ROBERT FROST : A CRITICAL STUDY IN MAJOR IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

BY
GAURANGA CHANDRA MOHANTA

2000

SUPERVISOR:
Dr B. K. BANERJEE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR
DARJEELING
WEST BENGAL

Robert Frost

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PREFACE

An original voice, Robert Frost (1874-1963) is one of the most talented and distinguished oligarchs of the twentieth century American poetry. He felt to find his avocational "vocation" in a period when there was no authoritative "singing strength" in the literary arena of America. When the literary journal, The Independent brought out his first professional poem "My Butterfly: An Elegy" in 1894, Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) could not yet get the scent of secrets of genius in them. Frost found his true metier at thirty-nine and stayed with it for the rest of his long life. The magic of his "new-world song" which immensely hinges on cloying images and signifying symbols wins much critical acclaim for him all over the world.

The distinctive characteristic of Frostian images and symbols which strikes one is the surface simplicity beneath which "lies a *selva oscura*".[1] But like Eliot Frost does not manipulate recondite or impenetrable images and symbols. Of course, like the Symbolist poets he dexterously deploys plurivalent symbols in his entire corpus. Considering Yeatsian image and symbol T. R. Henn intelligently discerns symbol "as a many-sided crystal".[2] And this is immaculately germane to the tenor of Frostian symbol which sheds shades of meaning or angles of vision.

There has been a spate of books on Frost and the Frost canon but critical literature has not paid adequate attention to Frost's imagistic and symbolistic repertory. Hence, I deliberate whether I could buckle down to my PhD dissertation on Frost's major images and symbols. I discussed my plan with my supervisor Dr Benoy Kumar Banerjee whose perspicacious directive, steady encouragement and profound affection infused me with unflagging confidence to prosecute the project and prepare this dissertation. To him I owe my foremost debt of gratitude.

It is noteworthy that this study is concerned with the major images and symbols evolved only in the Frost poetry. As a matter of fact we would not examine the images and symbols wielded in Frost's prose contributions— plays, short stories or sketches notably "A Way Out", "Old Stick-in-the-Mud", "The Wise Men", "A Just Judge", "Old Welch Goes to the Show", "Dalkin's Little Indulgence" and so forth. It won't be impertinent to specify that we used the expression "major images and symbols" to signify dominating and recurring images and symbols in Frost. Though Frost has never belonged to Symbolist or Imagist movement he spectacularly employs imagistic and symbolistic method of communication in his poetry. Frostian images and symbols are simultaneously dredged from phenomenal and spiritual world.

Our study in the Frostian major images and symbols is intended for tracing poetic evolution and exploring novelty of Frost's imagistic and symbolistic strategy. The entire project comprises four chapters. The first chapter, A Survey of Frost Criticism focuses on favourable and adverse criticism devoted to Frost's poetry. This, of course, seeks to justify the relevance of this dissertation. The second chapter, Frost: into His Own reviews Frost, the man and illumines his poetry wherein autobiographical lithographs scintillate. The third chapter, Images and Symbols: A Study in Theory and Practice deals with the scopes and functions of images and symbols particularly in poetry. Frost's imagistic and symbolistic credo and practice are also spotlighted in this chapter. The fourth chapter, The Frost Universe: A Study in Major Images and Symbols classifies and discusses predominant images and symbols evolved in the Frost poetry in an attempt to define the structural pattern of Frost's imaginative world. To trace the strategical development in Frost's imagistic and symbolistic artistry this chapter has been divided into three sections. The opening section, "Pipes in hands": Early Phase (1913 - 1916) examines major images and symbols manipulated in three volumes—A Boys Will (1913), North of Boston (1914) and Mountain Interval

(1916). In the early phase of the Frost poetry the images of "woods", "bird", "flower", "colour", "wall", "house", "road", "light", "moon", "death", "darkness" bulk large. Psychical, psychological, natural, intimate, colour, sexual, psychosexual, spiritual and religious symbols preponderantly wielded in this phase. The second section, "Toward the source": Middle Phase (1923-1942) considers the dominating images and symbols deployed in the four volumes—New Hampshire (1923), West-Running Brook (1928), A Further Range (1936) and A Witness Tree (1942). In these volumes the images which loom large are "star", "snow", "water", "animal", "woods", "wave", "brook", "sun", "moon" and "whiteness". The types of symbols which play a major role in middle phase are psychological, psychical, sexual, colour, conventional, cosmic and spiritual. The concluding section, "A line of shadowy tracks": Final Phase (1945 – 1962) delves deep into the major images and symbols employed in four volumes—A Masque of Reason (1945), Steeple Bush (1947), A Masque of Mercy (1947) and In the Clearing (1962). The key images which occur in these volume are "light", "tree", "bird", "weeds", "house", "water", "sun", "moon", "star", "storm", "animal", "death", "rebirth", "spirit", "flight", "substantiation" and "incarnation". Natural, colour, conventional, psychical, material and spiritual symbols are adroitly handled in the final phase of Frost's poetic career.

It is worth mentioning that for texual references, I depended on The Poetry of Robert Frost edited by Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1969). The research guidelines drawn up in MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers by Joseph Gibaldi (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 1996) have been strictly adhered to while preparing this dissertation.

I am grateful for courteous assistance I received from numerous individuals and institutions. I owe Dr Avoya Prasad Das of North Bengal

University a debt of gratitude for his generous support and encouragement. I acknowledge with pleasure the advice and valuable reactions of Professors Ms Rena Fraden of Pomona College, U.S.A., E Nageswara Rao of Indo American Centre for International Studies, Hyderabad, Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University, Bangladesh and Girindra N. Ray of North Bengal University, Darjeeling.

I would like to thank my well-wishers and colleagues especially Ms Manjulika Raha, Mr A. B. Siddique, Mr Shahadt Hossain, Mr Shashwata Bhattacharjee and Mr Netai Saha who have indefatigably been supportive of my work.

My father, Upendra Nath Mohanta, who would have been extremely pleased to notice the dissertation, unexpectedly passed away a few months ago. An endless source of inspiration he was to me. Today, with a very heavy heart I remember him along with my late loving mother, Parul Mohanta. My wife, Rina, always patient and resilient, solely managed household affairs so that I could devote all my efforts to this project. My little daughter, Twisha who tries to learn Frost by heart and pretends to be a Frost researcher made my work exquisitely delightful. I thank them with all my heart.

Ms Gouri Sen of the PhD section, North Bengal University, has given so much courteous help that she deserves very special mention.

I have counted tremendously on the library staff of North Bengal University, Dhaka University, Delhi University, American Centre Libraries, Calcutta, Delhi and IACIS, Hyderabad. Special thanks go to each of the members of these institutions.

I would like to thank Mr Sudhangshu Kr. Das of Computer Link, Shivmandir, for the scrupulous service he has rendered to me.

Last but not least, I am pleased to acknowledge my indebtedness to IACIS Awards Committee for providing me a fellowship grant (Teachers Study Grant) – an impetus to my research.

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Chapter - I

CHAPTER - I

A SURVEY OF FROST CRITICISM

Robert Frost (1874-1963), whom hails Randall Jarrell "the greatest of the American poets" "along with Stevens and Eliot"[1] has won international recognition in the realm of "arts and artifices of verse."[2] The extent of his reputation has been so pervasive that his enigmatic personality, thriving career and prodigious output provoked serious critical attention simultaneously at home and abroad. This present survey will provide some piquant glimpses into the individual and the poetic image of Frost, as divulged by the commentators of different interests.

Frost's strikingly long life of nearly eighty-nine years has become the focus of incisive discernment. It is patently obvious that without an accurate knowledge of the man, Frost's work or his stature could not precisely be appraised. Accordingly the familial tensions concerning the poet and the record of his life took shape in masses of biographical literature. In this regard we would refer to Gorham Munson's biographical volume, Robert Frost: A Study in Sensibility and Good Sense (New York: George H. Doran, 1927) which is the first of its genre. But it is outmoded and incomplete; it could not reach the required standard of a high calibre study. Nevertheless, the genealogical facts of the Frost family, which the thesis presents, are important and informative. Munson's interpretation of Frost as " the purest classical poet of America today " is still stimulating. Another interesting biographical volume Robert Frost : The Trial by Existence (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston,1960) has been presented by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant. Her study, which is largely based on her acquaintance

with Frost, provides plethora of material concerning the poet's life. But it does not examine the poet's life methodically. Evidently Mrs Sergeant discloses more information than Munson does. The difference between their viewpoints is also discernible, while Munson endeavours to give his thesis an interpretational slant, Sergeant remains content with her appraisal. Again, we could refer to Jean Gould, who in his 1964 study, Robert Frost: The Aim Was Song (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1964) cursorily exposes the contradiction in Frost's character. He does not deeply probe into the poet's life or poetic self. His biography lacks essential genealogical stresses of the Frost family. There are other stimulating studies of Frost's life. Lawrance Thompson's Robert Frost: The Early Years, 1874-1915 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966) is a full-length first-rate official biography. It surpasses the previous biographies in authenticity and scholarly interpretation. Thompson gains access to confidential Frost material; his penetrating analysis of genealogical stresses of the Frost family proves his supremacy over Gould or Sergeant. His biography is thoroughly documented. The stupendous accomplishment of this volume lies in the reinterpretation of Frost as a man and a poet. Lawrance Thompson's second volume Robert Frost: The Years of Triumph 1915-1938 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) which won the Pulitzer prize in the category of biography for 1970, casts a slur on the character of Robert Frost. In this volume, Thompson insensitively uses pejorative language underlining Frost's vindictive retaliations, professional rivalry, murderous inclinations, conniving malignancy, blazing cantankerousness, violent illiberalism and so forth. The volume ostensibly appears to damn and destroy the bulk of hegiographical writings relating to Frost, which appeared during the poet's life-time and shortly after his death. Nevertheless the massive volume is useful for its presentation of striking memorabilia.

All the biographies, written so far, have not only unfolded diverse facets of the man but also examined the fact that a good many poems turn up to be deeply

personal or distinctly self-revelatory. Louis Untermeyer appropriately observes: "Frost's poems are only superficially reticent; actually they are profound and personal revelations,"[3] Hence a study of the poet's life is of paramount importance for a perceptive judgement of his poetry.

Apart from biographical writings, a considerably massive and variegated bulk of criticism has grown up around the formidable corpus of Frost's works. Of course, uncanny is the pattern of critical reaction to Frost's oeuvre. Not only was Frost the only poet to win four Pulitzer prizes, he also was one of the few modern American poets whose work generally aroused favourable comments. Frost, nonetheless, could never escape being criticized by his detractors. This is why Frost's commentators may roughly be categorized into two groups: those who favourably consider his poetry and those who contend that " his poetry shows serious weakness in execution or philosophy which prevent him from attaining true greatness."[4] Before touching on the nature of the negative criticism, we would attempt to glimpse at the favourable criticism devoted to Frost's work.

In 1937 was published a very significant work on Frost and his work. It was Recognition of Robert Frost (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1937) edited by Richard Thornton. This was published in honour of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of A Boy's Will. The volume incorporates shining examples of the first British, American and continental favourable evaluations. The British critic Norman Douglas, in his notice (first published in The English Review, June, 1913) discovers "a wild racy flavour" in the poems of A Boy's Will and they suggest a response to nature to show the "true lyric feeling"[5] of Frost. Lascelles Abercrombie, in his review (first published in The Nation, London, June 13, 1914) upholds that Frost's similes and metaphors are usually striking because of the "concrete familiarity of the experiences they employ."[6] Frost's intimate friend Edward Thomas, in his review (first published in The English Review,

August, 1914) insists that Frost knows the life he writes about better than Wordsworth. Thomas argues "he (Frost) sympathises where Wordsworth contemplates"[7]. According to him, poems like "The Death of the Hired Man", "Home Burial", "The Black Cottage" and "The Wood-Pile" are "masterpieces of deep and mysterious tenderness."[8] This review is rewarding for a comparative study of Wordsworth and Frost. Edward Garnett's article (first published in The Atlantic Monthly, August, 1915) is tremendously perceptive. He judges Frost as "a fresh creative force, an original voice in literature"[9] He explicates several poems of Robert Frost. Regarding "Home Burial" he opines that "for tragic poignancy this piece stands by itself in American poetry."[10] The American critic Ezra Pound's observation is remarkably incisive and stimulating. In his article (first published in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, December, 1914) Pound glorifies Frost's artistic integrity and honesty for writing about New England rural life instead of "cribbing" themes from Ovid. Louis Untermeyer, in his article "Man and Poet" (published in Modern American Poetry, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936) considers Frost laudatorily. He observes the poet to be fortified by serenity and strengthened by his strength. "He has been intellectually revised and spiritually revived."[11] In the incisive essay "The Neighborliness of Robert Frost" (first published in The Nation, December 6, 1919) G.R. Elliott argues that the poet is precisely aware of "the human spirit of neighborliness." He defines neighbourliness as "the spirit which enables people to live together more or less fruitfully in a small community, and which, with all its meanness, comprises the basal conditions of wider human brotherhood."[12] Elliott's article is useful to comprehend the deeper meaning of Frost's society-oriented poetry. Mark Van Doren, in his article "The Permanence of Robert Frost" (first published in The American Scholar, Spring, 1936) categorically assesses Frost as a Symbolist poet. Among the continental critics Albert Feuillerat is remarkable for his scintillating observation. His essay (first published in Revue des deux mondes, September 1,

1923) considers the "Americanness" of Frost's poetry superbly. "His (Frost's) work" he insists "in fact has a flavor all its own, a somewhat tart flavor; but it owes its quality only to the land from which it has sprung."[13] More than fifty comments and essays collected in Recognition of Robert Frost highlight Frost criticism through 1936.

In 1942 Lawrance Thompson, who had consented to become Frost's biographer, published a perceptive book, entitled Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost (New York: Russell and Russell, 1942; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1961). It is a scholarly study which attempts to correct the previous failings in evaluating Frost's poetry. Thompson favourably considers Frost's theory of poetry, his dramatic narratives, lyrics and satires and his attitudes towards life and art. Beneath the intricate structure of Frost's poetry, this study attempts to reveal "not only wide technical range of intent and extent but also a spiritual depth of sight and insight".[14]

In 1953 Randall Jarrell, the most persuasive advocate of Robert Frost, published his significant book, Poetry and the Age (New York: Knopf, 1953) which contains two well-crafted and perceptive essays on Frost: "The Other Frost" and "To the Laodiceans". The bulk of Jarrell's criticism about Frost, though not massive, is invaluable for its incisiveness. According to Jarrell, Frost is not a "brilliant partial poet"[15] but a "complete" or a "representative" one whose vision of life and the world is comprehensive.

In the 1950s two other significant books were published. One is Sidney Cox's A Swinger of Birches: A Portrait of Robert Frost (New York: New York University Press, 1957) which attempts to expose various anecdotes about Frost's career and vivid memories of what the poet said. The book is also remarkable for its consideration of a good many poems of Frost, who, according to Cox, "has seen many oppositions become almost unions, ... on earth things are dual; so he

swings"[16]. This volume contains an introduction by Robert Frost who comments, "this ought to be a good book".[17] The other book is Reginald L. Cook's The Dimensions of Robert Frost (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1958) which attempts to discover the interrelation between the poet and his poetry. It also presents the theory of voice tones concerning the poetry of Robert Frost.

1960s, being the prolific years in Frost criticism, have seen a number of book-length appraisals which have broadened the horizon of Frost studies. An exhaustive study is John F. Lynen's The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960). It is devoted to establish Frost as a sophisticated artist whose technique is essentially pastoral. Lynen explains how the New England landscape enriches the bulk of the Frost canon metaphorically and symbolically. His interpretation of Frost's treatment of nature is imposing. He contends that, for Frost, nature is an image of the entire world of circumstances within which man discovers himself. Frost's pastoralism, concludes Lynen, does not make him an escapist, rather it establishes him as the major figure in contemporary literature. Radcliffe Squires's The Major Themes of Robert Frost (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963) is a scholarly study; it attempts to explore the legality of Frostian language, the relevance of Frost's work to life and "the philosophic muse that speaks in the center of his poetry."[18] In 1963 appeared Reuben A. Brower's The Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963). It provides a perceptive analysis of Frost's poetry particularly in the context of nineteenth century nature poetry. Brower's comparisons of Frost's poetry especially with those of Wordsworth and Emerson reveal a link between Frost and romantic progenitors. Critical literature of Frost is further enriched by Elizabeth Jennings's rewarding study, Frost (Edinburgh London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964). It presents an intuitive and chronological examination of all the volumes of Frost's poetry. Jennings rates Frost as a "philosophic poet"[19] and analyses the views of those commentators who

failed to grasp the profound resonance of Frost's poetry. The critics have looked upon this work as an important contribution to Frost scholarship. In 1966 was published a remarkable work on Frost and his poetry. It was Philip L. Gerber's Robert Frost (1966. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969). This critical study attempts to arrive at an acceptable definition of Robert Frost. It perceptively considers the poet's life, personality, craftsmanship, poetic theories and the major themes with which the poet is concerned.

In the 1970s Frost criticism reaches the most significant milestone. The avant-garde critic, Frank Lentricchia's Robert Frost: Modern Poetics and the Landscapes of Self (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1975) exposes Frost's realistic and ironic vision of the world. Lentricchia attempts to consider Frost's poetry in the context of what he calls Neo-Kantian philosophy. He believes that " Robert Frost occupies a position somewhere between the Neo-Kantian, object-oriented aesthetics of the new critics and the protophenomenology and existentialism of William James... [20]. Lentricchia's work is an example of scholarly philosophical-literary criticism. Throughout his work one can find references to not only Kant and William James but Schiller, Schelling, Hans Vaihinger, Nietzsche and others. Lentricchia argues Frost's modernism very strongly. Though Reuben Brower and John F. Lynen insisted on this point earlier, a difference exists between Lentricchia's viewpoint and that of his predecessors. While Brower and Lynen argue Frost's modernism on pastoral context, Lentricchia pleads this modernism on post-Kantian ground. Richard Poirier's Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) is an interesting and demanding study of Frost's poetry. Poirier argues that Frost's poetry remarkably explores the possible connection among various kinds of creativity in poetry, in sex and the seasons. Poirier convincingly establishes that Frost's work is suffused with sexuality and the pleasant activity of the genitalia. In the sonnet "The Silken Tent" Poirier discovers phallic implications in the "central cedar pole" and the

"going slightly taut/ in the capriciousness of summer air."[21] And the poem "All Revelation", at one level, discovers "life through the pleasure of the genitalia."[22] Poirier's study concerning the centrality of sexuality in Frost's poetry gains imposing insight into Frost criticism. The critic concludes, "Frost is a great poet of marriage, may be the greatest since Milton, and of the sexuality that goes with it".[23] There is another significant publication in the year 1979, Robert Frost and New England: The Poet as Regionalist (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979) by John C. Kemp. In this book Kemp persuasively considers Frost as a new England poet. He explains Frost's inductive approach to New England. According to him, Frost "locates his poems precisely and concretely, and his speakers react to their environments in varied, unpredictable ways."[24] He appreciates North of Boston for its vivid language, well crafted metrical forms, profound theme, unified vision and stimulating imagery. To him "North of Boston is a notable landmark in the history of American poetry." [25] Kemp, in his thesis, analyses the views of the commentators carefully. He refutes the argument of David Perkins who insists that Frost lacks the "seriousness, profundity, and commitment"[26] of a major poet. Kemp feels that Frost was the "most serious" about "one of the central problems that confronts the modern mind: the problem of meaning"[27] which has been important in the post-Darwinian, post-Freudian world. Kemp establishes Frost as a "very large poet" who possesses two qualities: "an extraordinary verbal genius" and "a powerful and meaningful vision of the human condition."[28]

In the 1980s there has been no dearth of Frost criticism. Dorothy Judd Hall published Robert Frost: Contours of Belief (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984). This volume resolutely considers the religious belief of Robert Frost who despised "religiosity". Hall repudiates the views of Hyatt Howe Waggoner, Yvor Winters, Joseph Warren Beach or their campfollowers who endeavour to interpret Frost as an agnostic or sceptic. She cogently analyses the religious function of Frost's

poetry and discloses "the link Frost perceived between metaphoric and spiritual revelation."[29] In 1988 appeared George Monteiro's Robert Frost and the New England Renaissance (Lexington, Kentucky: the University Press of Kentucky, 1988). It attempts to consider Frost's poetry within a New England literary context. Monteiro discloses how the poems and essays of Emerson, Thoreau and Emily Dickinson, in particular, and occasionally Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William James proffered an abundance of material that Frost incorporated into his New England poetry. Monteiro's critical approach enhances our interest in Frost. Some of the essays of his volume entitled "Dangling conversation", "Designs" and "Roads and Paths" which consider the poems "My butterfly", "Design" and "The Road not Taken", respectively, are well done.

In the 1990s appeared a handful of books widening the contour of Frost criticism. George F. Bagby's Frost and the Book of Nature (Knoxville: University of Tennesse Press, 1993) is a perceptive study of Frost's nature poems. Bagby interpretes Frost as an "emblem poet" who searches for truth in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau. For contextual study Bagby categorizes Frost's emblem poems or nature lyrics in four groups: "fablelike", "prototypical", "meditative", and "heuristic". Intellectually provocative, Bagby's thesis broadens our horizons. Katherine Kearns's Robert Frost and a Poetics of Appetite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) is the most stirring study since Richard Poirier's Robert Frost : The Work of Knowing. This thesis sheds a brilliant light on the sexulized metaphorical structure elevated by Robert Frost who is, to Kearns, "a master of the sexual innuendo, which is always seemingly belied by the hearty voice that utters it."[30] Kearns superbly analyses Frost's irony, his women characters, the role of eros in his work and his treatment of prosody and lyricism.

Like the favourable criticism the bulk of negative commentary on Frost is substantially enormous. From the 1910s began in fact the negative criticism about

Frost and his work. In 1917 was published Amy Lowell's Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917) which contains a long essay on Robert Frost. It is notorious for her fallacious arguments. Miss Lowell argues that Frost's poetry is strictly limited to New England themes. She claims that "North of Boston" is a "very sad book"[31] which displays death and disease of New England. She categorically identifies this volume as "an epitome of a decaying New England".[32] She explicates several poems of Robert Frost. To her "Home Burial" discloses "monotony and a mistaken attitude toward life bringing on insanity."[33] She finds "A Hundred Collars", "a little dull"[34] and fails to appreciate its humour. She erroneously contends that Frost lacks humour. Frost's reaction to her criticism is noteworthy. The poet, in a letter, writes to Edward Thomas, "Amy Lowell says I have no sense of humour, but sometimes I manage to be funny without that gift of the few."[35] Miss Lowell believes that Frost's poetry is pervaded by tragedy. Her view about the characters in Frost's poetry is also faulty. She observes Frost's characters as "leftovers of the old stock, morbid, pursued by phantoms, slowly sinking to insanity."[36] Moreover, Amy Lowell mistakenly comments that Frost fails to use dialect in his poetry.

