

Dylan Thomas's *The Map of Love*: The Critical Dilemma

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Abstract: In *18 Poems* (1934) and *25 Poems* (1936), Dylan Thomas had sought to emulate one poet after another to find a form out of formless darkness. His poem *The Map of Love* (1939) can be properly understood only when the readers relate his development to the appraisal and awareness of the poetic tradition in the early poetry. The transitional poem, while stressing his feasible ideal of poetic licence, exhibits the parallel quest of the War poets—F.T. Prince, Roy Fuller, Alan Rook, Keidrych Rhys, Alun Lewis, and Sidney Keyes -- for their own identity as a poet, and their quest involves a weighing of several alternative choices. Apparently, it offers a comparative and contrastive estimate of the time-conscious poets, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice and the life-conscious War poets, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys. The issues involved are wider and cover the whole range of aesthetic transcendence and historic sense of W.H. Auden. The War poets, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys heaved a sigh of relief as the world-concentric Thomas's *18 Poems* offers a hope for poetry for their poetic mind fumbling around Auden's historic consciousness. What the readers note in *The Map of Love* is Thomas's acute consciousness of the need, what is vital and relevant in his past works and in the works of Auden. The conflicting loyalties and ideals of the poets of thirties and the War poets, their language of confusion as patterned in the poems of *The Map of Love* are allegorically narrated in the prose section of it, but the stress of the narrative voice is a continuation of the poet's tone. The critical study on this volume is confined to extrinsic and general readings; commentaries on the individual poems are in no way resourceful enough to comprehend the whole meaning of the poem. Taking the language of a general statement or the language of a commentary as the criticism of the poem is detrimental to its total meaning. Thomas's poetic licence with the norms of grammar and syntax, his syllogism requires a syntactical reading to clear the ambiguity about the poem. Hence this paper, focusing on the paradoxical structure and rhetorical language, tries to bring out its associative values and contextual significances.

Keywords: tenor, nonage, statuesque, proleptic, allegorical, facetiousness, and intrinsic.

I. Introduction

In the poetry written between 1934 and 1946, Dylan Thomas had sought to emulate one poet after another to find a form out of formlessness and darkness. In *18 Poems* (1934), he brings out the underlying inherent poetic process of death-birth, the art of finding individual identity:

I dreamed my genesis in sweat of sleep, breaking
Through the rotating shell, strong
As motor muscle on the drill, driving
Through vision and girdered nerve. (*Poems* 66)

His search for appropriate coherent form explains the continual experimentations, the necessity of poetic licence to the grievous poets of thirties:

I see that from these boys shall men of nothing
Stature by seedy shifting,
Or lame the air with leaping from its hearts;
There from their hearts the dogdayed pulse
Of love and light bursts in their throats.
O see the pulse of summer in the ice. (71)

Louis MacNeice comments on the process of transmutation that reveals the focal point of *18 Poems* in a "plain speaking" manner:

Which when caught between the beginning and the end
Turn other than themselves, their entities unfurled,
Flapping and overlapping—a tree becomes
A talking tower, and a woman becomes world. (*Collected Poems* 209-10)

Thomas's *25 Poems* (1936) also marked a ceaseless quest for an artistic pattern out of the emotional-intellectual dilemmas that enrich the texture of the poems of his fellow-poets. He breaks out the joy of inherent coherence and cohesion, cultivation and communion born of labour:

This flesh you break, this blood you let

Make desolation in the vein,
Were oat and grape
Born of the sensual root and sap;
My wine you drink, my bread you snap. (*Poems* 136)

Thomas's moral disinterestedness freed the sorrow of the fellow-poet's mind and art, "the twin-boxed grief." He maps out the continuous process of labouring worked out as salvation to the problem of communication confronting the War poets:

No silver whistles chase him down the weeks,
Dayed peaks to-day to death,
These stolen bubbles have the bites of snakes
And the undead eye-teeth,
No third eye probe into a rainbow's sex
That bridged the human halves,
All shall remain and on the graveward gulf
Shape with my fathers' thieves. (60)

