


在外研究員研究報告書

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所 属	Faculty of Letters, Dept. of English		氏 名	Mark Richardson	
職 名	Professor				
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Mark Richardson
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Report on Research Activity: 2019-2020.

I arrived for my sabbatical year in the United States on August 31, 2019. I registered as a Visiting Scholar at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, where I lived while in America. After having established my residence, I flew north on September 10, 2019, to attend the annual Robert Frost Symposium in Derry, New Hampshire, where Frost and his family lived from 1900 until 1911, and where a good deal of the poetry that went into his first book was written.¹ That symposium ran from September 12 through September 15. I then drove north to Hanover, New Hampshire, where Dartmouth College is located. Dartmouth has the largest extant collection of Robert Frost's literary manuscripts. I spent a number of days there working in the archives, photographing manuscripts of Frost's letters and related materials. I was particularly interested, during this visit, in securing clean photographs of Frost's letters to his editor at Henry Holt and company, Richard Thornton, to his friend Sidney Cox, and to obtain also clean photos of letters exchanged between Frost and George Whicher (his friend and colleague at Amherst College), and between Frost and his friend and fellow poet Robert P. Tristram Coffin. All of this was pursuant to the completion of volume three of *The Letters of Robert Frost, 1929-1936*. This is part a five-volume project on which I've been working for fifteen years.

Volume one of *The Letters of Robert Frost, 1888-1920* (Harvard University Press), appeared in 2014, volume two of *The Letters of Robert Frost, 1920-1928* (Harvard University Press), appeared in 2016; my purpose during my sabbatical year was to complete volume three. (I am collaborating with three other scholars, two based in the United States, one based in Japan.) During the fall of 2019, I assembled the typescript of what would become volume three of *The Letters of Robert Frost, 1929-1936*, and had by winter 2019-2020 essentially completed that task. During those months I worked on the preface, the introduction, and the chronology for the volume, in concert with my co-editors. The book prints 605 letters from Robert Frost to friends, family members, colleagues, and fellow poets, most of them never before collected in any edition of letters. Our job as editors is to obtain high quality copies of the manuscripts of all surviving letters. We then transcribe the letters and annotate them such that readers of the edition will know all they need to know to understand completely each letter Frost writes.

In February of 2020, I attended a convention organized by the American Literature Association in Washington DC, devoted to American poetry. I took part in a panel on Frost, and delivered a paper titled: "‘Thank you for noticing’: Robert Frost and Rhyme." The conference ran from February 20 to February 23. And then the pandemic arrived in the United states.

With the arrival of COVID-19, every library and archive, and every university on the East Coast of the United States, closed. The lockdowns began in March 2020. All archives and libraries remained closed for the duration of my sabbatical year. As a result, unfortunately, I was unable to work in any of them from March 2020 through the end of August, when I returned to Japan. I spent the last six months of my sabbatical in Columbia, South Carolina, in lockdowns of varying degrees of severity. Nevertheless, I was able to work at home during the lockdown to refine the typescript of volume three and, by July 2020, I and my co-editors submitted the

¹ This is a yearly event that Frost's granddaughter Lesley Lee Francis inaugurated in 1994. The symposium brings together, by invitation, a handful of Frost scholars to discuss a topic of interest each year at a site associated with the poet.

typescript of the book to Harvard University Press. It went into production soon thereafter, and in the fall of 2020, after I returned to Japan, I read copy-edited chapters of the book, and then page-proofs of the book, collaborated in the preparation of its index, and completed production of the volume. The book is now done. It will appear in April 2021.²

Early reviews have already appeared. *Kirkus* calls the book “meticulously edited.” The reviewer continues: “Besides an informative introduction contextualizing the letters and consistently rigorous footnotes, the editors provide a biographical glossary and a narrative chronology. A richly detailed portrait of Frost in his own words.” Major Jackson, author of *The Absurd Man* and guest editor of *The Best American Poetry 2019*, says of the book: “Reading *The Letters of Robert Frost* is as indispensable as reading the poems, for revealed in these pages are the layers of thinking that buttressed the great poet’s talent. What emerges into view is a fuller individual—at times humane, empathetic, avuncular—whose complexity and art were utterly responsive to the political and aesthetic ferment of his times.” Adam Kirsch, author of *The Modern Element: Essays on Contemporary Poetry*, writes: “‘I believe in survival. That is my fundamental doctrine,’ Frost wrote to a friend in 1936. The first two volumes of his letters showed how Frost survived early poverty and obscurity to become a great poet and an American institution. This third volume reveals how his ironic wit and artistic devotion enabled him to survive the personal tragedy of his daughter’s death and the national crisis of the Depression, as well as the more ambiguous perils of fame.” Calista McRae, coeditor of *The Selected Letters of John Berryman*, adds: “Here Frost’s bracingly wide-ranging letters are illuminated. Through notes that capture even the most elusive of references, the editors have produced a book that is impressively thorough, rigorous, and generous—a pleasure to read page by page, event by event.” Full-length reviews will soon appear in the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Hudson Review*, and other similar outlets (I am writing the present document in March 2021, in advance of these and additional reviews).

I am now at work on volume four of the letters which will be, as we expect, the penultimate instalment in the edition (we hope to have that book in production by summer 2022). A fifth volume will follow and complete the edition.

² *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 3: 1929–1936*. Mark Richardson, Donald G. Sheehy, Robert Bernard Hass, and Henry Atmore, editors. Belknap Press. An Imprint of Harvard University Press. Annotated edition. April 30, 2021. 848 pages. ISBN-10: 0674726650. ISBN-13: 978-0674726659.