

## Jeffrey Meyers: On "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

Like "The Road Not Taken," it suggests vast thematic implications through a lucid narrative. . . .

The most amazing thing about this work is that three of the fifteen lines (the last line repeats the previous one) are transformations from other poems. "He gives his harness bells a shake" comes from Scott's "The Rover" (in Palgrave): "He gave the bridle-reins a shake.: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep" comes from Thomas Lovell Beddoes' "The Phantom Wooer": "Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet." The concluding "And miles to go before I sleep" comes from Keats' "Keen Fitful Gusts": "And I have many miles on foot to fare." Though these three lines are variations from other poets, Frost, writing in the tradition of English verse, makes them original and new, and integrates them perfectly into his own poem.

The theme of "Stopping by Woods"--despite Frost's disclaimer--is the temptation of death, even suicide, symbolized by the woods that are filling up with snow on the darkest evening of the year. The speaker is powerfully drawn to these woods and--like Hans Castorp in the "Snow" chapter of Mann's *Magic Mountain*--wants to lie down and let the snow cover and bury him. The third quatrain, with its drowsy, dream-like line: "Of easy wind and downy flake," opposes the horse's instinctive urge for home with the man's subconscious desire for death in the dark, snowy woods. The speaker says, "The woods are lovely, dark and deep," but he resists their morbid attraction.

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