The need to find his own individuality was felt more urgently in *The Map of Love* (1939). "Bury the dead for fear that they walk to the grave in labour..." (*Poems* 140). Thomas's transitional poem can be properly understood only when the readers relate his development to the appraisal and awareness of the poetic tradition in the early poetry, *18 Poems* and *25 Poems*. MacNeice estimates:

Under the hive-like dome the stooping haunted readers
Go up and down the alleys, tap the cells of knowledge—
Honey and wax, the accumulation of years.... (182)

In *The Map of Love*, Thomas "offers a more profound and controlled exploration of the themes that inform his earlier work. He is able to see in perspective his earlier adolescent attitudes and emotions" (Ackerman 73).

It is especially in *The Map of Love* written during the pre-war period of 1938 that the conflicting loyalties and ideals of the poets of thirties and the War poets receive a sharp focus. Thomas sketches out the paradox of love and hate, attraction and repulsion figuring in the poems published after the Great War and in the poems written before the outbreak of the Second World War:

Now in the cloud's big breast lie quiet countries,
Delivered seas my love from her proud place
Walks with no wound, nor lightning in her face,
A calm wind blows that raised the trees like hair
Once where the soft snow's blood was turned to ice. (*Poems* 70)

The synthesis whether at the stylistic or conceptual level is never finally achieved—even what may be called the last phase is in a sense exploratory. MacNeice's "plain speaking" is that their beginning was their end, passivity and indolence :

In the beginning and in the end the only decent
Definition is tautology: man is man,
Woman woman, and tree tree, and world world,
Slippery, self-contained; catch as catch can. (*MCP* 209)

The "major development" that Ackerman finds in *The Map of Love* is Thomas's "increasing awareness of the condition of other people. He begins to move away from the introspective obsession of his previous work" (72). Thomas's self-evaluation necessitated the War poets a clearer understanding of the precise nature of the literary heritage that they could assimilate only by conscious effort. What is significant in this third book of poems and prose stories is "the number of poems which, for the first time, respond to the independent reality of other people" (Davies 62).

The critical study on this volume is confined to extrinsic and general readings; commentaries on the individual poems are in no way resourceful enough to comprehend the whole meaning of the poem. Taking the language of a general statement or the language of a commentary as the criticism of the poem is detrimental to its total meaning. Thomas's poetic licence with the norms of grammar and syntax, his syllogism requires a syntactical reading to clear the ambiguity about the poem. Hence this paper, focusing on the paradoxical structure and rhetorical language, tries to bring out its associative values and contextual significances.

II. Discussion

In the poem "O Make Me a Mask," Thomas examines with remarkable perspicuity the relevances and the relative significances of W.B. Yeats's *Last Poems* he admired and also his own place in the poetic tradition:

O Make me a mask and a wall to shut from your spies
Of the sharp, enamelled eyes and the spectacled claws
Rape and rebellion in the nurseries of my face,

Gag of dumbstruck tree to block from bare enemies
The bayonet tongue in this undefended prayerpiece,
The present mouth, and the sweetly blown trumpet of lies... (*Poems* 103)

MacNeice perceived that Thomas found “the courage of eyes, the craft of hands ... the gay feet, the pulse of hope ... the will that flings a rope—though hard ... to catch the future off its guard...” (191), the rule and energy of Yeats's *Last Poems* for his transitional poem *The Map of Love*. Thomas, while giving a sketch-map of his Yeatsian “art of minding one's own business magnanimously,” persuades the self-complacent and self-conscious War poets to be receptive before responsive “since the heroes lie ... entombed with the receipt ... of epic in their heart ... and have buried ... that art...” (Day Lewis 23).