In the 1930s the negative critics open up some acrid charges against Frost. R. P. Blackmur in his review (first published in The Nation, June 24, 1936) observes a weakness of craft in A Further Range. He categorically refuses to recognize Frost as a poet. Frost is assessed as a bard who fails to transform his instincts into true poetry. Blackmur defines a bard as an "easy going versifier of all that comes to hand." On the contrary , a poet is defined as a "maker in words, a true imager, of whatever reality there was in his experience" and who can distinguish between true subjects and "the false host of pseudo-subjects." To exemplify his point Blackmur suggests that Swinburne is a bard-cum-poet but Yeats is a poet. He contends that as a bard, Frost, who fails to have resort to the "complete act of craft"[37] is controlled by his instincts. Blackmur considers the

poem "Build Soil" as a "dull verse." Another negative critic, Cleanth Brooks is also remarkable for his pungent remarks. Brooks, in his book Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939. Chapel Hill : The University of North Carolina Press, 1967) argues that "much of Frost's poetry hardly rises above the level of the vignette of rural New England ... . In general, Frost's metaphors are few and tame; and the occasional bold metaphor is confined to his very lightest poems ... . Frost does not think through his images; he requires statements."[38] This commentary reveals that Brooks fails to appreciate the brilliant late poems of Frost. However, Brooks is fully aware of Frost's symbolic technique and precisely holds the view that Frost's "anecdote is absorbed into symbol."[39]

In 1944 was published Malcolm Cowley's article, "The Case Against Mr. Frost" (first published in The New Republic, September, 11, 18, 1944) which unfolds dissenting opinion of the critic. Cowley criticizes Robert Frost as a "social philosopher in verse". He contends that Frost, who is "opposed to innovations in art, ethics, science, industry or politics" dismisses Freudian psychology, objects to invention and even to the theory of evolution. Thus Frost is tremendously "walled in by the past"[40] and can never do anything positive to relieve or resolve the social problems. Cowley suggests that Frost fails to explore his innerself for he, in his poetry, refuses to enter the woods which symolise "uncharted country within ourselves".[41] He never considers Frost as a major or great poet. He goes on to insist that Frost is not a poet of the great New England spirit but one who "celebrates the diminished but prosperous and self-respecting New England of the tourist home and the antique shop in the abandoned gristmill."[42]

In 1957 appeared Yvor Winters' The function of Criticism: Problems and Exercises (1957. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962.). The fourth essay of this book is "Robert Frost, Or the Spiritual Drifter as Poet" (first published in The Sewanee Review, Autumn, 1948) which may be considered to be

the most significant negative evaluation of Frost. Winters caustically identifies Frost as a spiritual drifter for he appears to be something of an Emersonian without Emerson's religious conviction. Winters insists that Frost is a poet of "the minor theme, the casual approach, and the discretely eccentric attitude."[43] He holds that "the whimsical, accidental, and incomprehensible nature of the formative decision"[44] appears to be the identical themes of the poems "The Road Not Taken", "The Sound of the Trees", " The Hill Wife" and " The Bearer of Evil Tidings". Frost's failure to develop serious decisions and moral choices in his poems, cuts him off from a profound understanding of human experience. Winters conceives that poetry should be the means through which reasonable idea and moral instruction should be articulated. According to Winters Frost is entirely regardless of reason. To recapitulate his charges against Frost Winters notes that Frost exalts impulse but despises reason, makes formative decisions casually, advocates retreat from cooperative action and ignores the ideas of good and evil to be taken very seriously. The charges Winters lays against Frost are undue and untenable. He imprecisely puts much stress on man's rational faculty and not enough on his intuitive power which is the lifespring of poetry.[45] Nevertheless, Winters' judgement is awfully narrow for he believes in the social function of poetry and shows always a moralistic attitude to his criticism.

In the 1960s appeared George W. Nitchie's full-length study, Human Values in the Poetry of Robert Frost: A Study of a Poet's Convictions (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 1960) which is the most developed and analytic of the adverse criticisms. Nitchie discerns an anti-intellectual in Frost whose poems are testimony to his convictions while revealing fundamental indecisiveness, whimsicality, evasiveness and incoherence. According to Nitchie "The Bear" and "The Egg and the Machine" suggest anti-intellectual propensity and sympathy for "motiveless hatred of complex machinery."[46] "The Road Not Taken" and "The Sound of the Trees" display moments in which "crucial acts of choice are made in

an entirely whimsical manner."[47] Nitchie is seriously concerned with the state of human values in Frost's poetry. He insists that Frost has simplified the rural world which reduces human values in the poetry of Frost. The human situation, as it is noticed by Nitchie, is insular and fundamentally antisocial. Nitchie argues that Frost trusts will and distrusts intelligence. Distrusting intelligence and emphasizing will Frost proffers a world in which the mysteries of life can neither be investigated nor construed. The exercise of the will simply results in an incoherent vision of man. Frost's limitations, Nitchie enumerates, impel him to assess Frost's stature diminished as compared with Yeats, Eliot, Auden and Stevens. Nitchie's study, which is a compendium of most of the damning assessments, appears to be comprehensive. But its limitation extends to outlook and method as well. Like Yvor Winters, Nitchie is of a moral bias which causes him to evaluate Frost narrowly. Moreover, in comparing Frost's ideas with those of Yeats, Eliot, Auden or Stevens, Nitchie generally puts up Frost's worst poems against their best ones.

In 1976 was published a significant work, A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode (Cambridge: The Belknap press of Harvard University Press, 1976) by David Perkins. Perkins devotes a complete chapter to Frost in this book while studying other poets like Hardy, Pound, Eliot and Yeats in respective chapters. Perkins refuses to recognize Frost as a major poet along with Yeats or Eliot. He insists "there seems to be a difficulty about conceding that Frost is a major poet. His ironic playfulness is one cause of this dubiety"[48]. To Perkins Frost is not a serious poet who lacks profundity and commitment. But Kemp discerns a serious poet in Frost and we have already seen how he repudiates Perkins's view. Ethically inclined Perkins highly appreciates the penultimate line of Eliot's "The Waste Land". According to him, "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata" provides a basis for ordering human existence. He argues that the profound extent of "quasi-moral, quasi-religious satisfactions"[49] produced

by Sanskrit words might be definitely difficult to derive from Frost. Frost indeed did not make any allusion to the Vedic Scriptures or the Upanishads but the "quasi-moral" and "quasi-religious" elements are quite evident in his poems of which "Birches", After Apple Picking", "Maple", "A Loose Mountain" to name but a few.

This overall scenario of Frost criticism has however oversimplified the importance of imagery and symbols in the works of Frost. That area has not been that way explored. In this connection, we refer to two books. One is Dennis Vail's Robert Frost's Imagery and the Poetic Consciousness (Texas Tech University, Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1976) which attempts to examine the recurring patterns of symbolic imagery in Frost's lyrics to reveal the artistic consciousness of the poet. Vail contends that behind the visible world of Frost's poetry there exists a "world of the spirit, a separate higher world, hidden but deeply felt, from which the visible world is observed but which is nevertheless tied to it." He deals with only a substantial part of this higher and hidden world which concerns the "artist's consciousness of himself as artist."[50] In Vail's thesis the recurrent lyric images which have particularly been considered are trees and woods. Conspicuously Vail excludes a great many images employed in Frost's narrative and dramatic poems from his consideration. Accordingly, incisive though Vail's thesis is, it could not attain the virtue of comprehensiveness. And the other book is B. S. Brar's The Poetry of Robert Frost: Study in Symbolism (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991). It examines the symbolic technique and lofty drama of humanity evolved in Frost's poetry. Brar shows how Frost dramatizes human aspirations and anxieties through subtle symbolic devices. He considers Frost's symbolistic technique as rich and complex as Yeats's. The splendours of Frostian symbolism are manifold. Frostian symbolism encompasses the poet's biographical, sociological and psychological facets. Like Vail he too is deeply concerned with the exploration of hidden realities occurring behind the chain of natural

phenomena in Frost's poetry. To him Frost's varied symbolic patterns unfold "man's existence in relation to the vast universal phenomenon".[51] Brar's observation is of course worthwhile but it is however very concise. For example, he has approached only two poems "Mowing" and "My November Guest" from Frost's A Boy's Will.

The independent study of images or symbols can hardly divulge the complete vision of life of a great poet like Frost. Hence, major images and symbols of Frost's poetry become the main objective of this present dissertation.

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Chapter – II

CHAPTER - II

FROST : INTO HIS OWN

"...the most part listened

While Robert Frost kept on and on and on

In his slow New England fashion for our delight,

Holding us with shrewd turns and racy quips,

And the rare twinkle of his grave blue eyes."

Gibson, Wilfred. "The Golden Room ".

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The artist in Frost who "cries out for design",[1] discerns life to be inseparably linked with art. Frost's formidable bulk of poetry is so much "a part of his life that to tell his life would be to explain his poetry."[2]. Born in San Francisco on 26 March 1874, Robert Lee Frost was named after Robert E. Lee, the commander of the confederate armies. His father, William Prescott Frost Jr., a New Englander and a graduate of Harvard College, was a journalist on the San Francisco Bulletin; temperamentally he was a "doggedly honest Democrat"[3] and a flinty agnostic who eagerly imbibed Darwinism. Frost's mother Isabelle Moodie, on the other hand, had an intense leaning towards Presbyterianism. She was "fresh a Presbyterian from Scotland". Wordsworth, Bryant, Poe and Emerson were her favourites. It was Emerson who "turned her into a Unitarian. ...Reading on into Emerson, that is into 'Representative Men' until she got to Swedenborg, the

mystic, made her a Swedenborgian".[4] Thus hereditarily Robert Frost came by mixed tendencies. Frost's father died of tuberculosis in San Francisco when the poet was eleven. Isabelle Moodie Frost along with young Frost and his sister Jeanie took the coffin to New England for interment at home. This unanticipated tragedy cast a deep shadow on Frost family. Isabelle who received minimal help from her children's paternal grandparents met various difficulties. But intelligent as she was, she obtained the position of a teacher in a multi-grade school at Salem, New Hampshire. Here Frost along with his sister received formal primary education. Frost claimed that he began to read to himself at thirteen[5]. Frost's mother, to whom Frost was strongly attached, read aloud to him usually from Scotland's history, Robert Burn's poem, Sir Walter Scott's Tales of a Grandfather, the teachings of Swedenborg, Mac Donald's At the Back of the North Wind, W. H. Prescott's Conquest of Peru and Conquest of Mexico[6]. Frost's formative years were potently influenced by his mother who was intensely interested in literature.

Frost's intimate classmate at Salem was Charlie Peabody, an active daredevil who taught him how to subdue a birch that grew by the side of the school yard.[7] Frost's famous poem "Birches" is vividly reminiscent of this incident. Frost spent three years for his schooling at Salem. He then attended Lawrence (Massachusetts) High School where the poet in Frost could bid fair to unfold his creative talent. At age sixteen Frost wrote his first poem "La Noche Triste" which was published in the (Lawrence) High School Bulletin (May 1890). The account of the temporary Indian Victory over Cortez in Mexico City delineated in W.H. Prescott's The Conquest of Mexico stimulated him to compose this poem. The other three poems appeared in the same Bulletin, were "Song of the Wave" (May 1890), "A Dream of Julius Caesar" (April 1891), and "Class Hymn" (June 1892) of which "Class Hymn" was meant to be sung to a Beethoven melody.

Frost distinguished himself by his impressive performance in Lawrence High School. From this school he was graduated in 1892 sharing valedictorian honours with a classmate, Elinor Miriam White who once "bobbed up ... as a rival"[8] to Frost turns out now to be the sweetheart of the young poet. In the fall of 1892 Frost's paternal grandfather who expected him to become a lawyer, sent him to Dartmouth College at Hanover where he stayed less than a semester for he had already developed a strong detestation for academic learning. In the spring, 1893 Frost started teaching in a public school in Methuen, Massachusetts. But from 1894 to 1895 his heart was so agitated that he could not remain steady in a particular job. During these years he sporadically worked as light-trimmer and gate-tender in the Arlington Mill, Lawrence, as teacher in a district school, Salem and as journalist on the Lawrence weekly Sentinel and the Lawrence Daily American. Though Frost led almost a nomadic life with his odd jobs, he did not forget at all to broaden his horizons. He enjoyed reading novels in order to strengthen his "executive faculties."[9] The Polish trilogy With Fire and Sword, The Deluge and Pan Michael attracted him much. He learned a lot from Thomas Hardy and drew his inspiration from the prose of Scott and Stevenson. The specific poems which Frost highly appreciated are Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound", Keats's "The Fall of Hyperion", Tennyson's "The Epic [Morte d' Arthur]" and Browning's "Saul". Francis Palgrave's The Golden Treasury, an anthology of English songs and lyrics held great attraction for him. Apart from these, classics which he absorbed during these period are Shakespeare, Homer and Virgil.

Elinor Miriam White who had kindled irresistible love in Frost, went off to St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York to complete her education. Frost felt very desolate and did his best to persuade his sweetheart to marry him. But as she was strong-willed, she wanted to achieve her degree first, then marriage. However she wanted her future husband holding remunerative position before the bond of matrimony. Circumstances did not prove otherwise. In March, 1894 he

sold his first professional poem "My Butterfly : An Elegy" to a renowned New York periodical, The Independent for fifteen dollars. Elated at this memorable event, he privately printed a slim volume of poetry Twilight (1894) containing five pieces: "Twilight", "My Butterfly", "Summering", "The Falls" and "An Unhistoric Spot". Frost had only two leather bound copies of Twilight, one for Elinor White and the other for himself. He met his fiancée at St. Lawrence and presented the literary gift to her with a view to conquering her heart for ever. Her response was not that overwhelming. Rather she appeared to be having interested in some wooers at St. Lawrence University. Elinor's lukewarm response left Frost very dejected. In a mood of despondency he ripped up his own copy and flung it away. Afterwards he dramatically experienced the bleakness of life and stole away into the wilderness of the Dismal Swamp of Virginia at a considerable risk to himself. The journey to the imaginary forest, which appears as a "mask of gloom" in the poem "Into My Own", might have been connected with the young poet's unusual trip to the Dismal Swamp of Virginia.

The publication of "My Butterfly" in the November 1894 Independent was an exciting event in the poetic career of Frost. Although the poem is characterized by its archaism, some of its lines show originality of the apprentice poet. In the late forties, Frost himself informed Earle J. Bernheimer, "for the eight lines or so beginning 'The gray grass is scarce dappled with snow' which was when I first struck the note that was to be mine". [10] The Indiana poet-critic Maurice Thompson who was asked by the editor of The Independent to advise the young poet, discovered "some secret of genius"[11] in the elegy; and his advice for Frost was to seek a more profitable profession. Reverend Dr. William Hayes Ward, the editor of The Independent who himself wrote religious poetry and greatly admired Sidney Lanier's verses for their moral beauty and truth, suggested Frost to follow the poetic style of Lanier. Frost enthused over Lanier's artistc style but did not

follow it. Nor did he pay heed to the advice of Maurice Thompson. He rather continued to follow his own course to supplicate the Muse.

Every cloud has a silver lining. In the Spring of 1895, Frost started teaching in private school, launched and administered by his mother in Lawrence. Frost, who was depressed, suddenly got a fillip when Elinor joined the staff in the fall of 1895. Impatient as they were now for their union in marriage, they got married on December 19, 1895. Elinor bore the poet a son on September 25, 1896. And they fondly named the boy Elliott.

Now, Frost felt a strong sense of responsibility towards the members of his family. He might have realized that the avocation of writing poetry could hardly be a vocation. So he made his mind up to become a teacher of Greek and Latin in a high school. With this end in view, he entered Harvard College as a special undergraduate in the autumn of 1897 and underwent courses in Greek, Latin and Philosophy. Among the great teachers at Harvard, he was very enthusiastic about William James. Irving Babbit and George Santayana were also held in esteem by him. He listened eagerly to the Latin and Greek of Babbit and the "golden utterance"[12] of Santayana. He particularly liked Virgil's Eclogues and Georgics in his course at Harvard.[13]

The constrained college life turned out to be irksome to him. Frost recounts, "I could not do things because they had to be done. I suppose I have been guided in my life so far by instinct to protect what I was or wanted to be. The most pronounced instance where my life was influenced by this instinct was when I gave up my work at Harvard."[14] At Harvard Frost also became terribly sick; "as if something were very wrong with heart or stomach"[15] and he required to be nursed back to good health in a homely atmosphere. Furthermore, his unintermittent assistance seemed to be inevitable for stepping up the management of his mother's private school at Lawrence. These were the factors that compelled

him to withdraw from Harvard at the end of March, 1899 before completing sophomore class.

The poet was thwarted in his academic aspirations but he, who claimed to "live forever and ever unjaded"[16] with poetry, was buoyed up by the sparkle of his creative faculty. During the late 1890s he wrote and published some distinctive poems. The poems "The Birds Do Thus" (August 20, 1896) "Caesar's Lost Transport Ships" (January 13, 1897) and "Warning" (September 9, 1897) appeared in The Independent. An incidental poem entitled "Greece" (April 30, 1897) was published in the Boston Evening Transcript.

The Frosts were blessed with the second child, a daughter named Lesley in the Spring of 1899. But the joys of parenthood did not last long. The following year the first-born child died of cholera infantum. This premature death told heavily on the parents and consequently affected the relationship between Frost and his wife. The poem "Home Burial" partly informs that.[17]

No sooner had Frost settled down to life in the fall of 1900, on a farm in Derry, New Hampshire, purchased there by his grandfather, William Prescott Frost than his mother died of cancer in a sanatorium. Grieved deeply over the death of his son and mother he somehow began to maintain his family and felt that his muse had never deserted him.

Till the fall of 1909 Frost lived on his farm in Derry. The 9-year period at Derry farm could unmistakably be considered as the "most important in the life of Robert Frost, for both the man and the poet."[18] Frost was mysteriously indisposed but he felt comparatively well in the changed environment of the farm. He had considerably a large family. A son Carol and three daughters Irma, Majorie and Elinor Bettina were born during the Derry period. Among them Bettina died only within two days after her birth. The farming method of the poet was not entirely traditional. The neighbours were staggered by the

unconventionality of his farming. They could not countenance some of his methods, for instance, "his milking the cows at ten o'clock at night so as to sleep later in the morning. [19]

However, beset with financial pressure he turned back to teaching chiefly English at Pinkerton Academy in 1906. Meanwhile, he grew tired of straggling farm life; in 1907 he miraculously recovered from severe pneumonia, he was striken with. Anyway, he also taught "history, Latin and geometry"[20] at Pinkerton. As a teacher Frost was wonderfully informal. He would contend, "every teacher should have his time arranged to permit freer informal contacts with students"[21]. Students were allowed to come to him at any time outside the class periods. He used to go on a hike with the students after class periods and discussed literature, astronomy, sports with them in his easygoing way. He even used to coach them how to perform such plays as had never been produced at Pinkerton : Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Milton's Camus, Sheridan's The Rivals and Yeats's The Land of Heart's Desire and Cathleen ni hooliban[22]. Shaw's Arms and the Man and Synge's The Playboy of the Western World were Frost's favourite modern plays from which he used to read to some of the students in the evenings at his farm house.

In 1909 he retired from Derry farm to live in a rented apartment in Derry Village. Again in 1911 he moved with his family to Plymouth where he joined the staff of the New Hampshire State Normal School to teach psychology. He also taught there some significant works such as Plato's Republic and Rousseau's Emile. But he seemed to be keen to devote all his efforts to his poetic pursuits.

It is worth noting that Derry years were poetically prolific. The sequestered countryside with its stretch of woods, verdured valleys, wooded hills, reedy brooks, upper pastures, pale orchises, little farmhouses, barns, hay-loads and the unfurbished lifestyle of the rural Yankees whetted his creative faculties. In the 1900s Frost succeeded in publishing the poems "The Trial by Existence"

(October 11, 1906) in The Independent, "The Tuft of Flowers" (March 9, 1906) in the Derry Enterprise, "Ghost House" (March 1906), "The Flower-boat" (May 20, 1909) in the Youth's Companion, "A Line-storm Song" (October 1907) and "Into My Own" (May 1909) in the New England Magazine. In fact, he was equipped with the stuff of several volumes to be published. The importance of Derry period could precisely be construed from the poet's own account, "I might say the core of all my writing was probably the five free years I had there on the farm down the road a mile or two from Derry Village toward Lawrence"[23].

Frost was impatiently itching to live in seclusion with a view to devoting all his energies to poetry which could promote his career as a poet. Accordingly the Frosts thought of Vancouver where they could live unobtrusively. But as it was very expensive, they decided to sojourn in England, a "freer field of poetical composition"[24].

Frost reached London in 1912, found a little cottage in Beaconsfield for his family and began writing which he had "in mind to do for a long time"[25]. In a sense England was his "mother country" where his "career as a poet had its real beginnings"[26]. If the New England landscape stimulated him and provided him with the material of poetry, which was "native to the grain of his talent"[27], the intellectual climate of England brought him public recognition for which he had been waiting for twenty years with bated breath. He took his manuscript of A Boy's Will to the offices of David Nutt and Company in London and was amazed to have his manuscript accepted for publication. A Boy's Will which appeared in April, 1913 unheralded, won applause from the commentators and this promptly led to pleasant contacts in London's world of literature. In Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop he conversed with F. S. Flint who was interested in the French Symbolist movement and its relation to the new-fashioned Imagist movement in England. Flint played the initial role to put Frost in touch with the recalcitrant

exponent of new poetry, Ezra Pound who wrote a favourable appreciation of A Boy's Will in Harriet Monroe's influential magazine, Poetry : A Magazine of Verse. Pound praised his "swift and bold" images upholding his "good sense to speak naturally and to paint the thing, the thing as he sees it[28].

When North of Boston, Frost's second volume of dramatic narrative poems, was brought out in May, 1914, it was acclaimed by the authoritative critics. Pound in his review published in the Poetry (December 1914) christened Frost's poems "modern Georgics". Frost, of course, made the acquaintance of the "Georgian" poets notably Wilfred W. Gibson and Lascelles Abercrombie but he did not in fact belong to the Georgians. Pound who believed that Frost had the "seeds of grace"[29] wanted him in his Imagist soirée. But as a serious artist Frost temperamentally shunned the Imagist soirée where Pound, Flint, Aldington and Hilda Doolittle used to "rewrite each other's poems" to "squeeze the water out of them"[30].

It is worth mentioning that Frost's concept of "sound of sense" has to be considered within the context of his poetic career. In 1913, shortly after publication of A Boy's Will Frost put forth his concept of prosody or "sound of sense" (which he elsewhere called "sentence sounds") in a letter to his former student John T Bartlett :

To be perfectly frank with you I am one of the notable of my time... . I am possibly the only person going who works on any but a worn out theory (principle I had better to say) of versification. I alone of English writers have consciously set myself to make music out of what I may call the sound of sense[31].

Obviously Frost grew interested in the sense or the meaning which is conveyed by the sound. "Every meaning" he said "has a particular sound-posture". He, of course, made clarification to his sound-posturing poetic artistry : "What I am most interested in emphasizing in the application of this belief to art is the

sentence of sound, because to me a sentence is not interesting merely in conveying a meaning of words; it must do something more; it must convey a meaning by sound."[32]

According to Lawrance Thompson Frost "was working in a direction which took him beyond the Imagistes, beyond the Georgians, when he developed what he meant by the "sound of sense"[33]. Thus the sound-symbolic feature of Frost's poetic language essentially marks off his own domain, quite distinct from the Imagists' or Georgians'.

Of all the friends Frost made in England, the "warmest" one was Edward Thomas. Thomas learned "how to write about nature without prettification"[34] from Frost. He was initially a prose writer. Frost inspired him to write poems. He (Frost) recounted, "He (Thomas) did not write poetry until he started war and that had something to do with my life with him"[35]. When Thomas died on a French battlefield in 1917, Frost wrote to Thomas's widow "... he is all yours. But you must let me cry my cry for him as if he were almost all mine too"[36]. Frost's sense of deep-seated grief over the death of his friend also found expression in his elegy, "To E. T." In August 1914, in the wake of the first World War, Frost's literary fortunes in England inevitably got contracted.Against this inauspicious socio-political environment, Frost found his further stay in England quite inhospitable for him. So the Frosts set sail for America on February 13, 1915 together with Mervyn Thomas, son of Edward Thomas.

Robert Frost returned home on George Washington's birthday in 1915 to find himself "on the eve of his American fame"[37]. Shortly after his landing in New York, he simply wondered to find Amy Lowell's appreciation of North of Boston in The New Republic, the latest magazine which he had never seen before. To his astonishment, an American publisher Henry Holt and Company had already planned for printing American editions of North of Boston and A Boy's Will. As a

matter of fact North of Boston and A Boy's Will were brought out in February and April, 1915 respectively by Henry Holt and Company.

From now on Frost's poems began to appear steadily in the illustrious periodicals without a hitch. The Atlantic Monthly which once refused his poems to publish now brought out "Birches", "The Road Not Taken" in its August (1915) issue.

Frost's life was completely consecrated to his career. This time he tried to win over Louis Untermeyer to his literary thoughts and subsequently Untermeyer became the "conduit of Frost's critical ideas"[38]. Enchanted with the Franconia region of the White Mountains, Frost settled his family almost surreptitiously on a small farm in Franconia, New Hampshire and buckled down to poetic practice. Joseph Warren Beach who had called on Frost at this period, found him to be "full of the English poets of the time, whom he had known personally, and whose work he discussed with fine appreciation, but also with cool objective discrimination and detachment".

As regards the English classics he was not keen on Milton, for he could not hear "the sound of the human voice in his rolling lines." But he was quite enthusiastic about Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Browning because he discovered "the inflections of the speaking voice"[39] in their verse. Frost's idea of speaking tone of voice was fully developed in his essay "The Figure a Poem Makes" (1939) where he tells us that "the possibilities for tune from the dramatic tones of meaning struck across the rigidity of a limited meter are endless"[40].

