Chapter IV
THE SOCIAL SCENE IN THE LONG POEMS OF E.A. ROBINSON

The forty years of Robinson’s poetic career may be placed under three rubrics: 1895–1915 when he wrote mostly short poems, 1915–1924 when he showed a growing preference for long poems, and 1924-1935 when he concentrated mainly on long poems. Robinson has, to his credit, thirteen long poems which are unique in many respects. With the exception of “Captain Craig” all of them were written after 1916 and surprisingly they all address the problems of the contemporary society. There is no gainsaying the fact that the central concern of his poetry is the human situation. He expresses the social problems of contemporary society quite deftly on his poetic canvas. He deals with the various aspects of connubial relationships in *Roman Bartholow, Matthias at the Door, Cavender's House* and *Talifer*. In his *Merlin* and *Lancelot* Robinson uses the disintegration of Arthur’s Kingdom as the canvass to paint the pathetic story of the Western World on the eve of world War I. *Amaranth* and *King Jasper* allegorize the problems of man's adjustment to reality and the eventual downfall of the capitalistic system. The theme of revenge functions as the pivot in *The Glory of the Nightingales* and *Avon’s Harvest*.

*Captain Craig* is the first long poem, and it is in the form of a dramatic monologue, consisting of 2016 lines. Here he derides the smugness and spiritual blindness that prevail in Tilbury Town. Captain Craig, the central character, reveals a faith that is hard won, a faith that
enlightens and justifies the seemingly futile adventures and endurances of his life. While in New York Robinson came across an English Jew, Alfred Hyman Louis, and it is this man who is the failed hero of his first long poem “Captain Craig,” published in 1902. The message the poem puts across to us can be summarised as follows:

A man should obey the child in himself and follow the logic of his character, undeterred by social disapproval. . . . he is so aware of the richness it has given his character, superior to the prudence and religiosity of a Tilbury willing to let him starve, that he preaches it to the saving remnant of young Tilbury men who succor him. (Neff 115)

The poet’s strong dislike for and discontentment with a materialistic community antipathetic to the spirit find expression in his Tilbury Town poems and the largest dramatic rendering of that antipathy is “Captain Craig.” From the beginning of the poem the town is presented as the Captain’s antagonist. The captain is faced with the twin alternatives—the life-enhancing way of the sun-receptive mind and the life-squandering way of the world. The narrator of the poem, destined to look after and listen to the Captain, not only shares his views but, unlike him, vehemently criticizes the town. On the contrary, the Captain does not blame the town for his hard times, he is content to criticise the prevailing institutions in order to bring about social reforms. Both for the captain and for the narrator, it is the social man who is the object of their criticism.
The poem is replete with references to the child's consciousness which is the source of spiritual health and it makes heavy use of the imagery of light. The darkness of the material circumstances, instead of making him bitter, has earnestly sharpened the Captain's desire for the light. The light and the child are neglected in Tilbury Town and this neglect of the spirit is the gravest sin of the town. The social materialism of Tilbury Town, prudence, righteousness and inhumanity and obsession with conventional worldly success—culminates in indifference to the captain, the suffering individual who stands for anticonformist ways of art. All this makes the town inimical to the captain.

The philosophy of "Captain Craig" consists in reviving the humane doctrine of Christ, which would involve moving out of the Old Testament into the New Testament. The captain is all praise for the splendour of the universe and a single ray of light is enough to attune his heart to intense happiness. He knows God is better pleased by man's interest in God-created beauty than by mechanical and selfish prayer. God is not a spiteful being as is pictured by mean minds who fashion him after their own image.

I turned a little furrow of my own
Once on a time, and everybody laughed:
As I laughed afterwards; and I doubt not
The First Intelligence, which we have drawn
In our competitive humility
As if it went forever on two legs,
Had some diversion of it; I believe

God’s humor is the music of the spheres . . .

The captain stands out as a paradigm of the concept that there is a Divine Force for good in the lives of men. He depicts an idealized view of a man and reveals how the Divine Force supervenes in human affairs. Through his characters he exhibits the dignity of man: “Nothing is there more marvelous than man’/ Said Sophocles; and he lived long ago” (CP 117). Craig speaks about the easiest way to reach God, namely the love for one’s fellow human beings. The poet asserts that it is possible only by having perfect trust in God. We will not have “the wiser kind of joy” that is “never, until you learn to laugh with God.” Robinson considered faith to be a simple trust in God and its manifestation has to be an intense wish to carry out His will. So Craig demands action emanating from faith so that all men may be led to the light. One may agree with May Sinclair that “Captain Craig”:

is a philosophy of life, taught through the humorous lips of a social derelict, a beggared Socrates, disreputable as the world counts reputation. It is a drama of the unapparent, revealing the divine soul hidden in the starved body of that “sequestered parasite;” a soul that had the courage to be itself, abiding in its dream, facing the world as a superb failure. (331–32)

Robinson’s trilogy represents undoubtedly a serious attempt to relate the Arthurian legend to the modern times. He makes an authentic presentation of the Arthurian legend through *Merlin* and *Lancelot*, at the
same time stressing their adaptability to the modern times. He “has made Camelot a real city which is fast falling apart under the stress of internecine conflict. He has also made it a symbol of a world in solution and its anagogic meaning establishes an analogy between war-torn Camelot and the Europe on the eve of World War I” (Joseph 115).

In Merlin Robinson conceives of Arthur as building a kingdom on rotten foundations. Its collapse, he thinks, may be a warning for the generations to come that any society so based is destined to doom. He finds consolation in a vision of the world’s salvation through the instinct of women to abhor war and more so, through the slow lesson of other-worldliness, represented by the quest for the Grail. It is not surprising that Merlin was published in 1917 just a month before the United States entered the war.

Robinson’s Arthurian poems are unique simply because he uses them as a peg on which to hang his ideas on modern life. Neff says that “the poems are filled with Robinson’s suffering at the spectacle of war” (196). He looked at World War I as the beginning of the end for a civilization into which he had been born and in which he had lived for forty five years. He used King Arthur and Camelot as a ‘mirror’ for men to look into and find the causes for the destruction of their world. As Merlin leaves Vivian at Brocéliande, he tells her:

This time I go because I made him (Arthur) King

Thereby to be a mirror for the world.

Witnessing the annihilation of Camelot.
Vivian comments:

You made him King

Because you loved the world and saw in him

From infancy a mirror for the millions.

The world will see itself in him, and then

The world will say its prayers and wash its face,

And build for some new king a new foundation.

