

You Come Too: My Journey with Robert Frost

Lesley Lee Francis

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Robert Frost's granddaughter travels roads not taken by previous biographers.

Lesley Lee Francis pays loving tribute to the life and work of her grandfather Robert Frost in a work that melds literary criticism to family biography. *You Come Too* is an intimate and inquisitive undertaking and a fresh addition to Frost scholarship.

Lesley Lee Francis is the daughter of the poet Lesley Frost, Robert's eldest daughter. The author so grew up beneath two literary shadows: the great American poet tapped by presidents and dignitaries, and the bookish dynamo who, for all of her creativity and daring, could never quite shake the pressures of her father's reputation. In the wake of both figures, Lesley attempts to make sense of her family inheritance: "I returned to the Frost biography ... looking for answers ... about [them and] about the meaning of my own life."

You Come Too integrates past Frost scholarship, family letters, literary heirlooms, and the author's own memories, to form a portrait of the Frost family that is both unfamiliar and illuminating. Previous biographers have tended to portray the poet in a not-always-flattering light: as someone who abused his wife's support, was emotionally reserved, and resented early publishing struggles. Francis's account rejects such readings as the narrow consequence of viewing Frost from the outside. The grandfather she recalls was intimate, caring, encouraging, and the grateful beneficiary of time spent among generous women.

Those who love Frost's poems will appreciate Francis's contextualizing insights. His biographers will benefit from her fresh views of the tragedies and challenges that the Frosts lived through, which, even when Frost mentioned them publicly, the poet played close to his chest. Insights into how children and grandchildren weather the reputations of their notable family members are both touching and illuminating. Snapshots of the Frost children in their adulthood undertakings also make this an invaluable piece of Americana.

Francis's tone is, at various points, both academic and affectionate. She resists making absolute declarations about her grandfather; at the end, he remains somewhat of an enigma even to her. Yet the quiet affection with which she gathers the various pieces of his biography together renders even her unanswered questions a powerful inroad to the poet.

You Come Too breathes new life into Frost's story and is sure to initiate interesting conversations in college classrooms.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Spring 2016)

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