

The Natural Philosophy of Robert Frost's Poetry from the Perspective of Ecocriticism

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Abstract: Robert Frost is the most popular poet and laureate in America in the 20th century and wrote many poems in his whole life. In his poems, we can find philosophical relationship between man and nature in Frost's poems. To read and reflect his poem from natural philosophy and ecocriticism perspectives have great significance on our modern life. This paper mainly studies Frost's poems from three aspects, emphasizing the intention, theme and rhythm of the poems themselves, studying the internal language, structure and function of the poems with the theoretical paradigms of British, American, new criticism and Russian formalism, applying the research methods of modernist literary theory to Frost's poems, and taking the poems of different stages as the noumenon in Destiny.

1. Introduction

Robert, as the most popular poet laureate in America in the 20th century, won four Pulitzer Prizes, wandered between New England and London all his life, roamed wild in natural forests, streams and rivers, was destitute and suffered hardships all his life, was as famous as Ye Zhi and Pound of his contemporaries, was loved by the world at that time, and was an American national poet. He was also invited to recite poems at the inauguration ceremony of President Kennedy, which was greatly respected and admired by Americans. Frost was born at a time when western capitalist countries accumulated primitive capital through overseas aggression and colonies, and completed the second industrial revolution. The rapid development of economy brought about the rapid expansion of material wealth and the improvement of people's material life.

2. Literature Review

Through consulting the related literature of HowNet, the author found that the research on Frost's poetry in recent five years is on the decline, and there are only 54 master's theses, only 3 doctoral theses and only 271 periodical theses, and most of them focus on a certain aspect of poetry research, and the research angle is too narrow. Most of the articles study the imagery in poetry, some of them are philosophical studies of poetry, and few of them are based on internal and external studies from the perspectives of language, literary history and philosophy. Li Ming (2009), taking Frost's "White Birch Tree" as an example, analyzed the poetic images in the white birch tree [1], which is the poet's

metaphor for the essence of poetry, and embodies the beauty of mystery and humanity. Yan Fang (2019) took Frost's three poems, "The Road Not Chosen", "Repairing the Wall"[2].

The image analysis of Stopping by the Forest on a Snowy Night points out the image features of "road", "wall" and "forest" respectively. Yang Lingyan makes a comparative study between modernist poetry and Pound's poetry, while Bin Luo uses the season in his poetry to metaphor the poet's melancholy theme. In Frost's poetry research, there are a lot of studies on imagery and metaphor, which is also one of the main features of his poetry, and it is worthy of further study and excavation. On the other hand, Frost was born in an era when transcendentalism and pragmatism prevailed. As a great natural pastoral poet in the 20th century, Frost was deeply influenced by it, and his literary creation was supported by transcendentalism and pragmatism in his works. Hu Dawei and Yin Kexiu (2015) took the comparison of Frost's and James's values as a starting point, proving that James's psychological theory and philosophical thoughts had a great influence on Frost and his poetics [3].

Pragmatic philosophy is not only reflected in Frost's historical theory and poetry creation, but also his own survival needs. In Frost's poetry, "Poetry should begin with happiness and end with wisdom" refers to the philosophical wisdom of pragmatism [4]. Guo Wenzheng (2007) and Fu Xiaona (2013) both believe that Robert Frost integrated his transcendental philosophy into his poetry creation and his life experience into his poetry [5-6]. Behind the poetic language is the contrast between objective nature and subjective thought, and man and nature are the world of unity of opposites. Therefore, Transcendentalism and Pragmatism can be said to be the two philosophical origins of Frost's poetry, which have been studied by more and more scholars throughout his life and his poetry creation [6-8]. In addition, ecological theory has been paid more and more attention by some scholars in recent years, including [9-11]. As Schumacher said, "Modern people don't regard nature as a part of nature, but as an external force to conquer and control nature. He even threatened to defeat nature and completely forgot that if he won, he would be a complete loser at the same time. To sum up, the author mainly discusses the imagery, rhythm, transcendentalism and pragmatism in Frost's poems from the linguistic context, cultural and historical context and philosophical context, so as to re-examine the relationship between man and nature from the perspective of eco-criticism, which is consistent with the ecological civilization value advocated by us at present, that is, "green mountains and green hills are Jinshan Yinshan", which has brought challenges to the survival and development of human beings under the present situation of increasingly prominent climate change, population explosion and environmental pollution. Therefore, it is of universal world significance and human value to promote the development and progress of all mankind by promoting Community of Shared Future for Mankind and constructing an ecological civilization concept that spans nationalities, races, regions, politics, culture and ecology.