Yeats's *Last Poems*, exemplifying his vivid dramatic imagination, is implicit of his faith in “what his great forefathers did” to “bring the soul of man to God” and “make him fill the cradles right.” The Italian painter Michaelangelo has “left a proof” of the “might” of art, “measurement” and “forms” “on the Sistine Chapel roof” as a contrast to Quattrocento who “put in paint ... on backgrounds for a God or Saint ... Gardens where a soul's at ease.” Besides quoting from Palmer that “Calvert and Wilson, Blake and Claude ... prepared a rest for the people of God” (*Collected Poems* 303), Yeats finds “proof” of “forms a stark Egyptian thought ... forms that gentler Phidias wrought” in Michaelangelo:

... proof that there's a purpose set
Before the secret working mind;
Profane perfection of mankind. (*YCP* 302)

As a poet and an artist of human “hearts and heads” he knows that the benchmark of his poetry, his poetical character and his poetic function is “perfection of the life” rather than “of the work,” “a heavenly mansion, raging in the dark” (209).

Thomas's comparative comfort in the Yeatsian poetic tradition stands a sharp contrast to the comparative silence of Auden in the Eliotian historic sense, “a tear-stained widower grief drooped from lashes ... to veil belladonna.” The transitional Auden found solace in the French symbolist R.M. Rilke's ironic and satirical technique for his sequence of sonnets “In Time of War.” The symbolic and eclectic artistic shield, considered an extension of his old historic sense emulated from Walter de la Mare and Eliot, “shaped in old armour and oak the countenance of a dunce ... to shield the glistening brain and blunt the examiners,” recognizes the inner reality of his own contemporaries, his betrayers and detractors, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and MacNeice “lamenting lies of their losses ... by the curve of the nude mouth or the laugh up the sleeve” and the War poets “the dry eyes.” In the sonnet sequence of “In Time of War,” Auden returns to the theme of subjectivity of the War poets, “the elementary rhythm of the heart” (*English Auden* 155), but with a difference, with his “bent spirit,” “a tear-tained widower grief drooped from the lashes” (*Poems*) and “blesses” the War poets, “happy their wish and mild to flower and flood” with the Rilkean subjectivity. The poet is to probe the inner mind not the trivial and ephemeral aspects of personal experience; and to explore the inner reality is to confront the void of the abyss. “While they breathed the air / All breathe took on a virtue; in our blood, / If we allow them, they can breathe again” (*EA*). His concerns with the subjectivity, the passive abstract mind, “the intimations of mortality” are not to be confused with egotism. “And Truth a subject only bombs discuss, / Our ears unfriendly, still you speak to us, / Insisting that the inner life can pay” (*EA*). An egotist imposes his own pattern on reality; but the poet's task, as Auden envisages it, is to confront the mystery and not to attempt to explain it by erecting a convenient structure of thought.

Apparently, Thomas's poem “The Spire Cranes” is a poetics evaluating the nature and functioning of the musical instruments, the flute and the trumpet, “In Time of War” and *Last Poems*, past and present. It portrays the conflicting artistic structures, between Rilkean subjectivity and Yeatsian subjectivity, between de la Mare, Eliot, and Auden, “the prison spire, pelter”, “the spire's hook” and Thomas Hardy, Yeats, and Thomas, “the feathery ... carved birds” and their active and passive defenders, “those craning birds,” Day Lewis, MacNeice, and Spender, and the dilemmatic War poets, F.T. Prince, Roy Fuller, Alan Rook, Keidrych Rhys, Alun Lewis, and Sidney Keyes, “songs that jump back / To the built voice, or fly with winter to the bells / But do not travel down dumb wind like prodigals.” Thomas evaluates the serious and speculative nature of Auden's condition:

The spire cranes. Its statue is an aviary.
From the stone nest it does not let the feathery
Carved birds blunt their striking throats on the salt gravel,
Pierce the spilt sky with diving wing in weed and heel
An inch in froth. (*Collected Poems* 86)