Frost became flamboyant in the literary arena of America. As a wider audience had been prepared for him he began delivering public lectures and readings. In June, 1916 he read his eclogue "The Bonfire" on Phi Beta Kappa Day at Harvard. Now there was pressure on him from his publisher. This prompted him to publish his third volume of poetry. In November, 1916 was brought out

Mountain Interval representing so sincere impressions of life that those cannot "affect us as false fires"[41].

Now Frost had to earn a living from farming and poetry. To ameliorate his financial position, in spite of his growing cynical about academic life, in January 1917, he joined the faculty of Amherst College where he taught until May 1920. The year 1917 was not at all prolific so far as Frost's literary output was concerned; only three of his poems were published in the periodicals.

Frost sold his Franconia farm in the summer of 1920 and bought a farmhouse in South Shaftsbury, Vermont where he moved with his family. During the period 1920-1923 Frost published thirty-seven poems in several periodicals. He accumulated most of them as "notes and grace-notes" in New Hampshire which was brought out on November 15, 1923. New Hampshire, "the fruit of his (Frost's) ripest powers"[42] won the poet his first Pulitzer Prize in May 1924. From now on, he was adorn with awards and honours. During these years Amherst and Michigan had simultaneously been claiming the radiant company of the poet. Frost, however, favoured Amherst, served as Professor of English in Amherst College and remained there until 1938. Frost was demanded to teach three months in a year and to quote Elinor Frost, "his obligations here are really not tiring him at all"[43]. As a poet-teacher he taught with profound sensitivity and genial countenance. He acted as an energizer and let the students arouse the power inherent in them. During this period the sonnets and brief lyrical poems which he wrote in influential periodicals stamped him as a frugal poet. "Content with the frugal fare at the banquet of the muses"[44] he, on November 19, 1928, brought out his fifth volume, West-Running Brook where "beneath the graceful image" and "wisp of metaphor" "speaks a greatness of soul"[45]. The poems "A Peck of Gold" and "Once by the Pacific" contained in this volume are "reminiscent of my ten years as a child" said Frost "in San Francisco"[46].

While Frost the poet won his spurs Frost the man grew to be "acquainted with the night". On November 1, 1930 Frost published his Collected Poems which challenged the commentators to re-define the reputation, Frost enjoyed as one of the clearest voices of "Our Singing Strength"[47]. It won second Pulitzer Prize in 1931. Just after the publication of Collected Poems Frost was elected to the membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1936, he was appointed Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard. It was indeed quite an enviable position for a poet in America.

Frost's sister, Jeanie Florence who was mentally ill, died on September 7, 1929. This misfortune augured more dire tragedies in Frost's private life. Frost's loving daughter Marjorie who found a brief period of happiness with her husband Willard Edward Fraser, died of septicaemia on May 2, 1934. But the most desolating of all catastrophes in Frost's life was the death of his wife Elinor Frost of whom Frost said "the unspoken half of everything." [48] As Elinor Frost died of heart attack on March 20, 1938 in Gainesville, Florida, the poet's strength went out of him "to the last drop" and he felt "as a tree that has lost its whole surrounding forest by bad forestry"[49]. "It was hard for Robert Frost to maintain his balance", Louis Untermeyer poignantly recounts : "after Elinor's death. He sold the Amherst house where he and Elinor had lived; he resigned from the college; he talked recklessly, and for the first time in his life the man whose favourite tipple was ginger ale accepted any drink that was offered. He committed himself to a long and wearying lecture trip. He was elected to the Board of Overseers of Harvard University, but there was a long black period before he found anything resembling peace"[50]. Nevertheless his recklessness could not mask his inward maelstorm; his old resentment concerning Twilight intractably flared up again. He almost impulsively sold the only existing copy of Twilight to Earle J. Bernheimer for $4,000.

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Frost's friends and benefactors notably David McCord, Theodore Morrison and his wife Kathleen Morrison helped the poet immensely to avert a complete collapse. Cathleen Morrison served the poet as his dedicated secretary. At one time Frost erratically asked her to marry him but she was astute and gracious enough to rebuff him while remained his tried and true friend.

Tragedy struck Frost again in the fall of 1940. The poet was extremely overwhelmed by the sense of grief over the loss of his only living son, Carol, who had "an increasing variety of nervous psychic aberrations" from his boyhood. Carol wanted to be a poet like his father but he utterly "failed in poetry". As a father Frost also failed to trick or argue Carol into "believing he was the least successful". Despondent as he was "he killed himself with a deer-hunting rifle in his own home"[51].

Thus like Job Frost went through terrible ordeals. In the later years of his life he was advertently engrossed in the Bible so as to unearth the deeper meaning sheathed in ordeals. Frost's personal catastrophes, however, never turned him away from the domain of poetry. On May 20, 1936 appeared A Further Range, "a thoroughly satisfactory collection"[52] of poetry with a "wider reach for his imagery"[53]. This won the poet the Book-of-the-Month-Club award (1936) and the third Pulitzer Prize (1937). On February 16, 1939 Frost brought out an enlarged edition of Collected Poems prefixed with a compact essay entitled "The Figure a Poem Makes" which embodies Frost's poetic theories.

Now Frost was sixty-five years of age, – an age of retirement. At this stage human beings normally begin to lose physical and mental strength. But the case with Frost is quite different; he drew prowess from the resplendent reservoir of his inmost strength in order to go trekking in poetic territory. In less than ten years he brought out four volumes : A Witness Tree (April 23, 1942), which has a "lyric force and intensity that shows how a mind may know age without losing youth"[54],

fetched the poet his fourth Pulitzer Prize in 1943; A Masque of Reason (March 26, 1945), a poetic playlet which claims to be the forty-third chapter of the "Book of Job"; Steeple Bush (May 28, 1947) which symbolically presents "possible bad roads, possible good roads, sympathetic insight into fears ... flashes of hope lighting the way, even though they come in fiery fusion of stars or lightning of storm"[55]; and A Masque of Mercy (September 16, 1947) wherein the poet postulates "a retributive God, withholding all certainty, whose "justice" seems so severe and cruel as to amount to injustice"[56].

From the ostensibly simple lyrics of A Boy's Will to the wry metaphysics of A Masque of Mercy Frost endowed imagery with the symbolic meaning so stupendous that he was quite confident about the indestructibility of the bulk of his poetry. He took it for granted that his poetry would be "a series of revelations" for the readers. So the poems which he wanted to save, were accumulated and the volume of Complete Poems bulging with resonance was brought out in April, 1949, as he celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday.

On the event of his so-called seventy-fifth birthday[57], the United States Senate adopted a resolution in his honour extending the "felicitations of the Nation which he has served so well"[58].

During the 1950s Frost perhaps was at the height of his popularity when honours and degrees once again were bestowed upon him at home and abroad. When he was basking in the glow of his glory in America, he had been invited to visit South America, Israel, England, Ireland, Greece and Russia. In 1954 he went to Brazil as a delegate to the World Congress of Writers and impressively took on there statesmanly tasks; in 1957 he made a trip to England on a "good-will mission" under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State. In London, at a splendid dinner given in honour of Frost, T. S. Eliot spoke of Frost's stature in glowing terms. Eliot said, "Mr. Frost is one of the good poets, and I might say,

perhaps the most eminent, the most distinguished, I must call it, Anglo-American poet now living"[59] which moved Frost nearly to tears. This time Frost received honorary degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, Ohio State University and National University of Ireland. He was appointed Consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress for the term from 1958 to 1959. In 1961 he brilliantly served as "ambassador of good will" in Israel and Greece.

Frost reached the apex of his poetic career when he was invited to read a poem in the inauguration ceremonies for President John F. Kennedy on January 20, 1961. It was a cold blowy day with the sun glaring mercilessly from the sky. The virulent weather prevented the octogenerian poet reading his newly-composed poem "The Preface" but doughtily he recited "The Gift Outright" from memory. On his eighty-eighth birthday, he was awarded the Congressional Medal at the White House on March 26, 1962, by President Kennedy. On the same day Frost brought out his culminating volume In the Clearing with a "frontispiece" enunciating "God's own descent/ Into flesh". Frost's uncanny spiritual awareness made his poetry symbolically delectable. He was disenchanted with progress and mistrustful of "science which has taken man deeper and deeper into the matter, further into space, and further away from the spirit"[60]. But at the tail-end of his poetic career, Frost however reconciled himself to the strides of science. The mystical mantra of this "good Greek out of New England" was "know thyself". Like W. B.Yeats he heard the soul-soothing music of "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" "in the deep heart's core." It is important to note that two of his favourite books were "Robinson Crusoe, the self-sustaining cast-away, and Walden, the document of a man who cast himself away to find himself"[61].

Frost became one of the "unacknowledged legislators of the world". In August, 1962 he made a trip to the Soviet Union on a "good-will mission" under the aegis of the U.S. Department of State. He was visited there by Premier

Krushchev. "One of my greatest experiences" said Frost "was to talk to Krushchev.[62] At a literary concourse in Moscow Frost recited "Mending Wall", a symbolical poem which begins "Something there is that doesn't love a wall,/ That wants it down". Presumably the symbolical import of the poem was not precisely communicated to the Soviets for Frost read it in English. However, this was Frost's last grand public performance.

"Robert Frost was a primal energy". Old age could never quell the "volcano of passion" in him; it "burned to his last day"[63]. Coming back from Soviet Union he fell ill but still clung tenaciously to life. He entered Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, Boston on December 3, 1962, underwent prostate operation on December 10th and exposed a spirit of inexorable tenacity. He seemed to recuperate his health. But on December 23rd he suffered a severe heart attack which he amazingly recovered from. Then twice in a fortnight's period he suffered pulmonary embolism. In a letter to his old friends G. Roy and Mrs. Alma Elliot, dictated on January 12, 1963, he said, "If I only get well ... I'll go deeper into my life with you than I ever have before"[64]. But alas! the "grim ferryman" made frantic attempt to approach the poet. On January 29, 1963, Frost suffered the third embolism and he died still "going deeper into life". "And what better mourns a poet" wrote John Ciardi "than the act of reading him again so to be stored and restored by him? ... His genius, wild and ardent, remains to us in his poems ... He was our best"[65].

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Chapter – III

CHAPTER – III

IMAGES AND SYMBOLS: A STUDY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Imagery and after-imagery are about all
there is to poetry. Synecdoche and
Synecdoche. — My motto is that something
must be left to God.

Frost, Robert. Quoted by J.Mc Bride Dabbs.
"Robert Frost and the Dark Woods".
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How anyone can fail to see
Where perfectly in form and tint
The metaphor, the symbol lies!
Why will I not analogize?
(I do too much in some men's eyes.)

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The poetic landscape of Frost's universe is uniquely characterized by the proliferation of images and symbols. These are the "component structures" of poetry through which Frost's sensory and extrasensory experiences of phenomenal and noumenal cosmos are strikingly divulged. Frost's poetic career may be divided

into three phases: early phase (1913-1916), middle phase (1923-1942) and the final phase (1945-1962).

Before embarking on the discussion of major images and symbols which have come up during the respective phases of Frost's evolution as a poet, we would like to analyse the functions of images and symbols in literature in general and poetry in particular. Hence, this study of images and symbols.

The word "image" originates from "imago" and "imitary" (to imitate) revealing the truth that the imitation of sense-experience shapes an image. Accordingly an image may be visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory or tactile. In fact the term "image" or "imagery" has diverse meanings and connotations. Imagery, in general, covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, ideas, thoughts, states of mind and sensory or extrasensory experiences. Critics are of different views on imagery. Some of them constrict its scope to rhetorical figures while others widen its application. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon uses the term "image" to subsume "every kind of simile" as well as "every kind of metaphor" which she recognizes as "compressed simile"[1]. Her definition of an image has been confined to "the little word-picture used by a poet or prose writer to illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought"[2]. She thinks of image as "connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through any of his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well, and which he uses, in the forms of simile and metaphor in their widest sense, for purposes of analogy"[3]. Miss Spurgeon does not discriminate an image from a figure of speech. The analogy between two objects or ideas which simile and metaphor as figures of speech suggest is the precursory purpose of an image. Hence an image might be held to be analogous to a figure of speech. But a subtle distinction between an image and a figure of speech is quite discernible. A simile can exclusively be

employed as an embellishment. But it would certainly be a "mistake to think of a poet's image as merely an embellishment"[4]. Unlike a simile an image is essentially the inseparable component of a poem. Furthermore, a figure of speech can accomplish its intended purpose by bringing an analogy into focus. But an image signifies not only similitude but enriches the reader's experience with unprecedented poetic perception well-arrayed by imagination. As a result Spurgeon's interpretation of imagery can logically be dissented. John Middleton Murry in his penetrating essay "Metaphor" considers image perceptively ". ...If we conceive the 'image' not as primary and independent", he writes, "but as the most singular and potent instrument of the faculty of imagination — it is a more valuable word than those which it subsumes: metaphor and simile"[5].

There are some critics who unlike Spurgeon broaden the scope of the term "image". They employ it to include word or phrase conveying sensory experience, direct description as well as figures of speech. According to S. L. Bethell the term "image" embraces "any reference in word or phrase to a distinct object or class of objects, whether used figuratively or directly"[6]. But the intrepretation we find in C. D. Lewis, seems to be more convincing. Lewis defines a poetic image as "a picture made out of words", and further elucidates that "an epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive."[7] Following the study of "image" or "imagery" if we now apply the term "image" to Frost's lyric, "Going for Water" we find plethora of images — "well", "door", "pail", "can", "fields", "house" and "brook" which function as literal objects as seen orchestrated in the opening stanza:

The well was dry beside the door,
And so we went with pail and can
Across the fields behind the house
To seek the brook if still it ran;

Moreover, the stanza can also be looked upon as a literal imagery because the literal objects are here not interlaced figuratively. In the fifth stanza the two lovers, who enter the autumnal woods in search of water are depicted in an exhilarated mood while hearing the brook:

Each laid on other a staying hand
To listen ere we dared to look,
And in the hush we joined to make
We heard, we knew we heard the brook.

Here, the "staying hand" which "each laid on other" manifests deep-seated love; and unlike literal imagery it turns out to be a figurative image.

Image is the soul of poetry. It is the integral part of poetic imagination. Simply a word of a poem can well be termed as an image if it be a fusion of experience, consciousness and imagination. Similarly, a group of such words which establish "emotional logic" can precisely be recognized as an image.

From an earlier period of literature the poets have been making use of the imagery as an important poetical instrument. The significance of the use of image has distinctly been recognized by the great minds in all ages. To Aristotle "image" was an unconceivable term but he was quite aware of the signification of metaphor in poetry. He identified metaphor as "the process of transferring a word from one object of reference to another. Metaphor consists in applying to a thing a word that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or on grounds of analogy"[8]. What Aristotle said about metaphor is exclusively germane to the tenor of image. In the eighteenth century the scope of poetic image was utterly circumscribed. The Romantic and numerous Victorian poets used to believe that there were images which were essentially poetical and similarly others which

were quite unpoetical. The Imagist movement is a land mark in the history of literature. In the autumn of 1912 Ezra Pound published at the end of his book Ripostes, five poems of T. E. Hulme; Pound, for the first time introduced the term "Imagiste" in the prefatory note to Hulme's poetical works. Again, in the November 1912 issue of Poetry (Chicago) he categorized Richard Aldington as an "Imagiste". Pound advocated the modernist technique for a "direct treatment of the 'thing'" and stamped his axiom with the French spelling "Imagisme" to designate the aesthetic of "Les Imagistes." Frost described the Imagist movement as "the new Movement" and he identified Ezra Pound as "the Prime Mover in the Movement"[9]. But T. E. Hulme may precisely be called the "father of Imagism" because he was the first aesthetic philosopher-poet to ruminate over Imagist poetry. He considered imagery to be predominantly visual. In the volume, Speculations he held the view that poetry "is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. ...Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor; prose is an old pot that lets them leak out. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language"[10]. Pound's conception of "image" was also quite remarkable. He defined it as "that which *presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time*". He laconically averred that "it is better to present one Image in a life time than to produce voluminous works"[11]. All these intellectual jottings helped to formulate the Imagist credo. To the 1915 anthology of Some Imagist Poets was attached an unsigned preface which was prepared by Richard Aldington and was infinitesimally redacted by Amy Lowell[12]. In this preface the Imagist credo was enunciated.

The first point of imagist credo was "to use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word." Pound and Flint had exhorted the poets to avert metronomic

regularity. To this end the second point called for the creation of "new rhythms" but the professed Imagists did not insist upon free verse as the only means to that end: "we do not insist upon 'free-verse' as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea". The third point proclaimed "absolute freedom in the choice of subject". "We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane in the year 1911". It is worth noting that the Imagists hinted at an effective distinction between universals and particulars. "To present an image ..." reads the forth point, "we are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous." The fifth point put stress on production of poetry which is "hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite." Finally, the Imagists urged the poets to master the style of laconism in poetical composition: "... most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry..." [13].

The Imagists claimed that the imagist principles are the essentials of all great poetry. Of course it would not be onerous to explore all these imagist virtues in the Frost canon save the novelty of cadence arsing from free verse. This is veritably what the Imagists accomplished. F. S. Flint in his review of A Boy's Will mentions that what is "most characteristic" of Frost's poetry is "direct observation of the object and immediate correlation with the emotion"[14]. Pound eulogizes Frost's power of manipulating visual images[15]. In his review of North of Boston Pound insists that "Mr. Frost holds up a mirror to nature, not an oleograph". He appreciates Frost for his circumvention of "stilted pseudo-literary language, with all sorts of floridities and worn-out ornaments"[16]. Like Pound Amy Lowell descries numerous imagist elements in Frost's work. In her review of North of Boston she contends that "Frost's imagination is bounded by what he has seen";

hence his work is "almost photographic". She admires Frost for his words which are "simple, straightforward, direct." She wants to suggest that Frost is keen on creating new rhythms. "The poems are written for the most part in blank verse" which is, to her, "halting and maimed, like the life it portrays"[17]. Again, in her book Tendencies in Modern American Poetry Amy Lowell commends "poetic realism"[18] of Frost who is extolled as an "intuitive poet"[19]. The pictorial images of Frost's poetry hold a great attraction for her. She finds the poem "The Mountain" to be "eery bit of genre painting"[20]. To her the two-pointed ladder sticking through a tree in "After Apple-Picking" appears to be "exceedingly clean and bright as a picture"[21]. She extracts the opening passage from "The Black Cottage" where Frost deftly draws a pictorial background:

> We chanced in passing by that afternoon
> To catch it in a sort of special picture
> Among tar-banded ancient cherry trees,
> Set well back from the road in rank lodged grass,
> The little cottage we were speaking of,
> A front with just a door between two windows,
> Fresh painted by the shower a velvet black.

"Mr. Frost writes down exactly", she tells, "what he sees"[22]. "What he does not portray is simply what he does not see"[23].

The professed Imagists consider imagery as predominantly visual which is misleading. Frost was well aware of the limitation of an Imagist. "An Imagist is simply one", Frost says, "who insists on clearer sharper less muddled half realised images (chiefly eye images) than the common run of small poets ... . Strange with all their modernity and psychology they didn't have more to say about ear images and other images — even kinesthetic"[24]. Frost became impatient with the pyrotechnics of the Imagists. Amy Lowell's tendency to pervert his work to the

Imagist credo could well constrict his poetic stature. In fact we could draw a distinction between Frost's imagism and the imagism of the professed Imagists. To Frost Lowell's imagism "lay chiefly in images to the eyes"[25]. Ezra Pound's imagism is also based on pictorial images[26]. But the imagism which Frost argues for is the imagism of the ear[27]. "I cultivate ... the hearing imagination" Frost writes to John Cournos, "rather than the seeing imagination though I should not want to be without the latter"[28]. It is conspicuously palpable that the images of sound are given greater importance than those of sight. Frost again in 1914 writes to Sidney Cox "we value the seeing eye already. Time we said something about the hearing ear — the ear that calls up vivid sentence forms"[29]. Frost's sentence sound which can easily be correlated with metrical regularity distinguishes him from the Imagists. Sentence sounds are "gathered by the ear from vernacular" and only the most original writer "catches them fresh from talk, when they grow spontaneously". Sentence sounds are "definite entities"[30] and they are "as definitely things as any image of sight"[31]. Recognizability is a great virtue concerned with Frostian images or sentence sounds. To illustrate this virtue Frost's poem "A Patch of Old Snow" could be examined.

There's a patch of old snow in a corner,
That I should have guessed
Was a blow-away paper the rain
Had brought to rest.

It is speckled with grime as if
Small print overspread it,
The news of a day I've forgotten —
If I ever read it.

The poet depicts a patch of old snow like a blow-away newspaper which was brought to a corner of the wall by the rain to rest. It is grimy as with the print and news of a day the poet have forgotten, if he ever read it. The poem is replete with commonplace images to be easily recognized. Frost does not provide his readers "something they don't know". He endeavours "to tell them something ... they know and hadn't thought of saying. It must be something they recognize"[32]. The images of a "patch of old snow in a corner", "blow-away paper", snow "speckled with grime" and "the news of a day" what people read in newspapers are precisely recognizable. The images are starkly "common in experience". The principium which Frost upholds to explicate his poetics is "common in experience — uncommon in writing". The "common in experience" encompasses not only subject matter, words and image but mood and tone[33]. The image of "the news of a day I've forgotten" which indicates forgetfulness is neither "bookish" nor "invented". It is "caught fresh from the mouths of the people"[34]. The effectiveness of this image lies largely on "special tone"[35]. This image characterizes sentence sound which is the vital component of Frost's poetry. "A man is a marked writer", Frost says, "if his words are largely strung on the more striking sentence sounds"[36]. According to him sentence sounds cannot be created. "What we feel as creation", he says, "is only selection and grouping"[37]. What Frost states here, we think, underscores the creative power of imagery in general. In this connection R. H. Fogle's observation concerning the function of imagery arrests our attention. "The essential quality and function of imagery", Fogle says "is a kind of creation; by the bringing-together of diverse objects, states of mind, or concepts new relationship are discovered"[38]. Thus "a patch of old snow" and "a blow-away paper" which ostensibly turn out to be disparate from each other are brought together for they possess analogous features of being blown in the wind on a rainy day. Hence, the trenchant comparison between the two images figures an unprecedented structure of thought.

Good imagery is imposingly imaginal. It does not merely order the common experience; sometimes it unfolds and sets out complex psychical topography. Frost insists "imagery and after- imagery are about all there is to poetry"[39]. After-image is a psychological term denoting an image or sensation which persists or recurs after the external stimulus has been withdrawn. Perfect examples of after-images could be cited from Frost's "After Apple-Picking". As the apple picker falls into a slumber due to enervating exertion of apple-picking, he experiences the vision of "magnified apples" appearing and disappearing, keeps hearing their "rumbling sound" going into the cellar bin and feels "the ache" in his "instep arch" that "keeps the pressure of a ladder-round". Here the "magnified apples" characterize visual after-image while "rumbling sound" of the apples and "the ache" in the "instep arch" represent auditory and kinaesthetic after-images respectively. Frost remarks "sight and insight makes poetry"[40]. Sight is concerned with physical image but insight is associated with mental after- imagery. Thus Frost's imagistic technique assumes" a dynamic interaction between the sensory faculties and the intellectual-emotional-psychic"[41].

The poetic imagery is the basis of the symbolic strategy of a poet. A symbol is a compact communicative component intended to represent or stand for a person, an object or idea. Usually each of the images cannot be transmuted into symbol. Symbol can be interchangeably used with image on certain occasions. It is unitive like image. By uniting the diverse stuff "it can organize experience into a kind of order and revealing the complex relationships among seemingly divided things"[42]. Jung also identifies symbol as reconciler; to him it unites the unconscious with the conscious. Further, when an image works suggestively it can never be distinguished from a symbol. The images of the Symbolist poets are essentially symbolic. Stéphane Mallarmé and his myrmidons made use of visible images to convey "supernatural experience"[43]. Almost every word of their poetry is a symbol. William Blake's and W. B. Yeats's poems are replete with symbolic

imagery. Northrop Frye in his study of Yeats's language of symbolism insists "... the imagery of poetry is a set of symbolic conventions"[44]. According to Cleanth Brooks Yeats's symbols are "concrete and meaningful images"[45]. Thus we see that the Symbolist symbol is simply an image imbued with suggestive or mysterious import. Frost's symbolic strategy is also almost analogous to that of a Symbolist. Frost selects an image to make it "a symbol of something else which is larger or deeper than itself"[46].