Merlin depicts the ruin of Arthur's kingdom when it is forsaken by its wise leader. Lancelot presents the final crash, the toppling of the old order and ideals. At the very outset of the poem, the reader sees the foreshadowing of the end of the poem when Gawaine says: "No, I like not this day/ There is cloud coming over Camelot/ Larger than any that is in the sky." One sees in the cloud an adumbration of the catastrophic fate that Camelot would soon be reeling under. It is inevitable that Camelot should fall because it is built on sagging ground. Modred, who is the result of an act of incest by King Arthur, will be the cause of the fall of Camelot.

The doom of Camelot is the central theme of Merlin. Deftly enough the poet makes use of this theme to examine the consequences of sin, the sins of Arthur, the King. Arthur's sin causes the ruin of Camelot. It is Fate that pervades the whole story, for Merlin himself says. "On Fate there is no vengeance/Even for God." There is yet another theme in Merlin—his affair with Vivian, which prevents him from coming to Arthur's aid until it is too late. The central theme of the poem is the inevitability of the catastrophe and the non-availability of help.
There is a shift of emphasis in most poems of his later years in that they have as their theme the development of society as a whole and in them he speaks about the life and death of civilizations as stages in the advancement of the human race. This is clearly so in *Merlin, Lancelot, Dionysus in Doubt* and *King Jasper*. In the decay of Arthur's kingdom and the appearance of the Grail, one is persuaded to see the medieval ideal of chivalry being substituted by the advent of a new ideal—the universal law of change under the impulse of the creative will in nature through which the human world gradually evolves. Obviously, Merlin, the primary instrument of this impersonal will, made Arthur king, for he perceived in him a mirror in which every man of that age recognized himself as he would like to be. Merlin, who was Fate, showed the king what in his heart he already knew, and everyone saw his ideal self in the king. Everything was fine till Arthur remained men's ideal conception of themselves. But "There was a light wherein men saw themselves/ In one another as they might become/ Or so they dreamed" (*Merlin* 306) and there ends peace in Camelot simply because Arthur cannot change and anything that cannot change should go.

Merlin makes his first visit to Camelot from Broceliande in Brittany, where for years he has been the most obedient captive of his beloved Vivian and her charms. He is saddened by the thought that Camelot will decay. He comes to the awareness that Lancelot will betray his Liege Lord and finally Modred will lead a revolt from which the Kingdom of Arthur can never recover. And this insight changes all things for him.
He, as though waiting for the imminent downfall of Camelot, does not come to Broceliande for the time being.

In his long poem Merlin, Robinson pictures a man who goes to the extreme of leaving the woman he loves solely because of his duty to the government. This is truly a selfless act, for he has no political ambition to be king and his vast experience in life prevents his being religious enough to see the Holy Grail. He gives the message to Vivian that the State means more to him than women when he discovers that both Arthur and his kingdom are beyond redemption and the shock is all the more great when one knows that it is after twelve years of love with Vivian he comes back to Camelot.

Merlin and Lancelot must be considered together since they are two parts of the same story, to have a clear vision of their theme. The poet himself speaks of Merlin that it was written “in anticipation of L & G (Lancelot) to complement its various incompleteness and (that) the two should be read together” (Selected Letters 113). Both Merlin and Lancelot take the readers into the romantic past. But it was a time when Europe was under the threat of war and Robinson’s Merlin was really an attempt to relate the Arthurian legend to the modern times. Lancelot, published after the war in 1920, was “a poetical interpretation of the questions and issues that have agitated us during the war and since the cessation of war” (Quoted in Perrine Twentieth Century Literature viii, 74).

In his Arthurian poems, Robinson unequivocally states that the very foundations of Camelot are rotten and asserts the impermanence of any
society so founded. King Arthur of Camelot is guilty of two sins: incestuous relationship with his sister and misalliance with Guinevere, knowing that she had no love for him. And his Kingdom fails. One may find a shocking contrast between the modern world and Camelot. One may agree with Barnard that the modern world is infirm due to the “economic and political imperialism (and) the ruthless sacrifice of moral ideals in the fierce pursuit of personal and national wealth and power” (118). Camelot might represent the western world, and as is testified by Robinson himself, Lancelot was intended “as a rather distant symbol of Germany” (SL 112). As is true of our own day, wars are caused undoubtedly by economic competitions between nations. Robinson’s suffering at the spectacle of war gets clear expression in poems like Merlin and Lancelot. Merlin refers to the United States in the words:

You are young,

Gawaine, and may one day hold the world

Between your fingers, knowing not what it is

That you are holding.

Lancelot was really in a dilemma as to whether he should select the light or his love for Guinevere and one sees him facing the situation stoically like any other ordinary mortal. “A moth between a window and a star/ Not wholly lured by one or led by the other.” The Light of Lancelot, Robinson wrote to Hagedorn, was “simply the Light of the Grail, interpreted universally as a spiritual realization of things and their significance” (SL 113).
Lancelot is not only a study of the love Arthur had for Guinevere, Arthur's queen, but also a study of the disintegration of Camelot. He knows that if at all Camelot is to be saved, it is possible only by a strong mind whose illumination is full and serene. So thinks Lancelot:

When I came back from seeing what I saw.

I saw no place for me in Camelot.

There is no place for me in Camelot.

There is no place for me save where the Light

May lead me, and to that place I shall go.

Paradoxically, later on the very same Lancelot is near his inescapable doom. By permitting Guinevere to follow the Grail, Lancelot concedes to be a victim of loneliness.

gradually,

In one long wave it whelmed him, and then broke-

Leaving him like a lone man on a reef

Staring for what had been with him, but now

Was gone and was a white face under the sea,

Alive there, and alone-always alone.

Arthur should bear the responsibility for his own downfall. Arthur has set the tragedy in motion by begetting Modred. A subsidiary theme of Lancelot is that human acts have consequences. Man, as he is imperfect, acts unwisely and ultimately reaches disaster. But the core of the poem is the triumph over tragedy aided by personal renunciation and understanding.
The antagonism between the mystical inner reality and society is stated in its most general form by Robinson at the end of Lancelot though the antagonism must be understood to include personal relations (for eg. that of lovers, here) as well as that of an individual to a group. . . . The Light and the world are not simultaneously available to man, he must choose between them; and what is finally at stake in that choice is life and death. . . . Shakespeare's black depression, the wandering Jew's anger, Rembrandt's and St. Paul's risking all for the Light . . . all reveal how the man with special knowledge of the spirit's truth reaches to society, to life in death. Inherent in man is a hostility between inner being and external forms and relations, between what Emerson called "the instantaneous instreaming causing power" and the objects that can hinder or misdirect its flowing. (W.R. Robinson 136-37)

And one comes across a Lancelot who has seen the grail and knows that "a played out world . . . had best be dead" that a new world may be born (Lancelot 383).

