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Editor's Note

Virginia Smith
vsmith@usna.edu

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Virginia Smith

United States Naval Academy

“Poetry died one hundred years ago this month,” shouts the title of a recent and widely-read opinion piece in *The New York Times*.¹ Although the declaration is hyperbole intended to grab the reader (as I hope I have done here), the author does not back off much from his assertion that the publication of T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” in December of 1922 ushered in an era of modernist poetry that was inaccessible to the public and devoid of inspiration from nature. He goes on to say that whatever decline Eliot and other Modernists set in motion was driven to completion by the urgencies of “modern life,” the abandonment of traditional poetic forms, and Americans’ collective loss of touch with the natural world. The author displays a sort of grudging admiration for what he sees as Eliot’s single-handed destruction, or at least the irreversible alteration, of a literary genre. To all of this, I might say – not so fast.

At first glance, the 1922 “annus mirabilis” of Modernism seems to have left Robert Frost behind. But, in fact, Frost’s landmark collection *New Hampshire* was published in January of 1923, only a month after “The Waste Land.” In his essay, “*New Hampshire’s* Secret Modernism: ‘For Once, Then, Something,’” former editor Jonathan Barron argues that, unlike the Modernist poets who felt compelled to reinvent the genre in order to explore new themes, Frost found ways to explore complex ideas drawn from philosophy and science using the traditional forms. Barron uses the poem “For Once, Then, Something” to show that, by analyzing the content of Frost’s poems, independently of form, we can narrow the perceived chasm between Frost and his contemporaries. *New Hampshire*, a towering achievement that earned Frost his first Pulitzer Prize, will be the focus of the next issue of *The Robert Frost Review*.

In the current issue, we are excited to recognize Joshua Fagan, whose essay “Ambiguity and the Premodern in *A Witness Tree*” was chosen for the 2022 Lesley Lee Francis Award for Excellence in Frost

2 THE ROBERT FROST REVIEW

Scholarship. We also feature Jean L. Kreiling, who was awarded the 2022 Frost Farm Poetry Prize, and feature her prize-winning poem “Antiphon.”

The issue features work from several first time-contributors: Leila Belkora provides historical background on the remarkable astronomical events of the late 1800s, with an emphasis on events around San Francisco, where Frost lived as a child; in a separate note, Belkora applies her expertise in astronomy to propose an explanation for the visual phenomenon in “Iris by Night.” Jack Thornton takes us to Key West in search of the cottage where the Frosts vacationed in the 1930s, separating passed-along falsehoods from truth along the way. In their literary essays, Maximilian Werner makes the case for “Mending Wall” as a work of *ars poetica* and Matthew Davis places Frost’s early poem, “A Dream Pang,” in the *aubade*, or morning song, tradition. We welcome back Priscilla Paton who reviews *Elizabeth Bishop in Context*, a collection of essays about the renowned poet who was a fellow New Englander and contemporary of Frost.

Robert Frost once said that the ear “is the only true writer and the only true reader.”² In this spirit, we have included several pieces that focus on spoken poetry. The first is a joint interview by David Yezzi of the actors Gordon Clapp and Tom Durham, who have dedicated themselves to portraying, and performing the poetry of, Frost and Edward Thomas, respectively, on stage and radio and who have worked together the past two years as part of the Edward Thomas Literary Festival. Although live performances of Frost’s poetry are lamentably rare, the lifting of copyright restrictions has produced many audiobook readings of his work. First-time contributor Matt Steinhafel has listened to standalone audiobooks of Frost’s poetry produced by three different publishing houses and reviews them for us, revealing a range of styles and strengths. Also on the theme of the spoken word, we have included original poems by contemporary metrical poets Jane Blanchard and Claudia Gary. In closing, founding editor of the *Review*, Earl J. Wilcox offers a modern response to Frost’s 1913 poem “Mowing.”

Over the next year and a half, The Robert Frost Society will mark the 100th anniversary of the publication of *New Hampshire* and the 150th anniversary of the poet’s birth with special events, talks,

and featured articles in the *Review*. We hope you will be a part of the celebration by supporting the Society with your membership and participation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Walther, Matthew. "Poetry Died 100 Years Ago This Month." *New York Times*. December 29, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/29/opinion/eliot-waste-land-poetry.html> (Accessed March 7, 2023.)
- 2 Frost, Robert. *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 1: 1886–1920*. Edited by Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson, and Robert Faggen. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 176. The quoted phrase appeared in a letter dated February 22, 1914 to Frost's friend and former student John Bartlett.