Before focusing precisely on Frostian symbolism it would not be impertinent to descry the evolution of symbolism. The word "symbol" is derived from the Greek etymon "symbolon" indicating "a preconcerted secret sign by which friends, married couples, kin or members of a society recognized each other"[47]. But symbol was not treated simply as a sign or token of recognition. It was also considered to have a numinous character which is to be discerned in Christianity with the sacraments. In the Eucharist "wine" and "bread" represent the "blood" and "body" of Christ.

Poetry of all ages is in essence symbolic. But during the nineteenth century symbolism in poetry formally gained momentum in France. In the 1860's a group of French poets, labelling them as the Parnassians, protested against Romanticism. During the period 1866 - 1876, they brought out three volumes of Le Parnasse Contemporain wherein Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, José-Maria de Hérédia, Leconte de Lisle, Sully Prudhomme, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Catulle Mendès and Francois Coppée contributed their poems which were characterized by objectivity and conformity to form. Their adherence to materialistic values led them to follow descriptive style. In addition, they excluded subjective elements from their poems.

But a few Parnassians notably Verlaine and Mallarmé, who had a mystical bent, could not approve of objective ideal in poetry. Hence they inevitably emerged as the leading exponents of the Symbolist Movement. Verlaine and

Mallarmé were the disciples of Charles Baudelaire who was "the first to exalt the value of symbols"[48]. Thus Baudelaire is precisely called the "father of Symbolism" : "ni Verlaine, ni Mallarmé, ni Rimbaud", Valéry remarks in "Situation de Baudelaire", "n'eussent étc ce qu'ils furent sans la lecture qu'ils firent des Fleurs du mal à l'age décisif"[49].

Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal was brought out in 1857. It struck a deeply symbolic note which was signally illustrated in his sonnet "Correspondances":

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l' observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, less couleurs et les sons se réspondent...[50].

The predominant images of this sonnet are pillars and temple which are profoundly symbolical. Nature, the depository of symbols, is represented by temple. According to Hazard Adams temple suggests "the rites of imagination to be performed by the poet-priest"[51]. The pillars symbolize the trees. "Forests of symbols" at times yield perplexing messages through various senses — sounds, scents and colours. A mystically talented poet can grasp these messages. Baudelaire wants to suggest that the diverse sensory or extrasensory experiences are not themselves discordant. It is the synaesthetic symbol that correlates them. The synaesthetic symbolism of this sonnet is also indicative of "the order of harmony in the other world"[52].

Edger Allan Poe was an influential precursor of the Symbolists. In the mid nineteenth century Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman and even Emerson endeavoured to sustain symbolism in America. It is worth noting that Baudelaire felt exhilarated when he first read Poe in 1847. Subsequently he translated Poe in French and brought out a volume of Poe's tales in 1852. His critical writings rectified romantic looseness and pared down romantic extravagance[53]. All the French Symbolists considered "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle" almost as gospel. According to Poe the indefiniteness of music should characterize the soul of poetry. "It is in Music, perhaps", he writes, "that the soul most nearly attains ... the creation of Supernal Beauty"[54]. Baudelaire was intensely influenced by Poe's doctrine — so much so that he considered poetry as a composition which should strive for capturing an indefiniteness of effect. Both Baudelaire and Mallarmé eulogized Poe's occult aestheticism.

Symbolism may be characterized by mysticism. Unlike the Realists the Symbolists would exploit word as a mystical link between everyday world and ideal world. Mallarmé made use of mystically evocative symbols by which the readers were inducted into an ideal world. Almost like a Yeatsian rose, the flower which Mallarmé limns in his verse "Prose pour des Esseintes" does not resemble a real flower, for it is infused with ideal beauty. It absolutely transcends the temporal character of any flower. Hence C. M. Bowra precisely remarks, "symbolism ... was a mystical form of Aestheticism"[55].

Music is a quintessential component of Symbolist poetry. The Symbolists were immensely swayed by the sonority of Wagner's music. They strained every nerve to bring poetry to the condition of music. Mallarmé and Verlaine attached stupendous importance to it. In his poem "Art Poetique" Verlaine proclaimed,

> De la musique avant toute chose;
> De la musique encore et toujours.

Suggestivity is an essential element of symbolism. The symbolists learnt systematical exploitation of suggestivity from their "great master" Edgar Allan Poe. Baudelaire identified suggestivity with magic and strangeness integrated with beauty. He aired his views that this strangeness was in fact the effect of combination of subject and object. "What is the modern conception of pure art? It is the creation of a suggestive magic", he tells, "containing both the object and the subject, the world outside the artist and the artist himself"[56]. For Mallarmé suggestivity is fundamentally linguistic. His words do not describe or name the objects; but they suggest and evoke "the aroma, the air"[57]of the objects. Arthur Symons reminds us of Mallarmé's principle: "to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create"[58]. Moreover, Mallarmé's conception of suggestivity correlates poetic language with dream and music.

At times Symbolist poetry emerges as an esoteric study of interior phases of the poet's mind. Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" is an instance of esoteric poem which exquisitely exhibits hermetic and narcissistic ideals.

Nonetheless, the characteristic manipulation of plurivalent symbols is a distinctive feature of symbolism. A Symbolist symbol "acts as a turn-table" which can provide "several possible meanings". Apart from the covert meaning for the poet, a symbol may have an array of meanings, "some of which the poet may not have thought of"[59].

Arthur Symons who introduced the theory of symbolism into England, dedicated his book Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899) to Yeats. Symons identified symbolism as "a literature in which the visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream"[60]. Symons could not hide his extra predilection for mysticism. This was of course, dispraised by the French critic Henri Peyre[61]. Hoever, what Yeats learnt of the philosophy of symbolism from Symons was pretty flimsy. Yeats had original conception about symbolism.

He recognized two types of symbols — the emotional and the intellectual. Emotional symbols "evoke emotions alone" while the intellectual symbols "evoke ideas alone, or ideas mingled with emotions"[62]. That the symbols could either be evocative of emotions or ideas was quite alien to Mallarmé[63]. Mallarmean symbol was mere a vehicle for aesthetically mystic experience. Further, there is a distinction between Mallarmean and Yeatsian mysticism. Yeatsian mysticism is not "aesthetic rapture ... but a belief in powers behind the visible world, powers that are evoked from dream and trance"[64]. Moreover, like Goethe, Schelling or Coleridge, Yeats differentiated symbol from allegory. But what we find in the Symbolists specially in Baudelaire is quite antithetical to Yeatsian view. Like Winckelmann, Lessing or Herder Baudelaire does not distinguish between symbol and allegory. Baudelairean symbol can interchangeably be used with allegory. To Yeats allegory derives from fancy. Yeats who is "for the most part bored by allegory" identifies it as the function of what Blake called the "daughters of memory"[65]. But symbol, "the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame"[66], is an architecture of imagination. Yeatsian notion of symbol-allegory antithesis tones up the spiritual character of the symbol. Yeats's symbols such as the sun, the moon, the rose, the sea, the directions of the compass and numerous geometrical designs aptly conjure up invisible spiritual essence.

Frost's symbolism, like that of Yeats, is thought-provoking and intricate. Mark Van Doren insists, "Mr. Frost is as skilful a Symbolist as anyone ..."[67]. Nevertheless, an ideological distinction could be drawn between Frostian and Symbolist symbolism. In an interview with Rose C. Feld, Frost declares, "I was brought up a Swedenborgian. I am not a Swedenborgian now. But there's a good deal of it that's left with me. I am a mystic. I believe in symbols. I believe in change and in changing symbols. Yet that doesn't take me away from the kindly contact of human beings. No, it brings me closer to them." [68] Hence, we could

easily apprehend that as a Symbolist Frost is less mystical than Mallarmé or Yeats. He is at heart a contemplative spectator of "the earth and the ways of man on the earth".[69]

Unlike Mallarmé, Verlaine or Laforgue, Frost employs commonplace images and exoteric symbols in his poetry. Frost proclaims, "I don't think a thing ought to be obvious before it is said, but it ought to be obvious when it is said"[70]. Certainly he attaches greater importance to communication than "unique expression"[71]. Frost's language is not esoteric but "his meanings often plumb fathomless depth"[72]. He never orchestrates obscure word or arcane phrase. What he endeavours is to renew word to make them symbolically meaningful. "The whole function of poetry", he says "is the renewal of words, is the making of words mean again what they meant".[73]

Like a Symbolist symbol Frostian symbol is precisely plurivalent. It resembles a many-sided crystal sparkling with shades of meaning. "The thing I'm saying", Frost maintains,"has got another behind it — all sorts of analogies. It's a symbol of many things".[74]

Frost's symbolism is charaterized by musicality. Verlaine wanted his verse to be purely musical. Valéry's poems which resemble songs are mostly lyrical. Similarly Frost's lyrics are intensely musical. To Frost the entire poem, which is ordered in the metric frame is a symbol. "Every single poem", Frost says, "written regular is a symbol.small or great".[75] It is worth noting that the French Symbolists renounced the oratorical tradition of the French alexandrine, and in some cases, they absolutely abjured rhyme. Gustave Kahn is usually accredited with having invented free verse which outlasted the Symbolist Movement.[76] But Frost deliberately averts his thoughts from free verse. Rather, he thinks that "regular verse springs from the strain of rhythm" and from this strain "comes the expression strains of music"[77]. Frost developed a distinctive kind of symbolism

which is marked by "the indirect and subtly suggestive quality"[78]. Frost's notion of suggestivity could easily be grapsed for he claims, "we like to talk in parables and in hints and in indirections — whether from diffidence or some other instinct"[79]. Of course like the Symbolist Frost never describes any object or scene in his poem. Frost's symbolism stems from his predilection for implication rather than distinct depiction. He never spells the scene out; he employs it as the medium through which the reality or the psychological reality could be discerned. [80]

Metaphor is above all the bedrock of Frost's symbolism. Edmund Wilson defines symbolism "as an attempt by carefully studied means — a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors ..."[81]. Frost's complicated ideas and emotions are also communicated through his metaphors to which he attaches great importance. To Frost, "poetry begins in trivial metaphors, pretty metaphors, 'grace' metaphors, and goes on to the profoundest thinking that we have. Poetry provides the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another"[82]. The objective Frost wants to achieve through metaphor is "the pleasure of ulteriority". Each of the poem turns out to be "a new metaphor inside or it is nothing"[83]. Frostian metaphor which is essentially suggestive assumes the character of the symbol.

Frost gives much importance to metaphorical education. "Unless you have had your proper poetical education in the metaphor", Frost insists, "you are not save anywhere. Because you are not at ease with figurative values: you don't know the metaphor in its strength and its weakness. You don't know how far you may expect to ride it and when it may break down with you"[84]. That one can ride metaphor reminds us of Frost's definition of a poem: "A poem is a little voyage of discovery"[85]. Todd M. Lieber appropriately suggests that metaphor should be construed not only as a suggestion of similitude but as an instrument by which the poet embarks on a "voyage of discovery"[86]. But the fact is that metaphor is not

infalliable; it can be splayed to a point beyond which it breaks down. Frost identifies metaphor as a "living thing". So "the beauty of it" lies in its fallibility. Metaphor is the vital spark of poetry. It is "the height of poetry ... the height of all poetic thinking"[87]. Of course, metaphor has not simply been circumscribed by poetic thinking. It is recognized as "the whole of thinking"[88]. Thus enormous significance is attached to metaphor. In Frost a symbol could interchangeably be used with metaphor. Because almost all the metaphors which spring from the vertex of Frostian thought tend to be cryptically significant. Hence Frost's symbolistic strategy seems to tally with Yeats's : "Metaphors are not profound enough to be moving, when they are not symbols ... poetry moves us because of its symbolism"[89].

Now to exemplify the symbolistic strategy of Frost "The Pasture" could be studied :

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long. — You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I shan't be gone long. — You come too.

The two austere quatrains are charged with unusually hidden meanings so much so that they appear as a prelude to numerous volumes of Frost. The lyric, "The Pasture" may be considered as the poet's manifesto and it serves as a prologue to his Complete Poems (1949). However, unlike Mallarmé or Eliot, Frost employs

commonplace images in this lyric. The bucolic and domestic images, which he manipulates here, are highly symbolic but penetrable.

The first quatrain deals with the poet's sortie into the pasture where he would "clean the pasture spring" by raking the leaves away and would wait to "watch the water clear". Obviously, the act of cleansing nature emerges as a primary task of the poet. Almost like Arnold, Frost wants to clarify life in his poetry. To him, a poem "begins in delight ... ends in a clarification of life ... not necessarily a great clarification ...but in a momentary stay against confusion"[90]. Thus the images of cleaning "the pasture spring" and watching "the water clear" hint at the poet's theory of "clarification of life". "Pasture spring" is also a symbol predominant in the first quatrain. It suggests the graceful life that is craved for. One cannot achieve the graceful life unless the adverse environment is conquered. "The leaves" suggest adverse environment that confuses the order of graceful life. So the poet wants to rake the leaves and thereby achieve a momentary stay against confusion.

The second quatrain touches on the act of fetching the new-born calf standing by its dam. Frank Lentricchia suggests that the act of fetching should be metaphorically apprehended, because it is "an act of preservation, for the sense of danger is genuine — the calf is not capable of staying out"[91] for a long period. Nevertheless, the "calf" could be identified as a symbol — a plurivalent symbol for it represents not only "protective tenderness", "natural innocence" and purity but the beauty and simplicity of Frostian poetry. The dam's licking of the calf has also to be construed metaphorically. Licking is a cleansing process of the animal; it indicates that nature cleans herself in her own way. The ubiquity of cleaning image reveals that the poet wants to clarify the mystery of life and nature.

The lyric is musical. The rhyme and the repeated w's in the third line serve as a reminder that the aim is song.[92] The twice-repeated refrain, "you come too" is

also musical. Lentricchia discovers sex implication in the refrain. To him, "the poem's twice-repeated refrain is an expression of an urge to redeem the painful separateness of self"[93]. Since Frost's symbol or locution has layers of meaning, we could explicate the refrain with a difference. The journey motif which pervades the lyric is profoundly suggestive. The poet's sortie into the pasture may symbolize the peregrination of life. The poet does not think it appropriate to go ahead alone in the ways of life. He earnestly muses, "you come too". Here the pronoun "you" stands for life-companion. Hence the poet wants to uphold his conviction that the peregrination of life can only be significantly pleasant when a person associates himself or herself with a fellow-peregrinator.

Frost, unlike Eliot or Ezra Pound, derives his images and symbols from natural phenomena and unexceptional objects. Austin Warren has the idea that Frost employs "natural symbolism" in his poetry. In the language of "natural symbolism" sleep or snow suggests death, darkness represents evil, woods indicate perilous enchantment and so forth. To illustrate his point Warren mentions that "sleep" is used to imply death in the poem "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening"[94]. But the symbolic and oblique import of a natural symbol is never static. In the poem "After Apple-Picking" "human sleep", in contrast with woodchuck's hibernation, suggests reawakening or creative conciousness, not death. So the views Warren airs could not entirely be entertained.

The texture of Frostian imagery and symbol is distinctively variegated. Generally, nature, seasons, snow, star, woods, trees, flowers, leaves, domestic objects, farm tools, animals, insects and colour constitute the constellation of Frostian imagery. The recurrent images such as woods, star, wall, snow which bulk large in Frost's poetry, have diverse connotations and various shades of meaning. Frost for the most part makes use of natural, psychological, sexual, religious, conventional, archetypal, and intimate symbols. Frostian images and

symbols are indeed lofty channels through which the poet dexterously divulges his experienced truth and vision of life.

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Chapter – IV

CHAPTER – IV

THE FROST UNIVERSE: A STUDY IN MAJOR IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

"Pipes in hands": Early Phase (1913 – 1916)

His (Frost's) primary artistic achievement, which is an enviable one, in spite of shortcomings, rests on his blending thought and emotion and symbolic imagery within the confines of the lyric. It would seem to be an essential part of both his theory and practice to start with a single image, or to start with an image of action, and then to endow either or both with a figurativeness of meaning, which is not fully understood by the reader until the extensions of meaning are found to transcend the physical.

Thompson, Lawrance. Robert Frost.

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959. 38.

... [I]n Frost the symbol, presented quite casually as an image, opens outward upon a vista of meaning. The vista does not have any definite terminus and in the farthest distance fades into vague areas of suggestion.

Lynen, John F. The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960. 27.

Frost's first volume, A Boy's Will (1913), "the Record of a Phase of Post-adolescence"[1], begins with a sonnet "Into My Own". It opens up the nexus of Frostian imagery wedded to the dark woods. Since Frost's poetic being has been shaped and reshaped by the woods, and the woods and the poetic being are almost

inseparable in Frost poetry, the study of this chapter hence begins with our observations on woods imagery:

> One of my wishes is that those dark trees,
> So old and firm they scarcely show the breeze,
> Were not, as't were, the merest mask of gloom,
> But stretched away unto the edge of doom. (1 – 4)

While William Cullen Bryant's poem, "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood" touches on escape from urban perturbations to the placidity of woods, Frost's "Into My Own" recounts yearning for escape into the "vastness" of "dark trees" which are merely the "mask of gloom". Bryant limns his woods romantically; his woods, the "abodes of gladness", can "waft a balm" to the "sick heart"[2]. But Frost's woods, "stretched away unto the edge of doom", savour of "lethal beauty"[3]. Unlike Bryant's woods Frost's woods are reticularly metaphorical. Frostian dark woods may be recognized as a complex psychical symbol suggesting intricate topography of the poet's psyche. The young poet is immensely concerned with psychical sombreness and wilderness. Of course the quest for poetic psyche is superbly tinged with the consciousness of humanity:

> They would not find me changed from him they knew –
> Only more sure of all I thought was true.[4] (13 – 14)

The image of woods is manipulated in the poems "Ghost House", "A Dream Pang", "The Vantage Point", "Mowing", "Going for Water"' "Pan with Us", "The Demiurge's Laugh" and "Reluctance". The images: "the woods come back to the mowing field" (p.5), "I had withdrawn in forest" (p.16), "the wood wakes" (p.16), "If I tried of trees I seek again mankind" (p.17), "there was never a sound beside the wood but one" (p.17), "by the brook our woods were there" (p.18), "Pan came out of the woods" (p.123), "I was far in the sameness of the

wood" (p.24), "out through the fields and the woods/ And over the walls I have wended" (p.29) unroll diverse connotations of woods.

"Ghost House" presents menacing woods associated with dilapidated and desolate image of house. The "vanished abode" in which the poet "dwells" exists only in the recess of memory. "A cellar" with the "cellar walls" which exists physically can be taken as a psychological symbol which suggests regression to an earlier stage of emotional development. The "cellar" is a plurivalent symbol. So it may also symbolize rebirth or mutability because from its ruins sprout "the purple-stemmed wild raspberries". "Wild raspberries", which have sweet fruits and the brambles, are suggestive of adolescent gaiety and infelicity. The image of woods which we perceive in this poem turns out to be incursive because "the woods come back to the mowing field"[5]. To Frank Lentricchia Frost endows the woods with antihuman suggestion: "In celebrating the antihuman –time's destructive element and the menacing advance of the woods – Frost celebrates, in a sense, the anticreative"[6].

In "The Demiurge's Laugh" the image of woods coupled with the image of hideous Demon unmasks Frost's consciousness of evil. "Far in the sameness of the wood" the speaker of the poem pursues Demiurge, "no true god" who may be recognized as the originator of evil. Repugnant and sardonic, the Demon rises "from his wallow", brushes "the dirt from his eye" and laughs a laugh which may indicate that he "utterly couldn't care"[7]. Further, what the speaker suddenly hears in the Demon's laughter is allusive. The Demon reminds us of Silenus, the satyr who laughs and reveals the truth to the King Midas that it is best not to be born, and if born, to die soon.

Like woods, season image is a unique "component structure" of A Boy's Will. Frost's moods of morbidity, despondency and expectancy are divulged through the images of seasons. The images of "dark days of autumn rain" (p.6),

"the love of bare November days" (p.7), "autumn, yes, winter was in the wind" (p.8), "winter wind concerned with ice and snow" (p.10), "the springing of the year" (p.12), "the autumn eve was fair" (p.18) are distinctively connotative.

Frost depicts a desolate autumnal landscape in "My November Guest". Autumn is personified as a woman who walks "the sodden pasture lane" on rain-drenched "dark days" and loves "the bare, the withered tree". Since "her pleasure" will not let him "stay", Frost like Keats wants to explore beauty in the etiolated surroundings of autumn. Charmed by the "temperate sharpness"[8] of autumn, Keats in "To Autumn" designates it as "season of mists". Frost also discovers close relationship between autumn and mists:

> She's glad her simple worsted gray
> Is silver now with clinging mist[9]. (9-10)

The depicture of autumn as silvery grey is indicative of Frost's colour consciousness. The image of "the stubble plains with rosy hue" which characterizes Keats's autumn evening reveals also Keatsian sense of colour. But the autumnal landscapes portrayed by the two poets are not identical. Keats's landscape which is limned with "fruit with ripeness to the core", "the fume of poppies" and singing of "hedge-crickets"[10] is sensuously and exotically romantic. On the other hand, Frost's landscape encompassing "desolate, deserted trees,/ The faded earth, the heavy sky"[11] is graphically realistic.

The poem "A Late Walk" wherein the poet "courts the autumnal mood"[12] unfurls morbid imagination:

> The whir of sober birds
> Up from the tangle of withered weeds
> Is sadder than any words. (6-8)

The sadder "whir" is suggestive of the poet's melancholic spirit; his depression is veritably reflected by the nature itself:

A tree beside the wall stands bare,
But a leaf that lingered brown,
Disturbed, I doubt not, by my thought,
Comes softly rattling down[13]. (9-12)

The poetic depression mirrored in the bleak landscape is not perdurable. In the poem, "October" the poet wants the ubiquitous autumnal desolation to be retarded:

Release one leaf at break of day;
At noon release another leaf;
One from our trees, one far away.
Retard the sun with gentle mist;
Enchant the land with amethyst[14]. (12-16)

Thus the autumn landscape turns out to be the psychical symbol suggesting gradual development of the poetic self.

The images of "tumultuous snow" (p.9), "wintry winds" (p.9), "the cold creeps as the fire dies" (p.10), "winter breeze" (p.10), "the frosty window veil" (p.10) make us acquainted with the wintry landscape suggestive of morbidity and death. A Boy's Will contains three winter poems: "Wind and Window Flower", "Stars" and "Storm fear". In "Wind and Window Flower" the winter wind, "concerned with ice and snow,/ Dead weeds and unmated birds" implies utmost gloom and morbidity. "Stars" presents the image of stars which is associated with "tumultuous snow" flowing "in shapes as tall as trees/ When wintry winds do flow". The white stars are emblematically analogized with the archetypal image of Minerva – the ancient Roman goddess of wisdom:

And yet with neither love nor hate,
Those stars like some snow-white
Minerva's snow-white marble eyes
Without the gift of sight[15]. (9-12)

The stars, characterized neither by "love nor hate" transcends human feelings. It is worth mentioning that whiteness in Frost's poetry is obsessively symbolical. The white stars are equated with "snow-white", lacklustre eyes of Minerva, an artifact. Hence the white stars come to symbolize "cosmic indifference"[16].

"Storm Fear" provides the image of "the wind" suggesting malevolent environment. The stoic speaker immured in his farmhouse views the winter blizzard which "works against us in the dark". The blizzard, held to be analogous to barking beast or dog, "whispers with a sort of stifled bark". This indicates beastly increasing malignity of the storm for which "the fire dies" and "cold creeps"[17]. The speaker plunges into the darkness of incertitude; amidst family members he upsets himself with stinging awareness of isolation. Thus the winter image which does not represent a flicker of hope makes the poetic persona dubious about his existence in the world.

