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Richard Eberhart: A Quest for Identity

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ABSTRACT

A short history of the life of Richard Eberhart becomes essential for us to understand the magnetic personality of a poet who believed in his younger generation. The secret of his continued popularity rests on his unique strong individuality, romantic mould, spasmodic vigour, his social commitment, simplicity of expression and a deep concern for mankind. The present study is a modest attempt in this direction and proposes to examine the predominant features of Richard Eberhart's poetry.

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1. Introduction

Richard Eberhart (1966) in his, "Notes on Poetry" states, "A poet is a mystery to himself and to the world" (P.5). To the discerning reader, Richard Eberhart is no longer a mystery. His long poetic career starting from 1927 to the present has not been a smooth and steady growth but a rugged one. He has struggled to scale the heights of poetry and he is now safe and secure. But unfortunately, he has been ignored by anthologists of poetry and his poems are not included in many anthologies. James Dickey feels that "Eberhart's writings in the field of poetry are heartening and life enhancing" (Foreword ix). His poems are about the nature of man, his trials and tribulations, man's hopes and despairs, his joys and sufferings, and his fear of death and war.

The objective of the study is a re-evaluation of Eberhart's poetry in the present day context and the scope of the study is limited to the poems that deal with the multifaceted mystery called death.

2. Eberhart's Uniqueness

As a modern poet, Eberhart writes of the self; even his plays seem to be dialogues between the multiple self of the poet, rather than characters. Traces of the most important currents of early twentieth-century verse are found in the poems of Eberhart. To cite a few examples: the active traditionalism of Robinson and Frost, the free-verse experimentation of the Imagists and others, and symbolism of Yeats. But his applications and combinations of these and other tendencies are individual. Like Thoreau, Eberhart has taken from the stream of time such advantages as it presents but has resisted being swept along by its currents. He has sharp intelligence, but also a warm humanity and a genuine inspiration. As a poet, Richard Eberhart believes in the concept of dualism. He is a Romantic poet, a Neo-Romantic and a poet of relativism. He is not primarily a religious poet, or a

metaphysical poet or a nature poet. Poetically he does not have an established system of beliefs or practices. But when one reads the poetry of Richard Eberhart, one is able to realize that his poetic identity does not fit into any specific group or school of American poetry of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s or thereafter. He is a general type of poet who has written profusely on varied themes. According to some, Richard Eberhart's Poetry is characterized by multiplicity and variety that attest to his independence from fixed creeds. Inclusive and insightful rather than narrowly systematic, it is poetry of wonder that develops not by logical progression but by a process of maturing. But his accomplishment lies in the achievement of his poems.

Richard Eberhart feels that poetry stems from one's experience of suffering or "imagination of suffering." Again poetry is born out of the fascinating opposites. Eberhart is obsessed with ideas of mystery and mortality, dualism and ambiguity- Love and despair, transcendental and time, past and present, and man's kinship with Nature and God.

Joel Roache (1971) in his book, *Richard Eberhart – The Progress of an American Poet*, traces the development of the poetic career and states that his career reflects the history of poetry in America in the twentieth-century. He further adds, "Eberhart's whole generation of poets has moved, on the whole from a position of rebellion and alienation to one of recognition and subsidization by society" (P. xi).

In this respect it has also been pointed out that three poets who began their career before World War II and have survived to become the elder statesmen of American poetry in the 1970s illustrate how the general shift of sensibility (the old dichotomy between Classicism and Romanticism) described above may be seen



in work of unmistakable individuality. Robert Penn Warren and Stanley Kunitz have moved from formality to more flexible style, while Richard Eberhart has gone his own way, scarcely touched by the seismographic shifts in the work of other. There is the stamp of transcendentalism upon the works of Richard Eberhart. Like Kunitz, he responded early to both Metaphysical and Romantic masters; in Eberhart's poetry the influence of Donne, combined with that of Traherne and other seventeenth-century mystical poets, is yoked to the bequests of Blake, Wordsworth, and Emerson. While at Cambridge University, Eberhart was a student of I.A. Richards and a classmate of William Empson and Kathleen Raine; his own work veers round the rigor and the abandon of the contemporaries. The reader of Eberhart's works quickly becomes aware that he is not a follower of William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Robert Frost, or any of the other influential figures in the generation immediately preceding his own. He says that his work resembles Frost's only "here and there." His early poem "Burden," about a hill near Hanover, is a "a little bit Frostian"; but, one the whole, "I don't think I'm influenced by him." He came to know Frost only in the last year of the elder poet's life. He did have two friendships with older poets- William and Stevens. Eberhart feels that briefly in the later 1940s, his work exhibited some similarity to that of Stevens, but he doubts that it amounted to much.

