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The Metrics and Imagery of Edwin Arlington Robinson As Exhibited in Five of His Blank Verse Poems

Elsie Ruth Dykes-Chant

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THE METRICS AND IMAGERY
of
EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON
As Exhibited in Five
of
His Blank Verse Poems

by

Elsie Ruth Dykes Chant

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in
English Literature

University of New Mexico

1930

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THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

The work of Edwin Arlington Robinson marks him as one of the most important poets in America today. Robinson was born in Head Tide, Maine, in 1869. When he was three years old, his parents moved to Gardiner, Maine, where Robinson received impressions that affect all of his written work. He entered Harvard in 1891, and withdrew from the College in 1893. After attempting various occupations, Robinson accepted an appointment in the New York Customs House from Theodore Roosevelt, who was then President of the United States. He resigned from this post within a few years, and since then, he has devoted all of his time to the writing of poetry.

Robinson first published The Torrent and the Night Before in 1896. Since then he has published a series of short poems, The Town Down the River (1910), The Man Against the Sky (1916), and Collected Poems (1921). Among his narrative poems that have been published are Captain Craig (1902), Merlin (1917), Launcelot (1920), Tristram (1927), and Cavender's House (1929). In 1929

his Collected Poems appeared.

Many students and critics have attempted to analyze Robinson's poetry from the standpoint of subject matter. These critics and students have pointed out, time after time, that Robinson depicts souls, psychologically analyzes emotions, presents portraits, and searches for truth. They have also traced the influence of Browning in his work, and discussed his irony. But the majority of them have touched lightly, if at all, on the mechanics of his work, his method of attaining force and beauty. Some dismiss the metrics briefly with a general and carelessly formed idea, as Alfred Kremyborg in Our Singing Strength,[1] who says, "Rarely, if ever, does he [Robinson] break the rules, the so-called laws of versification."

Robinson does break the "so-called laws of versification," but in the breaking of them, he attains a fluency and a flexibility of style that make possible all that the critics have pointed out. His skill as a technician accounts largely for his success as a poet.

1-Kreymborg, Alfred, Our Singing Strength, p.
New York, Coward-McCann, 1929

Statement and Purpose

Almost all of Edwin Arlington Robinson's poetry is divided metrically, into three types: blank verse, sonnets, and quatrains. The metrical analysis that follows is based on his blank verse. The real intent is to compare the earlier blank verse with the later, to analyze the relation between subject matter and form, and to note in general, the sources from which he gleaned his figures of speech.

The following analysis is based on a study of some 13,000 lines of his blank verse.

MATERIAL, METHOD, and PROCEDURE

The material for this metrical study of Edwin Arlington Robinson's blank verse consists of five narrative poems, covering the years from 1902 to 1929. These poems are: Captain Craig (1902), Merlin (1917), Lancelot (1920), Tristram (1927), and Cavender's House (1929). These poems were studied from his Collected Poems, published by MacMillan in 1929.

The study was divided into two parts. The first part was a metrical study, and the second part was an analysis of the source and appropriateness of the figures of speech.

In studying the form, the basic idea of English blank verse was used. As commonly understood, blank verse is composed of ten syllables, an unaccented followed by an accented syllable, forming five iambic feet. There is usually a caesura or pause, generally falling in the middle of the line, though this caesura is sometimes omitted to give more powerful phrasing. This pause is also shifted in different verses to give variety. It is also allowable to substitute a

trochaic foot, or one accented foot followed by an unaccented foot, especially at the beginning of a verse, and to substitute an anapestic foot, or two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable, for the regular iambic foot. The use of the extra-metrical syllable or feminine ending at the end of the verse is recognized as a means of attaining beauty. Run-on lines are accepted as giving the verse a flexibility and a sweeping range of emotions.

As a basis of comparison, fifty lines were scanned from Browning's The Ring and the Book,[2] fifty lines from Tennyson's Morte D'Arthur,[3] and fifty lines from Robinson's Lancelot.[4] Trochaic substitutions, anapestic substitutions, feminine endings, and run-on lines were all noted.

To study Robinson's use of the caesura, the first fifty lines in Captain Craig[5] and the first fifty lines in Cavender's House were analyzed.

The general metrical study of Robinson's poetry was made from the five long narrative poems mentioned

2-Browning, Robert, Complete Poems (Student's Cambridge Edition), p. 503-504, New York, Houghton Mifflin Co.,1895
3-Snyder and Martin, A Book ofEnglish Literature, p. 580, New York, The MacMillan Co., 1921
4-Robinson, E. A., Lancelot (in his Collected Poems, p. 391, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1929)
5-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 113
6-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 961

in the opening paragraph. The lines in each poem were counted, and trochaic, anapestic, and spondaic substutions were all noted, as well as the feminine endings, run-on lines, and hexameter or twelve syllable blank verse lines.

The second part of the study was based on Robinson's use of the figure of speech. In this study, his tendency to use certain words was also noted. Each figure of speech was noted in the five narrative poems. The appropriate use and the source was studied. The source was estimated and worked out from the following outline:

I Reading

- a History
- b Bible
- c Myths
  - 1 Greek
  - 2 Norse
- d Other poets

II Nature

- a The firmament
- b The elements
- c Animal life
  - 1 Wild
  - 2 Tame
  - 3 Reptiles
  - 4 Worms
  - 5 Fish
- d Topographical
  - 1 Mountains
  - 2 Ocean
  - 3 Sea
  - 4 Lake
  - 5 Plains

III Observation

a The life and occupation of man
b Family Relations
c Fire
d Ghosts
e Light
f Darkness
g Day
h Night

IV Imagination

a Images created by poet
b Operations of the mind

V Personification

VI Simple Comparison

COMPARISON

	Lines	Trochaic	Anapestic	Fem. End.	Run-on Lines
Browning *The Ring and the Book*	50	2	2	0	12
Tennyson *Morte D'Arthur*	50	5	0	0	18
Robinson *Lancelot*	50	0	7	10	13

CAESURA

	Lines	Period Stop in Line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	0
Captain Craig	50	8	2	3	3	14	9	12	5		7
Cavender's House	50	8	0	5	3	12	4	16	2	1	13

CAPTAIN CRAIG (1902)

Number of lines	1887	
Number of syllables	19077	
Run-on lines	1020	54%
Feminine Endings	140	7%
Anapestic Substitutions	67	0.4%
Trochaic Substitutions	25	0.1%
Dactylic Substitutions	2	
Hexameter Lines	1	
15 Syllable Lines	1	

MERLIN (1917)

