On the Road with Robert Frost: His Poetry of Motion

Robert Frost was a four time Pulitzer Prize winner, the most widely-read American poet of his time and one who for many readers became almost synonymous with the maples, birches, farms, fences, country roads, and snowdrifts of rural New England. Frost was also a Latin teacher, a chicken farmer, an amateur botanist, a shrewd creator of a self-reliant public persona, and one of the first poets to bring creative writing onto college campuses. Classes will focus on Frost’s use of voice and form in his lyrical, dramatic, and narrative poetry. Controversies regarding the poet’s biography, politics, and aesthetics will also be explored. No text required. Recommended: Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays (Library of America, 1995) and Robert Frost, a Life, Jay Parini (Henry Holt & Company, 1999).


Class 5: Frost on Poetry. His odd military metaphor for how to approach a poem. His refusal to play tennis “with the net down. His thoughts on the breakdown of metaphor; rhyme as revelation; “strict” versus “loose” iambic; “the figure a poem makes”; “a momentary stay against confusion.” Frost’s presence on college campuses as mentor to the young and promoter of his own poetry. His disparagement of fellow poets; comments on Eliot, Pound, and that “Minor Bird,” Carl Sandburg. Merit of Lionel Trilling’s characterization of Frost at his 80th birthday party as a “terrifying” poet? (“Desert Places,” “Design,” “Neither Out Far, Nor In Deep,” “Bereft,” “Provide, Provide.”)


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