The Dartmouth library has thirty-five letters exchanged between Eberhart and Stevens during the period 1948 to 1955. Speaking of them, Eberhart sums up Stevens' position as a belief that there is no imitation; that each poet is his own man. Not the poets of this century but Wordsworth, Blake, Tennyson and perhaps Gerard Manley Hopkins are, Eberhart feels, his real poetic ancestors. Eberhart is a

strangely uneven poet: his besetting weakness is a too-easy leap into heady abstractions, the willed imposition of spiritual significance rendered in assertive syntax, and Latinate diction. His strengths are the opposites of these flaws: poems of clarity at once simple and profound, such as "I Walked Out to the Graveyard to See the Dead." Some of these proceed with a rigorous logic, like that of Blake's "The Mental Traveller" reversing the theme of Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality.'" Eberhart sees mankind ranked in battalions, "demanding moral answer"

I gave the moral answer and I died
And into a realm of complexity came
Where nothing is possible but necessity
And the truth wailing there like a red
babe.

(Eberhart, 1960: 50).

Such novel experiments of new and upcoming writers like Richard Eberhart was made possible by the new poetic theories expounded by the pioneers of modern poetry like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. The effect of Eliot's achievement upon his successors was overpowering. T. S. Eliot after the publication of *Prufrock* (1917), his most revolutionary and classical essay, "The Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) and through "The Waste Land" (1922) had been a prime mover of the revolutionary aesthetic of modernism along with Pound, Joyce, Auden, W.B. Yeats and D. H. Lawrence. After 'Ash Wednesday' (1930), Eliot proclaimed himself a "classicist in literature, royalist in politics and Anglo-Catholic in religion". In the minds of most contemporaries, Eliot stood for the pre-eminence in literature of a traditional culture outside the self, a European culture on which the poet must draw and to which his work may contribute.

The Theory of Impersonality advocated by him in "The Tradition and the Individual Talent", and his essays on Dante, the Elizabethan dramatics and his



revolutionary essay on “The Metaphysical Poets” and the characteristics of Metaphysical poetry left a lasting impression on the minds of modern American poets, especially the Academic poets of the 1940s and 1950s. It was the metaphysical strain in Eliot’s poetry, offered the mould into which much American poetry was poured through in the work of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and the other Fugitive poets. After the War, this vein continued in the early works of Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, W.S. Merwin, John Hollander and Adrienne Rich and Richard Eberhart, all of whom later burst out in freer forms. From objective verse they shifted to the confessional mode. Recent criticism on Eliot has emphasized the covert Romantic and autobiographical themes of his poetry.

Ezra Pound’s impact on modern poets, especially American poets is note worthy. He accomplished more than anyone else in freeing poetry from the emotional smithers of worn out Victorian diction and an aesthetic that trickled to the pruderies and prejudices of the aesthetic that trickled to the pruderies and prejudices of the middle class. Pound in his social criticism was in the line of Shelley, Ruskin and Morris, protesting the corruption of the spirit by materialism and individualism. Pound was attracted to the economic theory of social credit, promulgated by Major C.H. Douglas. As such he directed his attack against industrial his attack against Industrial Capitalism that had expressed its inner evil by bringing on World War I. the world was reeling under the impact of Marxist revolutionary doctrines and Freud’s system of psychoanalysis.

Twentieth-century American writing cannot be understood without some knowledge of doctrines derived from Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. “Freudianism” pervaded almost every level of American mind after about 1920, from the flappers of

