

# A personal nature – the poet robert frost

[Environment](#), [Nature](#)



The poet Robert Frost has been described as "the gentle New England poet". This is because of his eloquent and subtle use of New England nature scenes as a metaphor for the human condition. In his poems Robert Frost manipulates nature, humanizing and exaggerating it with the purpose of creating a fictional world for his characters. This use of nature as the active driving force for the poems is vital to Robert Frost's subtle implication of deeper meanings in his poems.

Frank Lentricchia noted that in "Birches" nature "performs the potter's art" and molds ice onto the speaker's figurative birch tree which becomes "bracken by the load" (line 14). Such a vivid description of the natural process of winter storms leaving behind loads of ice to weigh down trees speaks volumes to the weight the speaker must feel on his life. The poem goes on to allow the speaker to re-live his fantasy and become a "swinger of the birches" (line 58).

In this metaphor, swinging in the birches -nature- is compared to leaving your cares behind and being happy again, in this way according to Frank Lentricchia, Frost "grants (the speaker's) wish." These acts of nature give an "original and distinctive vision to the poem" says John C. Kemp. This is obvious in Frank Lentricchia's allusion to Mother Nature in his analysis of the speaker's descent from heaven in which "the blessed pull of the earth is felt again" (Kemp). Because Mother Nature is nature herself the speaker feels that nature has a warm pull on man, further emphasizing and humanizing Frost's consistent use of nature.

Robert Frost goes even further than creating a metaphor of nature to human condition. The brilliance of the poet brings nature to a humanized level so he can manipulate nature itself to fit his motivation. The purpose of this is to rid the poem of contaminating "matter-of-fact" (line 22) verbiage. According to Frank Lentricchia the emotive power of the poem rises uncontaminated from the "morass of philosophical problems" that harm the poem if the poet decides to turn to knowledge of facts to influence a point (Lentricchia).

This theme of a humanized nature is evident in "Design" in which nature's design "steere[s] the white moth thither in the night," (line 12) giving nature an active, driving role in the poem's message of the design of nature. Frank Lentricchia also notes that this "humanized nature" indicates a "human will riding roughshod over a pliable external world," giving Robert Frost's characters a sense of separation from the "external" world and a feeling of security in nature.

In "Birches" nature stands humanized as the poet allows the speaker to transcend the scientific universe and, at the same time, the poet allows the fictive world to be penetrated by imagination (Lentricchia). This secure world in which Robert Frost's characters live in is not a realistic nature but rather an "unsanctioned vision of the world" (Lentricchia). An immediate example of this is Frost's "Design" in which the abnormal "dimpled and white" (line 1) spider sits atop the mutant "white heal-all" (line 2).

These two extremely rare albino obscurities are likely to never meet each other in the real world; however Robert Frost has idyllically introduced them as companions in nature's supreme design. The pleasant swinging of a boy in

a birch tree in "Birches" is also obviously fabricated because of the perfect, linear oscillations of the boy's swing. This lie is very effective, however because the smooth, downward swing of the speaker back to earth's "love" (line 51) is a redemptive personality inhabited by Robert Frost's Nature, giving man and Nature an intimate connection. The ice on the trees in "Birches" is also very idyllic.

Because of the weight of the ice, the branches may never "right themselves," (line 16) however the beauty of the ice makes one believe that the "inner dome of heaven" had fallen. Although nature in the form of ice represents life's burdens, it redeems its relationship with man through its manifestation of a birch tree in which it grants the speaker his wish by launching him into heaven and back again. Ralph Waldo Emerson describes man's relationship with nature so deeply that he felt man was "no better acquainted with his limbs" than he is "with the air, the mountains, the tides, the moon, and the sun" (Montiero).

Richard Gray comments that in "Design," Robert Frost's imaginary Nature "whisper[s] secret, sympathetic messages to us." Because of this perfect relationship established between nature and the characters, caused by the humanization of nature and the exaggerated fantasy world, Frost effectively portrays all of the character's emotions. Robert Frost's "resource as a poet" is effective enough to use nature not for "shock's and changes" to keep the reader interested, but rather as a useful tool to deliver the best message (Lentricchia).

Because of Frost's great manipulative talents he is able to do what most poets can't. For instance, Frank Lentricchia believes that in "Birches" Frost's use of the "pathless woods" would appear "trite" if any other poets were using it, but for Frost it only adds to the overall feeling of the poem. In "Birches," nature manifests itself in three beings- the ice on the tree, the fanciful birch which lifts men up into the heavens, and the "pathless woods" (line 43) which represents life's considerations.

As a result, the poem's passionate concluding lines, its closing pronouncements on life, death, and human aspiration, do not give the reader a sense of finality. Instead, "they are presented as doctrines that we must accept or reject on the basis of our belief in the speaker as a wise countryman whose familiarity with birch trees, ice storms, and pathless woods gives him authority as a philosopher" (Kemp). Therefore, the "the natural order - tree, ice crystal, pathless wood" functions as proof of the wisdom of Robert Frost (Kemp).

The manipulation of nature in Robert Frost's poetry turns it into a character rather than a withdrawn force; this character shares human emotion and fantasy and creates a very inviting fiction for the poem's characters to live in. Not only does this characterization emphasize Frost's emotions, but it gives meaning to them. Robert Frost's intention with poetry was to express his feelings in an uplifting way, not to pour out his personal struggles in a form of self-pity, and through such an exact setting of a personal nature, he accomplished just that.