The uncertainties in regard to Auden's own creative endeavours, the hostility of his contemporaries, finally his emigration to America, and the instability of the War poets—all these made him poignantly conscious of the stark reality of his poetry. To quote Day Lewis is more appropriate in this context: “The glare of death transmuted to your own / Measure scaled-down to a possible figure the sum of ill. / Let the shield take that

image, the image shield you" (*Collected Poems* 222). In *Another Time* that was already taking a clear shape, Auden explains his eclectic approach:

Like love we don't know where or why
Like love we can't compel or fly
Like love we often weep
Like love we seldom keep. (19)

Auden, slipping out of his "own position ... into an unconcerned condition," adopts "the timid similarity," the symbolic form from the Rilke of "Duineser Elegien" and "Die Sonette an Orpheus" (1923) to "confine" Thomas's "vanity," to concentrate on objectivity and intellectual leaning of his temperament, functional landscape embodying a psychic or a general human situation.

Thomas's poems in *The Map of Love*, while stressing his feasible and life-centric poetic form, exhibits the parallel quest of the War poets—Prince, Fuller, Rook, Rhys, Lewis, and Keyes -- for their own identity as a poet, and their quest involves a weighing of several alternative choices. Initially, the young War poets were sceptical of the modern poets and loved William Wordsworth's romantic theory of poetry. "Moon-floods heighten the valley with glimmerings like / The feel of a memory before it is born..." (DCP 272). Day Lewis comments:

We are caught, all of us, in time's fine net,
Walled up in time: yet still we seek a secret
Spring, a weak mesh, where we may
Break out and be immortal. (DCP 272)

Thomas's poem "I Make this in a Warring Absence" brings out the War poets's varying attitudes in their juvenile phase to the Romantic poet Wordsworth and it also indicates their attempt at clarifying the direction that their own poetry should take. Thomas relays:

:

I make this in a warring absence when
Each ancient, stone-necked minute of love's season
Harbours my anchored tongue, slips the quaystone,
When, praise is blessed, her pride in mast and fountain
Sailed and set dazzling by the handshaped ocean,
In that proud sailing tree with branches driven
Through the last vault and vegetable groyne,
And this weak house to marrow-columned heaven.... (*Poems* 69)

In "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (180).

The War poet Prince was a lover of Wordsworth's solitude, "corner-cast, breath's rag, scrawled weed, a vain ... and opium head." Thomas explains: "By magnet winds to her blind mother drawn, / Bread and milk mansion in a toothless town." Fuller made his adolescent verses, "nettle's innocence," "a silk pigeon's guilt in her proud absence," "the shell of virgins" under the influence of Wordsworth "the frank, closed pearl" with reverence and love. "Whalebed and bulldance, the gold bush of lions, / Proud as a sucked stone and huge as sandgrains." Rook was disgusted with the literary modernistic poets of "contraries," "priest's grave foot and hand of five assassins," "cinder-nesting columns," "the starved fire herd ... cast in ice," "a limp-treed and uneating silence" and accepted the loneliness of the Nature poet Wordsworth: "Who scales a hailing hill in her cold flintsteps / Falls on a ring of summers and locked noons." Rhys took cudgels against the intellectual poetry of the moderns, "a weapon of an ass's skeleton," "the warring sands by the dead town," "wreck east, and topple sundown" and sought the comfortable moods of "sped heart," "beheaded veins," "wringing shell" and fastened "eyelids." Lewis, while damning the grand manner and metaphysical tradition of the modernists "the room of errors, one rood dropped ... down the stacked sea and water-pillared shade," weighed the pros and cons of Wordsworth's philosophic poetry, "rock shroud," "my proud pyramid" and Siegfried Sassoon's "deathbed" and his dreaming of the natural beauty of Oxford, "wound in emerald linen and sharp wind." Thomas describes the salient features of Lewis's hero:

The hero's head lies scraped of every legend,
Comes love's anatomist with sun-gloved hand
Who picks the live heart on a diamond. (*Poems*)

Day Lewis comments on Lewis's dilemma: "Our nerves branched and flickered with summer lightning" (218). Before the outbreak of War, Lewis's early poems, "our burning bush" "gently swayed" between past and present, Wordsworth and Sassoon, between "the rose ... mounting vermilion" and "the glare ... on the roses," "a fire's heart" and "the sealed-up hour," "that breathless inspiration of pampas grass" and "the pampas quivering," "crab-tree's attentive pose" and "the taut crab-apple," "the veiled Word's flesh" and "a near annunciation" and anticipated "some explosive oracle to abash ... the platitudes on the lawn ... heaven's delegated ... angel—the golden rod" (DCP).