The image of spring is conspicuous in two pieces: "To the Thawing Wind" and "A Prayer in Spring". As the poet wants to get rid of disappointment courted by him, a "change through the violence of the elements"[18] is called on in "To the Thawing Wind". He invokes the "loud Southwester" to "give the buried flower a dream;/ Make the settled snowbank steam", "Scatter poems on the floor" and "Turn the poet out of door"[19]. The poet aspires to merge himself in nature's current of creative life. Hence "Southwester" can be taken as a natural symbol suggesting poetic inspiration or creative ecstasy as opposed to dull inertia. "A Prayer in Spring" formulates a pattern of prayer which is significant for its

impressive components of images. The speaker of this poem prays to "keep us here/ All simply in the springing of the year". Evidently the poem not only touches on spring but "the springing of the year", a blissful period which essentially embodies the blithesome activity of the bees "dilating round the perfect trees" and of the bird which "thrusts in with needle bill" into a blossom. Presumably these images suggest "the greatness of love" for they help establish deeper Frostian conviction: "this is love and nothing else is love,/ The which it is reserved for God above". The mode of the prayer, the speaker moulds, is nonetheless significatory. Instead of personal pronoun "me" he makes use of "us" while articulating his feeling in prayer-images: "give us pleasure in the flowers today", "make us happy in the happy bees", and "make us happy in the darting birds"[20]. "Us" is cryptically employed as a personal pronoun. Frost may suggest that it is "springing" which exists in "us" in two senses; first in the man and woman who lovingly preserve creation by "putting in the seed" and watching for birth; and second, in the poets who have sustained such poetic convictions which help "keep" us in "the springing of the year" wherein is to be perceived the renewal of the body and innocence which is necessary for a renewal of the soul[21].

Like the warm days of spring, summer ushers in various types of flowers which are a recurrent motif in Frost's poetry. Flowers hold a great appeal for Frost. "I like flowers you know", he writes to Sidney Cox, "but I like em wild, and I am rather the exception than the rule in an American village"[22]. The poem, "Rose Pogonias" which deals with beautiful wild flowers, epitomizes Frost's indulgence in "the ritualism of nature"[23]. Pogonia orchises are the rare flowers for which the "saturated meadow" assumes a gnomic configuration –"a circle scarcely wider/ Than the trees around were tall". The annularity, quiescence and aroma of the flowers create "a temple of the heat" where the poetic persona takes an active part in "the sun's right worship". The impressionist image of the landscape "Seemed tipped with wings of color/ That tinged the atmosphere"[24]. This reminds

us of the identical landscape of the later poem "Atmosphere (Inscription for a garden wall)" wherein "moisture and color and odor thicken" and "the hours of daylight gather atmosphere"[25]. Nevertheless, "A Prayer in Spring" and "Rose Pogonias" provide the poet with incandescent and worshipful mood. Hence, "rose pogonias" or "orchises" can be taken as spiritual symbol suggesting paradisiacal beauty and spiritual wisdom.

A few poems of A Boy's Will are stamped with Frostian signature of maturity. Like the later poems, "Two Tramps in Mud Time" or "Putting in the Seed", "Mowing" may be considered as a mature labour poem replete with cloying images and inherently signifying symbols. In a sequestered grassland "beside the wood" the poet mows grass with his "long scythe whispering to the ground". The whispering swish which pervades the poem is cryptic. The poet coyly articulates: "what was it— it whispered? I knew not well myself". The whispering is neither day-dreaming nor "easy gold at the hand of fay or elf". It is "something" which is "perhaps" about "the heat of the sun" or "the lack of sound"[26]. It is worth noting that the whispering is not an independent swooshing sound. It is the effect of interaction between scythe and "swale". "Swale" represents nature. Scythe which is treated anthropomorphically is an intimate symbol suggesting the mower-poet. Nature divulges its truth to the solitary kind of person who makes creative effort. Hence, "whispering" of the scythe may symbolize the truth of nature. "Mowing" is nevertheless a synecdochal image, suggestive of writing poetry. Sidney Cox contends, "a poem is a fact, factum, a thing done or made"[27]. "Mowing" or making hay is the factum; what "labour" knows is "the fact" which is "the sweetest dream" of the mower-poet. The symbolic landscape of the poem "Mowing" resembles the dramatic scene of "The Tuft of Flowers". It is a work poem wherein the lonesome poetic persona relishes entering the human community. Structurally it is held to be analogous to William Cullen Bryant's poem, "To a Waterfowl" but philosophically both the poems are

different; Frost's realistic vision bears no resemblance to Bryant's spiritual insight. A spiritual "Power" which guides the solitary flight of Bryant's waterfowl "through the boundless sky" to enable it finding "a summer home" leads the speaker's "steps aright" through the "long way" he must "tread alone"[28]. On the other hand the creature which leads the eye of Frostian speaker "to look/ At a tall tuft of flowers" or "a leaping tongue of bloom" beside a brook is simply a butterfly which conveys the message of humanity. "A leaping tongue of bloom" is the central image which reminds us of Thoreau's orchis limned as leaping flame and tongue of colour in his Journal. This can also be taken as a magnificent natural symbol which suggests fraternity or communication. It strikingly occasions "a message from the dawn", because the first mower's signs of accomplished work and love of nature have precisely been communicated to the speaker through this symbol. It aptly arouses the speaker's community spirit: "henceforth I worked no more alone"[29].

The iterative images of A Boy's Will are "woods", "tree", "season", "bird", "flower", "butterfly", "colour", "scythe"' "mowing field" and "pasture". Psychical, Psychological, natural, spiritual, intimate and colour symbols are preponderantly manipulated in this volume.

Frost's second volume North of Boston (1914) which is viewed as being "unaffectedly expressive of New England life"[30] transcends regionalism through its indelible images and symbols. This volume begins with "Mending Wall", an exceedingly symbolical dramatic monologue which according to Frost, simply contrasts two types of people.[31] The speaker of the poem fosters "the latent imaginative power within himself"[32] while his hidebound neighbour clings to mere shibboleth. The speaker's uncanny imagination finds expression at the outset of the poem :

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.[33](1-4)

"Wall" is the central image in this poem. But the indefinite pronoun "something" is manipulated here most cryptically. "Something" is treated anthropomorphically; it is invested with human feeling "love" and concerned with the active verbs "send", "spill" and "make". To Elaine Barry "something" is suggestive of "some principle of order in nature[34] and Samuel Coale attempts to identify it with "other frost"[35] which does not love a wall. But we would endeavour to show that it does not merely symbolize nature. In this poem we perceive that the hunters crash through the wall to "have the rabbit out of hiding". "Something" encompasses not only "frozen-ground-swell" but the "hunters" who tear down the wall. The hunters may obviously personify the speaker who characteristically frowns upon the existence of wall. Frost's manipulation of "elf" image can be taken as a tell-tale clue to the untried symbolical implication of "something". "Something" which "doesn't love a wall" is "not elves exactly"(1.37). Presumably Frost here refers to light-elves (not black-elves) which represent music, dance, art or love. Thus "something" is meaningfully linked with "elf" image. This significant linkage makes us inclined to air our views that "something" is a psychological symbol representing a superbly artistic or culturally imaginative mind. The image of "wall" can be treated as a plurivalent symbol. An "unliberated life"[36] which the stolid neighbour lives may precisely be equated with Dickinsonian "Existence with a wall"[37]. "Wall", thus, symbolizes psychical or spiritual incarceration. The neighbour's reliance on the adage, "Good fences make good neighbours" makes him a troglodyte, "an old-stone savage" (1.40). "Wall" may further imply individual privacy and the progress of civilized society as opposed to atavistic one.

In "Home Burial" and "A Servant to Servants" Frost strikingly employs house or incarceration image. The images of "I must get out of here. I must get air" (p.52) "the darkened parlor" (p.54), "one is alone, and he dies more alone"(p.54), "But the world's evil"(p.54), "I must go– Somewhere out of this house" (p.54-55), "a sort of cage, / Or room within a room"(p.66) unmask severe psychological desolation of Frost's paranoiac poetic personae.

Baudelaire envisages human being to be doomed under the "couvercle noir de la grande marmite"[38] . The earth looms up as a dark prison for a man in Baudelaire. In "Home Burial" home is reduced to a desolate prison for the obsessively overwrought housewife who feels estranged from her husband whom she considers to be insensitive for he powerfully digs the grave of their child ·

> I saw you from that very window there,
> Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
> Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
> And roll back down the mound beside the hole.[39] (74-77)

Here the window symbolizes contracted viewpoint of the psychotic woman. The repetitious expression of "leap and leap in air, / Leap up, like that, like that" indicates her hysteria in which she melancholily heightens the contrast between the inanimate thing "the gravel" which gains momentary motion and the animate being, the child that remains eternally motionless[40] . The spade, a grave-digging tool which the husband stands "up against the wall" in the entryway can be taken as a plurivalent symbol. It suggests inexorable reality of human life. The spade also symbolizes masculinity and sexuality. According to Randall Jarrell it has " a sexual force, a sexual meaning... when the plowman digs his plow into the earth, Mother Earth, to make her bear, this does not have a sexual appropriateness only in the dreams of neurotic patients — it is something that we all understand"[41] . The overwhelmed wife, however, finds her sacred grief profaned by "everyday

concerns" of her husband. When her husband talks about danger of weather, she reacts :

> Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
> What had how long it takes a birch to rot
> To do with what was in the darkened parlor?[42] (94-96)

Here "birch" symbolizes the dead child and "the darkened parlor" euphemistically suggests the family vault where the child is buried. In "Home Burial" "little grave" or home burial which remains at the core of Frost's symbolistic strategy, may be considered as a psychological symbol for it not only signifies the burial of a child that unhinges the housewife's mind but also " the burial of relationship" between husband and wife and "the way a woman buries herself a little bit everyday in the domestic setting"[43]

The speaker of the eclogue "A Servant to Servants" is a woman whose postmarital life is blighted by the displeasing domestic drudgery and unbenignity of her husband. The tedium of house-keeping — cooking and cleaning for a clump of persons hired by her flint hearted husband makes her psychologically indisposed. So the house she lives in reminds one of an inescapable prison. The climatic portion of this eclogue delineates a story about the insanity of the woman's uncle who was encaged in a wooden "room within a room" in the garret :

> He'd shout and shout
> Until the strength was shouted out of him,
> And his voice died down slowly from exhaustion.
> He'd pull his bars apart like bow and bowstring,
> And let them go and make them twang, until
> His hands had worn them smooth as any oxbow[44].
>
> (131-136)

The account of the insane uncle's plight is strikingly suggestive. The insane uncle's confinement represents the psychological predicament of the drudge herself. The image of the "bow and bowstring" symbolizes lethal intention of the psychotic woman to whom life is turned into unendurable burden and love into derangement. Like the witch in Frost's dialogue-narrative "The Witch of Coös" or the wife in "Home Burial" the memory of the drudge in "A Servant to Servants" encompasses "a set of images which are potentially fatal to mental balance if not expelled or suppressed" [45]

A shift in the connotation of home image is well-marked in the dramatic eclogue "The Death of the Hired Man" in which Silas, a shiftless, infirm hired hand returns to Mary and Warren, his old employers, at a time when veritably "His working days are done". The two definitions of home that we find in this poem, emblematically characterize Frostian "sentence sound". Warren defines home derisively as "the place where, when you have to go there,/ They have to take you in." Conversely Mary defines it as "something that you somehow haven't to deserve". The suggestive images of the poem can well be construed allegorically. Hence, "home" may be considered as a spiritual symbol suggesting divine blessing. It is worth noting that Warren represents the retributive figure of God dowered with the attribute of reason and justice while Mary stands for benign figure of God endowed with the attribute of charity and mercy. "Illogical kindness — that is mercy[46] ", Frost wrote to Wilbert Snow in 1938. Frost's notion of mercy which moderates justice is dexterously elucidated in this poem. Silas who represents mankind repeatedly failed to keep promises of life before yielding to death. So his soul should justifiably be damned to perdition. But it is mercy for which he is ensconced at home. Like his death the death scene of the hired man is equally symbolic:

" ... I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."
It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.[47] (160-164)

Frost, like a chiaroscurist manipulates his symbolic imagery very superbly. "The moon" that symbolizes the light of Silas's life can better be taken as an example of the "clarus"(clear or light) image and "small sailing cloud" suggesting the agent of death that "hit the moon" can better be considered as an example of the "obscurus" (dark) image. The hired man's death symbolizes the salvation of human soul.

The image of woods is reiterative in the Frost poetry. Like A Boy's Will The North of Boston deals with woods or tree image probing intricate world of varied experience. The images of tree, woods, shrub and clematis are predominantly manipulated in the poems "The Mountain", "Blueberries", "After Apple-Picking" and "The Wood-Pile." The images of "there was a wall of trees with trunks" (p.41), "ladders sticking through a tree / Toward heaven still" (p.68), "two or three / Apples I didn't pick upon some bough" (p.68), "The view was all in lines / Straight up and down of tall slim trees" (p.101), "The wood was gray and the bark warping off it" (p.102), "Clematis / Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle" (p.102) are characteristically connotative.

The image of tree associated with the ascending image of ladder is adroitly wielded in "Frost's masterpiece",[48] "After Apple-Picking". Its wider symbolical properties induced Cleanth Brooks to consider it "a symbolist poem"[49]. From the outset of the poem symbolistic intricacy occurs in metaphoric imagery :

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,

And there's a barrel there that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough. [50] (1-5)

Metaphor is the wellspring of all thinking for Frost. In the essay "Education by Poetry" Frost employs the image of ladder as metaphor which has covert meaning than its literal one. "We still ask boys in college to think, as in the nineties, but we seldom tell them what thinking means; we seldom tell them it is just putting this and that together; it is just saying one thing in terms of another. To tell them is to set their feet on the first rung of a ladder the top of which sticks through the sky."[51]

In this poem the vertical "two-pointed" ladder is expressly metaphorical. Dennis Vail discerns the "ladder" as male and the "barrel" as female symbol which conjointly suggest "a human completeness in the nature of the effort"[52]. Mordecai Marcus explores psychosexual imagery in "After Apple-Picking". To Marcus the image of pointed and sticking ladder is "overwhelmingly phallic"[53]. Nevertheless, critics like George Monteiro and Dorothy Judd Hall endeavour to perceive religious dimension in this poem. Monteiro considers the poem as "an elaboration of Genesis"[54]. To Hall the apple-picker represents a "fallen man" or "a latter-day Adam" who "symbolically perpetuates the Genesis legacy of mankind's first act of disobedience. He is tired from physical labor and weary, too, of the burden of original sin." According to her "two or three/Apples" which the apple-picker "didn't pick upon some bough" symbolize "the human lot", Frost often observed as "unfinished business"[55]. We find that the symbols of this poems are exceedingly plurivalent. The solitary apple-picker devoting himself to his tough pursuits may also represent an artist; the apple-picking suggests near perfectionism in art or in an artistic life. "A tree" is suggestive of creative life of an artist. Art is monumental but life is fleeting. The poet ventriloquizes the truth that it is humanly or artistically inconceivable to procure all the gems of life. Hence "two or three / Apples" are kept unplucked and "a barrel" is left unfilled.

The "long two-pointed ladder" left sticking "Toward heaven still" symbolizes an artist's aspiration for immortality through creative achievement.

Drifting into the "Essence of winter sleep" the lonely apple-picker views a strange world "through a pane of glass" skimmed from the "drinking trough". This symbolic imagery indicates an artist's entrance into the world of chimerical dreams in which the contents of imagination appear to be magnificently larger than those of factual world :

> And I could tell
> What form my dreaming was about to take.
> Magnified apples appear and disappear,
> Stem end and blossom end,
> And every fleck of russet showing clear.[56](16-20)

The dream of "Magnified apples" suggests the recollections of creative achievement of a contemplative artist.

In "After Apple-Picking" Frost quaintly makes use of afterimagery. We have already touched on the nature of afterimagery of this poem in the previous chapter. The apple-picker's "sight" experienced "through a pane of glass" shapes visual afterimage while "There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch" moulds a tactile afterimage. The colloquialism, "ten thousand thousand" typically characterizes Frost's "sentence sound".

We could experience a complex imbrication of dream and reality, earth and heaven, day and night, sleep and awakening in the textural make-up of this verse. This imbrication of antithetical elements may suggest the cyclical mobility of life. The apple-picker appears to be discomposed as to ascertain the lineaments of sleep: "one can see what will trouble/This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is." The image of woodchuck throws light on sleep. Woodchuck's hibernation or "long sleep" is dreamless. So it can never be analogous to human sleep. "This

sleep of mine" is nothing but "just some human sleep" which is full of dream or mental activity. The "long sleep" or hibernation resembling "the little imitation of death" that terminates in springtime, aptly suggests "resurrection" and "just some human sleep" suggests reawakening.[57]

The image of woods coupled with the image of bird and wood-pile is employed significantly in "The Wood-Pile", a "Symbolist work"[58]. "Out walking in the frozen swamp" the peripatetic poetic persona senses the precariousness of the landscape where the "hard snow" holds him. He is virtually lost in the sylvan swamp :

> The view was all in lines
> Straight up and down of tall slim trees
> To much alike to mark or name a place by
> So as to say for certain I was here
> Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.[59] (5-9)

The "place" is desolate and unnamed because the "tall slim trees" are "too much alike to mark or name a place by." The linear wood is as sequestered as the earlier one portrayed in the poem "Mowing"; it is "far from home." According to Roger Gilbert the wood does not resemble the "selva oscura" of the Inferno; it turns out to be the antithesis of "home"[60]. The wood is a very intricate symbol in the Frost canon. In this poem the wood may equivocally be considered as a psychological symbol suggestive of ecology nurturing human creativity.

As the poetic persona strolls through the gelid counrtyside, a "small bird" flies before him. It is a timorous creature to which human attributes and sensations are imputed :

> He thought that I was after him for a feather –
> The white one in his tail; like one who takes
> Everything said as personal to himself.[61] (14-16)

Through the image "one who takes/Everything said as personal to himself" the poet "turns the bird into a homely human type"[62]. The bird leads the poetic persona to discover and appraise a magnificent "handiwork" — "a cord of maple, cut and split / And piled — and measured, four by four by eight." Hence, the bird signified poetic avidity for discovery.

The "wood-pile" is the predominant symbol in this poem. The "rugged" and "hoary Pile" which we find in Wordsworth's poem, "Elegiac Stanzas" is not identical to Frostian wood-pile. The portrayal of "rugged Pile" against the background of the "sea in anger" and "dismal shore"[63] fills Wordsworth with foreboding. On the other hand, "a pile of wood" left in the "frozen swamp" opens Frost's eyes to the majesty of human craftsmanship. Hence the wood-pile may be considered as an intimate symbol indicating human creativity or craftsmanship. Further ,the wood-pile can precisely be treated as a plurivalent symbol. The abandoned wood-pile may seem like offscourings for it is denied a proper consummation on the hearth. But the wood-pile, which reminds us of Hawthorne's "heap of mossy fuel"[64] in The Blithedale Romance, is left "To warm the frozen swamp as best it could/With the slow smokeless burning of decay". Here the mouldering wood-pile is depicted to be disintegrated into fecund soil from where new life will pullulate. [65] Thus the wood-pile is also suggestive of resurrection. It is indeed a Symbolist symbol in Frost's poetry.

The reiterative images of North of Boston are "wall", "house", "moon", "darkness", "woods", "tree", "ladder", "apple" and "sleep". The types of symbols predominantly wielded in this volume are psychological, sexual, spiritual and intimate.

Frost's third volume Mountain Interval (1916) opens with a mellifluous lyric "The Road Not Taken" which like the first sonnet of A Boy's Will presents

wood imagery. The image of wood depicted in "The Road Not Taken" is substantially coupled with the image of road:

> Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
> And sorry I could not travel both
> And be one traveler, long I stood
> And looked down one as far as I could
> To where it bent in the undergrowth;[66] (1-5)

This wood imagery wedded to road image echoes Emily Dickinson's "forest" and "road" imagery employed in one of her poems wherein the poetic persona comes to the "odd fork in Being's road" and apprehends that his "pace took sudden awe" for "Before were cities, but between, / The forest of the dead."[67] The images Dickinson makes use of are tinged with religious orthodoxy while Frost's secular images are characterized by psychological intricacy. What Frost wrote to Susan Hayes Ward on February 10, 1912, sheds light on the outstanding suggestivity of "The Road Not Taken" :

> Two lonely cross-roads that themselves cross each other I have walked several times....[T]he other evening as I came down one to see a man, who to my own unfamiliar eyes and in the dusk looked for all the world like myself, coming down the other, his approach to the point where our paths must intersect being so timed that unless one of us pulled up we must inevitably collide. I felt as if I was going to meet my own image in a slanting mirror. Or say I felt as we slowly converged on the same point with the same noiseless yet laborious strides as if we were two images about to float together with the uncrossing of someone's eyes. I verily expected to take up or absorb this other self and feel the stronger by the addition for the three-mile journey home.[68]

In this letter Frost delineates how he ran across an image of another self the other evening. The context of confrontation with one's "other self" at the

convergence of roads is distinctly related to the context of "The Road Not Taken" in which the poet detached himself from one approachable self at a divergence of roads. [69] Hence, "road" may be considered as a psychical symbol suggesting an image of self or a pattern of life. Road-symbol underscores duple limitations of human life. To begin with man cannot traverse two roads at the same time; he has to make a decision to take one road or to choose one pattern of life from a number of alternatives and, secondly no man can envisage the pellucid chart of his future, for futurity is always unpredictable. So, when a man makes a decision to embrace a pattern of life, he feels perturbed about the consequence of life-pattern chosen :

> I shall be telling this with a sigh
> Somewhere ages and ages hence :
> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
> I took the one less traveled by,
> And that has made all the difference.[70] (16-20)

Woods can be considered as a psychical symbol suggesting involute topography of human psyche entangled in "the problem of choice". The road "less traveled by" resembling "the way we took in the poem "In Neglect" of A Boy's Will may aptly suggest the image of poetic self which the poet absorbed with a sense of perturbation.

The other poems of Mountain Interval in which the image of woods is chiefly wielded are "The Oven Bird", "Birches", "The Hill Wife", "The Bonfire", "The Line-Gang" and "The Sound of Trees". The images: "a mid-wood bird, / Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again"(p.119), "the lines of straighter darker trees"(p.121), "trunks arching in the woods"(p.121), "life is too much like a pathless wood"(p.122), "He's watching from the woods"(p.127), "the dark pine that kept / Forever trying the window latch / Of the room"(p.128), "dark converging paths between the pines"(p.129), "the dim trees stand back in wider

circle — " (p.130), "the fire / Died not without a noise of crackling wood —" (p.131), "They throw a forest down less cut than broken" (p.141), "I wonder about the trees"(p.156), "my heads sways to my shoulder / Sometimes when I watch trees sway" (p.156) have outstanding connotations.

The poem "Birches" provides the image of birch trees against the backdrop "straighter darker trees" resembling the "dark trees" which "scarcely show the breeze" in "Into My Own" :

> When I see birches bend to left and right
> Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
> I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
> But swinging doesn't bend them down to say
> As ice storms do.[71] (1-5)

The birches are bent to earth in "ice storm" but the poet should "prefer to have some boy bend them." The swinging of birches is a highly metaphorical image. George Monteiro explores "pubescent sexuality"[72] in the swinging of birches. Birches "trailing their leaves on the ground" emerge as "girls on hands and knees that throw their hair/Before them over their heads to dry in the sun". That the boy "subdued" the girl-like birches by "riding them down over and over again" until "not one but hung limp, not one was left/For him to conquer" can be taken as a pattern of psychosexual imagery. Nevertheless Monteiro discovers sexual imagery in the closing lines of the poem as the poet thinks to be catapulted and set back again on earth by the flexing birch :

> I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree
> And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
> *Toward* heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
> But dipped its top and set me down again.

That would be good both going and coming back,
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.[73] (54-59)

The act of going up and "coming back" may imply sexual activity or "tumescence and detumescence". [74] The swinging of birches is an excellent instance of plurivalent symbol. "Earth" which is "the right place for love" fascinates the poet tremendously. But terrestrial life can never bring him incessant felicity. When he is "weary of considerations", life turns out to be "a pathless wood" where "face burns and tickles with the cobwebs". In such situation he momentarily contemplates the grace of Heaven, but he ultimately clings to the real world of love and tribulation. This oscillating experience of real and spiritual world is exquisitely suggested by the "birches" which can be considered as an intimate symbol; it lets the poet like Zaccheus in the later poem "Sycamore" "climb black branches up a snow-white trunk / *Toward* heaven" and come back "Clear to the ground."