Number of lines	2631	
Number of Syllables	26904	
Run-on lines	1017	35% 399.
Feminine Endings	482	18%
Anapestic Substitutions	112	0.4%
Trochaic Substitutions	90	0.3%
Hexameter Lines	3	
Nine Syllable Lines	1	

LANCELOT (1920)

Number of Lines	2878	
Number of Syllables	29708	
Run-on Lines	1117	40% 39%
Feminine Endings	610	21%
Anapestic Substitutions	318	1.1%
Anapestic Substitutions Slurred	47	12%
Hexameter Lines	5	
Trochaic Substitutions	108	0.4%
Feminine Endings	117	Pronouns
Used the word light	150	times
Other allusions to light	64	times

TRISTRAM (1927)

Number of Lines	4318	
Number of Syllables	43792	
Run-on Lines	1896	44%
Feminine Endings	905	21%
Anapestic Substitutions	600	1.4%
Anapestic Substitutions Slurred	93	15%
Hexameter Lines	6	
Trochaic Substitutions	225	0.5%
Feminine Endings		
Pronouns	125	
Other parts of speech	50	
Themes		
"White birds flying"	4 times	
"Cold waves on Cornish rocks"	20 times	
Words		
Peace	8 times	
Fate	36 times	
Time	67 times	

CAVENDER'S HOUSE (1929)

Number of Lines	1552	
Number of Syllables	16272	
Run-on Lines	680	44%
Feminine Endings	367	24%
Anapestic Substitutions	184	1.1%
Hexameter Lines	1	
Trochaic Substitutions	107	0.6%

	CAPTAIN CRAIG-1902	MERLIN-1917	LANCELOT-1920	TRISTRAM-1927	CAVENDER'S HOUSE-1929
Run-on Lines	54%	35%	40%	44%	44%
Feminine Endings	7%	18%	21%	21%	24%
Anapests	.4%	.4%	1.1%	1.4%	1.1%
Trochees	.1%	.3%	.4%	.5%	.6%
Hexameters	1	3	5	6	1

FIGURES OF SPEECH

CAPTAIN CRAIG (1902)

I Reading

History	2
Greek Myths	38
Bible	25
Hindu	4
Pagan	1
Arabian Nights	3
Egyptian	1
Shakespere	3
Persian	1

II Nature

Firmament	3
Seasons	2
Elements	3
Animals	
Reptiles	4
Tame	1
Birds	6
Insects	2
Fish	2
Plant life	12
Topographical	
Shoals	2
Desert	1
Sea	3
Ocean	1

III	Observation	
	Life and Occupation of Man	15
	Body of Man	5
	Family Relations	2
	Soul	4
	Music	13
	Life	1
	Death	3
	Ghosts	2
	Fire	2
	Ashes	1
	Light	6
	Darkness	1
IV	Imagination	
	Imagery by poet	7
	Operations of the mind	5
VI	Personification	14
VII	Simple Comparison	4

FIGURES OF SPEECH

MERLIN (1917)

I	Reading	
	History	4
	Greek Myths	9
	Norse Myths	1
	Bible	20
II	Nature	
	Firmament	3
	Elements	12
	Animals	
	Wild	4
	Tame	3
	Worms	2
	Reptiles	8
	Insects	6
	Fish	4
	Birds	7
	Plant life	16
	Metal	5
	Topographical	
	Desert	1
	Sea	2
	Ocean	3
III	Observation	
	Life and Occupation of Man	38
	Body of Man	19
	Soul	1
	Music	5
	Death	8
	Ghosts	4
	Fire	12

	Shadow	1
	Light	2
	Darkness	3
IV	Imagination	
	Images by Poet	7
	Operations of mind	13
V	Personification	42
VI	Simple Comparison	12

FIGURES OF SPEECH

LANCELOT (1920)

I	Reading	
	History	6
	Greek Myths	15
	English Myths	2
	Bible	15
	Dante	1
II	Nature	
	Firmament	10
	Elements	8
	Animals	
	Wild	6
	Tame	3
	Worms	4
	Reptiles	6
	Insects	5
	Fish	3
	Birds	7
	Plant Life	17
	Sea	2
	Ocean	3
III	Observation	
	Life and Occupation of Man	60
	Body of Man	10
	Family Relations	4
	Soul	2
	Life	2
	Ghosts	9
	Fire	14

	Ashes	5
	Shadow	3
	Witch	1
	Veil	2
	Music	1
	Light	5
	Darkness	6
	Vaporish	4
	Cream	1
	Color	3
	Metal	9
	Stone	2
	Ivory	2
IV	Imagination	
	Images by Poet	12
	Operations of Mind	49
V	Personification	29
VI	Simple Comparison	20

FIGURES OF SPEECH

TRISTRAM (1927)

I	Reading	
	History	5
	Greek Myths	7
	Bible	20
	Shakespere	2
II	Nature	
	Firmament	6
	Seasons	1
	Elements	7
	Animals	
	Wild	9
	Tame	12
	Fish	2
	Reptiles	11
	Birds	7
	Plant life	20
	Topographical	
	Sea	8
	Lake	2
	Gulf	1
III	Observation	
	Life and Occupation of Man	50
	Body of Man	6
	Family Relations	9
	Life	5
	Veil	1
	Mist	1

	Ghost	11
	Death	20
	Fire	24
	Ashes	1
	Vampire	1
	Marble	2
IV	Imagination	
	Images by Poet	23
	Operations of Mind	25
V	Personification	43
VI	Simple Comparison	19

FIGURES OF SPEECH

CAVENDER'S HOUSE (1929)

I	Reading	
	Greek Myths	5
	Bible	2
	General Reading	6
	Dante	3
II	Nature	
	Firmament	7
	Seasons	1
	Elements	2
	Animals	
	Wild	5
	Tame	2
	Worms	1
	Insects	2
	Birds	2
	Topographical	
	Mountains	1
III	Observation	
	Life and Occupation of Man	33
	Family Relations	4
	Body	6
	Music	1
	Time	4
	Death	8
	Spectre	1
	Day	1
	Light	3

	Darkness	5
	Night	2
IV	Imagination	
	Images b Poet	20
	Operations of Mind	43
V	Personification	13
VI	Simple Comparison	15

	CAPTAIN CRAIG-1902	MERLIN-1917	LANCELOT-1920	TRISTRAM-1927	CAVENDER'S HOUSE-1929	TOTAL
Reading	78	34	39	34	16	201
Nature	41	77	74	86	23	301
Observation	55	95	146	132	68	496
Imagination	12	20	61	48	63	204
Personification	14	42	29	43	13	141
Simple Comparison	4	12	20	19	15	70

Reptiles	30 times
Bible	82 times
Greek Myths	71 times
Flowers	61 times

COMPARISON

In comparing the blank verse of Robinson with that of Browning and of Tennyson, the results show that the trochaic substitutions and the run-on lines average about the same. However, the percentage of anapestic substitutions was much greater in Robinson's work, as was the percentage of feminine endings. It would seem that Robinson's blank verse is much freer and more flexible than that of the other two poets, and that this freedom and flexibility are largely gained by his greater use of feminine endings.

