

Literaty anaylsis



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Literary Analysis of “ Birches” By Robert Frost Robert Frost, one of the widely read American poets, is known for his simple use of language, treatment of nature and its landscapes, vivid imageries, and, simple depiction of the natural beauty of nature that surrounds the universe. The simplicity of Frost’s poems and his symbolic treatment of the natural world and human experiences have made him unique as a poet. In the poem “ Birches”, Frost resorts to his simple treatment of a birch swinger boy and his natural surroundings, and the literary devices employed in the poem makes it another tale dealing with human life and experiences. The essay tries to make a literary analysis of Frost’s poem “ Birches” laying special emphasis on its theme and the literary devices employed in it.

One of the major themes of the poem is that of imagination versus reality. The poet, like the birch swinger, tries to fly into an imaginary world, but he ultimately realizes that “ one must remain within the natural world itself and that complete escape into the world of the imagination is impossible” (“ Birches: Themes”). The poet finds the birch tree “ bend to left and right” and he understands the reality that it is the result of ice-storms. However, his imagination goes beyond the actual reason and concludes that some boy would be swinging on the birches. Thus, the tension between “ the real world and the world of the imagination, runs throughout Frosts poetry and gives the poem philosophical dimension and meaning far greater than that of a simple meditation on birch trees” (“ Birches: Introduction”). Later the poet himself identifies with the boy and considers himself to be a birch swinger. The poet is of the opinion that when one is “ weary of considerations” and life seems to be “ a pathless wood”, he/she is quite likely to “ to get away from the earth awhile”. Thus, the climbing of the boy in the poem symbolizes

man's escape from the real world to the world of imagination or illusion and his coming down to earth suggests coming back to the world of reality. For the poet, the escape from the earth is only momentary and this occasional climb to the world of imagination provides one with the inner strength to face the real world. As Frost himself puts it: " I'd like to get away from earth awhile / And then come back to it and begin over". At the end, the poet comes to the realization that the " earth is the right place for love" and that he cannot find a better place than this. Thus, the poem can be rightly understood as a conflict of the soul between two worlds- one imaginary and the other real.

The effective use of literary devices in " Birches" makes it rich. All throughout the poem human experience is brought out by the poet in a symbolic manner and the poet uses the symbol of the birch tree to symbolize life and the climbing of the tree can rightly be understood as man's futile attempts to escape from the harsh realities of life. Frost employs capturing similes abundantly in the poem. The part of the poem where he compares the birches to a girl who dries her hair in the sun, on her hands and knee is a classical example of his use of simile in the poem. For him, the birches trail " their leaves on the ground,/ Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair". Another instance in the poem is where the poet compares life to a pathless wood: " And life is too much like a pathless wood". The poem has an allegorical treatment as it " has a second meaning beneath the surface one" and the climbing of the birch swinger " suggests the value of learning and experience" (The Poetics of Robert Frost- Examples). Hyperbole is effectively employed by the poet in the poem when he exaggerates the melting down of the ice storms as " the inner dome of heaven had fallen".

Thus, one can undoubtedly state that it is the effective employment of literary devices like simile, symbolism and allegory that makes Frost a master craftsman who deals with human experiences in the natural world. The poem “ Birches” is not just about a birch swinger or his climbing up and down. On the other hand, the poem is a symbolic representation of human life where everyone tries to flee away from the real world to the world of imagination. Frost believed in the immense potentialities of the humans and therefore he believes that each climbing of the birches would provide man with better insights to face the stark reality that surrounds him, rather than being an escapist. No doubt, the world of Frost’s poetry is all about “ snow and crows and birches, as well as brooks and asters and hayfields and autumn leaves” (Frost & Schmidt 4), but all his poems do have something symbolic and serious to convey to the readers

Works Cited

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