The "ballad-lyric" "The Hill Wife" presents the imagery of woods and tree together with house image. The image of woods that we notice here is as menacing as the woods portrayed in "Ghost House". The young hill wife who sustains paranoid fears in her psyche, gets abnormally tensed up for the "smile" appeared on the face of the tramp whom she propitiates with "bread". She interprets the smile as dreadfully mocking and feels the tramp "watching from the woods as like as not". The tramp, however, can be taken to be a portent of the hill wife's unnatural disappearance at the end of the poem. "The lonely house" in which the young woman lives with her husband appears to be sexually or maritally sterile for there is "no child" in the house. Her "oft-repeated dream" may be recognized as a projection of her psychosexual complication. She is plagued with the image of "the dark pine that kept / Forever trying the window latch/Of the room where they slept." "The dark pine" and "the room" may be

recognized as psychosexual symbols suggesting phallus and "female genitals"[75] respectively. The "oft-repeated dream" aggravates her paranoiac plight. She strays into the woods "With a song to herself / On her lips," breaks frenziedly "a bough / Of black alder" and disappears into "the fern" presumably to be engorged by the woods resembling the hungry tramp who has a derisive "vision" of the couple "old and dead." Hence, the woods can be considered as a psychical symbol indicating decimation of human psyche.

Like woods death imagery is adroitly manipulated in Mountain Interval. The images of "The log that shifted with a jolt / Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted, / And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept" (p.108), "The doctor put him in the dark of ether" (P.137), "He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath" (p.137), "the watcher at his pulse took fright" (p.137), "The water in desperate straits like frantic fish" (p.142), "he showed John the wheel pit all right" (p.142) typically illuminate Frost's vision of death.

In the poem "An Old Man's Winter Night" we find death and dark imagery coupled with light imagery. Like "Storm Fear" that portrays bestial winter blizzard working "against us in the dark" this poem presents nature as an antagonistic force to its old protagonist: "All out-of-doors looked darkly in at him." Roberts W. French rightly identifies this nature as a "malevolent voyeur."[76] Against the backdrop of a deadly "winter night" the lonely, senile man wanders in a claustrophobic "creaking room" with "the lamp tilted" in his hand. Light is a preponderant symbol in this poem. "The lamp tilted" suggesting subdued life-flame foreshadows impending death of the protagonist who suffers from amnesia:

> What kept him from remembering what it was
> That brought him to that creaking room was age.(6-7)

The protagonist is succumbed to psychological and physical inertia. The "light" that he bears in him cannot be a stimulus. His life has dwindled away to almost

nothing: "A light he was to no one but himself." The terrestrial life inevitably comes to an end like the "log" that burns to cinder in the "stove":

> The log that shifted with a jolt
> Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
> And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.[77] (23-25)

Frost's vision of death turns out to be philosophically fascinating in this poem. That the protagonist consigns to the "moon" his "snow" and "icicles" seems ostensibly to be spiritual submission to the force of nature or the triumph of death over life. But death cannot actually eclipse life or its rhythm. Because cosmic life is eternal. Thus, the "moon" a symbol of eternal life takes over as the keeper of the house when the protagonist dies or fails to "keep" the same.

The poem "Out, Out —'' provides the lethal image of "buzz saw" that "snarled and rattled in the yard" of a family farm. Valerie Rosendorff and William Freedman scrupulously consider the religious implication of this poem. To them "the boy" who saws wood at the "buzz saw" reminds one of Jesus who assisted Joseph to cut wood in the carpenter's shop. The boy's death caused by the saw echoes crucifixion.[78] The image of "those that lifted eyes could count/Five mountain ranges" is biblically allusive for it alludes to the opening lines of Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Hence "five mountain ranges" can be considered as a religious symbol suggesting grace of Godhead. "Five mountain ranges" is certainly a plurivalent symbol. William S. Doxey contends that these sun-rouged mountain ranges are suggestive of the bloodstained teeth of the "buzz saw". [79] The snarling "buzz saw" is symbolically significant. It may symbolize mechanical life or industrialized civilization which strangles simplicity and humanity in homo sapiens. The young sawyer "Doing a man's work, though a child at heart" finds "all spoiled." His doom symbolizes the

illimitable probability of humanity which has been nipped in the bud. The abrupt amputation of his hand suggests the utmost incertitude in industrialized civilization. The doctor, of course, "put him in the dark of ether", but "the watcher at his pulse took fright." The tentacles of industrialized civilization prove to be so fatal that the imperiled persons cannot be rescued from them; their doom inevitably takes place.

The death imagery that we notice in the verse "The Vanishing Red" is more horrific than that of "Out, Out —." Industrialized civilization chokes off blossoming life in "Out, Out—" but in "The Vanishing Red" the so-called civilized White, out of his instinctive ferocity, murders the Red Indian with the help of machinery. That the industrialized civilization can never enlighten the inner world of so-called civilized persons is well suggested in this poem. "Wheel pit" is a central symbol in "The Vanishing Red". It can be considered as an intimate symbol suggesting clandestine murder or death. Disgusted at the Red Indian, John's "guttural exclamation of surprise" about "the great big thumping, shuffling millstone" the White Miller unhasitatingly shows him the "wheel pit" into the mill :

> He took him down below a cramping rafter,
> And showed him, through a manhole in the floor,
> The water in desperate straits like frantic fish,
> Salmon and Sturgeon, lashing with their tails.[80] (20-23)

This symbolic imagery suggests the grisly scene of John's last moments. The horror a human spirit experiences while confronting unnatural death is startlingly symbolized by "frantic fish".

The recurrent images of Mountain Interval are "woods", "tree", "road", "path", "house", "room", "light", "moon", "darkness", "death" and "mill"

(machinery). Psychical, psychosexual, religious and intimate symbols have been tellingly employed in this volume.

This present study in major images and symbols occurring in the early phase of the Frost poetry shows that Frostian images are drawn from ecological and societal phenomena; Frost's major symbols embody subtle experience resulting from weird and wonderful interplay of phenomenal world and poetic psyche.

"Toward the source": Middle Phase (1923 –1942)

The middle phase of the Frost poetry distinctively signalizes dazzling poetic maturity. A novel set of philosophicopsychological values which Frost sets forth during this phase are exquisitely embodied in images and symbols of his poetry. Frost's fourth volume New Hampshire (1923) "marks so great an advance over his previous work that it should be hailed with any amount of hand-shaking and cheers".[81] In this volume Frost's penchant for astronomical imagery takes a glorious turn. Star image is strikingly employed in the poems "A Star in a Stoneboat", "The Star- Splitter", "I Will Sing You One – O" and "Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter". The images of "Never tell me that not one star of all / That slip from heaven at night and softly fall" (p. 172), "He looked an old stoneboat with the star" (p.173), "You know Orion always comes up sideways. / Throwing a leg up over our fence of mountains" (p.176),"In that grave word / Uttered alone / The utmost star / Trembled and stirred" (p.219), "From north to south across the blue; / A piercing little star was through" (p. 233) are substantially implicative.

In "A Star in a Stoneboat" the image of star is wielded in an involuted manner. The highly imaginative speaker of this poem intends to manipulate the star or fallen meteorite more dignifiedly than to utilize it "to build a wall". He rails at the labourer of being unimaginative. The labourer who unconcernedly drags the star "through the plowed ground" singularly fails to recognize in it "The one thing palpable besides the soul / To penetrate the air in which we roll". The star has strange characteristics. It cannot be compared to the "resorts of life as M[illegible]s and Earth". Although it is not associated with the idea of "death", "birth" and "sin", it is astoundingly invested with "worldly nature" for it can "chafe and shuffle" in "calloused palm". Thus "the star becomes little more than a toy"[82] as the poem

draws to its close. The star can however be recognized as a psychological symbol suggesting fertility of poetic mind.

"The Star-Splitter" deals with the image of star coupled with the images of house and telescope. Brad McLaughlin, a farmer who mingles "reckless talk / Of heavenly stars with hugger-mugger farming" burns down his house for "the fire insurance" with which he buys a star-splitting telescope to "satisfy a lifelong curiosity / About our place among the infinities". Hence the arsonist turns out to be a visionary. He discards the terrestrial life represented by the "house" and renounces contracted vision signified by the "smoky lantern". He is concerned with "not plants / As on a farm, but planets, evening stars / That varied in their hue from red to green". Star is the cardinal symbol in this poem. Unlike the star in "A Star in a Stoneboat" it can be treated as a spiritual symbol suggesting enlightened, extramundane life.

Like astronomical imagery, colour image is adroitly handled in New Hampshire. The poems wherein colour image is conspicuous are "Fragmentary Blue", "Dust of Snow", "Nothing Gold Can Stay" "For Once, Then, Something", "Blue-Butterfly Day" and "A Hillside Thaw". The images: "fragmentary blue", "heaven presents in sheets the solid hue" (p. 220), "a crow", "dust of snow" "a hemlock tree" (p.221), "Nature's first green is gold, / Her hardest hue to hold" (p.222), "what was that whiteness? / Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something", "It is blue-butterfly day here in spring" (p.225) "the sun lets go / Ten million silver lizards out of snow" are replete with symbolic overtones.

"Fragmentary Blue" furnishes the image of blue colour. In Thoreau's system blue is a significant colour symbol. In Walden "Walden water", "Walden ice" and the unclouded sky are "beautifully blue". Thoreauvian blue symbolizes spiritual purity. A "savant" like Thoreau would make "earth include the sky" (1.6). But Frost's blue "so far above us" is "fragmentary" and it falls toward earth to

become "bird", "butterfly", "flower", "wearing-stone" or "open eye". Frostian blue which "gives our wish for blue a whet" may signify Frost's yearning to "attain the ultimate real through the particular". [83]

In the compact lyric "Dust of Snow" interrelated images of evergreen hemlock tree, white snow and black crow are employed picturesquely. "The way" in which "a crow" shakes down "the dust of snow / From a hemlock tree" is exceedingly symbolic. As snow-dust falls on the poet "A change of mood" comes up to be celebrated. The action of the crow saving "some part / Of a day" the poet "rued" indicates retrieval of poetic spirit. Laurence Perrine incisively explicates the symbolic significance of this lyric. Crow, snow and hemlock tree have a "pleasing effect" on the poet and "his response to them is an upsurge of joy". [84] Crow stands for the herald of life in a wintry landscape. The evergreen hemlock suggests youthful freshness and beauty; the sparkling dust of snow is indicative of momentary spiritual bliss.

"For Once, Then, Something" provides "well" image associated with the image of water and white colour. Peering down into a well metaphorically points to delving into the mystery of nature. But it is difficult to plumb it for a gazer whom presumably mystics or Christians "taunt" as egocentric "with having knelt at well-curbs / Always wrong to the light". Instead of fathoming truth the gazer percieves his own "godlike" reflection in water which reminds us of "The wetter ground" that reflects "a standing gull" in the later poem "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep". "Beyond" and "through" his "shining surface picture" what the spectator discerns is "a something white, uncertain, / Something more of the depths". The philosophical character of "the depths" remains enigmatically "blurred" in this poem. When the straining well-gazer almost probes "the depths", "Water came to rebuke the too clear water". To observe the confounding design of nature a droplet of dew from "a fern" ripples the water to blot the deified reflection and the

"whiteness" of something out. Unlike Wordsworthian nature Frostian nature precludes the gazer from exploring "whiteness" or "Truth" hidden in nature. In this poem, "well" can be recognized as an intimate symbol suggesting psychical speculum which may reflect subjective truth of the world.

"Snow" is one of the major images in New Hampshire. Besides "Dust of Snow" and "A Hillside Thaw" snow occurs in the poems "An Empty Threat", "Fire and Ice", "Stopping by Words on a Snowy Evening", "The Onset", and "Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter". The images of "The seal yelp / On an ice cake" (p.211), "Some say the world will end in fire. / Some say in ice" (p.220), "woods fill up with snow", "downy flake" (p.224), "the gathered snow lets down as white / as may be dark woods" (p.226), "a crystal chill / Was only adding frost to snow" (p.233) are symbolically significant.

In the epigram "Fire and Ice" Frost psychologically resolves the disputation over planetary apocalypse: "Some say the world will end in fire, / ... for destruction ice / Is also great / And would suffice". Frost prognosticates that the two antipodal extremes love ("desire") and "hate" can equally destroy "the world" or human race. In the later poem "Beyond Words" "icicles" are typically associated with "hate" : "That row of icicles along the gutter / Feels like my armory of hate".[85] Likewise in "Fire and Ice" "ice" which can be recognized as an intimate symbol suggests hatred. The other catastrophic passion, "love" is symbolized by "fire".

One of Frost's most popular poems "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" provides interrelated images of woods, animal and snow laden with uncanny symbolical implications. In the "darkest evening of the year" the traveller of this poem stops his buggy somewhere between "the woods and frozen lake" to "watch" the woods "fill up with snow". The "little horse" remonstratively jangles its "harness bells" which infuse a new life of awareness into the aesthetically

charm-struck traveller. In this poem the "darkest evening of the year" may suggest the winter solstice. The murky winter landscape with its snowfall has tremendously baffled the commentators. John Ciardi discerns "death wish" in the symbols of "the dark and the snowfall".[86] But it is our contention that no symbol of this poem insinuates death-wish. The "snow", "downy flake" or dark landscape may indicate threat of death but the "harness bells" suggesting consciousness leads the traveller to overpower this threat. Life-urge is so potent in this poem that ultimately the traveller can neither slough off his personal nor social responsibilities; he realizes that he has "promises to keep" and "miles to go" before he sleeps. The image of "lovely, dark and deep" woods is extremely suggestive. Allen Tate fittingly compares the woods with a temptress who is "cold, mysterious (dark), and unfathomable".[87] Hence woods can be treated as the psychological symbol suggesting temptation in the ways of unending life-journey. One must not succumb to this temptation; everybody should feel impelled to move on by the realization of obligations before yielding to death.

The reiterative images of New Hampshire are "star", "snow", "water", "animal", "tree", "woods" and "colour". The types of symbols predominant in this volume are psychological, spiritual, colour and intimate.

West-Running Brook (1928), Frost's fifth book of poems, begins with a highly enigmatic lyric "Spring pools" which presents the image of pools coupled with woods, season and flower imagery. In the deciduous woods , the spring pools with "snow that melted only yesterday" mirror the "total sky almost without defect"; they are hemmed in by ravishing flowers but the transience of floral beauty yields a sense of regret. The pools will be sucked up by "roots" and "flowery waters and these watery flowers" will be blotted out and swept away by the trees to "darken nature" and make "summer woods". This destructive woods which adumbrate psychical sombreness of the poet can be recognized as a

psychical symbol. The "summer woods" canopied with "dark foliage" remind us of the later poem "Leaves Compared with Flowers" wherein Frost enunciates: "Petals I may have once pursued. / Leaves are all my darker mood".[88]

The images of woods, trees, leaves and flowers are dexterously wielded in the poems "On Going Unnoticed", "Acceptance", "Tree at My Window", "A Winter Eden", "The Last Mowing" and "The Birth Place". The images of "And still the woods sweep leafily on, / Not even missing the coralroot flower" (p. 247), "Hurrying low above the grove, some waif / Swoops just in time to his remembered tree" (p.249), "Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground" (p.251), "Not all your light tongues talking aloud / Could be profound" (p.252), "wild apple-tree's young tender bark" (254), "The trees are all I'm afraid of, / That flowers can't bloom in the shade of" (p.264), "The mountain pushed us off her knees. / And now her lap is full of trees" (p.265) are markedly suggestive.

"The Last Mowing" provides the image of flowers threatened by "trees" resembling "summer woods" in "Spring Pools". The wild and ephemeral beauty of "tumultuous flowers" reminds us of stunning landscape of the earlier poem "Rose Pogonias" wherein wild "orchises" luxuriate in "saturated meadow". In "season" the colourful flowers which "can't stand mowers and plowers" may thrive transiently in "Faraway Meadow" for

> ... trees, seeing the opening,
> March into a shadowy claim.
> The trees are all I'm afraid of,
> That flowers can't bloom in the shade of;[89] (9-12)

The engulfing shadow and appalling aggression of the trees, which hasten the demise of beautiful flowers, may signify spiritual desiccation. The flowers symbolize paradisiacal beauty and evanescent spiritual wisdom. "The Birthplace" unfurls portentious relationship between mountain and woods. Like the portraiture

of "woods /That end all"[90] in the earlier poem "In the Home Stretch" or "woods" in "Spring Pools" and "The Last Mowing" the mountain "pushed us off her knees. / And now her lap is full of trees".

"Tree at My Window" presents the image of anthropomorphic "window tree" appearing figuratively as "Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground". Between the tree and the psychical being of the imaginative speaker a bond of sympathy is explored in this poem. The "sash is lowered when night comes on" but the "curtain" is kept always undrawn to make them watch each other's condition. The speaker discerns the tree to be "taken and tossed" by the wind; the tree marks the speaker to be "taken and swept" by his dreams. The tree is concerned with "outer" weather; its "light tongues" which can only gabble insinuate miserably incoherent expression of the dreamer-speaker who is tremendously disquieted by "inner weather".

Like woods and its concomitant imagery, the images of water, wave, brook and ocean are masterfully manipulated in West-Running Brook. The suggestive images : "The shattered water made a misty din" (p.250), "Great waves looked over others coming in, / And thought of doing something to the shore" (p.250), "There would be more than ocean-water broken / Before God's last *Put out the Light* was spoken" (p.250), "It must be the brook / Can trust itself to go by contraries", "We'll both be married to the brook", "The black stream, catching on a sunken rock, / Flung backward on itself in one white wave, / And the white water rode the black forever" (p.258), "It is from that in water we were from" (p.259), "The brook runs down in sending up our life. / The sun runs down in sending up the brook" (p.260), "Sea waves are green and wet, / But up from where they die / Rise others vaster yet; / And those are brown and dry" (p.260) encompass Frost's recurrent moods and attitudes.

The poem "Once by the Pacific" presents interlinked images of ocean-water and cloud which typically embody Frostian vision of cataclysm. Frost metaphorically portrays an Othello-like malevolent God who flares up to "Put out the Light" instead of dividing it from darkness. "The shattered water" which makes a "misty din" turns out to be a foretaste of disaster to happen. Menacing stormy "waves" are depicted to do "something to the shore / That water never did to land before". The "dark intent" and "rage" of malicious God are manifested not only in water and wave but also in cloud image: "The clouds were low and hairy in the skies, / Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes". To C. Hines Edwards, Jr. this hirsute cloud-being may be treated as a reversal of William Blake's well-known representation of bearded God "stretching his dividers downward through a hole in the clouds into darkness".[91] Blakean God is concerned with light, order and creation while Frostian God in this poem is concerned with darkness, chaos and overhanging destruction. Briam Barbour thinks that the images of this poem are not apocalyptic; they are blasphemous for Frostian vision of destruction does not encompass the notion of salvation.[92] It is our contention that Frost should not be charged with sacrilege for he follows the "tradition of combining pagan and Judaeo-Christian allusion in his poetry — a combination which flourished particularly during the baroque period".[93]

Frost makes use of wave and brook imagery perceptively in his philosophical dialogue "West-Running Brook" wherein a newlywed couple views a topographically curious brook which occasions philosophical conception of life. Unlike "all the other country brooks" flowing east, this brook which has the westerly motion may suggest reconciliatory contrariety for the bride. observes: "It must be the brook / Can trust itself to go by contraries / The way I can with you — and you with me —". She senses that they would "both be married to the brook"; to her the brook is "an annunciation", "its waving to us with a wave / To let us know it hears me". The brook emerges as a gregarious figure; all the "three"

figures are inseparably united by heavenly love. Fred, the husband considers this wave plilosophically. To him the "white wave" rising against the current of the brook on a "sunken rock" resembles an image of striving bird "whose breast / Flecked the dark stream and flecked the darken pool / Below the point". For the husband the "white wave" may symbolize intractable human will to transcend mortality. The west-running brook which runs away "seriously" and "sadly" to "fill the abyss's void with emptiness" is indicative of flow of existence. This existence is imaged as "the stream of everything that runs away" which piquantly reminds us of the phrase "To go with the drift of things"[94] in "Reluctance", one of Frost's earlier poems. Frostian images and symbols are considerably influenced by Bergsonian imagery and notion of *élan vital*[95]: "Life as a whole", maintains Henri Bergson in Creative Evolution, "from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter".[96] The image what Bergson manipulates here is similar to Frost's image of stream with "some strange resistance". "Life sways perilously", writes Frost to Robert P. Tristram Coffin in 1938, "at the confluence of opposing forces"[97] : Frost's remark on "opposites" illuminates his poetic "trust ... to go by contraries" :

> It is this backward motion toward the source,
> Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,
> The tribute of the current to the source.
> It is from this in nature we are from.
> It is most us.[98] (68-72)

The image of "backward motion toward the source, / Against the stream" reminds us of the image of "you can climb / ... back through history up the stream of time" depicted in the later poem "The Master Speed" which manifests Frost's recurrent interest in Bergsonian idea of *élan vital*. It is worth noting that the "backward

motion toward the source, / Against the stream" signifies not only Frost's belief in existence with the tension of opposite forces but also in spiritual unity. Hence the "west-running brook" can be recognized as a spiritual symbol suggesting inmost aspiration for a return to divine origin.

Like woods and water imagery, luminary and astronomical images play a major role in West-Running Brook especially in the pieces of "The Freedom of The Moon", "Fireflies in the Garden", "The Peaceful Shepherd", "Acquainted with the Night", "Canis Major" and "On Looking up by Chance at the Constellations". The images "I've tried the new moon tilted in the air", "one first-water star" (p.245), "Here comes real stars to fill the upper skies", "they were never really stars at heart" (p.246) "I leaned to line the figures in / Between the dotted stars" (p.252), "And further still at an unearthly height / One luminary clock against the sky" (p.255), " the great Overdog, / That heavenly beast / With a star in one eye, / Gives a leap in the east" (p.261) "The sun and moon get crossed, but they never touch", "And look elsewhere than to stars and moon and sun / For the shocks and changes we need to keep us sane" (p.268) are distinctively meaningful.

Frost's treatment of astronomical imagery in "On Looking up by Chance at the Constellations" is amusing. In outer space "beyond the floats of cloud" "nothing even happens". The heavenly bodies are well systematized "in heaven". To observe spatial design "The sun and moon get crossed, but they never touch". They neither "strike out fire from each other, nor crash out loud". The poet humorously tells us that we have to "look elsewhere than to stars and moon and sun / For the shocks and changes we need to keep us sane". Like the white stars portrayed in the earlier poem "Stars" the stars of this poem symbolize cosmic indifference.

"Acquainted with the Night" which establishes Frost's "kinship with Baudelaire"[99] provides the involuted image of "luminary clock" against the backcloth of "night" image. The imagistic strategy of this poem resembles the earlier poem "Good Hours" wherein the evening straggler who wandered around "the slumbering village street" "saw no window but that was black".[100] Likewise the protagonist of "Acquainted with the Night" acquainted himself with sombre "night" while walking "out in rain — and back in rain" and looking down "the saddest city lane". Of course the night stroll in "Acquainted with the Night" is symbolically more pregnant than that of "Good Hours". The aural image of "an interrupted cry" coming over "houses from another street" neither called the protagonist of "Acquainted with the Night" "back" nor said "good-bye". The night that encompasses "saddest city lane" and "an interrupted cry" can be recognized as a plurivalent symbol indicating both vacuity of modern city life and unendurable psychical desolation. The crux of the poem is concerned with the image of "One luminary clock against the sky / Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right". Nina Baym in her article "An Approach to Robert Frost's Nature Poetry" recognizes the "luminary clock" as the moon.[101] Nat Henry also argues that the "luminary clock" which does not proclaim "a fact" but proclaim "an opinion" about "the time" can only be the moon.[102] To Frank Lentricchia the "luminary clock" may both be clock tower or the moon suggestive of "indifference of time" that neither "guides nor judges" the "journey" of the protagonist.[103] But we think that Laurence Perrine's observation is perceptively fitting. To him "luminary clock" refers to "a tower clock with a lighted dial, not to the moon".[104] He supports Dorothy Tyler's views on this issue. Tyler tells us that Frost himself admitted that the "luminary clock" was in Ann Arbor. She further insists: "It may well have been, for the big illuminated clock on the Michigan Central Station ... was just around the corner from the house on Pontiac Road where the Frost family lived in 1925, down the hill and over the railroad bridge he

must have crossed many times".[105] Thus it could well be perceived that "luminary clock" is a very complex symbol. It may be regarded as an intimate symbol suggesting the spirit of desolate modern human being not regulated by moral values.

The recurrent images of West-Running Brook are "tree", "woods", "flower", "water", "wave", "brook", "star", "sun", "moon", "night" and "darkness". Psychical, spiritual and intimate symbols are preponderantly manipulated in this volume.