CONCLUSIONS

ROBINSON'S USE OF THE CAESURA

The study of Robinson's use of the caesura would indicate that the only change he has made from his first poem written in 1902,[7] to the last one written in 1929,[8] is in abolishing the pause in a great number of lines. The findings seem to show that his later work has almost twice as many lines without internal pauses as his earlier work had. Since the elimination of the caesura creates a more powerful dramatic phrasing, the conclusions would be that Robinson's later blank verse is more powerful and more moving than his earlier blank verse. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that Robinson apparently was interested in his youth in the intellectual side of life, as Captain Craig[9] is an intellectual study, and that as he grows older he becomes more and more interested in the emotional side of life. Lancelot[10] and Tristram[11] are powerful emotional portrayals. However, Robinson in his

7-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 113
8-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 961
9-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 113
10-Idem., Lancelot, p. 365
11-Idem., Tristram, p. 595

last long narrative poem, Cavender's House,[12] deals with a psychological study.

In Cavender's House[13] are several fine examples of his use of the caesura. In one line he places a period stop, and follows it with a line in which there is no caesura at all.

".....They were there now,[14]
"Or might be; for a furtive unseen breathing
"Was not the breath of man. If it was demons,
"They may have called him with a woman's voice,
"And this might be their triumph more than hers."

"Laramie! Do not go! I am not trying[15]
"To shake even what dust weighs from my shoulders.
"Let them bear all there is for them to bear,
"And lash me if you must. But do not go!"

"Tell me that I was mad for doubting you,[16]
"Or that a poison that was burning in me
"Was truth on fire, as I believed it was.
"I am not asking now to be forgiven,
"Or dreaming of it."

12-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 961
13-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 961
14-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 963
15-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 984
16-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 990

METRICAL STUDY

In studying the metrics of Robinson's verse, I found that the percentage of feminine endings is much greater in his later work. In Captain Craig the comparative few feminine endings show only 7%. In Merlin, he has over twice as many feminine endings or 18%. In the next two poems, Launcelot and Tristram, he increases the feminine endings to 21%, and in Cavender's House, he raises them to 24%. There seems to be little increase in the use of anapests, though there is a slight change. The percentages are .4% for Captain Craig, .4% for Merlin, 1.1% for Lancelot, 1.4% for Tristram, and 1.1% for Cavender's House.The trochaic substitutions show an increase from .1% through.3%, .4%, .5%, to .6%. Although there is a regular increase in substitutions, there is a noteable peculiarity in Robinson's use of the run-on lines. In his earlier work, Captain Craig, he has an enormous number of them--54%. Then in Merlin, he suddenly drops back to 35%, raising it to 40% in Lancelot,

and then to 44% in both Tristram and Cavender's House. This free use of feminine endings in Captain Craig is especially noteworthy, when we consider that the blank verse is otherwise very normal, that is, that it has a comparatively few percentages of substitutions.

Robinson evidently slurs some of his words, and intends for them to be pronounced as one syllable. Some examples of this are: ever, even, given, driven.
"Not you, Not even when most we are in power."[17]
I found that 12% of the anapests in Lancelot were slurred in this manner, and 15% in Tristram.

Shakespere and Milton, and other poets usually use only the naturally unaccented endings of words, as "man/ners" for instance, for the extra syllable. Robinson, however, has devised two interesting types of feminine endings. The first type is the use of pronouns, and the second type is his use of other parts of speech. In Lancelot, 21% of the feminine endings are pronouns and 6% are other parts of speech. In Tristram, 13% of the feminine endings are pronouns, and 6% are other parts of speech. Examples of this tendency

17-Idem., Tristram, p. 611

are as follows:

" 'Treasure my scantling wits, if you enjoy them;[18]
" 'Wonder a little, too, that I conserve them' "

"That were so large in the small face before him."[19]

" 'If they ran only for a pike to die with?' "[20]

" 'In Cornwall is--or one here now might say so."[21]

In true blank verse, if we return to the first definition, we find that a verse is made up of ten syllables, an unaccented followed by an accented, forming five iambic feet. Robinson wanders away from this standard sometimes, having twelve syllables, an unaccented followed by an accented, or an iambic hexameter line. It is true, he has only one hexameter line in Captain Craig, three in Merlin, five in Lancelot, six in Tristram, and one in Cavender's House, but hexameter lines are not properly blank verse lines. Some examples of this are:

"And tumbled, like loose jewels, town, towers, and walls,"[22]

18-Idem., Lancelot, p. 416
19-Idem., Tristram, p. 599
20-Idem., Lancelot, p. 397
21-Idem., Tristram, p. 605
22-Idem., Merlin, p. 308

"'So many things written for you in starry fire,'"[23]
"'Of your uncertainty? Why do you say the end?'"[24]

In Captain Craig, Robinson writes a very unusual line which contains fifteen syllables, and in Merlin he writes a defective line in which there are only nine syllables.

"'As a frog on a Passover-cake in a streamless desert,--'"[25]
"'Climbing, climbing, climbing, all the time;'"[26]

Robinson fits the blank verse form to the idea he is expressing. He attains change in feeling and emotion by shifting the caesura and by substituting trochees and anapestic syllables. In the line,

"When Clotho laughs, Atropos rattles her shears;"[27]

the substution of both a dactyl and a trochee gives the impression of hearing the shears. In the following from Captain Craig, the lines fairly crinkle and snap as Robinson describes

"'Count Pretzel von Wurzburger, the Obscene[28]
"'(The beggar may have had another name,
"'But no one to my knowledge ever knew it)
"'Was a poet and a skeptic and a critic,
"'And in his own mad manner a musician:
"'He found an old piano in a bar-room,
"'And it was his career--three nights a week,
"'From ten o'clock till twelve--to make it rattle;'"

23-Idem., Tristram, p. 688
24-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 987
25-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 134
26-Idem., Merlin, p. 274
27-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 132
28-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 135

Robinson uses the spondee to slow up a verse and to indicate emotion as the following from Lancelot shows:

"'For pity, Pity her God! God!...Lancelot!"[29]

Rapidity of motion and stirring action are given in regular blank verse lines with only feminine endings, as is shown by this extraction from Lancelot:[30]

"'The penal flame had hardly bit the faggot,
"'When, like an onslaught out of Erebus,
"'There came a crash of horses, and a flash
"'Of axes, and a hewing down of heroes,
"'Nay like to any in its harsh, profound,
"'Unholy, and uneven execution.
"'I felt the breath of one horse on my neck,
"'And of a sword that all but left a chasm
"'Where still, praise be to God, I have intact
"'A face, if not a fair one.'"

