

# Robert Frost's View of Nature in the Contradiction and Unity of The Freedom of the Moon

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## Abstract:

The title of the poem plays a general role in the poem and can give the reader a hint of the content of the poem. The title of Robert Frost's *The Freedom of the Moon* contradicts the poem's content. As a representative of human beings, the hero in the poem has made various attempts and changes to the shape, position, and state of the moon, showing man's control over nature, which is quite different from the title "The Freedom of the Moon." Robert was an American poet who saw firsthand the conflict and struggle between man and environment that resulted from the country's fast industrialization and economic growth. Through his poems, Robert advocated that people of his generation should respect nature and live in harmony with nature. Guided by such a view of nature, *The Freedom of the Moon*, created by Robert, uses the contradiction between the title and the content of the poem and readers' consensus on the role of the title of the poem to create tension, which encourages readers to think about the ownership of "Freedom" in the title during reading. It makes the reader think more deeply about the relationship between nature and humans. It encourages them to avoid the anthropocentrism that can lead to arrogance and strike a balance between them.

**Keywords:** Robert Frost; View of Nature; Human; Nature

## 1. Introduction

In general, a poem's title takes center stage. It refines and summarizes the poem's content, making it easier for readers to understand the poem when they first encounter it and giving readers a hint as to the spirit that the poet wishes to express via their poetry. However, from a superficial perspective, the title of *The Freedom of the Moon* by Robert Frost contradicts the traditional relationship introduced between titles and poems. This tension of the contradiction also provokes readers to think deeply about the relationship between "I" in the context and the moon. "Nature is the most distinguished feature in Robert Frost's poems [1]." which expresses Robert Frost's value of nature: appealing reverence for nature, not agreeing with "man over nature," and advocating the natural view of harmony between man and nature.

## 2. Literal Meaning of the Poem

From the literal meaning of the lines in the poem, Frost describes man's freedom rather than "the freedom of the moon" in the title. First of all, from the first line in the first stanza, "I've tried the new moon tilted in the air", it can be understood that the first point of view of the nar-

rator, "I," is not the moon itself, for the two subjects have interaction in motion. "One of Frost's distinctive characteristics is that his writings concern human relation to nature. The elements of the world of nature in his poems are recognized as trees, birds, flowers, and snow [2]." Here, "I" is another image in the same dimension as the moon; it symbolizes the human perspective, which is in opposition to the nature that the moon in this poem stands for. The poem comprises four sentences starting with the letter "I." This suggests that the "I" in the poem is speaking and exchanging thoughts with the audience. When Frost uses the word "you" directly in the third line of the opening verse, the subtly implied conversational situation becomes valid. The combination of the first and the second point of view smoothly pulls readers into the context, making readers the audience of what has happened between "I" and the moon. The poem's modest setting is the night sky, which is gloomy and has a beautiful moon. There is a comparison that suggests the two actions are equally simple and common: "I" doing things to the moon is compared to "you" wearing a gem in your hair. The title and the depiction of "I," a man manipulating the moon, are clearly at odds. First, the tension is raised.

The second sentence in the first stanza begins with the

same words as the first sentence, “I’ve tried,” implying this is still the moon being manipulated by “I” or “I,” imaging control of different states and phases of the moon. The phrase “it fine with little breadth of luster” refers to the new moon period of the moon, for the moon in the new moon period is thinner, compared with the round shape of the full moon, which corresponds to “little breadth” in the poem. This statement can also be read to suggest that “my” choice determines how the moon looks. The moon’s state against the night sky was brought to the reader’s attention by the second half of the sentence, “alone, or in one ornament combing / with one first-water star as shining,” which changed the reader’s perspective from “my” imagination of the moon phrases to one of the moon’s states alone or in combination with stars, reflecting bright light on each other.

Compared with the content of the first stanza, “I” tried with different states of the moon, the second stanza mainly talks about how “I” tried a variety of locations of the moon. The urge to govern the moon is no longer carefully hidden, as in the first verse, and we move into the second. The statement “anywhere I want” especially highlights the impression.

In conclusion, the first stanza’s literal meaning refers to how “I” can handle the moon by “my” own willingness, implying people’s common sense at the time on the interaction between people and nature. If the first paragraph leaves the reader with doubts about the poetry and subject, the opening sentence of the second paragraph puts those doubts front and center, making it difficult for the reader to ignore them. As “I” walks to different places, the image of the moon changes, and the readers’ perspective also changes. Three parataxis verbs, “pulled,” “brought,” and “dropped,” lead readers from the shadow of tree branches in the sky to the lower area above the water and then finally dive into the water. Readers unconsciously project their feelings of being controlled by the true object in the poem--the moon, which distinguishes the moon more from “freedom.” Other linguistic skills, such as metaphorizing the crossing branches as “a crate,” add the impression of the moon being imprisoned in a small space.

The final line, “all sorts of wonder follow,” after being shaped in these lines, ensures that the tension between the title and the poem continues even after the poem has ended. This sentence gives readers the impression that humans can manipulate nature without recognizing it. If the interpretation of the poem is simply based on the literal meaning of the lines, not only it is not difficult to find the contradiction between the title and the content of the poem, but also the title “The Freedom of the Moon” has

become a satire and seems to be a foil to “the freedom of the man.” It shows the almighty “I,” the representative of humans towards the moon, one important role in nature.