Tristram is the simplest, the most passionate and direct long narrative of Robinson. The poem hinges on a theme very commonplace: the love of a man and a woman. The love story of Tristram and Isolt is undoubtedly one of the most famous love stories of the world. Robinson has recreated, in its most noblest form, the ecstasy of passion. The earnestness of his writing a poem is clear from his comment, "I like to be
familiar with my characters and development before I start a poem. . . . I worked out its structure somewhat as a playwright would work out a play” (Evans, Bookman lxxv, 1932. 676-78).

Tristram is the son of a sister of King Mark of Cornwall. At his birth his mother dies hence his dolorous or tristful name—Tristran. He had been nurtured away from the court and trained in various fields where he proved his genius. He was brought back to Tintagel and he became a favourite of King Mark. As he became a man, he was sent on a mission to liberate Cornwall from the Irish tyrant Gormand who exacted a terrible toll every year from Cornish people. During the fight he slays Morolt (Morhans), the Irish champion, brother to Isolt (Iseult), Gormand’s queen, but is injured and it could be cured only by being treated by Isolt and her beautiful daughter of the same name; she is the heroine of the romance. Disguised, he goes to her and is cured and coming back he intimates to Mark of the fair Isolt, who in turn becomes desirous of possessing her. Tristram gets her and brings her to King Mark but on the way back to Tintagel accidentally he drinks the love potion prepared by Isolt’s mother to be given to Mark. Tristram passionately falls in love with Isolt, and their love is life long. Unfortunately, as is destined, she becomes Mark’s queen while her love ever continues towards Tristram. When Mark comes to know about it, Tristram is banished. He goes to Brittany where he frees King Howell from an old enemy and he gives his daughter Isolt in marriage as reward. But during the encounter he is again wounded and sends for his love, Isolt of Cornwall. He is too ill and sinks to death.
Finding him dead, Isolt of Ireland falls on his corpse dead. Mark, having learned of the potion buries them in a chapel, one along each wall. Amazingly a sapling springs from the tomb of Tristram and sends one of its shoots down into the tomb of Isolt across the way.

Robinson has tamed the story to suit his purpose. He does not mention the love potion, instead he makes a twist in the last phase of the story. After a long interval Tristram finds Mark's doors open, for he realizes the truth: that their love is quite inseparable. But the last conversation between the two prepares the ground for the arrival of Andred who stabs Tristram. Tristram dies with Isolt and Mark is left alone to wonder why there should be such an end. Wisdom dawns upon Mark at last, but it is of no avail now. Actually in Tristram king Howell and Andred demonstrate two sides of the desire for actual governmental influence.

In Tristram, death is offered as a positive element in the final solution. When king Mark undergoes reform, he recognizes his error. Andred stabs him and Isolt of Ireland dies together with Tristram. Thus there is peace but in death. King Howell tells his daughter, Isolt of Brittany, Tristram's widowed wife:

When the dawn comes, my child,

You will forget. No you will not forget,

But you will change. There are no mortal houses

That are so providently barred and fastened

As to keep change and death from coming in.
Tristram is dead, and change is at your door.

Two years have made you more than two years older
And you must change.

In *Tristram* Robinson makes use of three settings—Brittany, Tintagel and Joyous Gard. Surprisingly in all of them the sea acts as the common factor. According to Davis, “The two sea images seem to be symbols of the continuum of life, of the inevitable course of an existence which is unchanged by human will or human aspiration” (*College English*, 385). The image of the Cornish rocks which is referred to might be

a symbol of all the forces arrayed against Tristram—Time, the jealousy of Morgan and the hate of Andred. The dull moan of the rocks pervades the whole poem, filing it with the premonition of hidden danger. One hears in the cold wash of the waves the hushed whispers of a conspiring Morgan, the angry ejaculations of Andred, and the dark protests of Time, the antagonist. (Joseph 73)

*Tristram*, along with *Merlin* and *Lancelot*, is conceived as a human story highly sympathetic and is a real representation of life. It creates in us an impression of grandeur because of its majesty of attitude and intensity of feeling. The hero and the heroine are involved in a terrible conflict between irresistible passion and reason, equally noble and inspiring. Frederic Carpenter describes in his study on Robinson’s Arthurian poems Merlin’s love of Vivian “as sensual; Lancelot’s love of Guinevere as partly sensual, partly spiritual; and Tristram’s love of the
dark Isolt as all inclusive and undivided, a complete love. . . .” He continues: “Merlin’s ended in spiritual defeat, Lancelot’s ended in suffering, which however, promised the hope of salvation; Tristram’s ended in spiritual victory” (*New England Quarterly* xi, 1938. 507-08).

*Avon’s Harvest*, published in 1921, is a psychological study of the destructive effects of hate and its two shadows—remorse and fear. It is a story of fear that haunts and is mixed with a tinge of madness and there runs a deep current of broad and universal humanity in this poem. Though Avon has seen the light, he falls a victim to failure. It is the story of a school boy who hates one of his mates and in one of his most wicked moods, gives him a blow. Later he is haunted by remorse. He is haunted by the man himself who makes him aware of his presence and existence now and then. When the Titanic sinks, he reads the name of his adversary in the list of the dead. But on his way to a forest to take rest, he comes upon the man once more with a knife in his body. The tale comes to a tragic end when he dies in the chair at home one night after a complete disclosure of the situation to a friend. To the friend the doctor says: “He died, you know, because he was afraid/ And he had been afraid for a long time.”

One may look at it as a simple tale of the effect of sin in the life of an ordinary man. Avon was a victim of the sin of hatred and towards the end he was filled with remorse. It is so grave that he cannot find any healing medicine.
I'm witness to the poison, but the cure
Of my complaint is not, for me, in Time.
There may be doctors in eternity
To deal with it, but they are not here now. (CP 559)

The influence of science in Avon's life can be traced back to his
doubt about God, his mind alternating between the unknowable God
and the "no-God." He refers to the divine knowledge of those aspects of
life which are quite inexplicable to man.

If such an one there be. If there be none,
All's well-and over. Rather vain expense,
One might affirm-yet there is nothing lost.