In the following lines from Lancelot, Robinson, by substitution of trochaic and anapestic and feminine endings, gives a great emotional scene, presenting Guinevere, when she realizes that she must return to the King:

"'..... .....No other way now than one?[31]
"'Free? Do you call me free? Do you mean by that
"'There was never woman alive freer to live
"'Than I am free to die? Do you call me free
"'Because you are driven so near to death yourself
"'With weariness of me, and the sight of me,

29-Idem., Lancelot, p. 392
30-Idem., Lancelot, p. 395
31-Idem., Lancelot, p. 422

"'That you must use a crueller knife than ever,
"'And this time at my heart, for me to watch
"'Before you drive it home? For God's sake, drive it.'"

In Tristram, Robinson secures force and a strong contrast by parallel construction in blank verse:[32]

"Tristram, the lous accredited strong warrior,
"Tristram, the learned Nimrod among hunters,
"Tristram, the loved of women, the harp-player,
"Tristram, the doom of his prophetic mother,
"Dropped like a log;"

In Tristram also there is a feeling of laughter and joyousness in the following lines:[33]

".....He stretched his arms,
"Laughing to be alive; and over his head
"Leaves in the wind that gave them a gay voice
"Flickered and ticked with laughter, saying to him,"

There is a distinct feeling of doom given by the use of the dactyl and by repetition of a clause in a line in Cavender's House. This line is used twice in the poem, and serves to intensify the feeling of tragedy.[34]

"'.....You should have known,
"'Cavender, you should have known.' Like drops of lead
"Those words had burned a way into his heart,"

Robinson writes lines of perfect blank verse, filled with beauty and with music:[35]

".....When you are on the sea,
"And there are white waves everywhere to catch

32-Idem., Tristram, p. 702
33-Idem., Tristram, p. 693
34-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 988
35-Idem., Tristram, p. 644

"The sunlight and dance with it and be glad
"The sea was made, you may be glad also.
"Youth sees too far to see how near it is
"To seeing farther."

Robinson, too, has written a great single line:

"'There will be love when there are no more stars.'"[36]

36-Idem., Tristram, p. 690

FIGURES OF SPEECH

Edwin Arlington Robinson's blank verse is undoubtedly truly artistic. He is an artist in his constant use of figures of speech--not figures that are unnecessary, but figures that are chosen through combinations of form, of color, and of sound. The results of the analyzation of the sources from which he secures his figures of speech show that he draws the majority of them from the life and occupation of man. Such imagery as the following illustrates his sympathetic study of humanity:

"'The Vision shattered, a man's love of living[37]
"'Becomes at last a trap and a sad habit,
"'More like an ailing dotard's love of liquor
"'That ails him, or a man's right love of woman
"'Or of his God.'"

"She smiled at him as only joy made wise[38]
"By sorrow smiles at fear,"

"'When are the women who make toys of men[39]
"'To know that they themselves are less than toys
"'When Time has laid upon their skin, the touch
"'Of his all shriveling fingers?'"

37-Idem., Lancelot, p. 417
38-Idem., Tristram, p. 675
39-Idem., Lancelot, p. 384

The second important source of Robinson's imagery is nature. He uses nature similes for delicate portrayals of his women characters; he draws from nature expressions of love, of wonder, and of distaste. Mark, in the poem Tristram, at last acknowledges the love of Isolt of Ireland and of Tristram bby saying,[40]

"'.....I do not know,
"'Whether these two that have torn life from time,
"'Like a death-laden flower out of the earth,
"'Have failed or won.'"

There is an ironical touch as well as a clear character portrayal in Lancelot, as Robinson describes Modred:[41]

"'God made him as He made the crocodile,
"'To prove he was omnipotent.'"

In Tristram, he secures a feeling of repulsion in his description of Queen Morgan's attempt to entice Tristram:

"Fondled him like a snake with two warm arms[42]
"And a warm mouth,"

Delicate, lovely pictures are sketched in the following by references to nature:

"'.....and there she goes,[43]
"'Like a whirlwind through an orchard in the springtime--'"

40-Idem., Tristram, p. 722
41-Idem., Lancelot, p. 431
42-Idem., Tristram, p. 641
43-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 128

"A dimmer faring, where the touch of time[44]
"Were like the passing of a twilight moth
"From flower to flower into oblivion,"

"'Wisdom is like a dawn that comes up slowly[45]
"'Out of an unknown ocean.'"

"The wind was like a flying animal[46]
"That beat the two of them incessantly
"With icy wings, and bit them as they went."

The third important source of Robinson's imagery is reading. From this source, the results show that the majority of his imagery is drawn from the Bible and from Greek myths; however, there are hints of the influence of Shakespere, Dante, and Tennyson. It is certainly not surprising that Robinson would turn to these sources for imagery when we consider that he has passed much of his life in Maine, for Maine has always been synomymous with Biblical as well as classical teaching.

"And we have made innumerable books[47]
"To please the Unknown God."

"Comes like the falling of a prophet's breath[48]
"On altar-flames rekindled of crushed embers,--"

"'.....Tell me, if you find it,[49]
"'Some fitter name than Eden. We have had
"'A man and woman in it for some time,
"'And now, it seems, we have a Tree of Knowledge.'"

44----------
45-
46-Idem., Merlin, p. 294
47-Idem., Christmas Garland, p. 116
48-Idem., Genius Loci, p. 126
49-Idem., Merlin, p. 294

"'And we, the fighters over of old wars--[50]
"'We men, we shearers of the Golden Fleece--'"

".....Atropos[51]
"Came first, and having grabbed the morsel up,
"Ran flapping far away and out of sight,
"With Clotho and Lachesis hard after her;"

"And in the glimmering stillness where he found her[52]
"Now, it was death; and she Alcestis-like,
"Had waited unaware for the one hand....."

Robinson not only draws many of his images from the Greeks, but he also utilizes the old Greek idea of Fate--the belief that Fate is an avenging power from which it is impossible to escape.

".....Fate played with me[53]
"'As I have played with Time; and Time, like me,
"'Being less than Fate, will have on me his vengeance.
"'On Fate there is no vengeance, even for God.'"

"'And after that it came about somehow,[54]
"'Almost as if the Fates were killing time,'"

".....What have we done[55]
"'To Fate, that she should hate and destroy us,
"'Waiting for us to speak.'"

