

## John C. Kemp: On "Desert Places"

"Desert Places" . . . vividly demonstrates the power of the imagination to influence the traveler's perception of the region he observes. "I have it in me," he says (l. 15) of the fear that arises from his bone-and spirit-chilling meditation. As a result of his voyage toward the "blacker whiteness" (l. 11) of his imagination, he can barely continue that other journey across the countryside, at least not in the spirit with which he began. His vision of loneliness will dominate any future travel he undertakes, and we should recognize that this poem may represent a frightening extension of the imaginative journey implicit in "Stopping by Woods." If so, the two works testify to the poet's growing reluctance in the twenties and thirties to launch off on the speculative, figmental explorations that a decade or two earlier had animated such brilliant pieces as "Mending Wall," "After Apple-Picking," and "The Wood-Pile."

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### **Author:**

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