Science be praised that there is nothing lost. (CP 567)

Robinson proves through Avon's Harvest that he has a clear and
sure grasp of the secret workings of the soul. It is a tale having psychical
elements. Towards the end Robinson achieved the difficult task of making
a ghost alive by sheer strength of psychological insight and dramatic
creation, and thus he exteriorised the inward vision, a filmy projection
into the twilight mist of the feverish hallucination that floats in the sick
man's subconsciousness. Actually in Avon Robinson is drawing a picture
of the early Puritans who were shocked and stunned by the blood-
curdling sights of the horrors of hell. It is a poem where one comes across
the "combination of Hawthorne's analysis with Poe's spectral creations with
more of the Scarlet Letter than of the "House of Usher". (Cestre 144).

Doubtlessly Avon dies of fear, his own conscience has killed him, for
Robinson does not draw a line between the real and the imaginary. The power of mind-created entities is so great as to destroy the life of their creator, also directly against his own will.

Roman Bartholow tells the story of a domestic tragedy. Bartholow has just recovered from a kind of neurosis which had kept him confined to the house. Possessed of great wealth, educated and refined, Bartholow presents a glittering exterior but inside him clouds are gathering for an outburst. Mr. Penn Raven, whom his friends have brought to the house to help him recover from his mental illness, has unfortunately got too close to Gabrielle. Penn Raven enjoys a reputation for curing soul sickness but what actually happens is that he infects two souls. Bartholow recovers his health and regains his love for life. Regrettably the beautiful Gabrielle could neither understand nor share his rejuvenation. It is all the more shocking that his close friend Penn Raven, whom he trusted, betrays him by seducing Gabrielle. The intolerant Bartholow utters his parting words to Gabrielle: "You are too beautiful to be alive" which she takes literally. She commits suicide by drowning herself when she realises that knowledge of her infidelity has destroyed the last vestige of her husband's regard.

Gabrielle had the loyalty and constancy of a true lifemate in the beginning. But pitifully enough Bartholow is incapable of fostering in her the natural womanly qualities of the "Clinging Vine." Bartholow is awakened from his torpor and begins to relish the beauty of nature and the real joy of life for the first time by the intervention of Penn-Raven.
It is again Penn Raven who discovers Gabrielle who has experienced too much disappointment to let herself be easily won over. His shrewdness helps him to reach her heart through her intellect.

Will you look at me and answer?

I am not asking much in saying that,

For I am asking only everything

Which is our coin of words may more than often

Weigh less than little.

There is a twist to the whole situation when one night Bartholow sees her with Penn Raven, which creates a storm of doubts in his mind. Despite her innocence, she feels ashamed and decides to deprive herself of her life. Being resolute she leads herself towards the river to be seen no more.

Bartholow, with his wife dead, and friend driven away, alone in his ancestral mansion muses over the enigmas of life—a cold wife who had kissed him on the forehead with the words, “You will remember this,” before slipping away to the river and a false friend who has given wise counsel. In this dilemma he seeks the counsel of a neighbour Umfraville.

Roman Bartholow is a poem with strong autobiographical elements. Robinson’s own brother Herman, who drank excessively, was greatly responsible for the spoiling of family inheritance. During one occasion he came home heavily drunk and was helped by his wife Emma to go upstairs, to bed. But in the middle of the night he woke up and came downstairs and saw Emma and Robinson together. There ensued a
quarrel between the two—Robinson and Herman, the very same incident pictured in the fight between Penn Raven and Bartholow. Bartholow loses Gabrielle while finding himself with the help of the pseudo-psychiatrist Penn Raven. On the other hand, seduced by Penn Raven and realising the fact that she could not find peace either with her husband or a lover or even with herself, Gabrielle commits suicide. Robinson might be considered a true successor of Hawthorne who “searches the conscience, in the spirit of stern earnestness, which belongs to the Puritan conception of the world” (Cestre 214). Certainly the conflict in her heart between passion and duty caused her death.

Robinson naively makes use of the river image in this poem, the river which binds the “falling lawn that is alive and green again” in front of the Bartholow house. Bartholow complains saying that the fresh coat of foliage on the trees obstructs his view of the river. He sees:

. . . The budding yellow trees
That soon would be a fence of emerald
Obscuring all beyond, except a far
Familiar stillness of eternal hills.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
If we are to believe we have a river
We must apply the cruel axe, I fancy.

Gabrielle too agrees with him that the trees really obstruct their view of the river and that he might “get an axe/And let the river and the world look in/ Upon us and our joy.” After a while one sees “Bartholow
busy with the task of felling the tree and the sound of the axe can be heard from the river front resounding regularly, a ceaseless succession like the tom-toms in O' Neill's *Emperor Jones* (Joseph 62). This reminds one of "Archibald’s Example" where old Archibald cuts down the trees because they spoiled his sunsets. As in "Archibald’s Example," Bartholow cutting down the trees has obvious symbolic significance. It stands for "the recent interference by Penn Raven who has planted himself between Bartholow’s and Gabrielle’s affections much like the trees which have interposed between Bartholow and his soul-sustaining view of the river" (Joseph 63). Throughout the poem the tree image is linked to Penn-Raven and his reaction to the axe strokes.

He counted them

As if he were the tree on which they fell

Feeling them as apparently the tree did.

It undoubtedly proves that Bartholow has taken cognizance of Penn Raven’s duplicity and also the same has been taken note of by Penn Raven. “The river, the trees that obscure it, and the relentless axe-strokes that reverberate through the early sections coalesce into a composite symbol representing Bartholow’s spiritual growth” (Joseph 64).

*Roman Bartholow* has a disguised moral design, as in *Matthias at the Door*, for it points to the danger of ill-assorted marriages. Bartholow awakens to the world of reality from the blinding illusions, symbolized by the trees which prevented him from seeing the truth about himself. It is the suicide of Gabrielle which ultimately paved the way for Bartholow's
moral development. A total lack of understanding of human relationship is the problem with Roman Bartholow. But tragedy chastens him by giving self-knowledge which paves the way for his spiritual regeneration and transformation. So also, Penn Raven's assurance to Bartholow that, "your dawn/ Is coming where a dark horizon hides it" clearly states the emergence of self-knowledge as a guiding light.

The spiritual rebirth of Bartholow leads him a long way and to a long life time of usefulness. He did his young wife wrong by taking her away from the society she loved to a lonely place, a country house. Instead of giving her his love and affection, he spent his time in studies and it was a life of darkness—a sort of death-in-life. He is brought back to life and hope by his friend Penn Raven, but this saving act leads to his losing Gabrielle, who ends her life by drowning in the river. But there is the final emergence of Bartholow, free and strong, and brimming with hope and energy. He becomes active for his own and the world's betterment, aided by the knowledge of Penn Raven. Every obstruction on his way to this transformation had to be removed and the greatest sacrifice had to be made by Gabrielle. And nobody could interfere in the functioning of a will for it is beyond human control. Bartholow was an instrument of this will. Hence Penn Raven tells him:

Your doom is to be free. The seed of truth
Is rooted in you, and the fruit is yours
For you to eat alone. You cannot share it,
Though you may give it, and a few thereby
May taste of it, and so not wholly starve.
And Gabrielle was:

A woman doomed never to live

That he who had adored her and outgrown her

Might yet achieve.

