

Aesthetic View of Labor in Robert Frost's Pastoral Poetry

Dan Gao^{1,a}

¹College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Da Qing 163319, China.

^agaodan.00@163.com

Abstract

"After Apple-Picking", "The Last Mowing" and "The Pasture" are the representative works of poet Robert Frost's pastoral poetry, Frost's unique artistic charm and incomparable aesthetic value are reflected in these poems. The rural work in poet's poem is full of rich local flavor and attractive pastoral taste; and these are the embodiment of all kinds of labor beauty in the eyes of the poet. This paper interprets the poet and his works from the perspective of labor aesthetics; explores the psychological and spiritual beauty embodied in the laborers in natural labor; explains the environment where labor exists and aesthetic value of labor products; and explores the aesthetic value of the action form in the whole process of labor production.

Keywords

Frost; labor; beauty; environment, aesthetic, poet.

1. Introduction

Robert Frost is one of the most popular American poets; he wrote every day, among them, there are many natural pastoral poems. The poetic style of his natural pastoral poetry is simple, fresh and meaningful, the language is unpretentious, simple and bright, rich in local flavor, and he is also known as "natural poet", "farm poet", and "farm life poet" and so on. However, his poetry also contains his wisdom for life and the world, give people the enjoyment of beauty and the enlightenment of thought.

As a typical representative of Frost's pastoral poetry, "After Apple-Picking", "The Last Mowing" and "The Pasture" are fresh, simple, natural, seemingly unremarkable, lyric and narrative are straight forward style of writing, but this is not the case. The poet always pursues an aesthetic principle of "begins in delight and ends in wisdom", inject his own aesthetics of labor into the poetry all the time, and interpret the beauty of labor to the fullest, whether it is the labor itself, the laborer or the working environment all give people a beautiful taste and aesthetic value orientation. This thesis takes this as a breakthrough point, uses aesthetic theory and text reading to interpret poetry, and further understands poets' aesthetic ideology in other poems, prose and drama, and inspires contemporary people to establish correct labor concepts and values, and it has certain practical significance for supplementing and perfecting Frost research; moreover, it has certain educational enlightening significance for how people in contemporary society should have a correct view of labor, values, world outlook and outlook on life.

2. Three Poems Have Aesthetic Theme to Eulogize Labor

Marx proposed that the labor creates beauty in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, and this idea uses labor as the existence and ontology to define thought and beauty. According to the definition, labor aesthetics is a discipline that studies the beauty and aesthetic laws in human productive labor, it mainly studies the relationship between labor and beauty, the generation of labor beauty, the aesthetic factors contained in labor, and the aesthetic value

of labor products. The main research contents are: the beauty of labor, the beauty of labor subject, the beauty of labor environment, the beauty of labor tools, the beauty of labor organization, and the beauty of labor products.

"After Apple-Picking", "The Last Mowing" and "The Pasture" these three poems are the masterpieces of Frost's pastoral poetry, which are all related to labor, so there are various interpretations of the poet's own for labor aesthetics essence.

The "After Apple-Picking", the poet aims to inform readers that they get a bumper harvest only through their hard work; the process of labor is also a pleasant process. The poet also warns the reader through an illusory situation like dream--people can't be greedy, create harmony between man and nature through reasonable principle, so that people's soul can be quiet and serene—dream without being disturbed. Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall. The rumbling sound, Of load on load of apples coming in, For I have had too much, Of apple-picking: I am overtired, Of the great harvest I myself desired, There were ten thousand fruit to touch, Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.