Wordsworth appealed to the War poets in the juvenile period as a poet of serene natural beauty to suit their moods of comforts and complacency in the midst of tense atmosphere and "uncomfortable hours." But Keyes during his stay at Oxford was struck by Wordsworth's "Ode on Immortality" and its philosophic Christian aspect. Thomas explains: "His mother's womb had a tongue that lapped up mud, / Cried the topless, inchtaped lips from hank and hood / In that bright anchorground where I lay lined..." (*Poems*). Keyes comments on his contemporaries's mood in the sonnet "William Wordsworth":

He was a stormy day, a granite peak
Spearing the sky; and look, about its base
Words flower like crocuses in the hanging woods,
Blank though the dalehead and the bony face. (*Contemporary Verse* 321)

Quite understandably, he emphasizes the religious implications of Wordsworth's early poetry. Day Lewis reconstructs: "Ennui of youth!—thin air above the clouds, / Vain divination of the sunless stream..." (219). For Keys the feeling produced by his contemporaries's poems was "blank" as there was "no room for mourning," as the War poet "being a boy again" "stood between the stones ... of the gaunt ridge, or you'll hear his shout ... rolling among the screens" and sought "wet vaults or iron sarcophagi ... of fame," "rest among the broken lands and clouds" (*CV*). What must have stirred Keyes imagination is evident from Thomas's comments: "In the groin's endless coil a man is tangled" (*Poems*).

It is obvious that Keyes, like most other admirers of Wordsworth, regarded Wordsworth's poetry, especially the poem "Tintern Abbey" as a message of hope and salvation. Wordsworth himself is quite explicit in his expression of faith:

... that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened.... (Peacock 568)

The word "mystery" occurs frequently in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and he uses the word not in the sense of revealed truth, but in the sense of the illimitable unknown that surrounds human existence. To understand Wordsworth's poignant rendering of the mind's bafflement at the mystery of existence, of the mind's anxieties because of its failure to comprehend reality, according to Keyes, takes "such long learning, loneliness ... and dark despite to master ... the bard's blind craft" (*CV* 320). But there are passages in Wordsworth's poetry that convey doubt and even terror and the War poets who, as Keyes says, valued Wordsworth only in patches—seemed to have responded most to the isolated passages "to escape time ... to settle like bird, make one devoted gesture of permanence upon the spray ... of shaken stars and autumns" (*DCP* 220). The War poets "knowing the war ... has no end," were "glad to gain the limited objective" of "dreaming" poetry as "the spontaneous overflow" of their "active heat" and recollection of their "past": "now we prize / Half-loaves, half-truths-enough for the half-hearted, / The gleam snatched from corruption satisfies" (219). Fuller, Rhys, Rook, and Prince limited their study to the first half of Wordsworth's poetry, "hooded by a dark sense of destination," and wished for deathless poetry. Lewis and Keyes concentrated on the whole corpus of Wordsworth and their perception was free from the impact of philosophic tradition as revealed in the "Ode on Immortality." "Her weight on the glass calm leaves no impression, / Her home is soon a basketful of wind" (*DCP*). Day Lewis brings out the discordant note of comprehension among the War poets:

Cuckoophrase of children
In their green enchantment
Where slanting beams fall warm and cool as larksong—
A woodnote rill unheard through afterdays. (*DCP*)

Keyes reveals the essential truth of Wordsworth's poetry:

... in bitterness
Of heart to strike the strings and muster
The shards of pain to harmony, not sharp
With anger to insult the merry guest.
O it is glory for the old man singing
Dead valour and his own days coldly cursed. (*CV*)

Commenting on the War poets's complacent love for the Wordsworthian solitude, spontaneity, tranquility and simplicity, "these once-blind eyes have breathed a wind of visions" as "once it was the colour of saying," Thomas estimates that their juvenilia is a midsummer night's dream steeped in light, colour, music and poetry, in which even the dull mechanical look a little insubstantial and are woven into the texture of fancy. Prince's impatience with such arid pedantry is manifest in his comment which Thomas adapts:

Soaked my table the uglier side of a hill

With a capsized field where a school sat still
And a black and white patch of girls grew playing... (*Poems* 109)

In censuring “the gentle seaslides of saying I must undo,” Fuller demands empirical validity in art. “That all the charmingly drowned arise to cockcrow and kill.” But what enrages Rook most is Wordsworth’s complete lack of perception, his judicial air, “we stoned the cold and cuckoo” For the young poet Rhys, who extolled sensation as a cult, this sterility of response in a critic betrays his lack of taste and denies him access to the realm of imagination, “lovers in the dirt of their leafy beds.” In Wordsworth, the word imagination is mostly associated with the fantastic constructions of an unbalanced mind, and this explains Lewis’s substitution of “shade” for “shades”, the war poet Sassoon for Wordsworth, “the shade of their trees was a word of many shades.” Keyes emphasizes his contemporaries’s lack of imaginative response and scoffs at their temerity to kill pity of war, “a lamp of lightning for the poor in the dark...” Thomas’s poem “Once it was the Colour of Saying” is adapted from the juvenile poems of the War poets and is taken out of the original context, and the thrust becomes all the more effective as the readers almost hear his voice at the end of the poem mildly rebuking unholy entrants into exquisite romance: “Now my saying shall be my undoing, / And every stone I wind off like a reel” (*Poems*).

Thomas points out that Prince liked half of Wordsworth, “halfmoon’s vegetable eye,” and this really sums up his mature response, “the fingers will forget green thumbs.” The element of doubt, “handful zodiac” in Wordsworth’s poetry seemed to Fuller more authentic than the element of faith, “husk of young stars” and he reacted against Wordsworth’s arid conceptualizations. Rook observes that he was sympathetic more to the views of the poet of solitude, “love ... wintered” than to those of the philosophic poet, “love in the frost.” There is, as Rhys rightly points out, a striking resemblance between Wordsworth, the poet of Nature, “breeze and shell” and MacNeice, the sceptical poet of nature, “a discordant beach” and their stress on the unresolved enigma of existence, “the whispering ears.” Lewis was doubtful of Wordsworth’s loneliness, “the lynx tongue cry”; for him life was mysterious and sacred, and to refuse to acknowledge this mystery, to take shelter in readymade formulae was to flinch from reality. Keyes’s abhorrence of obtrusive designs in Wordsworth’s poetry and the bitterness engendered by personal vanity and bigotry gradually drew him away from the Romantic poet, “the nostrils see her breath burn like a bush.” Thomas’s phrase “five ... senses” becomes increasingly associated in the five War poets’s mind with self-comfort and self-complacence. To relax in comfort is to deaden one’s sensibility; in such a frame of mind one is prone to be satisfied with over-simplified intellectual formulations that are deterrent to a genuine pursuit of truth. But in the case of Keyes whose sensibility is identified with Wilfred Owen’s, there is “room for mourning” and “pity in poetry.” Thomas singles him out to justify his poetics probing into the mystery of human life:

My one and noble heart has witnesses
In all love’s countries, that will grope awake... (*Poems*)