"'Fate has adjusted and made sure of that[56]
"'Where we are now--'"

Although Robinson turned to the Bible and to

50-Idem.,Captain Craig, p. 125
51-Idem.,Captain Craig, p. 140
52-Idem.,Lancelot, p. 440
53-Idem.,Merlin, p. 614
54-Idem.,Merlin, p. 298
55-Idem.,Merlin, p. 618
56-Idem.,Captain Craig, p. 128

Greek Literature for sources of his imagery, there are fleeting glimpses of influences from other writers. In Lancelot there are four lines that utilize an idea that Shakespere touched upon twice in King Lear. Robinson says,

"'.....The gods play[57]
"'Like that, sometimes; and when the gods are playing,
"'Great men are not so great as the great gods
"'Had led them once to dream.'"

Shakespere says in King Lear,

"As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,[58]
"They kill us for their sport."

And again, the idea is repeated in the same play,

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices[59]
"Make instruments to plague us."

In Tristram, there is a metaphor that is reminiscent of an idea that Shakespere uses in the play Troilus and Cressida. Shakespere expresses the idea in the following manner:

"Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,[60]
"Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,"

57-Idem., Lancelot, p. 439
58-Shakespere, W., King Lear (in Shakespeare's Principal Plays, p. 635, l. 37, Brooke, Cunliffe, MacCracken, New York, The Century Co., 1924.)
59-Idem., King Lear, p. 649, l. 37.
60-Shakespere, W. Troilus and Cressida (in The Complete Works of William Shakespere, p. 790, Craig, London, Oxford University Press, 1919)

Robinson utilizes the same idea by saying,[61]

"Time is a casket
"Wherein our days are covered certainties
"That we lift out of it, one after one,
"For what the day may tell."

There is also in Tristram a metaphor that seems to be borrowed from the play Hamlet. Tristram, in realizing the enemity of Isolt of Ireland's family[62]

".....Knew too late
"How one word then would have made arras-rats
"For her of all his uncles,"

Hamlet, while in his Mother's room, hears a noise behind the arras and says,[63]

"How now! a rat?"

The lines in Lancelot[64]

".....Time, tide, and twilight-
"And then the dark,"

sound very much like Tennyson's[65]

"Sunset and evening star,
" And one clear call for me!
.....
.....
"Twilight and evening bell
"And after that the dark!

62-Robinson, E. A., Tristram (in his Collected Poems, p. 644 New York, The Macmillan Co.,1929)
62-Idem., Tristram, p. 602
63-Shakespere, W., Hamlet (in Shakespeare's Principal Plays, p. 519, Brooke, Cunliffe, MacCracken, New York, The Century Co., 1924.)
64-Robinson, E. A., Lancelot (in his Collected Poems, p. 383, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1929)
65- Tennyson, A., Crossing the Bar, (in Century Readings in English Literature, p. 966, Cunliffe, Pyre, Young, New York, The Century Co., 1915)

There is one particular allusion in Lancelot that is suggestive of Dante's Inferno--

"'The shape of one infernal foul attendant[66]
"'Will be forever prowling after you,
"'To leer at me like a damned thing whipped out
"'Of the last cave in hell.'"

And so we see Robinson drawing suggestions from the masters of Literature; but it is interesting to note from the findings that his earlier works were marked by a greater number of figures taken from literature. As he developed, he turned gradually from books to man. In Lancelot and Tristram there is clearly the mark of the artist who has appraised men and women. He lifts images from man's occupations, from his general living, from his elementary feeling. He shifts from such images in Captain Craig as

"'You tell me that Alnaschar is a fool[67]
"'Because he dreams? And what is this you ask?
"'I make him wise? I teach him to be still?
"'While you go polishing the Pyramids,
"'I hold Alnaschar's feet? And while you have
"'The ghost of Memnon's image all day singing,
"'I sit with aching arms and hardly catch
"'A few spilled echoes of the song of songs--
"'The song that I should have as utterly
"'For mine as other men should once have had
"'The sweetest a glad shepherd ever trilled
"'In Sharon, long ago?'"

66-Robinson, E.A., Lancelot, (in his Collected Poems, p. 377, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1929)
67-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 157

to such figures as the following:

"'Nor shall I be a weight for you to drag[68]
"'On always after you, as a poor slave
"'Drags iron at his heels.'"

"'.....Colgrevance,[69]
"'Who fell dead while he wept--a brave machine,
"'Cranked only for the rudiments of war.'"

".....He felt her body throbbing[70]
"As if it held a laugh buried alive,
"And suddenly felt all his eloquence
"Hushed with her lips. Like a wild wine her love
"Went singing through him and all over him;"

"'Leave me a woman still--a one-love woman,[71]
"'Meaning a sort of ravenous one-child mother,
"'Whose one love pictures in her composition
"'Panthers and antelopes, children asleep,
"'And all sorts of engaging animals
"'That most resemble a much-disordered queen,
"'Her crown abandoned and her hair in peril,
"'And she herself a little deranged, no doubt,
"'With too much happiness.'"

"'.....God help me,[72]
"'Be led to safety like a hooded horse
"'Through sparks and unseen fire.'"

He has changed in Cavender's House (1929) to figures of the mind and of the imagination. Since this poem is purely a psychological study, it is necessary that he use powerful, suggestive, mental

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68-Idem., Lancelot, p. 381
69-Idem., Lancelot, p. 387
70-Idem., Tristram, p. 682
71-Idem., Tristram, p. 685
72-Idem., Tristram, p. 703

images. Some of his most forceful and unusual figures in this poem are:

".....and he waits[73]
"Hooded for death, and with no fear to die."

".....for there were pictures on it,[74]
"Like shadows on black water in a well,
"Darker than any well."

"'.....I have not come[75]
"'Like a wise spectre to lift any veils,'"

"'.....For why should not[76]
"'A man of passion and address dance well
"'On a crushed life, and laugh?'"

"He shivered, and a mist was on his forehead,[77]
"Cold, as if death had touched him and withdrawn
"His touch unwillingly. It was not time
"For Death, and death was vexed at his mistake,"

".....Some such balm[78]
"Assuaged him only for another onslaught
"Of writhing certainty that he was held
"In toils that he had woven for his long
"Constriction and imprisonment alone."