"Hope" the "bumper", "picking apples" makes the poet "tired." "Bumper" brings a kind of spiritual sustenance to poet; he is always looking forward to it, it is what we call a life expectation, a kind of concern, when people see the harvest is in sight, everyone will have some excited emotions in their hearts. However, no pains no gains. The harvest is not an unearned income, so the poet shows the reader a hard-working process. The process of labor is hard, and any gain is to be reasonably obtained through this hard work, so that people can draw a beautiful end. Magnified apples appear and disappear, Stem end and blossom end. And every fleck of russet showing clear, my instep arch not only keeps the ache, it keeps the pressure of a ladder-round. I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend. And I keep hearing from the cellar bin, the rumbling sound, of load on load of apples coming in. For I have had too much, Of apple-picking: I am overtired, Of the great harvest I myself desired. There were ten thousand fruit to touch, Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall, for all, that struck the earth, No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble, Went surely to the cider-apple heap, as of no worth. One can see what will trouble, this sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is. Were he not gone, the woodchuck could say whether it's like his, Long sleep, as I describe its coming on, or just some human sleep.

"Great apple", so that "my foot plate" "so sore." Because the apple is too big, the poet himself can't bear the weight. The poet aims to tell that life and labor have their own laws, the original good things will become heavy or broken due to the destruction of the law--because of greed, people think that huge apple fell from heaven; finally, what people end up with is to use extra strength to endure the weight.

Apple "has no bruises" and has not been "smashed by grassroots", because there are too many apples, people have to "go to make cider" and finally "not worth a cent." When things are too much, they lose some value in such a quantity and become cheap. The poet here tells the reader should think in labor, make money without doing evil, ensure a kind of self-satisfaction and kind of coordination of nature, and harmony is also the virtue that labor must maintain.

The poem "The Last Mowing" eulogizes the joy of labor. In the process of labor, people can experience and feel the beauty in this process and feels the beauty of nature. The poet believes that the labor itself can completely release the pressure, relieve the troubles of the world, and finally bring emotional and spiritual ease and pleasure.

"Sincere love" is the poet's sincere love for the countryside and labor, when face such love, all languages are weak, and all languages appear pale in the face of a down-to-earth labor creation. In the eyes of the poet, this love for labor can enrich everything, make the ease and pleasure overcome the pressure and troubles, even the astounding "swamp" can eliminate everything, let the fear and anxiety disappear, even if it is intimidating "green snake." The "truth" that the poet thinks is "the sweetest dream known to labor", because labor is happy, and all illusions are

the same pale in the face of such a full truth, only the truth of labor is the experience of people, and it is more expensive than the "easily available gold in the hands of the elves."

"The Pasture" shows a harmonious labor beauty--the beauty between people in the labor process, the harmony between man and nature, the harmony between man and animal, and finally, the poet presents to the reader a harmonious picture of people, animals and nature: 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.

"Clean" and "water" are beautiful labor process, because there are fallen leaves falling into the spring water, how sweet the spring water is, so many people and animals need to drink. But corrupt leaves will pollute this spring, which breaks the harmony of nature, man's labor is creative, he can create conditions for harmony and re-establish a pivot for this harmony through their hands, "bring fallen leaves ashore, and re-create a harmonious beauty." "Little calf" is "too small" and can't stand the slightest touch, even if "the little calf fall to the ground mother cow licks the calf", the poet must "carry" in order not to let the little calf wounded. The poet's heart is kind; he can't bear to watch the little calf fall again and again. He loves this weak life, so he wants to protect it. "It doesn't take too long—you come with me." This is a call from a poet to a friend. He hopes that he can share such joy of labor with others and create and feel such a harmony together. It also shows the kind of affection between the poet and others.

The poet here aims to advocate a kind of harmony and guide the human heart--namely the idea of the balance of all things, without me without him. In such a situation, people can regard labor as a kind of responsibility and a kind of enjoyment of beauty. Because nature is infinitely beautiful in the eyes of poets, and if the poet himself is an indispensable part of nature, then he is beautiful, so the maintenance of this beautiful work naturally becomes the dual nature of responsibility and enjoyment.

3. Three Poems Express the Beauty of Labor Process

Every labor will have a labor process, and many labor processes will be very difficult. Therefore, some people will regard this hardship as a torment and an unbearable burden, they pay more attention to the results of labor--the ultimate harvest is their greatest desire; and some people also have the desire to harvest, but they did not extreme this desire, but effectively catalyze this desire as a kind of motivation, so they will think that the desire and the harvest are only two points, and the one line in the middle is equally worthy of expectation, namely labor. It is worth mentioning that labor itself is also beautiful, and the formation of beauty necessarily requires long-term beauty accumulation, therefore, in the process of labor, they are also enjoying such an aesthetic taste.