*Roman Bartholow*, one may consider, is a story of modern man’s saturation with materialism and his effort to overcome it. Robinson uses it to reveal the personal triumph of a morally sick man. The reader too faces the dilemma faced by Bartholow: “Like one above a dungeon where for years/ Body and soul had fought futility/ In vain for their deliverance (*CP* 733).

Triumph comes to him the moment he finds himself and rises above his weaknesses by virtue of his coming back to a belief in God. He realises God as a “Power/ That filled him as a light fills a buried room/ When earth is lifted and the sun comes in.”

The theme of marital discord also is very prominent in this poem. Filled with high hope Gabrielle gives her hand to Bartholow but pathetically fails in her attempt to lift him from his despondency. On the contrary, Penn Raven saves him, heals his soul and aids him to be born again. Now he is ready and confident to build a new house, and begin a new life with Gabrielle. Her marriage with Roman being a loveless one, there can be no new life for her, with the result she ends her life by drowning.
There are references to a few moths struggling at the window panes and to the unceasing whirring of the moths. Barnard comments on the presence of the moths that they:

appear to symbolise, in general, the helplessness of human beings to achieve by their own efforts what they most desire, and in particular perhaps, the wish of both Gabrielle and Penn Raven to escape from the loneliness, which for them is the other face of freedom, into an existence that is limited but also warmed by love. (194)

The best among Robinson's long poems is The Man who Died Twice. Fernando Nash, the hero who is a musician and a genius, descends into a strange hell and loses contact with those strains of music which he will never hear again. The tale of Fernando Nash exhibits the personal attitudes of Robinson—his care for art and for humanity. It is this quality "which makes his work stand out with a self-sustaining stiffness which is not mere exterior North American correctness, and gives it an aspect of solitary, mystical security of possession" (Moore, The Dial lxvii, 1924. 169).

Nash, the central character of the poem listens to the hallucinatory symphony orchestra. The symphony consists of four movements. The first movement, "a musical architecture uprising lightly out of chaos" introduces the theme and the counter theme. It is followed by the second part a subdued wail that expresses, along with his own sorrow, "all the sorrow of man." Then comes the third phase which develops the counter
theme and finally comes the theme of life and joy. The four movements may be compared to the four phases in the life of Nash. To quote Joseph:

His entry on the field as a gifted musician and the many years of dissipation, the repentance and the resolution to starve himself to death, the final debauch that lasts three weeks, and the concluding phase of serenity and peace—all this is symbolised by the final symphony. (68)

The symphony, Wallace Anderson has observed, “is a symbolic recapitulation of Nash’s life, a metaphor of the poem as a whole, and a moral allegory of life as Robinson perceived it” (139).

Nash in The Man who Died Twice crumbles under the weight of his lusts in the beginning of the poem. The mirror with the derelict reflections unfolds the truth as applied to Nash. The whole poem is really an unfolding of Nash’s awakening to the truth about himself. Nash, incapable of self-deception, acknowledges and admits his death to art as a deliberate sin against the spirit. To his mind God was a personal being, offended by sin. As any believer knows, divine justice demands a complete dedication of the sinner if he is to overcome his faults and come to God. And this alone brings meaning to the life of the repentant for the deity of Nash is truly the God of revelation.

Nash, a musical composer of towering genius and equally towering pride, falls a victim to alcoholism and continues to be an alcoholic for the next twenty years, listening to “drums of death.” But he is brought back to his right mind by an orchestra of rats which play a symphony. He listens
to his true music in a shower of "choral gold" which builds "a gay temple" for "the Queen of Life." Later he comes across the Poe-like image of:

The faint approach of slow, infernal drums
That were not long in coming, bringing with them
A singing horde of demons, men and women,
Who filled the temple with offensive yells
And sang to fight the frightened worshippers.

Nash prayed for God's help when he realised that he was to God, "a half-hatched bird of paradise." He beats a drum for the Salvation Army as part of his penance for his sin. Certainly Divine Grace interferes, he finds God at the end of a long inner struggle and also found the wisdom of forsaking the world. He expiates his sins and gets the assurance that he is permitted to hear his symphony. He also comes to the realisation that his life has not been wasted and that all will be well in his future dealings. It is the same peace and quietude as Guinevere finds in her convent.

Another long poem, Cavender's House, published in 1929, has mostly the same situation as in "Luke Havergal." Cavender in a fit of passion and stirred by jealousy kills his wife Laramie by pushing her down from a cliff near their house by the sea. Then he goes away from his house on a self imposed exile to come back after twelve years. The death is considered a suicide and he escapes from the grip of law but does not find escape from his tormenting conscience. Later he prepares himself to accept the social and moral laws. He pleads guilty before the civil law, fully
conscious of the stupidity of self slaughter which he has been contemplating all these years. At the outset of the poem, we are introduced to the picture of a dark house into which faint moon light seeps through the window. It might be that Robinson wants the reader to become conscious of Cavender's awakening into the light of reason, after a period of spiritual darkness. The dark house makes Laramie tell Cavender.

There are still doors in your house that are locked,
And there is only you to open them,
For what they may reveal, there may be still
Some riches hidden there, and even for you,
Who spurned your treasure as an angry king
Might throw his crown away. (CP 1005)

Cavender, a dynamic captain of industry, a man of stature and great material possession marries Laramie simply because of her beauty and apparent lack of individuality. The poem tends to be highly exciting and encouraging because of the subtle progression of the debate in his mind with the image of his dead Laramie, presently his implacable judge, Laramie ultimately persuades him to relinquish the last vestige of his possessiveness and to surrender to the civil law, the earthly representatives of the moral law of the universe and the surrender turns out to be a release from all anguish.

He was afraid
Only of peace. He had not asked for that,
He had not earned or contemplated it;
And this could not be peace that frightened him
With wonder, coming like a stranger, slowly.
Without shape or name, and unannounced
As if a door behind him in the dark,
And once not there, had opened silently,
Or as if Laramie had answered him.

And by deciding to own up the dark deed Cavender succeeds
in opening the right door of his house and this takes “the culprit’s
ignoble soul to a first and last act of belated dignity” (Cestre, Mark Twain
Quarterly ii [Spring 1938] 7).