the Jazz Age to serious literary figures such as Sherwood Anderson, Eugene O’Neill, William Faulkner, Edmund Wilson and many other poets, critics and writers of fiction (Poetry and Prose edited by Norman Forester, 127). The great popularity of the ideas associated with the name of Freud was in part the result of the promise of new freedoms of behavior, uninhibited pleasure, and sexual hedonism, the intellectual roots of which were only dimly understood, if at all, by the general mind. Freud’s system of psychoanalysis, with its corollary theories of repression and sublimation, the sexual motivation of conduct, and the supremacy of the unconscious, was introduced to America through a series of lectures at Clark University in 1909, published as “Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis” in the following years. In a period of less than forty years during which nearly every poet alive is a contemporary of all of the others, chronology is an arbitrary maker of categories. The great events in this period, the events most operative upon its poetry, are World War II, the postwar period of seeming social and literary conformity, and the cultural revolution of the sixties occasioned by a whole complex of simultaneous social and political causes. In the midst of it all, it seemed to many that the institutional bulwarks of culture-politics, education, our traditional commitment to the work ethics-were being undermined. Only very few survived them with the same aesthetic assumptions and poetic intentions with which they began. There has perhaps never been a generation of greatly talented poets who, whatever their individual proclivities, have so widely shared in a stylistic revolution. In broad outline, that revolution involves the shift of the literary imagination from a conviction of the historical continuity of culture which guaranties that the present is both a continuation of the past and a link to the future.



After 1920, a battle of the Bookmen took place in which the professors, speaking for conservatism and Academics, were ranged against the journalists, the literary radicals, and the ideals of Bohemia. Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More as spokesmen for the New Humanism called for a repudiation of “the cold and clammy facts” of realism and science and return to the literature of the past and the ethical values of the class. Babbitt instructed his students at Harvard in the evils of “Menckanism” and pointed to the need for inner checks and controls on the waywardness of the instincts and passions of men. The radicals, on the other hand, including Randolph Bourne, Cleanth Brooks, H.L. Mencken, and the Marxist critics, retaliated with the charge that Humanism was reactionary and academic, looking backward to the Puritans or to the genteel tradition for its models. They took advantage of the appeal to modernism and the examples of the new realists to enforce the principle of vitality and contemporary relevance as essential to good literature. Both schools suffered somewhat from generalization. They were literary theorists, not critics, and both indulged in dogmatism and rhetorical assertion; neither looked closely at a given work of poetry or prose to assess its literary strategies, its form, or its symbolic or metaphorical significance. “This remained for the school of analytical criticism whose founder was J.E. Spingarn, a follower of the Italian critic Benedetto Croce. Spingarn’s “expressionism” emphasized the author’s intentions, the creative act, and the work of art itself”. This tendency merging with the textual analysis which had its start in the essays of T.S. Eliot, later came to be called the “New Criticism”, and in the thirties and forties it emerged as the most influential critical method, partly because of its great effect on the teaching of literature in the classroom.

Thus, after World War II, American literature as a whole was diverted to still further experimentation with the techniques of expression, and it continued to exploit Freudian motivations and to extend the boundaries of freedom in the use of sex scenes in homosexual as well as heterosexual relationships. The poetic revival covering two or three decades of the twentieth was a blend of experiment and tradition and a new poetic mode brought to bear on the American scene. Like the criticism and fiction of the same period, poetry was in revolt against both the objects and the means of expression inherited from the nineteenth century. The powerful example of Walt Whitman remained to leave its mark on those poets who accepted, in part at least, the continuing significance of democratic hopes and national ideals. But more and more poetry withdrew remained to leave its mark on those poets who accepted, in part at least, the continuing significance of democratic hopes and national ideals. But more and more poetry withdrew into a private world of its own making.

The poetry of Pound and Eliot was not without significant social and intellectual content, but the values expressed were indirectly revealed. Both poets were in revolt against the liberal, progressive, humanitarian though that had been carried over from the nineteenth century. During the 1920s Eliot especially was searching for new values either in the rituals of the established church or in Greek mythology, Buddhism, pagan cults of worship, and fertility rites. In their expatriate situation, both poets seemed to prophesy the doom of Western civilization to follow upon the catastrophe of World War I. But it was not such expressions of mood or feeling that were to be the hallmark of the new poetry, however naturalistic or “modern” they may have sounded in 1920.