3. The Intellectual Context of Robert Frost's Poems

The negative impact brought by this is naturally the spiritual emptiness and loneliness behind people's powerful material wealth. People have to satisfy the accumulation of material wealth as desperately as robots. This has brought a series of social problems: mental depression, seeking wealth after fame and gain for a moment's peace of mind, apathy and tension between people, rupture and abnormality of marriage relationship, etc. At the same time, the contradiction between nature and human beings began to stand out, and Darwin's theory of evolution deeply influenced people at that time and later generations. Under the domination of "Jungle Law", a view that human beings are the masters of nature emerged, and human beings constantly plundered wealth from nature. Ignoring the carrying capacity of the natural environment, the ecological crisis appeared, the environment deteriorated, and the conflict between man and the environment became more and more fierce. However, people at that time never looked back on their greed and fearfulness, and resource plunder caused the irreconcilable

contradiction between man and nature. Robert Frost, as a natural poet, mainly pays attention to man and nature and human psychology, cherishes the beauty of nature, and writes a lot of simple, natural and beautiful faces in the countryside of New England. Nature also projected into an image in the author's heart, which made him have an ecological consciousness at that time. Therefore, studying poetry from the perspective of eco-criticism, combining ecological knowledge with literature, studying literature from Darwin's theory of evolution and ecology, and interpreting people and their nature in Frost's texts with an eco-criticism concept can help people to establish a natural view that man and nature live in equality and harmony, which is of high ethical value for re-understanding human beings and the life of all things.

As a natural writer, he describes the wonderful natural scenery of New England, the daily life and hard work appointed by ordinary labor, and writes about the hardships of ordinary people. His poetry works are spread in ordinary scenes and are well known, which embodies the author's rich philosophy of life. All daily life flows into the new era with the spirit of the times, which brings endless thoughts to the life of contemporary people. As a poet in the transitional period between tradition and modernity, behind the colloquialism and conciseness of Frost's poetic language, there is a metaphor for the ultimate thinking of life and death, and loneliness and depression are revealed in the natural forest. That is, literature is life, and literature is a symbol of depression. He is deeply sad behind the seemingly simple poetic language, and there are huge waves and hidden tides in calm. Like Wordsworth, Frost has an idea inspired by imagination, which suddenly exists mysteriously and is strangely impersonal. Frost's turning point lies in bringing the poet into the intonation of ordinary discourse instead of elevating his imagination to a lofty position beyond the poet of ordinary discourse. Wordsworth thinks that a poet is a person who speaks to others from the height (or depth) of long-term experience. Frost thinks that a poet is a person who is fixed on the page by imagination. In his words, this sentence constitutes life in everyone's speech. Therefore, his use of language and metaphor provides a reference for our poetry creation.

4. The Features of Frost's Poems

4.1 Transcendentalism, Metaphor and Natural Image

Transcendentalism implied in poetry, the opposition between man and nature, the imagery of the objective world and the spiritual world under the mapping of nature require us to study Frost's poetry, examine the relationship between poetry and philosophy from an interdisciplinary perspective, and explore the natural ecological view, transcendentalism and pragmatism in poetry. At the same time, we should take the internal study of a literary noumenon as the content, and study the internal language features of poetry. Studying the context and theme of Frost's poetry development from the perspective of stylistics can better promote the internal and external research of poetry, provide a theme paradigm for poetry creation, and explain to us the poetic principle that the sound of sentences is more important than a single word.

