

ARTS & LETTERS

The Puritans believed that work gave each man his identity. Wyeth laments, above all, the passing of this belief. His paintings frequently show lone, self-absorbed country folk, apparently oblivious to the signs of their labor that surround them. To many critics, these canvases represent a blind yearning for America's rural past. But Brighton argues that they are a protest against dehumanizing industrialism that even Wyeth's critics on the Left should appreciate.

Robert Frost As Critic

"Robert Frost: On the Dialectics of Poetry" by Sheldon Liebman, in *American Literature* (May 1980), Duke University Press Bldg., East Campus, Duke University, Durham, N.C. 27706.

Robert Frost (1874–1963) adamantly refused to publicize his theories about poetry. He nevertheless established himself as a major critic of verse in letters to friends and in interviews, writes Liebman, professor of English at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle.

Frost believed that the creative process begins with a descent into "chaos." In one sense, he saw chaos as reverie. "All of a sudden something becomes prominent [and] I can pick the poem off it," he said in 1960. But Frost's chaos was also an objective fact, the reality lying beneath the manmade order of everyday life. To appreciate it, the poet abandoned conventional, rational ways of perceiving and cultivated the "hearing imagination," listening for his own "tone of voice" as well as the sounds and phrases of others.

Frost denied that poets bring raw material to life through an act of will. The poem makes itself, he argued, explaining, "Like a piece of ice on a hot stove, the poem must ride on its own melting." Poetry, he stressed, "must be a revelation . . . as much for the poet as for the reader."

Yet Frost denounced modern poets who wrote as if "wildness" and "sound" were all they needed. "Emotions must be dammed back and harnessed by discipline to the wit mill, not just turned loose in exclamations," he maintained. The whole function of poetry is the "renewal of words"—the recovery of lost original meanings, and, through metaphor, the reaffirmation of a word in a new context. Ultimately, poetry was to Frost a "voyage of discovery" beginning in chaos and ending in clarity and insight.

The Beleaguered Acropolis

"Truth at a Loss" by John Appleton, in *Museum Magazine* (July–August 1980), Museum Circulation Service, P. O. Box 1200, Bergenfield, N.J. 07621.

Revered as a great monument of Western culture, Athens's Acropolis has suffered extraordinary indignities.

The site was sanctified by the ancient Greeks in the 5th century B.C.,