Frost's "After Apple-Picking", "The Last Mowing" and "The Pasture" all tell a labor process. The poet is extremely passionate about the pastoral production and life, and he is still a spiritual activist in the production of labor, he always puts his own philosophies in the simple labor life, therefore, therefore, these three poems have a certain degree of reflection on the ideological concept of the poet's labor process.

"After Apple-Picking" suggests the beauty of labor in both reality and illusion, down-to-earth labor, if a person lives in a dull dream, he will break easily like an ice, and it will be like a huge apple to endure the pressure of life. Only by diligent work, people can experience and feel the joy of life and the value of existence in the work. Even if there are "two or three left in the branches", even if "there is a wooden barrel not full", but "the apple picking is finished," only think in such a labor process, people can smell the "scented apple incense", then understand the true meaning of labor beauty.

The "The Last Mowing" writes that when the poet cuts the grass, he only hears the sound of cutting his own grass, in this silence that seems to be unbearable to others; the poet can regard

it as the beauty of the labor process. - "that is whispering to the earth." What a wonderful imagination! Then, at this moment, the poet's labor process is funny, and all kinds of imaginations enrich the silence—the whisper is because of fear of "exaggeration", it will "necessarily appear to be powerless" in the face of true love.

It is difficult for many people to do something with a happy mood in a completely lonely environment, let alone a boring work like mowing. However, the poet can interpret such a labor process interestingly, and give labor a profound thinking in the infinitely beautiful delusion. Many people regard boring labor as the torture of the body and the soul, however, in the eyes and pens of the poet, even the boring, desolate and lonely labor can create a kind of beauty, fantasy and dreams are just one way, what he wants to really express is to think, explore, and seek a kind of "truth" while working. It is like something bad in life can be dispelled through the labor process, and then fill these vacancies with ease and joy in the work. In fact, the process of mowing is really boring, but when the poet adds something to his mind, it becomes deep and meaningful.

"The Pasture" is the poem that writes the labor process most clearly and vividly in the three poems, the pictures in poetry do not have the obvious jumping sense in the first two poems, it has no imaginary things, all are simple and clear things. However, its picture is still so full---leaves fall into the springs in the pasture, wash the leaves and clean, and wait until the springs are clear before they can drink; the calves are always knocked down by cows, the poet is worried about small calves is injured, he wants to bring it up; call companion and "I" to do these things, how wonderful it is. This is like two beautiful pastoral paintings, nature, animals and people are happy, and they live together in harmony, and there is no competition for various interests.

The beauty of harmony is inherent, and when some uncertain factors come, it will destroy this beauty, "fallen leaves" and "spring water" is a harmonious beauty. Man has creative ability, so he should create conditions for this harmony, which is also a responsibility, they are also in this environment, and also affected by it. This actually creates a kind of motivation—author are actually part of this beauty, so he seems to do all with a smile and joy behind the words, maintains all, and the process of doing it is always easy and enjoyable all the time, but also happy to feel and share this beautiful process - "you come with me", does not regard this as a simple labor, more perhaps a kind of enjoyment. How open-minded this is!

4. Three Poems Vividly Express the Labor

Most people think that everything they have (including their own environment) tends to be a kind of beauty. Even in the eyes of others, it is "ugly", they think it is beautiful, and the facts are true. If people say that the environment on the Loess Plateau is bad, it is one of the symbols of ugliness in the environment, and then the people in Yellow Land who grow there do not agree. He will blame you for ignorance, and say that the Loess Plateau is the most beautiful land; it is a kind of feeling--that is the place where they work, so they look at the loess and have an attachment.

Frost's poems are mainly pastoral poetry; many of the descriptions are rural work in the context of the New England countryside, therefore, there is always a description of the rural environment and labor products, it also reveals his aesthetic feelings about his own working environment to some extent. The following is a brief study of "After Apple-Picking" and "The Pasture".