Like Avon’s Harvest in Cavender’s House, Laramie shows that the
power of the mind-created entity is so great that it can destroy the life of
their creator. Her first appearance to Cavender is quite the same as twelve
years before. Her refusal to tell her husband anything new might give the
reader the impression that she has been called into existence solely by
Cavender’s will, no matter whether his decision to kill her was based on
fact or not. Robinson’s own comment was: “What I tried to do . . . was to
create an extension or projection of Cavender’s own mind that could
stand off and examine him without mercy and without ordinary hate”
(Brown 79–80). It is the ghost of Laramie, in fact, his own conscience,
that helps him find the answer he seeks though it confirms his guilt
ultimately and brings him peace.

Robinson firmly believes the price of knowledge is death and this
theme is powerfully presented in poems like Cavender’s House,
Roman Bartholow and Matthias at the Door. Knowledge came to Cavender through dark ways involving the murder of his wife which is followed by intense remorse and self examination and the final submission to the law. Actually Robinson freed himself from the Christian theme of salvation, forgiveness and final redemption by switching on to natural justice and the inevitable consequences of sin. The sin of Cavender was nothing less than an exceptional form of pride. But towards the end, he is ready to accept the moral sanctions that men invariably attach to sin. As a result of his sin, Cavender is on the verge of taking his own life when he hears the phantom voice of his dead wife, his own conscience, saying:

Eternity may have time and room to show us
How so transformed a fabric may be woven
Of crimes, corruptions and futilities
That we shall be confounded with a wonder
At our not seeing it here. Yes, there is hope,
And there is hope deferred by too much haste:
Or so there might be. It's all rather dark.

It might be that Cavender is speaking for the author that the good that is to come of his evil act may not necessarily appear in this life. It simply suggests that good may come out of evil. The poem unveils Robinson's uncertain but persistent search for moral values. He is impelled to believe that there must be a God, or at least a purpose and a law.
The poem *Cavender's House* speaks about the wreck of a marriage ultimately ending in murder. The failure of their marriage is caused by Cavender's extravagant way of life and here Robinson makes an explicit denunciation of materialism. Basically, Cavender is accustomed to power and is capable of fulfilling his ambitions and the beautiful Laramie becomes his wife or rather he owns her as a result of his possessive instinct. He was so selfish that he was not ready to share anything that was his. His instinct for money and ownership had so blinded him that he could not escape into the light of truth through a sympathetic understanding of his wife.

*The Glory of the Nightingales*, which is a study of an egoist more cultivated and intelligent than *Cavender*, was published in 1930. Robinson dedicated this poem to Alfred Louis, the inspirer of his first poem of length. Nightingale, though an inheritor of great wealth and highly influential, met with defeat in his life when Agatha, the woman he loved, refused him. Instead, she chose the poor and idealistic Malory with whom Nightingale had a warm and youthful friendship. Nightingale had helped him become a bacteriologist. Nightingale now retaliates for the defeat in his love affair by withdrawing his investment in a mine where Malory had invested his entire legacy. Shocked, Agatha commits suicide. Dispirited and broken, Malory resolves to shoot Nightingale and then to end his own life. However, on the way Malory realizes the folly of the wild justice of revenge. The two at last realize the futility of revenge in a world governed by Emersonian laws of compensation. It is this awakening
which makes Nightingale confess his vanity and lust. He helps Malory with the vision of what a bacteriologist could do for the suffering humanity by bequeathing all that he had to Malory to found a hospital.

The transformation of Nightingale has a telling impact on the life of Malory; he rededicates his life to the world and it is presented in his journey from the darkling cemetery to the magnificent Nightingale mansion within sight of the flashing waves. A cemetery unquestionably stands for death and the sea is a symbol of life. According to Charles T. Davis “the flashing waves evoke the picture of suffering humanity entreating the bacteriologist to dedicate himself to the service of mankind” (385). Of course, Malory, too, is transformed and “he changes his mind and his eventual decision to devote the rest of his life to the service of the suffering millions puts him back on the path of life, and Malory’s journey towards the sea thus becomes symbolic of a journey back to life” (Joseph 78). Nightingale’s bungalow, which could have been the scene of murder, is turned into a hospital which will be the centre of Malory’s life-saving activities, with the new light flooding his mind. Of the two, Nightingale’s change is nobler simply because he emerges from a deeper darkness. His desire to make amends for his misdeeds truly testifies to the functioning of the light in him. And he alone is responsible for bringing Malory back to life.

Nightingale needs the company of Agatha to make his career complete but Malory comes in the way. Blinded with malice he permits Malory to suffer total economic privation paving the way for, though
unwittingly, the death of Agatha. Towards the end, becoming cognizant of
the wickedness of his attitude he gives orientation to Malory’s scientific
ambition toward public service in an endowed hospital and it constitutes
the climax in his life of influence and power.

Matthias at the Door, like Roman Bartholow, has a disguised moral
design for it speaks about the danger of ill-assorted marriages. These two
poems, like “Mortmain,” “How Annandale went out,” “Aunt Imogen” and
“The March of the Cameron Men,” reprecipitate in objective terms real
incidents in the poet’s own life. The poem probably had its roots in
personal history with Dean cast as Garth, Win Robinson as Timberlake
and Herman as Matthias, a man of excessive drinking, and Emma as
Natalie. Matthias is an affluent materialist who marries Natalie for he loves
her but slips away from him through suicide imitating Gabrielle in Roman
Bartholow. Matthias has saved Timberlake from death and in turn he
sacrifices his love for Natalie and she had to marry Matthias. At the
opening of the poem there is the suicide of Garth. Natalie speaks out her
mind that she had always loved Timberlake passionately and this makes
Matthias angry and confused and later he turns to drink. As Timberlake
departs, he literally drives her to death.

For a long time
His world, which once had been properly
And admirably filled with his ambitions,
With Natalie, with his faith, and with himself,
Was only an incredible loneliness,
The lonelier for defeat and recognition.
As we go through these incidents one might be forced to recall the Emma-Herman-Win triangle. The dream scene in section VI which transforms itself into a nightmare recalls Matthias’ own life which had a happy phase before it was plunged into the experience of hell following the suicide of Natalie.

The theme of the poem, *Matthias at the Door* is "the chastening of the businessman who thinks himself perfect" (Neff 235). The central character, Matthias, though a self-righteous man, because of his being walled up within himself unable to see the truth about his own nature, comes out of the walls of illusion to face the reality. This takes place as a result of a series of shocks, the suicide of Garth, the quarrel with Natalie which ended in her suicide and the death of Timberlake. These three deaths actually but miraculously keep Matthias in life and ultimately cause his spiritual rebirth. His spiritual growth is explicitly shown in the image of his climbing out of the gorge in the dark and waiting for the day to break.