Frost's sixth volume, A Further Range (1936) wherein Frost "lifts up his eyes to other than the customary hills"[106] adumbrates his symbolistic maturity. Frost's imagistic strategy also signally takes a remarkable turn in this volume; the earlier volumes predominantly deal with woods imagery whereas A Further Range prodigiously focuses on animal imagery. Animal image stands out in the poems "The White-Tailed Hornet", "A Blue Ribbon at Amesbury", "Departmental", "Desert Places", "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep", "Design" and "On a Bird Singing in Its Sleep". The images of "The white-tailed hornet lives in a balloon" (p.277), "He's after the domesticated fly / To feed his thumping grubs as big as he is", "And the fly circled round him in derision" (p.278), "Such a fine pullet ought to go / All coiffured to a winter-show" (p.279), "An ant on the table cloth / Ran into a dormant moth / Of many times his size" (p.287), "All animals are smothered in their lairs" (p.296), "The wetter ground like glass / Reflects a standing gull" (p.301), "I found a dimpled spider, fat and white, / On a white heal-all, holding up a moth", "A bird half wakened in the lunar noon / Sang halfway through its little inborn tune" (p.302) are expressively weighty.

In "The White-Tailed Hornet" the wasp image is wielded ludicrously. The "balloon", in which the white-tailed hornet lives, "floats against the ceiling of the woodshed". The balloon is further imaged as "Japanese crepe-paper globe". The

hornet rushes to sting the speaker for it fallaciously thinks that he intends to hang the "balloon" over "a bookcase". B.J.Sokol contends that Frost's "The White-Tailed Hornet" echoes the intricate instincts of the hymenopteran insects described in Henri Bergson's Creative Evolution.[107] The hornet which ridiculously would "stab" the speaker in "the sneeze-nerve of a nostril" reminds us of the "nerve-stinging surgeon-wasps" as delineated by Fabre and Bergson. The hornet chases after "the domesticated fly" to feed his young which are depicted as "thumping grubs as big as he is". It mistakes "a nailhead" and "a little huckleberry" for flies and finally tries to pounce on "a fly" which "circled round him in derison". The bungling endeavour of the hornet makes the speaker question:

> Won't this whole instinct matter bear revision?
> Won't almost any theory bear revision?
> To err is human, not to, animal.[108] (50-52)

Frost scoffs at those modern theorists who place too much reliance on the infallibility of instinct. Radcliffe Squires points out that Frost's powers of observations tell the poet that "instinctive behaviour can be mean or faulty".[109] Frost believes that only human beings can transcend animality or instinctive behaviour and fulfil their potential to feel exalted. However, white colour emerges as a major symbol in "The White-Tailed Hornet". Sokol tells us that white-tailed hawk and white-headed hornet exist in North America but there is "no species of wasp or hornet called white-tailed".[110] Like "white heal-all" in "Design", white-tailed hornet occurs only in the Frost universe. Unlike Thoreauvian whiteness Frostian whiteness insinuates ominous force. The whiteness of hornet's tail containing poisonous sting suggests a lack of "divine order" and "real scale of value".

"Design" which is called by Frost "a set little sonnet"[111] deals with spider image schematically associated with the imagery of moth and heal-all, "a subverted cosmic flower".[112] The original version of "Design" entitling "In White" (1912) distinctly discloses that whiteness is one of the core symbols of this sonnet. In fact the symbol of white colour in this sonnet is treated more enigmatically and appallingly than the whiteness in "The White-Tailed Hornet". The triadic collocation of albinic spider, moth and heal-all (prunella vulgaris) dramatises the "design of darkness" in "Design". The "dented spider" of "In white" emerges as "dimpled" "fat and white" one simulating an inculpable infant "holding up a moth / Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth" on "a white heal-all" in the octet of "Design". Unlike the "orchises" representing beauty and spirituality in the earlier poem "Rose Pogonias" or "a leaping tongue of bloom" suggesting fraternity in the earlier piece "The Tuft of Flowers" the "white" heal-all, which loses its natural blueness insinuates gothic horror. The simile "Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth" is terrifyingly implicative. In "In White" Frost uses "lifeless satin cloth" instead of the image of "rigid satin cloth" which is expressive of rigor mortis or the lining of a coffin.[113] Hence the trio — spider, moth and heal-all grows into "Assorted characters of death and blight". (l.4). These characters like "the ingredients of a witches' broth" are ironically unlimbered "to begin the morning right", an intricate image implying a grisly morning "rite" or funeral or "danse macabré". The simile "Like the ingredients of a witches' broth" which echoes mephitic components of the witches' cauldron in Macbeth suggests the macabre interplay of evil forces. As the octet reaches its close, the "beady spider" of "In White" turns into "snow-drop spider" indicating the ironic innocuousness of the insect, for the white flower, snow-drop (Galanthus nivalis) which generally represents innocence is "like a froth" that is tacitly linked up with the poisonous "broth" of the witches; the image of moth-wings resembling "a paper kite" indicates cadaverous stiffness.

In the sestet Frost unconventionally phrases his three cogitative questions. The first question, "What had that flower to do with being white, / The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?" points up the enigmatic "albino catastrophe" imaged in the first and second line of the octet. The second question, "What brought the kindred spider to that height, / Then steered the white moth thither in the night?" accentuates plausible conniving force in nature. The third question, "What but design of darkness to appall?" presumably suggests the fact that freaky whiteness sets the stage for a macabre play. The word "appall" which means "to grow pale" (apalir) or "pale" (pallidus) in its root sense is superbly linked up with the image of whiteness. The "small" tragic tableau deviously determined by "design" points to a maleficent deity whose ubiquitous existence in the universe can never be impugned. Thus the whiteness of spider, moth and heal-all can be recognized as an intimate symbol suggesting sinister force active in cosmic life.

"Neither Out Far Nor in Deep" furnishes interrelated images of sea-bird, sea and ship. This cryptic lyric begins with the "people" on the strand gazing seaward "all day" in pursuit of "the truth". While gazing they catch sight of an offshore ship "raising its hull" and the nearby reflection of "a standing gull" in the glassy "wetter ground". Due to their limitation of human vision the "people" can never watch beyond the horizon and beneath the opaque surface of the sea: "They cannot look out far. / They cannot look in deep". "A standing gull" emerges as the most suggestive image of this lyric. Peter D. Poland discovers a close resemblance between the "people" and "a standing gull". The people who "have cut themselves off from the land world and all that it represents ... have become isolates, like the solitary gull that they resemble".[114] Unlike the speaker of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" the gull-like "people" negate the "land world" and slough off their social "promises" and responsibilities. Like the well-gazer of "For Once, Then, Something" the poetic personae of "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep" want to experience the complete truth of nature but nature does not divulge her secrets to

them. Here, the sea can be considered as a conventional symbol indicating the truth of the nature.

In A Further Range Frost branches out into the profound implication of snow image besides animal imagery. Snow image is conspicuous in the poems "Two Tramps in Mud Time", "Desert Places" and "Afterflakes". The images of "don't forget / The lurking frost in the earth beneath" (p.276), "Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast / In a field I looked into going past", "A blanker whiteness of benighted snow" (p.296), "In the thick of a teeming snowfall / I saw my shadow on snow", "the thick flakes floating at a pause / Were but frost knots on an airy gauze" (p.303) are emblematically outstanding.

"Desert Places" deals with snow image associated with the image of darkness, whiteness and loneliness. Like the traveller watching the "woods fill up with snow" in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" the speaker of "Desert Places" observes "Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast / In a field". But the connotations of the symbolic image, "snow" in these two pieces are not identical. In "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" snow suggests momentary threat of death while in "Desert Places" it symbolizes execrable spiritual desolation. Like the "shadowy claim" of woods which hastens the demise of flowers in "The Last Mowing", the dark and lonely woods of "Desert places" present a dying world where all "animals are smothered in their lairs". Nevertheless this lifeless world reflects the spiritual desolation of the speaker himself: "I am too absent-spirited to count; / The loneliness includes me unawares". The blankness of the snowy landscape, chromatically characterized by "A blanker whiteness of benighted snow", signifies spiritual or creative vacuity of the speaker who confronts existence "With no expression, nothing to express". The speaker's inmost "desert places" are so terrifying that they transcend the state of "empty spaces / Between stars — on stars where no human race is". It is worth noting that in "Desert

Places" the symbol of whiteness assumes exceptional dimensions. Unlike the symbol of whiteness in "The White-Tailed Hornet" or "Design" whiteness in "Desert Places" symbolizes illimitable and appalling sterility of human spirit.

The snow image which "Afterflakes" deals with is highly symbolical. "In the thick of teeming snowfall" the speaker of this poem views his "shadow on snow". This shadow indicates his inward darkness or murky mood. The inward or psychical landscape is further mirrored by the image of weather: "That shadow of mine should show in form / Against the shapeless shadow of storm". But psychical shadowy storm is not perdurable. As the poem reaches to its close, the image of thick snow is exposed as "frost knots on an airy gauze" through which "the sun" shines. In "Desert Places" the image of snow which is "benighted" embodies Frost's dark vision. But in "Afterflakes" snow, a psychical symbol, encompasses Frost's duple vision — dark and lucent.

The iterative images of A Further Range are "animal", "nature", "flower", "snow", "whiteness" and "darkness". The dominant types of symbols occurring in this volume are psychical, spiritual, conventional, intimate and colour.

Frost's seventh book of poetry, A Witness Tree (1942) is poignantly lyrical. "The Silken Tent", "Never Again Would Bird's Song Be the Same", "The Subverted Flower" are wonderful lyrics dealing with the images of love, beauty, femininity, sexuality and eroticism. The images of "She is as in a field a silken tent" (p.331), "supporting central cedar pole", "countless silken ties of love and thought ((p.332), "the birds there in all the garden round / From having heard the daylong voice of Eve / Had added to their own an oversound" (p.338), "He flicked and flung the flower" (p.339), "His lips were sucked and blown / And the effort made him choke / Like a tiger at the bone", "She dared not stir a foot, / Lest movement should provoke / The demon of pursuit / That slumbers in a brute",

"She looked and saw the shame: / A hand hung like a paw, / An arm worked like a saw" (p.340) are signally significative.

"The silken Tent" is a one-sentence lyrical sonnet wherein the beauty and maturity of a woman is suggested by the image of silken tent. The images of "midday" and "sunny summer" in the second line not only suggest diurnal and seasonal maturity but also entrancing nubility of the woman. The tent metaphor exquisitely reveals the psychical topography of the woman. The tent which "gently sways at ease" due to relenting "ropes" is supported by a "central cedar pole" — the "pinnacle to heavenward" signifying "the sureness of the soul". The "cedar pole" can be recognized as a plurivalent symbol. Richard Poirier insists that it has a sexual implication.[115] Katherine Kearns also considers this to be a phallic symbol. Here the femininity is observed to be fulfilled by masculinity. "Without the pole the tent would be "silk" or "cloth" but not serviceable".[116] Nevertheless the "cedar pole" also maintains spiritual implication. The images of "cedar pole" and "sureness of the soul" reminds us of Psalm 92 wherein the "cedar in Lebanon" represents virtuousness and spirituality. The feminine nature which we find in this sonnet is paradoxical. The tent-like woman is "loosely bound / By countless silken ties of love and thought". She enjoys freedom while she is love-bound. The "capriciousness of summer air" which assays her "bondage" symbolizes "the paradoxical contrast between the established pattern of the woman's virtuous life and the unexpectedly impulsive response to a gust of passionate desire".[117]

"The Subverted Flower" provides sexually involute flower image associated with the image of beast in human being. According to Stearns Morse this lyric is "quite unFrostian" for it explicitly deals with "love's sexual root".[118] Written in earlier period the lyric could have been incorporated in A Boy's Will but perhaps its crude sexuality made Frost's strait-laced wife disallow to publish it

in her life time. In "The Subverted Flower" we find that the unmuzzled sexual drive of a man transforms him into a dog-like beast with "muzzle". The man "smiled" for the frigid or "willfully unkind" woman and "flicked and flung the flower". "[A]nother sort of smile" indicating licentiousness cracks his "ragged muzzle" while he discovers her "standing to the waist / In goldenrod and brake, / Her shining hair displaced". Terrified by the surge of sexuality of the man resembling "a tiger at bone" the virgin dares not to change her position "Lest movement should provoke / The demon of pursuit / That slumbers in a brute". It is worth noting that the woman apprehensively discovers canine, tigerish and demonic nature in the man. When she hears her "mother's call / From inside the garden wall" the man undergoes another uncomely metamorphosis; with a "snout" he looks like a pig to be easily subjugated. He runs away in fear and she "heard him bark outright". She feels that "the tender-headed flower" is "base and fetid". Frost tells us that "frigidity in woman" is the gist of "The Subverted Flower"[119] Frigidity is not glorified in this lyric. Negating warm emotion the woman herself grows into a beast. As she hears the man "bark", she hysterically spits "bitter words" just like a cat spitting at a dog. Her mother wipes "the foam / From her chin" and draws her like a domestic animal "backward home".

Flower is the predominant symbol in "The Subverted Flower". Unlike the flowers in the earlier pieces, "Rose Pogonias", "Mowing", "The Tuft of Flowers" or "A Prayer in Spring", the flower in "The Subverted Flower" is wielded in an uncanny fashion. It can be recognized as a plurivant symbol. To begin with the flower has sexual implication; to Jay Parini it indicates "a thinly disguised phallus"[120] and secondly, the flower has also psychological implication; the flower which appears to be malodorous or "fetid" to the women, signifies her unusual anaphrodisia and psychological abnormality. The woman considers that the flower "marred" the man. But ironically she herself "marred" her flowery heart. Hence the flower symbolizes the dismal topography of the woman's psyche.

Like sexual or erotic images the image of nature with its indifference and sombreness stands out in the poems notably "The Most Of It", "To a Moth Seen in Winter" and "Come In". The images: "For all the voice in answer he could wake / Was but the mocking echo of his own", "He would cry out on life, that what it wants / Is not its own love back in copy speech, / But counter love, original response", "As a great buck it powerfully appeared, / Pushing the crumpled water up ahead, / ... And forced the underbrush — and that was all" (p.338), "And now pray tell what lured you with false hope / To make the venture of eternity / And seek the love of kind in wintertime" (p.356), "I cannot touch your life, much less can save, / Who am tasked to save my own a little while" (p.357), "Now if it was dusk outside, / Inside it was dark", Too dark in the woods for a bird / By sleight of wing / To better its perch for the night", "Far in the pillared dark / Thrush music went — Almost like a call to come in" (p.334), emblematically divulgate the identity of Frostian nature.

"The Most of It" provides the image of nature coupled with beast image. The protagonist of this lyric ironically thinks that he keeps "the universe alone". He, of course, deplorably emerges as an isolate figure to hear only the "echo of his own". In the earlier poems, "Storm Fear" or "An Old Man's Winter Night" nature is depicted to be malevolent while in "The Most of It" the cosmos is portrayed to be extremely indifferent; it is void of "counter-love, original response". What the protagonist cries "out on life" is embodied in cacophonous sounds. A great buck crashing about "the cliff's talus", "Pushing the crumpled water up ahead", landing "like a waterfall" and stumbling "through the rocks with horny tread" "powerfully" appears to force its way through "the underbrush". The forceful and callous movement of the buck is highly symbolical. The buck can be recognized as a cosmic symbol suggesting the indifference and callosity of the universe.

"Come In" furnishes images of nature or woods, bird and star. As the speaker of this lyric at "dusk" comes to the edge of dark woods wherein a thrush can never "better its perch for the night" by "sleight of wing", he listens to thrush "music" lamenting over the "last of the light of the sun / That had died in the west". Frost's thrush contrasts sharply with Hardy's thrush which pours its "illimited" joy "to fling his soul / Upon the growing gloom".[121] Unlike Keats's nightingale Frost's thrush is concerned with death and darkness. Like the buck identified with utter indifference of the universe in "The Most of It", the thrush is unified with the dismaying darkness of nature. The threnodic thrush "music" lures the speaker into "the pillared dark" to "lament". But unlike Keats who wants to fly to the "immortal" nightingale "on the viewless wings of Poesy",[122] Frostian speaker declines approaching the thrush to lament. The phrase "pillared dark" harks back to Baudelaire's "Correspondances" wherein "piliers" are manipulated to symbolze trees. Thus "pillared dark" suggests large trees existing in the darkening woods. To Marie Borroff it also implies "a monumental high-cultural edifice belonging to a past era, such as a temple or a cathedral".[123] The speaker averts his attention from the "pillared dark" for a lucent destination:

> But no, I was out for stars:
> I would not come in.
> I meant not even if asked,
> And I hadn't been.[124] (17-20)

The traveller in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" turns his back on the seductive woods to bear human responsibilities while the speaker in "Come In" forsakes the death-dealing darkness of the woods for the superior starry world of immortal life. It is worth mentioning that the connotation of the star image in the early piece "Stars" does not correspond with the implication of star image in

"Come In". Star in "Come In" can be recognized as a spiritual symbol suggesting immortality, intellectuality and spirituality.

The images which recur in A Witness Tree are "summer", "flower", "woods", "nature", "animal", "darkness", "sun", "light" and "star". Sexual, psychological, cosmic and spiritual symbols play a major role in this volume.

Our examination of major images and symbols evolved in the middle phase of the Frost poetry reveals that Frostian images are simultaneously derived from organic world and luminary universe; Frost's temperamental insight into human psyche and philosophical response to cosmic phenomena reinforce intricacy of his symbolistic strategy.

"A line of shadowy tracks": Final Phase (1945 – 1962)

The Final phase of the Frost poetry spectacularly vivifies Frostian vision of life. The late poetry, which has a philosophicoreligious twist in its artistic structure, is a testimony to Frost's finer sensibility and deeper wisdom. The philosophical and spiritual overtones Frost transmits to his late works are inevitably embodied in his major images and symbols. As Yeats in his early sixties sails to "the holy city of Byzantium" — the world of art and spirituality, so Frost in his early seventies sets forth in quest of "Something Byzantine". Frost's eighth volume A Masque of Reason (1945) is a one-act play after the fashion of seventeenth century masque. But unlike the traditional masque, this play probes philosophicoreligious problems. The septuagenarian poet strikingly ponders on "sun-bathed" imagery and spiritual symbols in this drama. Through the suggestive images of "A fair oasis in the purest desert", "the incense tree's on fire", "Burning Bush", "The strangest light", "There's a strange light on everything today", "The birds, seem all on fire with Paradise", "The enameled nightingales / Are singing", "The Tree is troubled. / Someone's caught in the branches" (p.473) "My forte is truth" (p. 480), "turn the gold enameled artificial birds on" (p.490) Frost sets out his spiritual idea and philosophical profundity.

The play is set in a sun-bathed " fair oasis in the purest desert" and its dramatis personae are the Old Testament God, Job, Satan and Job's wife, a petulant feminist. Job "sits leaning back against a palm" and his wife Thyatira "lies by him looking at the sky". The image of "fair oasis in the purest desert" is suggestive of the hereafter or "Judgment Day" for the modifiers "fair " and "purest " transcend the literal meaning of "oasis" and "desert". The image of "a palm" is also highly symbolical. A "palm", the only tree which never sheds its leaves may symbolize eternity. Judgment Day is characteristically irradiated with

divine illumination: "There's a strange light on everything today". Job and Thyatira perceive God entangled in "Byzantine" "Burning Bush" or the "Christmas Tree" from which He makes Himself free by quite gradually. The image of God in the poem "Once by the Pacific" does not correspond to the figure of the Godhead in A Masque of Reason. The God "Once by the Pacific" represents is a reversal of Blakean God while the portrayal of God in A Masque of Reason is quite identical to Blake's drawing of the Deity. Thyatira recognizes God easily for she knows him "by Blake's picture anywhere". God is depicted anthropomorphically in this play. He pitches His "prefabricated" plywood throne and pulls it lightly upright on its hinges. This collapsible "prefabricated" throne presumably points to some weakness in God. God speaks equivocally and apologetically in this play. The problem Job and Thyatira discuss with God is "great pains of life on earth". This problem is perceived to be irreconcilable with divine wisdom. Reginald L. Cook appropriately observes: "Just as the ambiguity of Plinlimmon's horologicals and chronometricals interested Melville in Pierre, so the inability to reconcile human affliction with heavenly wisdom fascinated Frost[125]". Job, "the great injured man" stands for humankind. The ordeal which human being has to go through can never be rationally explained. God tells Job, "There's no connection man can reason out / Between his just deserts and what he gets". God does not readily divulge the secrets of the trial on which He puts Job. Thyatira who provokes God to spell Job's suffering out, contends, "Of course, in the abstract high singular / There isn't any universal reason". God, nevertheless, admits that "the discipline" what man needs most is to learn his "submission to unreason". God apologetically makes a confession that in tormenting Job He was "just showing off to the Devil". Job looks puzzled; he symbolically and despondently associates whiteness with equivocality and dissipation: "Though I hold rays deteriorate to nothing: / First white, then red, then ultrared, then out". It is worth mentioning that the depiction of the Devil as "God's best inspiration"

remarkably signifies Frost's consciousness of evil. Frost senses that Satanic activities are impregnable on earth. He implies that no human being can escape from the Devil's clutches. The role the Devil plays in this drama is symbolical. The Devil manifests himself "like a sapphire wasp" with flickering "mica wings". He is diaphanous for "Church neglect / And figurative use" have attenuated him to "a shadow of himself". His waspish appearance reminds us of the poem "The White-Tailed Hornet" wherein the wasp image suggest divine disorderliness. That the Devil reluctantly speaks and scarcely stays on stage presumably indicates that he is busy to bedevil human beings surrepticiously.

Frost considers his two masques A Masque of Reason and A Masque of Mercy to be the "major achievements".[126] But unfortunately A Masque of Reason often fails to provoke serious critical attention. A Masque of Reason presents an argumentation "which ends in the paradox that, though man's self-referential identity lies in seeking reason, the irrational remains supreme to mock his efforts".[127]

The recurrent images of A Masque of Reason are "light", "tree", "bird" and "picture". Spiritual and colour symbols are particularly employed in this play.

Steeple Bush (1947), Frost's ninth volume of poetry manifests "no diminution of poetic power".[128] In fact, the philosophical and spiritual subjects of this volume on which Frost waxes eloquent "attest the ripeness of the poet's wisdom".[129] In Steeple Bush Frost orchestrates his images and symbols with astounding skill. The poems "A Young Birch", "Something for Hope", "Directive", "An Unstamped Letter in Our Rural Letter Box", "The Middleness of the Road" deal with the recurrent imagery of trees and weeds laden with exceptionally added significance. The images of "The birch begins to crack its outer sheath / Of baby green and show the white beneath" (p. 375), "the meadow sweet / And steeple bush, not good to eat, / Will have crowded out the edible

grass" (pp. 375-376), "the trees put on their wooden rings", "long-sleeved branches", "lovely blooming but wasteful weed" (p. 376), "A few old pecker-fretted apple trees" (p. 378), "There, pointed like the pip of spade, / The young spruce made a suite of glades", "There I elected to demur / Beneath a low-slung juniper" (p. 380) have diverse layers of meanings.

"A Young Birch", the opening poem in Steeple Bush provides the image of birch tree coupled with the image of whiteness. Frost tells us that "a glimmer of white" which he sights in the birch by his cabin is the principal point of the piece.[130] Unlike the image of birches which suggest oscillating experience of real and spiritual world in the earlier poem "Birches", the young "birch" that "begins to crack its outer sheath / Of baby green and show the white beneath" indicates natural mutability or the progression from immaturity to maturity. Unlike the enigmatic whiteness in "For Once, Then, Something" or appalling whiteness in "Design", the whiteness in "A Young Birch" can be recognized as a conventional symbol suggesting experience as opposed to innocence. The young birch, which can be regarded as a natural symbol, points to intensified perception of ineffable beauty: "It was a thing of beauty and was sent / To live its life out as an ornament".

The image of steeple bush which comes up in "Something for Hope" provides the title to this book of poetry. Like the incursive woods that "come back to the mowing field" in the earlier poem "Ghost House" or the aggressive "trees" which precipitate the demise of ravishing flowers in "The Last Mowing", steeple bush, a "lovely blooming but wasteful weed", "Will have crowded out the edible grass". The steeple bush is indicative of antagonistic force to life. To make the "pristine earth" free from steeple bush and "ready again for the grass to own", the poet exhorts us to raise trees and cut down them "when lumber grown".