Frost's poetry is an idyllic work reflecting the social reality. In Frost's poetry, tiny creatures and natural phenomena that are common in nature are everywhere. Metaphor and duality of poetic language are the charm of his poetry. While describing the natural scenery, he described the ordinary farmers and workers in New England with plain language during the period when modern poetry became obscure, which is full of democratic atmosphere and provides a model for our modern poetry creation. Metaphor under nature is the embodiment of the author's transcendentalism philosophy, and it is also a self-portrayal of the poet's miserable and lonely life. His viewpoint that metaphor is the whole of thinking seems not far away from our thoughts, but it is the place where our thoughts go the farthest. It is human beings who transform the cruelty of the world into beautiful and meaningful nature, and it is he who sublimates all natural things into beautiful things, so that we modern humans

can still maintain a natural view and establish a positive attitude towards life in cruel reality.

4.2 Interpretation of Ecocriticism Perspective

From the perspective of ecological crisis, Chinese leaders emphasized the ecological civilization concept of "green mountains and green hills are Jinshan Yinshan" which changed our traditional concept of emphasizing that human beings are the masters of nature in the past, and established a new model of the relationship between man and nature, which coincides with the embodiment of Frost's view of nature in our poems in the realistic sense, and has the consistency beyond time and space. In his poem "Repairing the Wall", we can also see the heart wall between people, which can further rise to the relationship between people, people and society, foreign culture and Chinese culture. It requires us to promote the communication and understanding of interpersonal relationships, exchange and learn from each other's cultures, and build a new era of Community of Shared Future for Mankind.

We takes metaphorical analysis and intentional schema of poetry as his research content, and uses Lakoff and Johnson's metaphorical theory. Secondly, from the perspective of literary history, two metaphorical perspectives of "plant-human" and "animal-human" were established. Yang Zongyi studied the iambic rhythm of "Dwelling by the Forest on a Snowy Night", and the use of rhymes metaphorically reflected the poet's wandering and hesitation in his life. Yan Fang's image of "Road" in *The Road Not Chosen* represents the road of life and her thoughts on life. Margery Sabin pointed out in *The Renewal of Literature* (1987) and *Poetry and Pragmatisim* (1992): 1. Emphasis on the tone of meaning and the speaker makes the image and complexity of Frost's original work profound and mysterious, and simplifies the meaningful voice into a clue towards practical criticism. 2. In comparison, the tone of speech in Frost's poems has not obviously declined and deformed. 3. The post-structuralism thinking on pronunciation has had a destructive impact on our understanding of Frost's poems. From the external research, Frost's research mainly focuses on literary history. Paul Mandoon thinks that his poetry has become a part of a wide network, which goes beyond the framework of characters and poetry itself, and text reading needs to be in a specific context. For example, the word "white" appears five times in *Destiny*, and three times in the first three lines:

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth

Here, rigid is once related to the Greek word *rhigos*, which means "frost". His second poem in *Further Range* is "Two Tramps in Muddy Times", which refers to "latent frost", implying that Frost tends to be "in a waiting state" and "concealed but able to be discovered".

In the fourth to sixth lines of "destiny", the "rigidity" of destiny is reflected again:

You can start in the morning by mixing all the features of death and disease, just like witch's broth.

The word "right" is related to the word "rigidity", and both contain the concept of integrity. But "correct" is also a pun of the word "ceremony". His "Morning Ceremony" and "Witch's Broth" may be stories that Macbeth's weird sisters are satirizing. Frost's creative behavior itself is a kind of witchcraft, implying a world in which "hidden frost" can be found.

I found a fat and white nest spider on a white wound, holding a moth like a white satin cloth. Jay Parini emphasized the importance of contextFu, which exists in every poem of Frost. David Sanders explored the theme of "the divided self" in Robert Frost, North of Boston, and *The Drama of Disappearance* in detail, which appeared in many poems in Frost's life. If we take his poems as an example, We can feel that he suffered from torture and pain between time and eternity, good and evil, and everything in the universe. He never stopped exploring these boundaries and tried to find peace and balance in the world, but he was always knocked down by difficulties, which made him face conflicts and made him panic. The third part of the thesis attempts to explore the unity of opposites

between man and nature in Frost's poems from the perspectives of transcendentalism and pragmatism and eco-criticism. Fu Xiaona pointed out in *Transcendentalism and Dualism: A Philosophical Study of Robert Frost's Poetry* that there are themes such as self-dependence, friendship, religion, life and natural environment in Frost's poetry [12], which is also the concrete embodiment of Emerson's transcendentalism in poetry. They are all optimistic about human instinct and believe in the potential of human self-improvement. In Frost's poetry, the poet is the representative of spirit and image. He can see things that others can't see, has super-perception ability, and reveals the transcendent nature. The poet is an observer, listener, prophet and language creator, and integrates transcendentalism philosophy into poetry creation.