There were long hours to wait,

And dark hours; and he met their length and darkness

With a vast gratitude that humbled

And warned him while he waited for the dawn.

In the poem Matthias comes to the awakening that he cannot die until he is born again. It is the insight that he must be born again that inspires the fine poem "Nicodemus" which the poet used as the title for his last collection of poems published in 1932. He loses his wife, Natalie, simply because their house was built on "infirm foundations." He comes
to the knowledge, though after her death and that of Garth and Timberlake, that he cannot begin to live until he has found himself. It is true one cannot explain why people are what they are and why things happen as they do happen. And it is this truth that is revealed through Timberlake's dying message to Matthias:

Why are we as we are? We do not know
Why do we pay so heavily for so little?
Or for so much? Or for whatever it is?
We do not know. We only pay and die.

The whole poem is a record of a succession of catastrophes which help Matthias, who is complacent over his material success, become aware of himself and it is this awareness which finally causes his rebirth. Failures in life make his friend Garth grow desperate and finally he crawls into a dark cave in the rocks to die by his own hand. According to Floyd Stovall the three—Garth, Timberlake and Natalie—have not died in vain and it is beyond human wisdom to understand that "Matthias is reborn from the ashes of his own dead self" (18). Only through the dark cave with the Egyptian door can a man be reborn, as Lazarus is or as Nicodemus is told to be reborn. The poem gives the idea that only through death—physical, spiritual or psychological—can a man come to a new life.

*Matthias at the Door* is a poem narrating life's mysterious ministry to a mind diseased. As in the case of the protagonist the destinies of other characters are also torn and worn out by inward conflict and the salvaging
of one life is often achieved only at the expense of another. Here Natalie kills herself solely because she could not live with Matthias who has become a stranger.

Among his many narrative poems Talifer, published in 1933, alone has a happy ending. The poem presents four characters. Althea is a domestic woman, sensitive but commonplace and in love with Talifer. He is an ordinary man, speaks about his ‘tradition,’ carries himself well, and expects of life more than his inner qualities entitle him to. Karen, another woman, is beautiful, cold and erudite and above all treacherous. Talifer imagines that he is in love with her with the result he marries her. It is only then he realizes the futility of their relationship for it was really a mismatch and he now regrets that he ever did marry her. But Dr. Quick comes to his aid by taking Karen away to England.

Talifer, a young man of wealth and sexual ambition, deserts his betrothed Althea, a girl of traditional solid virtue, to marry and find peace in the arms of Karen, who combines cold beauty with cold Greek. A year teaches him his mistake; the true life re-asserts itself, he divorces Karen, marries Althea, breeds a child, and finds his peace in the homely reality from which false ambition and glittering but icy, prospects drew him away. (Blackmur Poetry xliii, 4, 1934. 221-25)

The intrusion of destiny can be distinctly seen in the life of Talifer. Undoubtedly Althea was a blessing beyond his deserts and hence he had to undergo a probation to claim her as his wife. Hence the stupid and
futile marriage with Karen who had a prodigious bent for scholarship and
great beauty. The marriage makes him aware of the hard realities of life
which disillusion him and finally pave the way for his real union with
Althea, his life’s fulfilment.

Robinson has a number of familiar characters that are failures,
whose desire for power, position or fame has somehow been frustrated.
His poem *Amaranth*—the flower that never fades—his symbol for reality,
is built on the theme of human failure and it is presented in the form of a
dream. The central character, Fargo, who had come to the old wharves
ten years before to end his life, had been persuaded to come back to
life by Amaranth. People look at the eyes of Amaranth, which are mirrors,
where they can see their real image; each one sees himself as he is.
The revelation that comes to them is really shocking. And anybody
who survives remains reconciled for the rest of their lives. In the case of
Fargo, he believed that his vocation was to be a painter but with the
intervention of Amaranth, who shows him the right path, he rectifies
himself and becomes a plumber “a foe to phantoms, and a man attuned/
To his necessities.”

Fargo faces the very same situation on his second visit to the wharf.
Along with Amaranth he goes through a strange landscape to the Tavern
of the Vanquished and he understands his mission either to save or
destroy. It is there at the Tavern that Fargo confronts a group of men who
have pathetically failed to find their proper vocation in life. Some of those
failures include Edward Figg a misfit as a lawyer, Doctor Styx, who
should have been a ventriloquist, Evensong, the disillusioned musician, Reverend Pascal Flax, who should have been a lawyer, Pink, the rootless poet and Atlas the painter who once was a stevedore. All of them except Pink and Atlas see themselves through the eyes of Amaranth and are reconciled to their failures; Pink and Atlas commit suicide.

The characters in Amaranth are people who were desirous of achieving beyond their abilities and are so lost. Everyone has heard the voice of Amaranth, the inner truth, but only a few have responded positively and successfully. It is a poem on the life of the artist. The poet tries to generalize the notion of mistaken vocation and treats of subjects like medicine, law, invention and the church, but the stress is upon unsuccessful writers, composers and painters. According to Neff "the background for its writing was his long observation of men and women with the urge for artistic creation but without the talent, who were temporarily encouraged by the boom of the 1920s" (233–34).

In Amaranth we see certain powers working around Fargo trying to save him from a wasted life. Aided by Amaranth, he visualises the Inferno created by the 20th century mind and looks with the eyes of Truth upon its inhabitants. Fargo is an artist who having known his shortcomings, abandons art in favour of life and works at building pumps. Thus he becomes an excellent pump maker, a realist, a practical man. He views, without inhibitions, Pink and Atlas who, having looked into Amaranth’s eyes, Time’s judgement upon men’s work, respond with suicide to the truth that “modernism” in art is, a false messiah. Miss Watchman who
preferred writing about truth or life finally crumbles to a handful of dust. 

Robinson is of the conviction that poetry should illuminate life. "Poets, whatever the end,/ Should know a little more than most of us/ Of our obscurities.

Figg, Flax, Styx and Evensong have accepted the inevitably failing roles in which they have been cast and it is marked by an enervating grace which greatly hints at high achievement could they have found their vocations. Among them Fargo alone escapes from his dreamshell and concerning his companions who do not escape the last word has not been said. Amaranth, i.e. truth, tells them: "I hope you may all live/ Until you are all sure you are not sorry/ Even here in the wrong world, that you were born."

