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Frost on Emily Dickinson

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Abstract

Frost went on praises for those who were largely close to his method and form of writing poetry and Frost favoured those who spoke positively about his sound of sense theory, but in the case of Emily Dickinson Frost finds out that Emily Dickinson was not in favour of rhyme, tone, meter and poetic forms but still she had the ability to produce new forms. Robert Frost noted that Emily Dickinson's poetry had themes and images which provided useful source for him- like that expressing his love for Elinor white.

Article

Frost finds out that Emily Dickinson was not in favour of rhyme, tone, meter and poetic forms but still she had the ability to produce new forms. Frost went on praises for those who were largely close to his method and form of writing poetry and Frost favoured those who spoke positively about his sound of sense theory, but in the case of Emily Dickinson as she did not favour meter and rhyme, Frost notes this difference.

But Frost later approved of her living out rhyme for truth and praised and commended for her strength. Thompson, Frost's biographer, points out that Frost was deeply moved by the existence of the themes and speech of New England in her poetry. He notes that besides her focus on the new England soul, she was dominated in her mind about the issues of death. Frost was clear to note her thinking regarding the short lived and mortal stay of man on this earth over the immortality and tower of death. Lawrence Thompson observes about her.

Frost greatly admired Emily Dickinson's treatment of her death subject in her poems and he specially mentions reading 'The Birds do Thus' that brings out Frost's own idea and the mortality of life, compared and contrasted through Dickinson's poem 'I reason , Earth is Short' where she raises questions over the sufferings, anguish faced in life by men, the life which is short and will ultimately go to the end towards death. Frost notes the similarities in the poetic forms of his Emily Dickinson –

I REASON, earth is short,

And anguish absolute.

And many hurt;

But what of that?

I reason, we could die:

The best vitality

Cannot excel decay;

But what of that?

I reason that in heaven

Somehow, it will be even,

Some new equation given;

But what of that?

While Emily Dickinson was anxious about the sufferings and dilemmas pervading life, Frost takes his dreaming and concludes with his famous observation on sleep, like that he does in ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening’-

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep

However the disagreement between Frost and Emily Dickinson about the mortality of life is clearly visible in lines like, ‘of reason, Earth is short’ (Emily Dickinson) and ‘life is not so short’ (Frost).

Lawrence Thomson notes that Frost’s poem ‘My Butterfly’ was drawn from Frost’s reading of Emily Dickinson’s poetry. The last stanza in fact featuring death as the subject, tends to sort of move the poem to an elegy-

But the wild touch of thy dye-dusty wing!
I found that wing broken to-day!
For thou are dead, I said,
And the strange birds say.
I found it with the withered leaves
Under the eaves.

Thomson notes about Frost in the connection of this poem, “by a movement which had occurred late in the full of his few months at Dartmouth, a movement when he had found fragile butter fly while butter fly wings lie down among dead leaves”. What finally enabled Frost to complete his poem however was his reading of Emily Dickinson . Over the memory of the autobiographical movement which moved Frost to attempt this elegy hovered Emily Dickinson’s butterfly poem.

Robert Frost noted that Emily Dickinson’s poetry had themes and images which provided useful source for him- like that expressing his love for Elinor white. Frost recalls of Emily Dickinson’s influence on turning him to pen down his poem ‘Warning’-

The day will come when you will cease to know,
The heart will cease to tell you; sadder yet,
Tho you say o'er and o'er that once you knew,
You will forget, you will forget.

There is no memory for what is true,
The heart once silent. Well may you regret,
Cry out upon it, that you have known all
But to forget, but to forget.

Blame no one but yourself for this, lost soul!
I feared it would be so that day we met
Long since, and you were changed. And I said then,
He will forget, he will forget.

Frost notes of her poem “I know that He Exists” serving inspiration for his poem ‘Revelation’. For idea of the existence of God although remaining hidden from man’s eyes, puts strong questions which Frost seems to tackle in his poems. Her purports of various seekers exploring the existence of God in strong desire to meet

him – some choose the path of prayer, some meditation, some thing that no faith exists. The whole poem symbolically shapes the playfulness as in a game.

While Emily Dickinson presents the fact that God hides himself deliberately from man because of men's incapability to face the power of God.

Robert Frost believes of drawing inspiration of the hidden existence of the almighty from Dickinson which he sought to answer through 'Revelation'. The riddle that Frost talks about in his poem draws much from Dickinson's poetry. Frost's couplet from 'The Secrets Sits' exemplifies the game of riddle- "We dance round in a ring and suppose/But the secret sits in the middle and knows."

Frost's poetry exemplifies her influence on more than one instance, not only in matter but in form and style also. Some of his poetry is to be termed Dickinsonian before he found his original style of writing.

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