From "After Apple-Picking", we can see that the labor product is "apple", apple has not finished it, maybe two or three are left in the tree, maybe it can't be seen, or it may not be picked , the work of picking apples is done. The scenes described in the first two sentences are somewhat naughty, it is more brisk and active, and also shows the poet's happy and relaxed mood at that

time, the poet himself likes such a quiet but not deadly atmosphere, this kind of environment can make people think easily, but can also make the mind active with the environment, poet feels the beauty of the environment while working. Because the poet knows that an environment does not exist for its own existence, its existence must have a certain purpose, just like a stylized thing, it always links two points and ten thousand points. The poet will also adapt himself to a certain environment, and create the thinking with the conditions given by the environment.

"After Apple-Picking" is not to write apples for the purpose of writing apples, it will lose a lot of more valuable things, and there is no need to write it. What it has to write is to express its feelings or a kind of sustenance when author is working. What kind of emotions can be drawn in such an environment, all are reflection of the environment at that time. Therefore, in this poem, the poet's understanding for environment at that time is somewhat complicated, including two, one is the work in reality: picking apples down to earth, obtain a reasonable harvest through hard work; the other is greed in dreams, even if it's an unearned income, this is what the poet wants to criticize.

Obviously, "The Pasture", the working environment of this poem is a pasture, and the labor objects are "water spring" and "calf", respectively, each reader should also explore the poet's aesthetic feeling and aesthetic value of overall environment and objects, New England pasture, when close eyes. People seem to see blue sky and white clouds above the imagination, there are a vast grassland, flowing water and flocks of cattle and sheep, the whole feeling is naturally beautiful. Such a place, for a poet like Frost who especially likes the pastoral landscape, it is nothing more than a paradise, therefore, in his pen, the leaves in the spring water are cleaned up, this small but beautiful things are brisk and enjoyable. The readers imagine that a group of people are laughing and running on the grassland in pursuit of harmony and beauty.

5. Conclusion

Frost is a great modern poet; his poems are mostly pastoral poetry under the background of New England, his poems are simple and fresh, but they are meaningful, the poet embodies deep thinking in plain content and simple poetry, he always pursues an aesthetic principle of "begins in delight and ends in wisdom", and the aesthetic value embodied in labor is described fully in his poems- the praise of labor itself, the pursuit of the mind, the yearning for the harmonious state of man and nature. The poet tells people of the aesthetic value of life and works with his unique artistic techniques and wisdom, focus on life and nature, enjoy and protect while enjoying beauty. The labor aesthetics in poet's poems can still play a role in today's social reality; his labor aesthetics still has certain educational enlightening significance for people how to have a correct outlook on labor, values, world outlook and outlook on life in contemporary society.

Acknowledgements

Research on Multiple Refraction of Image in Robert Frost's Pastoral Poetry (Number: 18WWE578; Project supported by Heilongjiang Province).

References

- [1] Cheng Aimin, Poetry art of Frost [J], Foreign Literature, 1994(4), pp.64-68.
- [2] Liu Shoulan, On Robert Frost and Modern American Poems [J], Shandong Foreign Languages Journal, 2001, (3), pp. 45-48.
- [3] Sun Meilin, A New Understanding of Robert Frost's Natural Poetry [J], Journal of Foreign Languages, 1996(1), pp.50-53.

- [4] Huang Zongying, Deceptive Simplicity: The Art of Robert Frost's Poetry [J], Journal of Beijing Union University(Humanities And Social Sciences), 2006, 4(1), pp.34-39.
- [5] Zhao Tong, Preliminary Study Of Robert Frost And His Poems[J], Journal of Xichang College :Social Science Edition, 2004(2), pp.18-19.
- [6] Niu Jianwei, Social Significance of Robert Frost's Natural Poetry[J], Hubei Social Sciences, 2010(7), pp.127-130.
- [7] Li Xiu, New England in Robert Frost's Poetry[J], Theory Horizon, 2006[9] pp.202-203.