

## **The Dilemma of Interpersonal Relationship in Robert Frost's Poetry**

Dan Gao

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University,

Daqing 163319, China

gaodan.00@163.com

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*Abstract: People are eager to get respect, understanding and love, but in the human interaction there is always a high wall lying between, making people suspicion, fear, exclusion, and even hatred. Strangers, neighbors, and even loved ones are always faced with barriers to communication. Although the emergence of a variety of modern means of communication reduce space, people's spiritual distance has not been narrowed. No matter how the development of science and technology, the distance of the mind has not been to completely eliminate, this interpersonal dilemma in Robert Frost's poetry has a profound embodiment. Based on Robert Frost's poems, this paper summarized the interpersonal dilemmas which are reflected in them as "isolated", "cold" and "skeptical", and analyzed these interpersonal relationship dilemmas from his poems.*

*Keywords: Robert Frost, interpersonal relationship dilemma, isolated*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was one of the most popular American poets in the 20th century. He contributed a great deal of famous works to the American literary world, enjoying the honor that other American poets of the same age could not match. His work frequently employed settings from rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes. One of the most popular and critically respected American poets of the twentieth century, Frost was honored frequently during his lifetime, receiving four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry (1924, 1931, 1937, 1945) [1], he is also the first poet was invited to recite poems at the inauguration in American literary history. Frost's poems take the new England countryside as the background, has the rich local flavor and the attractive countryside interest. He is good at capture the poetry inspiration from daily work and life, describe the emotions of ordinary people, with a unique perspective to explore philosophy of life, convey the profound wisdom of life [2].

However, for a long time Frost's poetry has not really been recognized by the readers, the majority of readers simply regard it as a natural poet. In fact, Robert Frost's poems are

deceptively simple, but deep in thought., and many of his poems show the important theme of interpersonal dilemma. This thesis aims to make a deep and detailed study of Frost's poems which reveal the dilemma of interpersonal relationships, so as to analyze the poet's poems more deeply and comprehensively. At the same time, it also analyzes the interpersonal dilemma that every surviving individual has to face.

### **1.1 Interpersonal relationship dilemma**

In Frost's poems, people are always alone, lack of communication, indifferent to each other standing in a place. This sense of isolation and indifference in interpersonal relationships can be traced back to Frost's early experiences. Until the age of 38, his poetry has attracted attention in the UK, published a collection of poems *A Boy's Will* and *North of Boston*, and before fame his experience is also unforgettable. Therefore, the interpersonal relationship in Frost's poems can be summarized as "isolation" all also plays with the theme

### **1.2 Isolated**

Wall and house image can be seen everywhere in Frost's poetry. Frost seems to have a special interest in walls and houses. The wall and the house image in the poem not only represent the scenery of New England, but also to show the New England society, or the whole human society. Usually in his poetry, the characters are placed in the room to talk to the outside of the house, or to the wall between the two sides of the conversation. Wall or house imagery dominates Frost's poetry, and then becomes a metaphor to show the boundaries between people, leading to mutual isolation.

*Mending Wall* is a very typical wall with the image to describe the human and the isolated poems, loved by people around the world. In the beginning of the poem, the protagonist's peasant image did not appear, but the speaker introduced himself in a tone of contemplation: "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." In these poems, the image of the wall implies the distance between people, because of its existence, people cannot communicate properly. So saying, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" [3].

Despite its simple, almost folksy language, *Mending Wall* is a complex poem with several themes, beginning with human fellowship, which Frost first dealt with in his poem *A Tuft of Flowers* in his first collection of poems, *A Boy's Will*. Unlike the earlier poem which explores the bond between men, *Mending Wall* deals with the distances and tensions between men. The poem explores the contradictions in life and humanity, including the contradictions within each person, as man "makes boundaries and he breaks boundaries" [4]. The poem also explores the role of boundaries in human society as mending the wall serves both to separate and to join the two neighbors, another contradiction. *Mending Wall* also plays with the theme of seasons as

recurring cycles in life, and contrasts those cycles with both physical and language parallelism as the men walk along the wall, each to a side, and their language stays each to a side. Then, in *Mending Wall*, Frost meditates on the role of language as a kind of wall that both joins and separates people. Finally, Frost explores the theme of mischief and humor in *Mending Wall*, as the narrator says halfway through the poem, “Spring is the mischief in me, / and I wonder, / If I could put a notion in his head.” Mending the wall is a game for the narrator, though in contrast, the neighbor seems quite serious about the work. [5] The narrator notes how the neighbor seems to be walking not only in the thick shade of woods and trees, but in actual “darkness”, implying ignorance and/or inhospitable sentiments.

A *Dream Pang* is another poem depicting human isolation. The hero of the poem escapes from contact with others in a dream: “I had withdrawn in forest, / and my song, / Was swallowed up in leaves that blew always, / And to the forest edge you came one day, / (This was my dream) and looked and pondered long, / But did not enter, / though the wish was strong: / You shook your pensive head as who should say, / ‘I dare not--too far in his footsteps stray, / He must seek me would he undo the wrong.” The hero hid in the forest singing, seems very happy look, but he really happy? From the leaves falling in the wind and engulfed the song we can see his inner contradiction. The reader may guess that perhaps the protagonist is unhappy because he has a dispute with a close person and falls into the forest, expecting the person close to him to find him in the forest and to apologize to him. However, when the girl came to the forest edge after some hesitation, although the desire to go very strong, but she lingered outside the forest: “I dare not—too far in his footsteps stray—He must seek me would he undo the wrong.” Thus, the “woods” in the poem has become an obstacle to lovers to communicate with each other obstacles, it is like the wall in the “mending wall”, separated from each other, not just lovers, but also extended to the whole human. Perhaps only a little bit of mutual concessions will be able to understand each other, communicate with each other, but no one is willing to take this first step, leading to each other’s isolation.