Eliot, in his influential essay “The Metaphysical Poets” distinguished between the intellectual poetry of Donne and the reflective poetry of Tennyson in defining the essence of the new and “Difficult” manner. In a now-famous phrase, “dissociation of sensibility”, Eliot suggests that English poetry since the seventeenth century had suffered from a failure to fuse thought and feeling, idea and sensation, into a unified expression of “disparate experience”. In the metaphysical poets Donne and Marvell and in the French symbolists Baudelaire, Verlaine, Laforgue, and Corbiere, he saw methods and techniques-century experience in all its variety and complexity. The established language of poetry, moreover, would no longer serve; it had failed to keep pace with changing ideas and ways of thinking. One could not write about the postwar generation in American or Europe in the accents of Tennyson or Swinburne, or even Whitman. New accents were needed, and the in turn led to new attitudes, rhythms, syntax, symbols, and indeed a new poetics. Thus the major effort of Pound, Eliot, and others during the twenties and thirties-whether we call it Imagism or symbolism or Surrealism-was to purify the language of poetry and make it express the realities of the age. What the age demanded. Pound said, was “an image of its accelerated grimace.”

Behind this façade of tricks and mannerism in E.E. Cummings’ verse was the lyricism that the might have been chagrined of seasons, his love of flowers, trees, and country sounds, and his primitive rhythms give him away as a later-day Wordsworth. What makes him modern is his prevailing humor and cynicism, a steady erotic strain, and the fresh “look” of his poetry on the page. The Lyrical impulse was strong, even when he was resisting the traditional Coleridge’s post-Kantian aesthetics as the precedent to his own belief

that the poet must take over reality by the creative and ordering power of imagination. E.E. Cummings was both an innovator and an artist whose lineage can be traced back to the mainstream of English and American romantic thought.

One should be careful of such terms as “romantic” in speaking of poetry. While much of the new poetry of the twentieth century can be viewed in terms of its reaction to the conventions of the Fireside Poets of New England- Lowell, Longfellow, and Whittier- and likewise to the intellectual milieu that produced Whitman, it is also true that a romantic mood (if we define it as enthusiastic, affirmative, having joy of life, and love of natural things) is a part of the poetry of any period. Richard Eberhart fits into this romantic kind of poetry. The spirit of assurance and the joy life and love of natural things in life are reflected in his poetry.

Where the new poetry diverged from its antecedents was in language and craftsmanship, in the changed temper of its audience, and in the subjective “private” world in which artists sought refuge from the overpowering incursion of science and scientists. Whereas Whitman was oratorical, these poets were conversational, and while he was expansive, they were introverted, drawing on the motions of the unconscious mind or dream-images. Ezra Pound is himself the embodiment of the poet maudit. His imprisonment, his suffering, his confinement in a madhouse, and his indomitable continuation of the cantos despite these circumstance, made pound seem more than ever before, to his admirers, the Philoctetes whose poetic vision was the weapon which alone would redeem the times. Along with Eliot’s Waste Land and Joyce’s Ulysses, Pound’s cantos enacts into literature in English the modern rejection of lineal time.



Pound's poetry constitutes a heroic attempt to assert the primacy of an imaginative vision of wholeness by intuitive and metaphoric means, an effort to reproduce in verbal forms the energies of man's feelings. Pound's efforts are deeply subversive of inherited modalities of thought. Pound by his example lent authority to this recrudescence of the Poet of Visionary, as he did also to the Poet as Mad Seer. Similarly Richard Eberhart's poetry is stimulated by his uncanny intuition fired by his imagination.

Auden was a forceful presence in American letters, not only because as Eliot had said, a great poet must in writing himself he wrote of his time but because he exemplified qualities of the poetic imagination without which our literature would have been much impoverished. In an age of madness he was a poet professing sanity. In a time of disbelief, after his leftist and psychiatric period, he found spiritual haven in the Anglican Church: but his Christianity was grounded in existential theology.

Another major figure in Twentieth-Century literature who wielded a considerable influence on his contemporaries and successors was W.H. Auden. As critic and man of letters, Auden belongs to the select company of Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, and Malcolm Cowley as well as Eliot, Pound, Ransom, and Tate—those whose commentaries on the literature of the past and the writing of the present help to give their times a consciousness of contemporary sensibility. Thus, Auden both encouraged and defined the salient interest in the poetry of his young contemporaries. Richard Eberhart pays his tribute to Auden on his fiftieth birthday with a poem entitled "To Auden On His Fiftieth.

The idea of something new; you had the odd face for it, books sprawling on the floor for tea. (Eberhart, 1986: 239).