Jonathan Levin pointed out that pragmatism developed from transcendentalism. At least since Emerson's time, American writers began to worry about the decline of language, especially when words became out of touch with things and separated from the spiritual life implied by the Bible. Frost expressed concern: Sometimes I completely doubt words, and I ask myself where they are. If these words have no effect, it is better to have no unless they bear fruit. They must be flat, just like a showdown in a poker game, which is not attractive. My definition of poetry will be Words that have become deeds. (CPPP 701) Richard Rorty (1979) further pointed out the principle of pragmatism, that an idea or proposition is not so much its correspondence with real objects in the world as its ability to exert effects on the world of these objects [13]. For Peirce and Dewey, it is mainly the observation of scientific methods. For example, in Frost's *White Birch*, the poet wandered between the earth and heaven by swinging the white birch tree, and emerged when the two opposing forces reached a momentary balance, and clearly expressed the pragmatic wisdom as a poem "It's good to walk like that, to leave and return like that/why people are not as good as a white birch swinger".

At the same time, this paper also analyzes the philosophical relationship between man and nature in Frost's poems with a view of ecological civilization in a new era. In Frost's poems, man and nature are closely related, and his poems contain rich philosophical wisdom. This is precisely another implication of rereading Frost's civilized ecological view in the 21st century under the environment of ecological environment crisis, global warming, sea level rise and extinction of animals and plants. In *A Study on Philosophical Characteristics of Frost's Poetry*, he put forward three philosophical relations in his poems: the philosophical characteristics of man and nature, man and man, and man and society, and explained them with three examples: *The Good Times Are Not Always in the Sky*, *The Silk Tent*, and *The Road Not Chosen*. Finally, he pointed out that the philosophical characteristics of his poems showed the advancement of thought and the uniqueness of technique when writing poems, and his philosophy. In *Robert Frost's Influence on Contemporary Literature*, Zhu Xiufang explained the influence of ecological theory in his works on Dangtai's ecological life, mainly involving poetry, the relationship between man and nature [14], in which the relationship between man and nature is the key expression of ecological concept in Robert Frost's poems, and the creation of poetry works is the concrete medium to reproduce the poet's ecological concept. Zhu Saiwei selected "Come in", "Mending the Wall" and "The Road Not Chosen" as the corpus to re-explore the philosophical implication of three levels reflected in poetry: man and nature, man and man, and man and self [15].

5. Conclusion

To sum up, through reading a large number of documents, the author looks at relevant works, which can be divided into three types: 1. Analysis of images, metaphors and symbols of specific poems, such as Wang Xingwei's comments on ambiguity in Robert Frost's poem *Good Times*; 2. From the philosophical point of view in Robert Frost's poems, philosophical analysis is mostly made from the combination of specific texts of people, people and society, and people and nature, such as the study

of philosophical characteristics of Xiong Wenxi Frost's poems.

From the research, we can find that most of them only pay attention to a single angle of study in literary works, such as theme, philosophical angle, or image, etc., and the research on language or stylistics is even less, but the author finds that this research is not comprehensive. The author tries to study Frost's poems from a systematic and comprehensive perspective, and studies Frost's poems in his life from the aspects of language, literature and history, and philosophy. It not only covers stylistics, images, metaphors, homophones, and rhythms at the language level, but also expounds the ecological view of harmonious coexistence between man and nature from the perspective of ecological criticism with transcendentalism and pragmatism, arousing people's protection of ecological environment and establishing people and nature in the form of literary poems. This is of great significance for people to better understand the social and spiritual values brought by poems far away from the crowd, to re-understand the status of human beings in nature and environment, and to build Community of Shared Future for Mankind.

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