

Calls for Papers on Robert Frost

American Literature Association Conference in Boston, MA

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Sponsor: The Robert Frost Society

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Deadline for Proposals: January 15, 2019; length: 300-350 words

Session I: "Robert Frost and Animal Studies"

"We were lost piecemeal to the animals, / Like people thrown out to delay the wolves," Robert Frost wrote famously in his poem "The White-Tailed Hornet" of the modern trend to investigate animality in humans. Robert Frost Society invites new essays on Robert Frost's life and work which would engage some of the critical frameworks being developed today in animal studies.

The poet's scornful remarks on dogs in "Mending Wall" and "The Rabbit Hunter" would suggest typical arrogance of human exceptionalism. Other dog poems, however, like "One More Brevity" or "Canis Major" greatly complicate or disprove such easy conclusions. So does his lifelong preoccupation with Darwin.

We welcome new studies investigating such motifs as human-animal relationships, human exceptionalism, posthumanism, indigenous people as animals, madmen as animals, pet keeping, domestic animal breeding, casual murders of animals, etc. in his poems, poultry stories, and letters. Stories about champion chickens, poems told from the view of woodchucks, question-asking horses, socially sensitive birds—all wait to be reconceptualized in the new critical terms of animal studies. Of course, we would also consider more general studies involving Robert Frost's animal motifs.

Session II: "Robert Frost and Political Philosophy"

Frost's work constitutes a very rich field for an extensive inquiry by political philosophers and literary scholars interested in political philosophy. The poetry and thought of Frost echo many of the key concerns of contemporary political theory. Among possible themes one might explore is Frost's recognition of politics as a necessary self-defense against nature (very much in touch with the post-Machiavellian-Hobbesian modern philosophic view that man must conquer nature for the improvement of the human condition); his complex reflection on such notions as utopia, individualism, disloyalty, as well as the good of war as the greatest school of virtue and as a great existential experience. One may also look into his rejection of the notion of the just war, his critique of democracy and of the New Deal progressivism, his Burkean reflection on elected politicians' answerability to themselves rather than to their electorate; finally, into his balancing act between states' rights and the federal unity. These and several other issues, repeatedly explored by Frost in his poems, notebooks and speeches, have been largely unexamined.