Professor Mohan Ramanan (1996) in his book *Difficult Balance – A Study of Contemporary American Formal Verse* states that "The main argument is that form in the traditional sense of the term has to do with rules, conventions and accepted poetic procedures" (P.1). He creates a term called 'Alternative' poetry. It provides a sharp contrast to a naked, raw, open and extreme verse of the various, 'schools' of American poetry or the American poetic 'Underground'. The 'Underground' comprises of Beat, Confessional, Deep Imagist, New Yorkist and Projectivist schools. Our attention is focused on the Alternative Tradition stemming from Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens, finding its continuity in the meditative verse of the Southern Fugitives, running through that later T.S. Eliot and fulfilling itself in the contemporary period in the poetry of wit, symmetry, intellect, irony and ratiocination. Major poets like Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, Karl Shapiro, Richard Wilbur, Howard Nemerow, John Hollander, Anthony Hecht, J.V. Cunningham, Elizabeth Bishop, James Merrill and Louis Simpson, are part of this abiding tradition. Especially they came into their own in the 1940s and 1950s in response to a changed world situation. America after 1945 was filling up the vacuum created by the marginalization of Britain after the break-up of the Empire. Americans travelled to all parts of the world promoting and sustaining the Pan Americana. This entry into a global role for America compelled parallel alternations in the realm of culture. Von Hallberg (1985) in fact calls the poets of this period the culture poets of America and he is quite right. Poets felt compelled to interpret America and he is quite right. Poets felt compelled to interpret America to the world and the 'travel' poem became naturally in important poetic genre. At home poets were encouraged to join Universities and to take up public and



Government employment. Robert Frost's and Richard Eberhart's presence at the Kennedy Inaugural in 1962 was in some ways symbolic of the prestige of the arts, and of poetry, in America. Poets felt flattered at their role as leaders and interpreters of culture and as a response to this situation the 'public' or 'occasional' poem became a frequent poetic exercise. The American political consensus lasted till about 1965 and Culture poetry flourished.

It was not as if the academic and University Poets were collaborators with the American political establishment. True, they did not break out of the parameters of civilized discourse but with that framework they wrote critically about the direction of American life and culture, appropriated the 'popular' into their discourse, and above all proved that urbanity and civility are important elements in the mental make-up of poets. They used traditional poetic forms but never without a sense of the changed social contexts in which these forms were being used. Poetic forms should keep pace with social developments. The culture poets knew this and consequently there was always a touch of irony in their use of a traditional form. Their use of a traditional form or convention was balanced, if not between form and content to produce in the reader a peculiar pleasure of reading the poem.

Whatever they did, the Culture poets were always aware of the fact that poetry should not degenerate into chaos. It was meant to impose an order on chaos. One of the figures behind culture poetry was your Winters. Winters, a major thinker and poet, berated the Modernist practice of allowing form to imitate the chaos of the world. He spoke of the fallacy of imitative form and argued that poetry must on the other hand, through form, and argued that poetry must on the other hand, through form, keep at bay the chaos and futility without (Winters, 1960; 1967). These poets, therefore, used

traditional forms to organize experience in a rational manner. This did not mean that experiment, strong emotive passages, feeling, imagery or metaphor were eschewed. On the other hand, all these features were fused together under the overall control of syntax and logical organization. Rhythm did not take over as it often did in the Underground's free verse organic projections over a field of poetic force.

Richard Ghormley Eberhart was born in Austin, Minnesota on April, 5, 1904, as the second son of Alpha LaRue Eberhart, the Vice-President of Hormel Meat Packing company, and Lena Lowenstein Eberhart. His brother Dryden and his sister Elizabeth were provided with all the best that the American Middle west afforded. Spending days in the town and countryside, he grew up with an independent spirit being susceptible to the scenic beauty and sensitive to the changes around. His parents were a devout, prosperous and affectionate couple. During his upbringing, special mention should be made of 'Deudecim' – primarily a social organization for the boys in the neighborhood, but each get together was followed by paper presentation on any subject and then discussions for which their respective parents were a source of real encouragement. Eberhart was a competent student. He was encouraged by his family. So he made a considerable contribution to the status of 'Deudecim'. He kept his grades up as much by hard work as by native ability. His diary records his frequently staying after school for help in Algebra and Latin, and occasional admonitions to himself to bring up his marks but English came to him naturally. But his grades were low in Latin. His chief contribution to Deudecism's prestige was in extra-curricular activities.