"And this could not be peace that frightened him[79]
"With wonder, coming like a stranger, slowly,
"Without a shape or name, and unannounced--
"As if a door behind him in the dark,
"And once not there, had opened silently,"

73-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 961
74-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 965
75-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 968
76-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 972
77-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 974
78-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 981
79-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 1007

Robinson etches clearly visible--imagery--light, delicate, fragile pictures that are forceful and beautiful:

[80]

".....cherry-boughs
"Above him snowed white petals down upon him,"

[81]

"'Concerning you in green, like a slim cedar,'"

[82]

"'That some far-off unheard-of retribution
"'Hangs over Camelot, even as this oak-bough,
"'That I may almost reach, hangs overhead,
"'All dark now.'"

[83]

"Came slowly into view like something soft
"And ominous on all fours, without a spirit
"To make it stand upright."

Robinson is also exact in his impressions of sounds. Tones are ranged from the delicate notes of the flute to the pounding of the ocean:

[84]

".....a soft breeze
"Made intermittent whisperings around him
"Of love and fate and danger, and faint waves
"Of many sweetly-stinging fragile odors
"Broke lightly as they touched him;"

[85]

"And with half-heard, dream-weaving interludes
"Of distant flutes and viols, made more distant
"By far, nostalgic hautboys blown from nowhere,-"

[86]

".....ant at last
"A mosning silence."

80-Idem., Merlin, p. 261
81-Idem., Merlin, p. 264
82-Idem., Lancelot, p. 378
83-Idem., Lancelot, p. 400
84-Idem., Merlin, p. 261
85-Idem., Merlin, p. 272
86-Idem., Lancelot, p. 393

87
".....Time was aware of them
"And would beat soon upon his empty bell."

88
"'.....Could I have him alone
"'Between me and the peace I cannot know,
"'My life were like the sound of golden bells
"'Over still fields at sunset, where no storm
"'Should ever blast the sky with fire again,
"'Or thunder follow ruin for you and me,--'"

89
".....She felt
"A noise that was like one of shadows fighting."

90
".....She laughed
"At him again, and he heard metal laughing,"

91
"'Your low voice tells how bells of singing gold
"'Would sound through twilight over silent water.'"

92
"'Sometimes I fear that I shall fear for you
"'No more,' she said; and to his ears her words
"Were shaken music."

Robinson is not only adept at visual and auditory types of imagery, but he also has a power of realizing and transferring abstract impressions, especially impressions of darkness.

93
"'And while I lay there, tortured out of death,
"'Faint waves of cold, as if the dead were breathing
"'Came over me and through me;'"

94
"'Till Merlin, or the spirit of him, came
"'As the dead come in dreams.'"

87-Idem., Tristram, p. 613
88-Idem., Lancelot, p. 375
89-Idem., Tristram, p. 626
90-Idem., Tristram, p. 640
91-Idem., Tristram, p. 657
92-Idem., Tristram, p. 689
93-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 141
94-Idem., Merlin, p. 244

95
".....The loneliness
"Of kings, around him like the unseen dead,
"Lay everywhere; and he was loath to move,
"As if in fear to meet with his cold hand
"The touch of something colder."

96
"Above him in a shuttered morning gloom,
"Seeming at first a darkness that had eyes."

97
"Midnight was like a darkness that had fingers.
"He felt them holding him as if time's hands
"Had found him;"

98
"There was silence that was watching him,
"And there was one that listened like a spider,
"Hearing his thoughts, and holding them to tell
"To demons who would likely come for him
"When they saw fit to come."

99
"Each room a sepulchre with nothing in it
"But stillness and the dark of memory."

Robinson also uses a type of double figure, or a figure within a figure that seems to be unusual. He frequently uses an image to make an idea clear, and then, as if to be sure that there can be no misunderstanding, he uses another image to clarify the figure itself.

100
".....Time swings
"A mighty scythe, and some day all your peace
"Goes down before its edge like so much clover."

101
"Lost in a gulf of time where time was lost,"

95-Idem., Merlin, p. 254
96-Idem., Lancelot, p. 429
97-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 961
98-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 963
99-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 964
100-Idem., Merlin, p. 239
101-Idem., Tristram, p. 612

[102]
"The sea itself, and the clouds over it,
"Like embers of a day that like a city
"Far off somewhere in time was dying alone,"

[103]
".....she saw him
"More as a thunder-stricken tower of life
"Brought down by fire, than as a stricken man
"Brought down by fate,"

[104]
".....He stared at it,
"And shivered in the moonlight as he stared,
"As at a thing alive whose touch was death."

One of the strongest and most attractive figures in Robinson's imagery is that of mirrors. The idea is apparently an entirely original one.

[105]
".....and as I smoked I watched
"The flying mirrors for a mile or so,
"Till to the changing glimpse, now sharp, now faint,
"They gave me of the woodland over west,
"A gleam of long-forgotten strenuous years
"Came back"

[106]
"And with a kingdom builded on two pits
"Of living sin, so founded by the will
"Of one wise counsell r who loved the king,
"And loved the world and therefore made him king
"To be a mirror for it,--"

There is a very striking idea used in Captain Craig that is not only forceful and moving, but also very beautiful:

[107]
".....the rhythm of God
"That beats unheard through songs of shattered men
"Who dream but cannot sound it."

102-Idem., Tristram, p. 674
103-Idem., Tristram, p. 717
104-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 998
105-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 124
106-Idem., Merlin, p. 289
107-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 143

Another figure that Robinson uses very effectively is that of "Whips." In Greek Mythology the Furies lashed their victims on with whips, and in Othello, Shakespere says,

"And put in every honest hand a whip[108]
"To lash the rascals naked through the world."

and again

"Whip me, ye devils,[109]
"From the possession of this heavenly sight!"

Robinson uses the idea well:

"'We children who forget the whips of Time,[110]
"'To live within the hour, are slow to see
"'That all such hours are passing.'"

".....On the morning when his fury[111]
"Wrenched her from that foul fire in Camelot,
"Where blood paid irretrievably the toll
"Of her release, the whips of Time had fallen
"Upon them both."

"'And you would whip me back to bury myself[112]
"'In Camelot,'"

"Holding a whip that was beyond his reach[113]
"And seeing, she could smile and strike him with it"

"Let them bear all there is for them to bear,[114]
"And lash me if you must."