### **3. Robert Frost’s View of Nature**

Robert Frost’s poetry has always reflected a different understanding of nature, despite the fact that it makes sense to understand *The Freedom of the Moon* as simply being about how humans may manipulate the moon. Mostly in the United States, the Second Industrial Revolution got its start in the latter part of the 1800s. When Robert Frost went on his wanderings, the Second Industrial Revolution was only getting started. During his roaming, the new production and lifestyle brought by industrialization brought various thoughts to Frost. He not only saw the benefits brought by industrialization but also could calmly think about the disadvantages of industrialization and then elaborated on their unique view of nature in the era of industrialization through poetry [3]. Using science and technology as weapons, humans have waged an onslaught against nature since the advent of industrial civilization, particularly in the modernization and urbanization processes, to maximize economic benefits. This has resulted in an extremely painful natural ecological crisis, including a shortage of natural resources, the extinction of biological species, and environmental pollution. As a poet living in a time when industrial development brought both prosperity and nature issues, Robert Frost always used poetry to alarm humans. “For Robert, exploring the subtle interpersonal relationship and human nature, as well as the relationship between man and nature, revealing the alienation of human nature from modern civilization, helping modern people return to their nature, and realizing social harmony and interpersonal harmony are the motivations and motivations of his literary works [4].” Robert Frost has always advocated the view of nature that humans need to respect nature and live in harmony with nature. Such a spirit can be felt in Frost’s other poems. Take *An Old Man’s Winter Night* and *To the Thawing Wind* as examples.

#### **3.1 View of Nature in An Old Man’s Winter Night**

The nature of Robert Frost’s poems can be frightening. He wrote about nature threatening humanity with destruction [5]. The universe presented in his poems is terrifying [6]. The first several lines, “All out of doors looked darkly in at him / Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars, / That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.” the beginning of *An Old Man’s Winter Night* depicts such a scene that an old man huddles in a crumbling cabin in a roaring snowstorm in the night, being frightened by the majesty

and power of nature. Frost makes a strong case against anthropocentrism from this. He believes that because humans are so small and vulnerable in the face of nature, it is illogical for him to only illustrate in *The Freedom of the Moon* how humans may manipulate nature.

### 3.2 View of Nature in *To the Thawing Wind*

Besides warning about the dignity of nature to humans, Frost expresses another angle of his view of nature through poetry. In *To the Thawing Wind*, lines depict how nature and humans can get along well. For instance, "Come with rain. O loud Southwester / Bring the singer, bring the nester; / ...Burst into my narrow stall; / Swing the picture on the wall; / Run the rattling pages o'er; / Scatter poems on the floor; / Turn the poet out of the door." These lines are about how strongly the poet is eager to invite the west wind to play with him: he invites the west wind to enter his room and wishes it can bring him to its world—nature [7]. Instead of the fear shown in *An Old Man's Winter Night*, this poem's tone is gentler and tender, and the tense relationship is eased. Humans and nature are like strangers in getting to know each other.

In light of the two facets of Robert Frost's interpretation of nature, the relationship between humans and nature is never about conquering or being conquered but rather about traveling the path of becoming familiar, which is analogous to the actual process of befriending people: being watchful, letting down one's guard and then being open to getting to know someone better, and ultimately developing a close friendship. This is also the real procedure of humans studying nature in reality. All in all, Robert Frost's view of nature is never about "men over nature". This makes it necessary to understand the poem's title and unity.

## 4. Unity of the Title and the Poem

On the basis of affirming the rationality of the poem's title, "The Freedom of the Moon," and interpreting the poem from the perspective of Frost's view of nature, it is not difficult to find that the poet gives readers a lot of hints.

From the perspective of rhythm, the poem has a very regular end rhyme. The first stanza rhymes as "a b a b c c," and the second stanza rhymes similarly. Poems that rhyme give readers a sense of rhythm and musicality when reading through lines. However, rhythm functions similarly to a track, giving readers a hint of what to expect even before they finish reading the next few words. The poem appears predetermined and predictable in this way, which runs counter to the idea of "freedom" and suggests that "the freedom of the man," as it is understood literally, is

limited rather than absolute. Rhythm is untouchable but leads readers during their reading, which is also the reflection of the real world where humans construct their world not only depending on the resources from nature but also under the restriction of laws of nature.

"In modern times, with the progress of social civilization and the high development of science and technology and production, human beings have pushed the conquest of nature to an unprecedented peak [7-10]." Humans dream about owning the freedom to control nature, just like what has been shown in *The Freedom of the Moon*, which is an alarm to wake people up from that fascinating dream of conquering nature.

Back to the poem itself. "I've tried" the moon because, as one law of nature, it has moon phases, which regularly change its shape and position in the sky. In reality, all that "I" "pulled, brought, and dropped" is only the moon or the moon as it seems to us. The true moon, the planet in nature, is suspended in the sky undisturbed, even at a great distance from humankind, no matter where "I" place it. Considering the combination of reality and the poem, readers can determine that "the freedom of the man" is limited. The almighty nature makes humans free, as is settled before the whole poem—the title "The freedom of the nature."

## 5. Conclusion

There are always numerous methods for readers to interpret one poem. Poetry is a vital form of literature, functioning as the bridge that connects poets and readers. As a necessary part of a poem, titles bring readers enlightenment during their reading. In the study of poetry, it is always a topic worth analyzing. Robert Frost creates tension when reading by contrasting the apparent meaning of the poem with its title. This prompts readers to consider the meaning behind the title and gently directs them to consider how humans and the environment relate against the backdrop of the industrial age. Frost's technique of adding tension in the process of reading provides a new perspective for the writing and analyzing poetry, which is worth further study.

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