The above mentioned are some tangible “wall”, such as walls, houses, woods, Frost’s poetry also appeared in some invisible “wall”, it is deeply rooted in people’s consciousness.

### **1.3 Indifferent**

In today’s society, we find that there are usually many friends, but no one help when you need help, do your business, do not interfere in other people's things, it seems to have become the first principle that people to do things, which makes more and more people infected with “indifference disease”, indifferent to others, the trust between people has been reduced to a minimum.

In Frost’s poetry, it uses the simple language to describe the indifference. *Eliot’s Waste Land* reveals the cruel reality of interpersonal relationship in twentieth century: loneliness and indifference. And this loneliness and indifference have enveloped Frost’s poetry career.

Therefore, the interpersonal relationships shown in Frost's poems, in addition to the mutual isolation of people, there are human indifference.

In Frost's poetry, *Departmental* is the most typical one - handed metaphorical poem of mutual indifference between people. This poem mainly depicts the cold ant society. By describing the ant social class to treat one of the compatriots died calm and casual, let us see the ant social indifference: "An ant on the tablecloth, / Ran into a dormant moth, / Of many times his size, / He showed not the least surprise...../ Seems not even impressed, / But he no doubts report to any, / With whom he crosses antennae, / And they no doubt report, / To the higher up at court." Ant colony situation as a mirror of human society, reflect the human indifference. When the queen knows the matter, but she also did not show any sadness, just calmly issued orders: "Death's come to Jerry McCormic, / Our selfless forager Jerry. / Will the special Janizary, / Whose office it is to bury, / The dead of the commissary, / Go bring him home to his people. / Lay him in state on a sepal, / Wrap him for shroud in a petal, / Embalm him with ichor of nettle, / This is the word of your Queen." When the queen issued this order just as she issued any other orders, her performance on the subjects of death is extremely indifferent, it seems that this should be the case. Then there is the funeral of the deceased Jerry: "And presently on the scene, / Appears a solemn mortician, / And taking formal position, / With feelers calmly atwiddle, / Seizes the dead by the middle, / And heaving him high in the air, / Carries him out of there. / No one stands round to stare, / it is nobody else's affair." From these lines we can clearly see the funeral industry professional cold and other people's indifference. The poet on the surface in the description of ant society, but in reality as a metaphor, revealing the status of human society. The last two sentences: "It couldn't be called ungentle, / but how thoroughly departmental", pushing poem to an exciting climax [6].

The poem *goes out, goes out* describes a tragedy of a boy working in a factory. In the beginning of poetry, everything went smoothly. The factory machinery works well, beautiful scenery outside the plant charming. Until the moment the boy's sister appeared put a stop to all that. Because the boy heard sister said the dinner time, a hand was caught in a high speed operation of the machine. after the accident occurred the boy's first reaction is request sister don't let them sawed off his hand, why did the boy in this time but just worry about his hand was amputated? Obviously, the boy is afraid, he was afraid of after losing his hands he will not be able to continue to work, but in the end, he was not afraid, because his life with his hands passing away, He died, died of people's indifference, but no one cared about his death, the other workers only gave him a few minutes of surprise, no regrets, no sorrow, they almost immediately began their work, as there is no emotional machine.

What makes them so cold? Perhaps used to seeing a similar tragedy, they have become so conditioned to them; perhaps the reality is not allowed to fall into their own sad feelings. Maybe they just do not dare to think too much, because if they further think about the fate of the boys may be their future a certain moment? This idea is too suffocating, in addition to indifference, they seem to have no choice.

## 1.4 Suspicion

When two strangers meet, the suspect will be generated.

Frost's *one hundred collar* is the dialysis of suspicion among strangers. In the whole poem, the protagonist experienced a strong inner conflict, is to believe that his room friend opens his heart, or cautious, take preventive measures? The protagonist is a highly educated and refined gentle doctor, in this journey he missed the train, and had to stay in the hotel overnight. The hotel man on duty told him the hotel room was full. "Unless you don't mind sleeping in a room with someone else." Doctors do not immediately refuse. Even if there was a man next to him because of fear of being robbed or murdered and unwilling to live with others, choose to sleep in the hall on the bench [7].

The clerk led him to the room, he saw his room friend Ralph - a rude to the shirtless man, then the doctor suddenly disappointed. He carefully guarded the reckless generation, but in his conversation with Ralph, he gradually found the man frank, sincere and enthusiastic. However, even though he had such a discovery, but cannot put down his alert heart, Ralph enthusiastically put his hard collar to him, but he did not dare accept. Perhaps the reader should criticize the doctor over-preparedness, but they cannot ensure their own safety in the environment, it may be prudent to be the most sensible approach. In today's society, there are people who use others philistine deception, then blindly innocent and frank in a way that is stupid.

In Frost's poetry, it both hope people to protect themselves not to believe in others, but also hope that people can be friendly and mutual trust. However, people in society, there is always the danger of instability lurking in the dark, no one can unconditionally give hope to others, so people are always struggling in two directions, people will always trap inside.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Although modern society provides people with a variety of communication tools, such as mobile phones, computers, networks, etc., which makes the world into a small village, here information is spread rapidly, however, the distance between people's mind has not been reduced. It is often felt that progress in technology did not shorten the distance between people, but make people lonelier. Whether this feeling is too negative, there is no doubt that we must recognize that no matter how the development of science and technology, the spiritual distance between people is always exist, and the indifference, isolation and doubt between people are everywhere. Interpersonal relationship is an important and complex problem, which every individual has to face, by reading Frost's poems about the dilemma of interpersonal relationships, people can better understand this problem and deal with the problem better.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Evolution of Theme in Robert Frost's Poetry.

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