108-Shakespere, W., Othello (in Shakespeare's Principal Plays, p. 585, I. 141, Brooke, Cunliffe, MacCracken, New York, The Century Co., 1924)
109-Idem., Othello, p. 598, I. 221
110-Robinson, Lancelot, (in his Collected Poems, p. 413, The Macmillan Co., 1929)
111-Idem., Lancelot, p. 415
112-Idem., Lancelot, p. 424
113-Idem., Lancelot, p. 429
114-Idem., Cavender's House, p. 981

As successful as Robinson is in his use of figures of speech, he seems to reach the height of his power in his description of women. Lovely, fragile pictures are given of women suffering from a fate from which there is no escape. He never mixes his types. Each one is drawn clearly so that we see her physically and emotionally. In Merlin, Vivian, the seducer of men, is shown as

115

"The lady Vivian in a fragile sheath
"Of crimson, dimmed and veiled ineffably
"By the flame-shaken gloom wherein she sat,"

In those three lines, we have her, beautiful, passionately appealing, seductive. Is it any wonder that Merlin, even though a wizard, lingered in her garden and forgot Time? And again we see her

116

"'More like a flower
"'Tonight,' he said, as now he scanned again
"The immemorial meaning of her face
"And drew it nearer to his eyes. It seemed
"A flower of wonder with a crimson stem
"Came leaning slowly and regretfully
"To meet his will--a flower of change and peril
"That had a clinging blossom of warm olive
"Half stifled with a tyranny of black,
"And held the wayward fragrance of a rose
"Made woman by delirious alchemy."

Never once do we picture Vivian as loving Merlin. Instead, there is always the feeling of physical lure only. This

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115-Idem., Merlin, p. 269
116-Idem., Merlin, p. 271

feeling is very strong when we see the two of them together:

117

".....and Vivian,
"Who smiled at him across the gleaming rims,
"From eyes that made a fuel of the night
"Surrounding her, shot glory over gold
"At Merlin, while their cups touched and his trembled.
"He drank, not knowing what, nor caring much
"For kings who might have cared less for themselves,
"He thought, had all the darkness and wild light
"That fell together to make Vivian
"Been there before them then to flower anew
"Through sheathing crimson into candle light
"With each new leer of their loose, liquorish eyes."

118

And we last see Vivian "in her golden
"Shell of exile,.....
".....and her laugh shall be a fire,
"Not shining only to consume itself
"With what it burns. She known not yet the name
"Of what she is, for now there is notname;"

In Tristram, Robinson presents three women characters, all different. The two major ones are "Isolt of the white hands" and "Isolt with the wild, violet eyes and the waves of blue-black hair"---two women caught irrevocably in a net of love for one man and each unable to escape. All through the poem, the sympathy of the reader is with both characters, an unusual treatment for the eternal triangle theme. In describing them, the figures of speech used are fresh and

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117-Idem., Merlin, p. 276
118-Idem., Merlin, p. 311

unusual. "Isolt of the white hands" is characterized adeptly when

"....a quick flush[119]
"Made a pink forage of her laughing face."

Our sympathy goes out to her in her determination to be happy with Tristram with

"....pity[120]
"Made the pale wine of love that is not love,
"Yet steals from love a name."

Her entire helplessness in the face of opposing odds is shown by

"For what imaginable small white pawn[121]
"Her candor and her flame-white loveliness
"Could yet become for the cold game of kings,
"Who might not always, if they would play quite
"Their game as others do."

To Tristram she gives "the rose-white warmth[122]
of her attention."

Gawaine describes her the most effectively in the following lines:

"'....You are supreme[123]
"'In a deceit that says fragility
"'Where there is nothing fragile. You have eyes
"'That almost weep for grief, seeing from heaven
"'How trivial and how tragic a small place
"'This earth is, and so make a sort of heaven

119-Idem., Tristram, p. 596
120-Idem., Tristram, p. 648
121-Idem., Tristram, p.647
122-Idem., Tristram, p. 650
123-Idem., Tristram, p. 657

"'Where they are seen. Your hair, if shorn and woven,
"'The which may God forbid, would then become
"'A nameless cloth of gold whiter than gold,
"'Imprisoning light captured from paradise.
"'Your small ears are two necessary leaves
"'Of living alabaster never of earth,
"'Whereof the flower that is your face is made,
"'And is a paradisal triumph also--
"'Along with your gray eyes and your gold hair
"'That is not gold. Only God knows, who made it,
"'What color it is exactly. I don't know.
"'The rest of you I dare not estimate,
"'Saving your hands and feet, which authorize
"'A period of some leisure for the Lord
"'On high for their ineffable execution.
"'Your low voice tells how bells of singing gold
"'Would sound through twilight over silent water.
"'Yourself is a celestial emanation
"'Compounded of a whiteness and a warmth
"'Not yet so near to heaven, or far from it,
"'As not to leave men wiser for their dreams
"'And distances in apprehending you.'"

In sharp contrast with "Isolt of the white hands" is "Isolt of the wild violet eyes." If the first Isolt arouses our sympathy, the second one does so to an even greater extent. She is lovely, appealing, passionate. I believe the second Isolt embodies Robinson's conception of an ideal woman, that is of a woman in relation to man. We see her first on the night of her marriage to Mark,

".....her tears, unwilling still to flow,[124]
"Made of her eyes two shining lakes of pain
"With moonlight living in them;"

124-Idem., Tristram, p. 616

When she tells Tristram of her love for him, she says beautifully and poetically,[125]

"'.....I believed that you would speak,
"'For I could hear your silence like a song
"'Out of the sea.'"

"'.....Untimely words[126]
"'Are not for love, and are like frost on flowers
"'Where love is not for long.'"

Her effect on Tristram is shown clearly when

"'Like a wild wine her love[127]
"'Went singing through and all over him;'"

Robinson gives his most beautiful description of her in this succession of images:

"'Isolt alone. All else that emulates[128]
"'And envies her--black faggots in red flame,
"'A sunshine slanting into a dark forest,
"'A moonlight on white foam along black ledges,
"'Sunlight and rain, trees twinkling after rain,
"'Panthers and antelopes, children asleep--
"'All these are native elsewhere, and for now
"'Are not important. Love that has eyes to see
"'Sees now only Isolt. Isolt alone.
"'Isolt, and a few stars.'"

In direct contrast to these two, lovely, appealing Isolts, Robinson sketches, clearly and briefly, Queen Morgan, with "a small and cat-like hand,"[129] and a "fair and feline face."[130]

125-Idem., Tristram, p. 623
126-Idem., Tristram, p. 681
127-Idem., Tristram, p. 682
128-Idem., Tristram, p. 684
129-Idem., Tristram, p. 609
130-Idem., Tristram, p. 611

Robinson is very skillful in contrasting characters by the use of images, as is shown in the following lines:

"He built a royal garden for Isolt[131]
"Of the white hands to bloom in, a white rose
"Fairer than all fair roses in the world
"Elsewhere--save one that was not white but dark,
"Dark and love-red for ever, and not there,
"Where the white rose was queen."

