding of this poem. The poem is written as a 'Rubaiyat' considering of four quatrains with rhyme scheme AABA, BBCB, CCDC. This form is similar to 'Omar

Khayyam quatrains'; the exception is the last stanza, which refers to the influence on Frost and his reading for eastern poetry. Frost wrote it using the rhyme scheme DDDD. Even though the rhyme in this poem is unrelenting and persistent, Frost demonstrates high skill in the use of poetical words in this poem.

The poem consists of four line stanzas with four feet to the line; the rhyme in the third line of the first stanza is similar to the first

two lines and fourth line in following stanza. This complex method is very difficult to write in English poetry. According to Ciardi (1959, p. 11), 'English, being a more agglomerate language, has far more final sounds, hence fewer of them rhyme'. In the English language it is not easy to summon one rhyme in the entire poem, because it does not have many words in the same rhyme. Frost wrote this poem by the rhyme for each three lines together and the fourth line is different in each quatrain. Ciardi (1959, p. 12) claimed that despite all of his self-imposed restrictions the poem seems to go effortlessly', Frost tended to lose the rhyme in the last stanza. He wrote this poem using more focus on the symbols and poetical images. However, he finished the last stanza by the repetition of rhyme, which illustrates the deep imagination of Frost.

## Conclusion

In an epoch of anxieties and uncertainties of intellectual tension, Frost went on a journey of conflict, which resulted in his poetic view of life that he presented through his work. Also, economic and social turbulence caused moral and spiritual frustration in society. At the same time, Frost was suffering from poverty and depression, he was isolated, and his poetry reflected this.



Nevertheless, Frost's reaction towards a difficult life might explain his attitudes towards escape or suicide, which are demonstrated through the depiction of his characters that are contemplating suicide and escape from their emotion as in his poem 'Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening'. The sad experiences in Frost's life were reflected in the use of literary expressions in his poetry. Despite the difficulties in his life, Frost had a continuous tone of going forward in the writing of his poetry. The poetry of Frost was generated from the tragedies he endured and took its tools from nature and society. Therefore, Frost criticized the neglect of the beauty of nature by the humanity after social change, which accompanied technological development. Also, Frost's poetry critiques people's behaviour towards nature.

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