It is, however, a measure of Keyes’s critical discernment that in spite of his dislike of certain aspects of Wordsworth’s poetry and personality, he never failed to appreciate what he considered the essential greatness of Wordsworth as a poet of “Tintern Abbey” and of “this unintelligible world.” And in the poem “Not From this Anger,” Thomas offers a sober, unprejudiced estimate of Keyes’s poetics on the nature of Wordsworth’s genius comparing him with Owen’s poetic tradition:

Not from this anger after
Refusal struck like a bell under water
Shall her smile breed that mouth, behind the mirror,
That burns along my eyes. (100)

But the aesthetic of these War poets had undergone a steady transformation by the time they had been composing the first book of poems. Keyes’s remark in the poem “The Bards” on the War poets indicates this alteration in taste:

Now it is time to remember the winter festivals
Of the old world, and see their rafted halls
Hung with hard holly; tongues’ confusion; slow
Beat of the heated blood in those great palaces
Decked with the pale and sickled mistletoe;
And voices dying when the blind bard rises
Robed in his servitude, and the high harp
Of sorrow sounding, stills those upturned faces. (*CV*)

Echoing Owen’s poetics as revealed in the poem “Insensibility,” “whatever mourns when many leave their shores ... whatever shares ... the eternal reciprocity of tears” (122), Keyes had censured the morbid element in the war-time poetry:

... quick hands in darkness groping
Pluck the sad harp; sad heart forever hoping

Valhalla may be songless, enter
The moment of your glory, out of clamour
Moulding your vision to such harmony
That drunken heroes cannot choose but honour
Your stubborn blinded pride, your inward winter. (CV)

In the poem "Insensibility," Owen commenting on the sensual and sentimental language of his five contemporary War poets, Ian Hamilton, Rupert Brooke, Charles Sorley, Isaac Rosenberg, and Edward Thomas who "by choice ... made themselves immune ... to pity and what moans in man ... before the last sea and hapless stars," defines what is not poetry:

But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns,
That they should be as stones;
Wretched are they, and mean
With paucity that never was simplicity. (CV)

Thomas's poem "When All My Five and Country Senses See" throws light on the direction of the Second World War poets'— Prince, Fuller, Rook, Rhys, and Lewis— insensibility and "old men's placidity" between the "five senses." "And when blind sleep drops on the spying senses, / The heart is sensual, though five eyes break" (*Poems* 146).

The War poets, Prince, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys realized that it is not enough for the contemporary poet to follow in the footsteps of the older master Wordsworth for their "hotted, fountain heart once fell in puddles ... round the parched worlds ... (*Poems* 25). Thomas derides the War poets's romanticism in several of their light verses and parodies:

To take to give is all, return what is hungrily given
Puffing the pounds of manna up through the dew to heaven,
The lovely gift of the gab bangs back on a blind shaft. (*Poems* 105)

The War poets became increasingly serious and speculative and their mirth gradually lost its spontaneity. Day Lewis confirms their sudden shift from frustrations and doubts to desires:

Unseen the sunburst Aprils

And the bloomed Octobers—
Oh, tremulous rivers danced by primula light!
Oh, blaze of marigold where love has been! (273)

Thomas's poem "On no Work of Words" reveals the War poets's deliberate effort to relieve the inward tension. Their transition from romanticism to modernism, Wordsworth to Auden and Thomas, from "three lean months" to "the rich year," "the body belly" to "the big purse of my body," "no work of words" to the poet's "task" and "craft" proves, however, much too quick. Thomas comments:

To lift to leave from treasures of man is pleasing death
That will rake at last all currencies of the marked breath
And count the taken, forsaken mysteries in a bad dark. (*Poems*)

The War poets's hankering for eternity and transcendental art, their desperate effort for freedom reminds the readers of the lines from Yeats:

Everything that man esteems
Endures a moment or a day.
Love's pleasure drives his love away,
The painter's brush consumes his dreams;
The herald's cry, the soldier's tread
Exhaust his glory and his might.... (181)

Linda M. Shires writes that "examining the Oxford scene during the early years of war, one finds the same division of interest among the literati who were expected to become the successors of Auden" (57).