Amaranth is really a study of the problem of maladjustment in individual lives. Anyone who treads a wrong path will certainly fall a victim to illusions and live in fear of reality. Fargo, Evensong and Atlas stand respectively for the three possible ways of responding to reality—mend one's ways and select the right profession; give up pretensions and resign to what one is present; and choose the road to suicide. We have Walton who identifies Amaranth with "the desire within men towards immortality" and his eyes with the "ultimate judgement" of time upon all men and their works" (Quoted in Kaplan 85). This refers to the twin roles of time and criticism assigned to Amaranth.

In this poem "Robinson seeks to expose the inherent drawbacks of modernist poetry through the portraiture of Pink, who, like Masters'
'Petit the Poet', must remain an ineffectual figure because he has severed himself from tradition” (Joseph 139). The poet speaks of how a would-be artist, Fargo, who is without talent is loitering in the ‘wrong world.’ By looking into the eyes of Amaranth he accepts the fact that he was born for more practical pursuits and thus is saved from destruction that comes to Pink, the poet and Atlas, the painter. Pink actually warns against the danger of wilfully dissociating poetry from tradition. Evidently, the poet had some of his contemporaries in his mind as he typifies Pink and according to Willyer it “must be Ezra Pound who was in the mind of Robinson” (The New England Quarterly, viii, 1935. 113). It might be that the confrontations of Pink and Atlas with Amaranth represent a symbolic indictment on the new fangled modernist trends.

Amaranth, the ideal critic, stands in sharp contrast to the wretched grave-diggers who “represent the generality of critics and reviewers, who are incapable of perception or of judgement, but who live in the manner of scavengers by destroying or trying to destroy whatever they encounter” (Winters 121). To be more specific, Amaranth and the grave diggers might represent the best and the worst aspects of criticism.

Robinson’s last long poem, King Jasper is a long allegorical narrative on a social theme. The inspiration for it came to him while walking down State Street in Boston during a bank holiday following the inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt. The name of the protagonist was surprisingly that of the mine (Jasper) where the last of his patrimony had vanished 35 years before. The poem presents a social drama and hence it
has a greater human interest than *Amaranth*. The story is about the wreck of an empire giving the message to the readers that nothing can exist on rotten foundations for long.

*King Jasper* presents the story of a family and at the same time it is the record of a social upheaval; it opens up in front of us a darkened vision of total destruction. According to Hagedorn,

He [Robinson] was distrustful of a contemporaneous theme but could not resist the temptation to write what he called his “treatise on economics.” He gave the poem a triple significance... first: as a story of six unhappy beings caught in a cataclysm of all that is life to them, as a symbolic drama of the disintegration of the capitalistic system, and last, as an allegory of ignorance and knowledge and aspiration. (369)

Jasper’s dream is mainly concerned with the ushering in of a new social order soon after the disintegration of the capitalistic system. On his onward march through the hills and valleys to the ever-receding summit, he meets Hebron, his old friend. Among Robinson’s characters Jasper is one “for whom no redemption is destined from the limbo of mere material wealth and social station” (Barnard 127). Hebron was a kindly man while alive, but now a changed man and he bluntly accuses Jasper of greed. According to Barnard, “King Jasper himself loses some of his humanness because he symbolizes the merits and defects of American capitalism historically considered” (176). Along with “The Man Against the Sky,” “Rembrandt to Rembrandt,” *Cavender’s House*, *Mathias at the Door*,
"Ponce de Leon" and "The March of the Cameron Men," *King Jasper* too is a powerful attack on materialism.

King Jasper, the captain of industry, built up his industrial kingdom by exploiting the brains of the inventor Hebron. Hebron accuses him of his deceit and hate while Jasper defends himself, unsuccessfully, and argues that it was for power and not for gold that he betrayed Hebron. Jasper has erected his wealth, power and civilization on treachery to Hebron, who typifies the common man. The son of Jasper, charming but ineffectual, represents civilization. Jasper’s wife, Honoria loves him for his achievements, and also for his love for her, but at the time of crisis she deserts him and kills herself. Robinson has commented that Honoria represents honour and Zoe, wife of young Jasper and with whom Honoria is always in conflict, represents intelligence and according to Estelle Kaplan, “Zoe represents intelligence and vitality” (145). Young Hebron, son to Hebron, is the avenger who destroys civilization in avenging the wrong on which it was founded. Jasper has not only cheated Hebron but also has let him die in poverty; that is why young Hebron avenges his death and for that he has become a communist. Jasper’s son has fallen under the influence of Zoe, knowledge which sustains life. In the poem Zoe functions as the poet’s mouthpiece: “Assurance of his power to serve the world/ When he is doing his villainous worst in it.”

Jasper, not ready to undergo change, was finally killed by Zoe. It is surprising that Jasper undergoes the very same kind of suffering which he had made Hebron go through in life. To be more explicit, the positions of
the oppressed and the oppressor are reversed. It throws light on the emergence of the new order which the revolution seeks to establish and Jasper's death certainly prefigures the fate of young Hebron. All these ultimately stand for Jasper's repudiation of the materialistic ideals and the poem pertains to the disintegration of the capitalistic system.

In the poem Zoe plays a vital role and the name in Greek means "life." Winters calls her "Vitality mistaken for intelligence in a traditionally Emersonian manner" (125). Cestre views her as the "invisible force of social evolution" (8). Honoria, queen of King Jasper who stands for honour, "uncomprehending and unyielding in her loyalty to traditional ways, forestalls by suicide the bloody end of young Hebron's revenge" (Barnard 127).

The whole poem is in the form of a dream. The elder Hebron represents the multitude of human beings that the captains of industries have seen fit to use and then to throw away. The young Hebron, his son, who is ignorant, arrogant, sensual and vengeful, has been as uncontrollable as Jasper in his lust for power. His attack on the established order made clear his fate like that of his father. Though Jasper was aware of the presence of injustices in society he thought it best to forget it. Actually the nightmarish presence of Hebron who torments him is the creature of his own conscience. At the end of the dream Zoe tells the king to acknowledge God.

Whether it is the Arthurian poems or the domestic tragedies, the world portrayed is the contemporary one. It is a bleak world where the dollar calls
the tune. The social environment of the Tilbury town is a perfect recipe for failure. However, among the long poems it is only in *Amaranth* that the theme of failure is introduced as a major concern. As we will see in the later chapters, the social factor in Robinson is not as prominent as it is in Masters, so far as failures are concerned. What we see here is a confirmation of the conclusion we draw on the basis of the short and medium length poems namely that it is character rather than fate or environment that decides whether a life should blossom out or get blighted.