Like trees and weeds, the image of house standing out in the poems "Directive", "The Night Light", "In the Long Night" and "A Steeple on the House" plays a very significant role in Steeple Bush. The images of "There is a house that is no more a house" (p. 377), "there's the children's house of make-believe", "that is no more a house, / But only a belilaced cellar hole, / Now slowly closing like a dent in dough", "This was no playhouse but a house in earnest", "Your destination and your destiny's / A brook that was the water of the house" (p. 378), "I stole the goblet from the children's playhouse" (p. 379), "She always had to burn a light / Beside her attic bed at night" (p. 382), "I would build my house of crystal, / With a solitary friend" (p. 384), "What if it should turn out eternity / Was but the steeple on our house of life / That made our house of life a house of worship", "A spire and belfry coming on the roof / Means that a soul is coming on the flesh" (386) emblematically divulgate Frostian vision of life.

The interrelated images of house and brook are extraordinarily manipulated in "Directive" which is, to Morrison, "One of the most moving poems Frost or anyone has written".[131] The appealing motif of this poem is journey. The "guide", who may represent the inner self of the poet, asks the poet-narrator to make a journey to "a house that is no more a house / Upon a farm that is no more a farm / And in a town that is no more a town". The image of this defunct house reminds us of the image of "vanished abode" that "left no trace but the cellar walls" in the earlier poem "Ghost House". The road, which the poet-narrator climbs along seems like "a quarry" or the "chisel work of an enormous Glacier / That braced his feet against the Arctic Pole". Thus the journey turns out to be "the serial ordeal" but the guide urges the narrator not to "mind" this. As they pass through the woods "light rustle" rushes to the leaves. But the "wood's excitement" does not attest to the sentience of the landscape. The landscape is of course exanimate for the symbolic image of a "few old pecker-fretted apple trees" insinuate irretrievable loss of life. Nevertheless, the image of the "only field /

Now left's no bigger than a harness gall" is also suggestive of the uncomeliness of the landscape as well as the agonies of human life. The poetic personae pass by "the children's house of make-believe" to reach the "house in earnest". "They retrace the line of growth", Ronald Bieganowski insists "from adulthood to childhood back to infancy when the child is confined to the house and nursery".[132] Their backward movement aptly resembles the image of "backward motion toward the source / Against the stream" in "West-Running Brook". The "house in earnest" is imaged as "a belilaced cellar hole, / Now slowly closing like a dent in dough". This image of the lilac – enshrouded insentient cellar hole characteristically resembles Eliotic image of "Lilacs out of the dead land" in the "Waste Land".[133] At this point, it is perspicuous that the "house in earnest" does not turn out to be the ultimate destination of the narrator. His "destination" and "destiny" is a "brook that was the water of the house, / Cold as a spring as yet so near its source, / Two lofty and original to rage". Frost informs Hyde Cox that "the key word in the whole poem is source".[134] The brook-water or "the water of the house" which is suggestive of the source of spiritual life, can only be quaffed from "the Grail" a metaphor for "living faith".[135] Like the poet, a true quester can be blessed with the sense of coveted wholeness by exploring the redemptive "waters" and "watering place" : "Here are your waters and your watering place. / Drink and be whole again beyond confusion".

Frost broadens the scope of house image in "A Steeple on the House". In "Home Burial" and "A Servant to Servants" house image is concerned with incarceration, in "The Death of the Hired Man" it is allegorically related to divine blessing, and in "Directive" house image is predominantly linked up with the remnants of human suffering and defeat. In "A Steeple on the House" this image of course is identified with the emergence of soul. Frost lavishes attention on spirit-earth or soul-flesh relationship in this poem. The vertical "spire" or "steeple" of the "house of life" is expressive of soul or spirit. The "house of life"

may indicate earth or fleshy human body. Though we do not utilize the steeple "to sleep" or "to live" the close connection between "the steeple" and the "flesh" can never be impugned: "A spire and belfry coming on the roof / Means that a soul is coming on the flesh".

The astronomical imagery is preponderantly evident in Steeple Bush besides the images of trees-weeds and house. The sharp images of the sun, moon and star are obsessively employed in the poems "One Step Backward Taken", "An Unstamped Letter in Our Rural Letter Box", "Were I in Trouble", "On Making Certain Anything Has Happened", "Skeptic", "Two leading Lights", "It Bids Pretty Fair", "Why Wait for Science" and "The Broken Drought". The images of "the sun came out to dry me" (p. 377), "The largest fire drop ever formed / From two stars' having coalesced / Went streaking molten down the west" (p. 381), "a star fresh fallen out of the sky" (p. 383), "I should justly hesitate / To frighten church or state / By announcing a star down" (p. 384), "Far star that tickles for me my sensitive plate / And fires a couple of ebon atoms white", "I put no faith in the seeming facts of light" (p. 389), "The sun is ... / a power of light / And could in one burst overwhelm / And dayify the darkest realm / By right of eminent domain" (p. 390), "The only thing I worry about is the sun" (p. 392), "Will she be asked to show / Us how by rocket we may hope to steer / To some star off there" (p. 395), "Earth would soon / Be uninhabitable as the moon" (p. 400) symbolically illuminate the imaginative universe of Frost.

Frost treats astronomical imagery quaintly in "Skeptic". His astronomical image in the late verse is not the replica of what he portrayed in the early or middle phase of his poetic career. Fascinated by the starry world of spiritual or immortal life, the speaker in "Come In" is " out for stars" while the speaker in "Skeptic" is altogether sceptical about "the seeming facts of light" of far "star that

tickles" his "sensitive plate". It is the star for which the speaker's sensitivity to the universe takes an unendurable turn:

> The universe may or may not be very immense.
> As a matter of fact there are times when I am apt
> To feel it close in tight against my sense
> Like a caul in which I was born and still am wrapped[136]
> (9-12)

To the speaker, the universe appears to be an excruciating "caul" harking back to the claustrophobic cosmos symbolized by "creaking room" in which the senile protagonist of "An Old Man's Winter Night" wanders.

"An Unstamped Letter in Our Rural Letter Box" is a significant verse wherein Frost employs, in his own inimitable way, the image of star which bears unusual weight and value. In this poem Frost draws an analogy between outward astral world and illuminated inner world. The poetic persona watches "The largest firedrop ever formed / From two stars' having coalesced / Went streaking molten down the west" which thrusts an image of creative or spiritual experience, for, this symbolic imagery is amazingly analogous with the image of "Inside the brain / Two memories that long had lain / Now quivered toward each other, lipped / Together, and together slipped". According to Mario L.D'Avanzo this rare experience is "at once visionary and creative".[137] The connotations of star symbols in "Skeptic" and "An Unstamped Letter" are not identical. In "Skeptic" the star is suggestive of skeptical mood while in "An Unstamped Letter" the star is expressive of spiritual realization or creative inspiration.

Star image is, further, dexterously deployed in the piece "Take Something Like a Star" (originally "Choose Something Like a Star") incorporated in An Afterword (1949) — a type of coda to Steeple Bush. In "Skeptic" Frost puts "no faith in the seeming facts of light" of the star while in "Take Something Like a

Star" he grants the "loftiness" of the star perceived as "the fairest one in sight". Unlike the cosmically indifferent stars analogized with "Minerva's snow-white marble eyes" in the earlier poem "Stars", the star, "steadfast as Keats' Eremite", is psychologically linked up with human life in "Take Something Like a Star". Frost's poem refers to Keats's sonnet "Bright Star" wherein "steadfast", bright star is held to be analogous to "nature's patient, sleepless Eremite".[138] Frost's star, contravening its taciturnity, says "I burn". Kearns discovers an implicit "sexual heat" in the star's feeling. To her the eremite or the religious recluse is also a lover who likes to remain "still steadfast, still unchangeable, / Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast, / To feel forever its soft fall and swell"("Bright Star").[139] But it would possibly be profitable to explicate the star's sensation in spiritual sense. The star with its sympathetic and eremitic feeling watches human life in the wide world. It endeavours to find "a certain height" for the elevation of humankind and it symbolically leads us to the world of spirituality:

> It asks of us a certain height,
> So when at times the mob is swayed
> To carry praise or blame to far,
> We may take something like a star
> To stay our minds on and be staid.[140] (21 – 25)

The reiterative images of Steeple Bush are "trees", "weeds", "house", "water", "sun", "moon" and "star". Natural, conventional, spiritual and colour symbols are substantially wielded in this volume.

A Masque of Mercy (1947), companion piece to A Masque of Reason is Frost's tenth volume wherein the poet wonderfully dwells on spiritual salvation. Unlike the "sun-bathed imagery" of A Masque of Reason , A Masque of Mercy predominantly focuses on "murky" images. But the images of this second play are not tinged with "the murkiness of hell. It is the murkiness of incapable human

reason, which finally surrendering, finds the self-obliterating darkness that 'there will be a light'. Not the light of reason, which enlightens little, but of truth and mercy, not from man but from God".[141] The images of "A bookstore late at night" (p. 493), "I have been sent / To prophesy against the city evil" (p. 495), "The world's sick" (p. 500), "A fracture in the rocks beneath New York" (p. 502), "God comes on me to doom a city for Him" (p. 505), "The city is admittedly an evil" (p. 506), "Your exit door's become a cellar door", "The door here opens darkly of itself" (p. 514), "all this talk of slaying down in cellars", "Just an oubliette, / Where you must lie in self-forgetfulness" (p. 516), "every time I fade (p. 518), "We send our wicked enemies to Hell, / Our wicked friends we send to Purgatory" (p. 519) point to a seemingly lightless, awful life which ultimately turns to a life of spiritual realization and salvation.

The setting of the play is a "bookstore late at night"; the characters are Jonah (also called Jonas Dove), Keeper, Jesse Bel (Keeper's wife) and Paul (an exegete or apostle). Jonah, a senile fugitive from God, having lost his "faith in God to carry out / The threats He makes against the city evil" enters the bookstore administered by Keeper and Jesse Bel. The bookstore does not prove to be a snug "sanctuary" for Jonah, a "prophet with the Bible for credentials". The bookstore seems like a prison from which Jonah cannot break away. But its significance transcends the conventional connotation of incarceration. When Jonah takes refuge in the bookstore, a "mighty storm" blows up outside the coverture. It is the predestinating God who clogs Jonah's way to the stormy world. Here, the "storm" represents tumultuous terrestrial life. The bookstore is a place where Jonah is redeemed by God but his redemption is not "easy gold at the hand of fay". "His way to light is through the darkness of purgatorial pit, his way to glory through prostration, his way to life through death".[142] Hence, "bookstore" can be recognized as a spiritual symbol suggesting spiritual salvation. It is worth mentioning that the nature of spiritual salvation in A Masque of Mercy reveals the

character of Frostian God. Sidney Cox tells us that Frostian God is "that which a man is sure cares, and will save him, no matter how many times or how completely he has failed".[143] As regards the second masque Frost himself categorically contends, "Jonah is told to go and prophesy against the city — and he *knows* God will let him down. He can't trust God to be unmerciful. You can trust God to be anything but unmerciful. So he ran away— and got into a whale. That's the point of that and nobody notices it".[144]

In A Masque of Reason no apostle or exegete is introduced to assist or guide afflicted Job while in A Masque of Mercy Paul is portrayed as apostle or exegete to enlighten the life of frustrated Jonas Dove. It is Paul who fittingly gives Jonas Dove his Biblical appellation: "You are the universal fugitive — / Escapist, as we say". Making an allusion to the story of Evangelist in Pilgrim's Progress, when Jonas Dove tells to Paul: "You ask if I see yonder shining gate, / And I reply I almost think I do, / Beyond this great door you have locked against me, / Beyond the storm, beyond the universe", Paul instantly discovers a quester of God in Jonas Dove and replies : "Yes, Pilgrim now instead of runaway, / Your fugitive escape become a quest". Hence Darrel Abel appropriately remarks: "From being an escapist Jonah has become a pursuitist".[145] Paul determines the spiritual journey to be made by the new "Pilgrim". At this point the image of light becomes prominent amid darkness. Jonas Dove is told to make his descent into an "oubliette" or "cellar" where he must "lie in self-forgetfulness / On the wet flags before a crucifix ... painted on the cellar wall". Into the dark cellar "There will be a light" and Jonas Dove must "Contemplate Truth until it burns your eyes out". Accordingly, he contemplates and "fades" away. Jonah's sacrificial death which indicate eternal life or spiritual salvation has also philosophicopsychological impication. On April 22, 1947 Frost writes to G.R. Elliott: "My fear of God has settled down into a deep inward fear that my best offering may not prove acceptable in his sight".[146] This idea is vocalized in A Masque of Mercy. Paul

pronounces: "We have to stay afraid deep in our souls/ Our sacrifice ... / may not / Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight". Jonah's best sacrifice has also an indelible "conversionary effect" on keeper, erstwhile pagan and Marxist whose final speech captures the quintessence of the play:

> My failure is no different from Jonah's.
> We both have lacked the courage in the heart
> To overcome the fear within the soul
> And go ahead to any accomplishment ....
> Nothing can make injustice just but mercy.[147]
>
> (726-730, 738)

The dominating images which occur in A Masque of Mercy are "door", "bookstore", "city", "storm", "darkness" and "cellar". Spiritual symbol is appealingly manipulated in this play.

Frost's final volume In the Clearing (1962), which encompasses monumental achievements in verse, phenomenally clarifies and concretizes Frostian vision of life. The images and symbols evolved in this volume bear witness to the strikingly novel imagination of the poet. The poems "Pod of the Milkweed", "A Cabin in the Clearing", "Closed for Good", "The Draft Horse", "Peril of Hope" and "In Winter in the Woods ..." exquisitely provide the suggestive images of plants, trees and woods. The images of "The milkweed brings up to my very door / ... And yes, although it is flower that flows / With milk and honey, it is bitter milk, / And any one whoever broke its stem / And dared to taste the wound a little knows" (p. 411), "They've been here long enough / To push the woods back from around the house / And part them in the middle with a path" (p. 414), "They leave the road to me / To walk in saying naught / Perhaps but to a tree / Inaudibly in thought, / From you the road receives / A priming coat of leaves" (pp. 415 – 416), "With a lantern that wounldn't burn / In

too frail a buggy we drove / Behind too heavy a horse / Through a pitch-dark limitless grove" (p. 443) "And a man came out of the trees / And took our horse by the head/ And reaching back to his ribs/ Deliberately stabbed him dead", "the night drew through the trees/ In one long invidious draft" (p.444), "It is right in there / Betwixt and between/ The orchard bare/ And the orchard green" (p. 445), "In winter in the woods alone/ Against the trees I go./ I mark a maple for my own/ And lay the maple low", "I see for Nature no defeat / In one tree's overthrow/ Or for myself in my retreat/ For yet another blow" (p. 470) perfectly convey outstanding ideas of Frost, still spry at eighty-eight.

"Pod of the Milkweed" which deals with the images of plant, flower and insect is reminiscent of the earlier piece "The Tuft of Flowers". Of course the images of flower and butterfly that come up in "Pod of the Milkweed" are symbolically more complex than the images of the "leaping tongue of bloom" and "bewildered butterfly" in "The Tuft of Flowers". The flower of the milkweed is depicted wonderfully for it "flows/ With milk and honey, it is bitter milk,/ As anyone who ever broke its stem/ And dared to taste the wound a little knows". The "distilled honey" of this flower is "so sweet" that it makes "the butterflies intemperate". The theme of "wanton waste" pops up in this poem. The butterflies "passionately" tread all the flowers to leave a "restless dream" to be inherited by "their posterity". The butterfly in this poem may signify spirit while the milkweed plant with its flower may indicate matter or the earth.

"The Draft Horse", one of the most significant poems in In the Clearing focuses on dark woods and animal imagery. Like "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" it develops a journey motif; but the journey delineated in this poem is more perilous than the earlier one. A pair of travellers drives a buggy "too frail" with a horse "too heavy" through "a pitch-dark limitless grove" which has no "lovely" features of sylvan landscape depicted in "Stopping by Woods". The

"lantern" the pair carry with them cannot light their murky path. Precipitiously they confront a nauseous act of malice: "And a man came out of the trees/ And took our horse by the head/ And reaching back to his ribs/ Deliberately stabbed him dead". The assailant ("a man") who represents frightening evil force in nature, endeavours to hobble the journey of life. "Something hates us", Frost writes to Lincoln MacVeagh in 1923, "and likes to spoil our fair beginnings".[148]

Frost's pair in "The Draft Horse" are so "unquestioning" that they neither cry out to the callous cosmos, as depicted in "The Most of It", for answers nor combat the evil force. They simply accept "fate" which like Hardy's "vengeful god" may voice: "thy sorrow is my ecstasy ... thy love's loss is my hate's profiting".[149] The last stanza of "The Draft Horse" symbolically echoes the concluding quatrain of "Stopping by Woods". The couple fight shy of identifying "the man" or "someone", if any, "he had to obey" and like the traveller in "Stopping by Woods" they feel impelled to move on. To "walk the rest of the way" is their mission that reminds one of "miles to go".

The obsessive image of dark woods pops up in the lyric "In Winter in the Woods ...". The dark woods of this lyric remind us of the earlier poem "Into My Own" wherein the lonesome speaker wishes to "steal away" into the "vastness" of the "dark trees". The dim woods in "Into My Own" are summer woods whereas the snow-mantled woods in "In Winter in the Woods ..." which characteristically resemble the woods in "Stopping by Woods" are winter woods.

The poetic persona "alone/ Against the trees" moves to "mark" an maple tree in order to "lay" it "low". In the bleakly "afterglow" he links "a line of shadowy tracks/ Across the tinted snow". The psychical symbol of "shadowy tracks" does not imply Frost's submission to nature but his ultimate wrestle with the force in nature. It is significantly clear that a stand-off between homo sapiens and nature is symbolically sketched in this poem:

I see for Nature no defeat
In one tree's overthrow
Or for myself in my retreat
For yet another blow.[150] (9 – 12)

Nature is not vanquished "In one tree's overthrow". Similarly man is not worsted in his "retreat/ For yet another blow". That neither nature nor man wins or loses is the quintessence of Frost's resolute conviction. Samuel Coale penetratingly observes that both nature and man "exist to encounter each other anew, and all that Frost would ask of us is 'You come too'."[151]

Like plants and woods, the images of death-rebirth and incarnation are preponderantly conspicuous in In the Clearing. The images of "And I may return/ If dissatisfied/ With what I learn/ From having died" (p. 413), "I might even claim, he was Sirius/ (Think of presuming to call him Gus),/ The star itself — Heaven's greatest star,/ Not a meteorite, but an avatar — / Who had made an overnight descent/ To show by deeds he didn't resent" (p. 421), "It was in a state/ Of atomic One./ Matter was begun — / And in fact complete,/ One and yet discrete/ To conflict and pair./ Everything was there,/ Every single thing/ Waiting was to bring,/ Clear from hydrogen/ All the way to men" (p. 426), "But God's own descent/ Into flesh was meant/ As a demonstration/ That the supreme merit/ Lay in risking spirit/ In substantiation" (p. 435) which stand out in the poems "Away!", "One More Brevity", "A Never Naught Song" and "Kitty Hawk" are suggestive of Frost's intimate experience of spirituality or greater life.

"Away!" presents the images of death and rebirth vividly. Frost says, "This is a real death poem".[152] But it is also a poem which impressively discloses Frost's vital love for life and earth. In the earlier poem "Birches" Frost wants to "get away from earth awhile/ And then come back to it and begin over" for he firmly believes "Earth's the right place for love:/ I don't know where it's likely to

go better". Most of Frost's late images and symbols are sharper than the early ones. In "Away!" he suggests to forget the myth of Adam and Eve "Put out of the Park" and acquaints us with his unique imagination: "And I may return/ If dissatisfied/ With what I learn/ From having died". Though Richard Eberhart finally recognizes this poem as "a fantasy, a myth" he has the idea that Frost "arrogates to himself power usually accorded to God. He thinks he is God and gives himself the audacity to determine life or death".[153] But it would be fair to construe the meaning of the verse metaphorically. Frost's idea of returning from death if he is dissatisfied with what he learns from having died should not presumably be analogized with the Christian belief of resurrection. Frost who "burns with the appetites of life", fervidly wants to live amid human beings and hence he metaphorically verbalizes his outstanding idea to conquer death. Frost's perception of returning from death to life may also indicate rebirth of the soul which a Hindu believes in.

"Kitty Hawk", the most central and longest poem (471 lines)in In the Clearing is, according to John Holmes, "a summation" of Frost's thinking.[154] Frost says, "It's a good deal about flight".[155] But in fact this poem provides flight or ascent image as well as descent image. The descent image is strikingly concerned with the idea of incarnation while the ascent image is related to the creative energy of human being.

As a "documentary piece" "Kitty Hawk" relates the poet's experiences of two visits to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Being failed to conquer the heart of his fiancée, Elinor White, Frost despondently made his first trip to the rural area of Kitty Hawk and "Nag's Head" in the late autumn of 1894; this poetic or emotive flight "Into the unknown" which is analogized with the Wright brothers' staggering space adventure turns out to be the theme of "Part One" — the first section of "Kitty Hawk":

It was on my tongue
To have up and sung
The initial flight
I can see now might—
Should have been — my own
Into the unknown,
Into the sublime
Off these sands of Time
Time had seen amass
From his hourglass.[156] (40-49)

Frost revisits Kitty Hawk in 1953 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Wright brothers' epoch-making flight which is emblematically delineated in "Part Two". In this section the poet celebrates the soaring mechanical enterprise of human being. He no more thinks that science is inimical to poetry. It is the scientific advancement which significantly signalizes the twists and turns in Frost's imagistic and symbolistic strategy. The Wright brothers' "leap in air" may be recognized as a plurivalent symbol. This symbol of flight uniquely unifies the aeronaut and the poet. It not only symbolizes modern civilization but the spiritually soaring imagination of the poet. Like the flight metaphor, the descent metaphor is significantly wielded in "Kitty Hawk". It does not symbolically resemble the fall of snow in "Stopping by Woods" and "Desert Places" or the fall of apple in "After Apple-Picking" and "The Cow in Apple Time". The descent of spirit in "Kitty Hawk" which makes us able to plunge into the "hugeness of space" is concerned with the notion of the Incarnation:

But God's own descent
Into flesh was meant
As a demonstration

That the supreme merit
Lay in risking spirit
In substantiation.[157] (219 – 224)

This descent image of spirit echoes the image of "And from a cliff top is proclaimed/ The gathering of the souls for birth" depicted in the earlier poem "The Trial by Existence". Nevertheless Frost's descent image is reminiscent of Emerson's image of "There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms" pictured in "Nature".[158] To Frost "Our instinctive venture/ Into .../ The material" (ll. 214 – 216) is never reprehensible. Speaking of "Kitty Hawk" Frost says: "all ... the great enterprise of life, of the world, ... of our race, is our penetration into matter, deeper and deeper: carrying the spirit deeper into matter. And though it looks like something different out into space, that's just deeper into matter ... . Put it that way. And that is our destiny— that is why science is our greatness".[159] Since Frost attaches great importance to science he typically renders thanks to the "God of machine/ Peregrine machine". (ll. 462 – 463).

At his poetic career's end, Frost simultaneously glorifies the uniqueness of "substantiation" and the sublimity of "spirit" or mind without which the universe becomes insentient. "Like a kitchen spoon/ Of a size Titanic" spirit "keep[s] all things stirred". Due to boundless power of mind "We have made a pass/ At the infinite, / Made it, as it were,/ Rationally ours". (ll. 362 – 365). The poet remains sanguine about the intellectual sovereignty of homo sapiens. The "ray" which we "dart" from our "head" and "heart", scientifically and poetically orders the universe and gives it "wholeness".

The images which recurrently occur in In the Clearing are "trees", "woods", "animal", "rebirth", "spirit", "flight", "substantiation" and

"incarnation". Material, psychical and spiritual symbols loom large in this volume.

Our analysis of major images and symbols in the final phase of Frost's poetry evinces that Frostian images are substantially gleaned from both material world and spiritual universe. Frost's subtle experience of human life and intimate wisdom of eternity singularly heighten his symbolistic strategy.

Images and symbols which are inseparable in Frostian Poetic world, are "Too lofty and original to rage". In our thesis we have made an honest attempt to fathom those, so diverse and myriad in meanings. Since Frost always enthuses his readers with "miles to go" and "promises to keep", future researchers will come forward with new promises to illumine some provinces of Frostian poetry, lying unexplored and untrodden.

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