As pointed out, Eberhart remembers Tennyson as the chief literary influence in his early life. But Tennyson does not appear



in his diary as many other writers do. He also read a lot when school was not in session. The poem "The Shell Vase" is only one of the many poems Eberhart wrote during his adolescence. Another poem "Indian Pipe" written during the same period merits special mention. He also wrote two short stories in his teens. They are preserved in his personal library. One is a tale of love. The other is a little more interesting, a kind of Romeo and Juliet story of love, war and death among the Chippewas and Cheyennes of primeval Minnesota. It is a juvenile piece. But it is plotted with care to make it adequate for the a motion picture or television show. That descriptive power of the poet in these two pieces characterizes much of his mature poetry.

Eberhart's early life emerges as a kind of American idyll, directed and watched over by his parents, who have apparently been accurately drawn in the "Visionary Farms". The elder Eberharts provided their children not only with means but with much of their motivation, in the form of encouragement and help. A very brief passage from "Duo Days", part of an account of the preparations for the annual banquet of 1920, will indicate to some extent the interest Eberharts took in their son's affairs. Then misfortune shook up the members of the family terribly, and left an indelible impression on the growing boy's mind which is echoed throughout his entire oeuvre. Eberhart's mother's fatal disease which laid her up for nine months, and the bad times for his father's business let the family down and impeded the immediate continuation of his studies. From the summer of 1921 until her death on June 22, 1922, she was unable to run the household. As a result, he remained at Burr Oaks to take care of his mother.

The exaltation that produced the last poem he wrote during his mother's life was a sense of relief at the approaching release

from months of tension. He had watched her agony for almost a year. For at least seven months of that time, he had known that there was no hope. So there is small wonder that, in the poem, the death seemed "timely":

Thou'rt not unkind, O timely death,
Who comes to still our mother's pain,
She lives, tho gone her human breath,
In God's eternal love again.

....

Sleep. Peace. How you have prayed for these:

For all your suffering intense
Reward is thine now from disease

And thou art gone-we known not
whence.

(Eberhart, 1960:186)

The family's business reversals also constituted a refutation of the individualistic ideal that had served the father so well, and indeed the poet came later to view the events in this light. He realized the magnitude of his father's losses. The social and economic success of Richard Eberhart reflects, more than his own efforts, achievement. It is clear that Eberhart's career reflects a massive interest in serious poetry and his income increased. Collected Poems began to bring royalties. His positions as consultant brought an unusual number of engagements. He earned outside of his Dartmouth salary an amount equivalent to that of a teacher. His winning of the Pulitzer Prize and the availability of his work in paperback hoped to improve his financial position. As a poet, he depended on institutional recognition and support. Joel Roache says: "Eberhart is among the most widely known and widely read serious poets writing today, and but for his position at Dartmouth, which amounts to that of poet in residence, he would have very little professional identity in relation to society as a whole."

By virtue of his contribution to contemporary American poetry and the cultural role as an academic poet, he



continues to hold his position and maintain his identity. In short, conditions have come a long way since he worked in a slaughterhouse. Eberhart continues to be an influence in colleges and universities. The audience for serious poetry will presumably increase under him. Younger men will find it less difficult than he did to be a poet in America.

A romantic by influence and temperament, Richard Eberhart evinces a keen interest in the objects of nature and the common everyday incidents and his poetic touch endows them with an everlasting idyllic beauty. His encounter with death early in life as he watched his loving mother devoured by the merciless monster of cancer cells, has instilled a sense of gloom and a predilection to death which gets manifested in poem after poem. What is striking about his poetry is the fact that he does not stop with the portrayal of death as the extinguisher of life, but goes still deeper and envisions a life after death. This theme of assurance is perhaps unique in the poetry of Richard Eberhart in the annals of Twentieth century American poetry. Another important theme that reverberates throughout his poetic oeuvre is the metaphysical overtones. Yet another theme that merits mention is his preoccupation with the pain, waste, death and the sorrow caused by the huge massacre in the name of wars.

3. Conclusion

Such a variety of themes endows his poetry with a unique quality which makes it very difficult, if not impossible for the readers and the critics alike to classify him as belonging to any particular school of poetry. It is indeed strange that a poet who has written as many as 1000 poems and brought out several anthologies of his own poems and authored several articles on poets and the theory and the craft of poetry has not been frequently anthologized and duly recognised. As critical works on his

works are scarce, the average reader has to grope in the dark while approaching Richard Eberhart.

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