

external/internal journey isolation
bleak, dismal
disorienting

7 - The Wood-Pile (North of Boston, 1915)

eponymous
negation
polysyndetic listing

calm
remainder

The Wood-Pile - indicator of civilisation

transitory nature of human beings

oxymoron - treacherous?

Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day, bleak

I paused and said, "I will turn back from here."

No, I will go on farther - and we shall see."

The hard snow held me, save where now and then

One foot went through. The view was all in lines

Straight up and down of tall slim trees

Too much alike to mark or name a place by

So as to say for certain I was here

Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.

A small bird flew before me. He was careful

To put a tree between us when he lighted, fear

And say no word to tell me who he was

Who was so foolish as to think what he thought.

He thought that I was after him for a feather -

The white one in his tail; like one who takes

Everything said as personal to himself.

One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.

And then there was a pile of wood for which

I forgot him and let his little fear

Carry him off the way I might have gone,

Without so much as wishing him good-night. Sweet, simple

He went behind it to make his last stand. humorous, ironic

It was a cord of maple, cut and split

And piled - and measured, four by four by eight.

And not another like it could I see.

No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.

And it was older sure than this year's cutting,

vernacular

tragic, unused stockpile

juxtaposed with previous

or reassuring - legacy?

uncertainty

symbol of
innocence,
freedom

interruption

polysyndetic listing -
reinforces detail, description
enact pause, focus

Or even last year's or the year's before. ^{bleached of life} how far does it stretch back? does it matter?

The wood was gray and the bark warping off it ^{degrading power of nature, invading protection}

And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis - ^{semantic field of gloom} nature continuing housekeeping
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.

^{new life} What held it though on one side was a tree ^{permanence/endurance of nature amid death + decay of winter}
Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,

These latter about to fall. I thought that only ^{nature vs. humans - nature wins}

Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks ^{positive approach? or foolish?}

Could so forget his handiwork on which ^{problem with humanity - too fickle}

He spent himself, the labor of his ax, ^{distraction} rural migration

And leave it there far from a useful fireplace

To warm the frozen swamp as best it could ^{repetition, circularity} unfulfilled, still trying to complete

With the slow smokeless burning of decay. ^{purpose for which it was created}

^{peaceful} oxymoron - /
nature overpowers even
this contradiction

^{slower pace of nature}
still being consumed, just not so rapidly

Wood/forest metaphor for mind, wilderness

circular return to bleakness of opening

irony that the "burning" of decay will
never melt the "frozen" swamp