Robinson presents Queen Guinevere in the poem Lancelot. She is an interesting person who changes swiftly from a laughing woman to a bitter, vindictive one, and then at last to a subdued character, submissive to Fate. We see her first, happy and joyful, inclined to meet life with a jest. She speaks to Gawaine and Lancelot in the following, bantering manner:

"'I grieve that you two pinks of chivalry[132]
"'Should be so near me in my desolation,
"'And I, poor soul alone, know nothing of it.'"

But under the bantering manner of hers, there lurks a fear that Launcelot will desert her:

"The pride of her forlorn light-heartedness[133]
"Fled like a storm-blown feather;"

She was lovely and cool, and Launcelot was inclined to think of her

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131-Idem., Tristram, 652
132-Idem., Lancelot, 370
133-Idem., Lancelot, 374

"In all the perilous calm of white and gold[134]
"That was her face and hair,"

When she learns that Launcelot is to return her to the King, she turns into a veritable fury, very different from the first presentation of a lovely, charming woman:

".....Like a blue-eyed Medea[135]
"Of white and gold, broken with grief and fear
"And fury that shook her speechless while she waited,"

And then finally, Robinson shows her as a woman completely subjected by her fate:

"While he gazed on her beauty, palled with black[136]
"That hurt him like a sword. The full blue eyes
"And the white face were there, and the red lips
"Were there, but there was no gold anywhere."

Possibly Robinson uses his most beautiful simile, when he describes the final parting between Guinevere and Lancelot:

"He crushed her cold white hands and saw them falling[137]
"Away from him like flowers into a grave."

Although the majority of Robinson's figures of speech are adeptly used a few of them are noticeable because of their weakness. It would seem that he

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134-Idem., Lancelot, p. 381
135-Idem., Lancelot, p. 421
136-Idem., Lancelot, p. 442
137-Idem., Lancelot, p. 446

becomes entranced with his images and suddenly decided to juggle with them; in other words he apparently wants to show off for the benefit of the reader, to exhibit his own cleverness and ingenuity as the seventeenth century Metaphysical poets liked so well to do. Sometimes he is guilty of conceits which equal the famous images of Crashaw. To illustrate he writes in Captain Craig:[138]

".....Tears
"Rolled out at last like bullets from his eyes
"And I could hear them fall down on the floor
"Like shoes."

Another bad metaphor in Captain Craig is:[139]

"The old man's eyes had glimmered wearily
"At first, but now they glittered like to those
"Of a glad fish."

In Tristram, there is a metaphor in which the figure seems rather strained. Tristram is described[140]

"Like a triumphant and almighty fish."

However, the weak and strained metaphors are very, very few, and it seems to be only in his earlier works, with the one exception mentioned above, that he he forgets to be the artist in figures of speech. The great majority of his images are so beautiful that the unsuitable ones are very apparent.

138-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 163
139-Idem., Captain Craig, p. 160
140-Idem., Tristram, p. 692

Robinson, at times, becomes fascinated with words. In Lancelot, the main idea is that of the quest for the Light or the Grail. He plays on the word constantly and uses the word light one hundred fifty two times. He makes at least sixty-four other allusions to it, so that the entire poem seems to be drenched in a glow of light.

Tristram is like music. There are sounding through the poem two separate themes, a minor one and a major one. The major one is the ceasless pound of the "cold waves on Cornish rocks." He uses this one phrase twenty times. It is slipped in so unobtrusively that there is no awareness of the words, and yet there is a feeling of the constant, hopeless wash of water that is ever-present. The minor theme is a delicate, lovely one--

"And there was nothing alive but white birds flying,
"Flying, and always flying, and still flying,
"And the white sunlight flashing on the sea."

This idea is repeated only four times, but it is placed in important parts of the poem---once at the beginning and again at the end, so that the reader notices and remembers it.

Edwin Arlington Robinson is undoubtedly a consumate artist in the realm of blank verse. He varies the form of his poetry so that it fits adroitly the idea and feeling that he expresses. He handles equally well the emotions of fear, of laughter, and of love. Certain lines crinkle with laughter and other lines, by clever substitutions and the shift of the caesura, slow up considerably and give the feeling of fear.

By the adroit repetition of certain words and phrases, he is able to obtain certain impressions that impregnate his poetry in such a manner which leaves the reader aware of them but hardly conscious of them.

Robinson turns with facility to various sources for his imagery. He is undoubtedly, first of all, a deep and understanding student of man. The various characters in his blank verse show a sympathetic interpertation of humanity, for Robinson delves deeply. He ponders, he broods, and he is able to show not only animate, concrete things clearly, but he also gives clear, vivid interpertations of the psychological aspect of man as well as personifications of inanimate things. Certain preachings show a definite ironical touch in regard to life, but this touch is quickly

followed by a broad, sympathetic interpretation.

He must be an omnivorous reader of the Bible and the classics, for his images show that a broad reading knowledge furnishes many of his sources. Music,too, apparently holds a fascination for him, for many allusions are made to musical instruments, and definite musicial effects are given in his descriptions. At times, there is an almost oriental suggestion in his various allusions to "golden bells at sunset."

Perhaps Robinson reaches his height of poetical beauty in his descriptions of his feminine characters. He is adept at presenting the various types of women that have influenced the pages of history. It is rather an interesting fact that no one of his women characters is of the intellectual type. There is the courtesan type as represented by Vivian, and in a lesser degree, by Queen Morgan; there is the weaker, vacillating type as represented by Guinevere; there is the courageous, lovely type as represented by "Isolt of the white hands;" and finally, there is man's ideal love-woman--"Isolt of the dark, violet eyes." These characters are all supremely intelligent, and each is lovely in her own way. Because of his interpretation of lovely women and of his under-

standing of life, Robinson is a thorough depictor of the passion of love. To be sure, he does not dwell on it, but there are various, definite allusions that are powerful and moving. Since he is a painter of life, he should deal with all of its emotions, and he does.

Nature, of course, plays an important part in his work. Flowers, and roses, particularly, form an important source from which he takes his images. The sea too, is a definite factor in his work. In animals, the reptilian class seems to exert an attraction for Robinsn, for he makes many allusions to snakes and lizards.

I think it is possible to portray Robinson from the conclusions based upon the study of his figures of speech. He is evidently a reserved, contemplative man, of th introspective type. He probably does not seek ~~seek~~ people from the social standpoint, preferring to study them analytically. Undoubtedly he casts ironical glances on humanity, following the glance with a smile of sympathetic understanding. Because he is evidently widly read, he would be a fascinating talker, should he care to talk. He very likely is the cultured, reserved type of writer.

Edwin Arlington Robinson is u questionably one of the most important, modern, blank-verse poets. The form of his blank verse, and his beautiful, powerful interpretation of life place him in the foremost ranks of American Literature.

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