A war poem required the massive idiom and the sublime manner appropriate to the tenor, and Auden's *Poems* (1928), Thomas's *18 Poems*, and Sassoon or Owen's war poems, "a humming shell," "the humming pole of summer lanes," and "an emanation from the earth or sky" (*DCP* 216) provided the supreme example in the genre. Day Lewis points out:

Moon-floods heighten the valley with glimmerings like
The feel of a memory before it is born:
The stars burn to deliver
Their pregnant souls of the dying. (272)

Thomas, in the poem "Because the Pleasure-Bird Whistles," critiques that the War poets must be receptive before they become active:

Because the pleasure-bird whistles after the hot wires,
Shall the blind horse sing sweeter?

Convenient bird and beast lie lodged to suffer
The supper and knives of a mood. (*Poems* 40)

In Thomas's comments, what the readers note particularly in the poems of Prince, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys is lack of receptivity as the aesthetic process evident in Auden's *Poems* (1928) and Thomas's *18 Poems* overpower them completely that their five senses directing their own creative enterprise. MacNeice explains:

They breathe the air of war and yet the tension
Admits, beside the slogans it evokes,
An interest in philately or pelota
Or private jokes. (171)

The poetic ideal of Sassoon and Owen seemed to supplant, even if temporarily, Wordsworth's in Lewis and Keyes. "And the sirens cry in the dark morning" (*MCP*). Thomas comments:

Her flesh was meek as milk, but this skyward statue
With the wild breast and blessed and giant skull
Is carved from her in a room with a wet window
In a fiercely mourning house in a crooked year. (*Poems* 25)

It may be said that Auden and Thomas represent for the War poets's two contrary poles and their changing evaluations of these two poets reflect the tension in the inner drama. The Eliotian "historic sense" gives Auden a clairvoyant insight into the past and the present, and Auden's poems of the early phase throws light on the distinctiveness of each epoch and also the continuity of movement, "that breaks one bone to light with a judgement clout" (*Poems* 25), and clarifies the task of the poet in the pre-war context. MacNeice explains Auden's pursuit of historic consciousness, the language of irony:

He carried a ball of darkness with him unrolled it
To find his way by in streets and rooms
Every train or boat he took was Charon's ferry,
He never left the Catacombs.... (197)

Deploring his contemporary's endeavour to find individual identity, his "satisfaction upon" his "difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors...", Eliot writes that "... if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" ("Tradition" 168-69). To the Rilkean eclectic Auden, tradition is "this monumental ... argument of the hewn voice, gesture and psalm," and even the most powerful minds are subject to historical necessity. MacNeice unfolds Auden's language of existential reality, passivity, poetic justice and invulnerable irony:

If there has been no spiritual change of kind
Within our species since Cro-Magnon Man
And none is looked for now while the millennia cool,
Yet each of us has known mutations in the mind
When the world jumped and what had been a plan
Dissolved and rivers gushed from what had seemed a pool. (217)

In contradistinction to Auden's thesis of tradition, Thomas holds that the historical conditions change continually as one phase of history gives place to another, and there are corresponding changes in the realm of thought and poetry. MacNeice, rendering the transmutations of Thomas's poetic patterns, justifies the need for poetic licence:

For every static world that you or I impose
Upon the real one must crack at times and new
Patterns from new disorders open like a rose
And old assumptions yield to new sensation.... (*MCP*)

So what Thomas's transitional poem *The Map of Love* and his early poetry, *18 Poems*, and *25 Poems* suggest is that a poet must have an awareness of the great artistic heritage; but the poetry of the past cannot fully serve the demands of the present, and in this sense the relevance of past ideals and models is strictly limited. Thomas points out his significant contribution of individual talent to the poetic tradition:

Morning smack of the spade that wakes up sleep,
Shakes a desolate boy who slits his throat
In the dark of the coffin and sheds dry leaves.... (*Poems*)

Ackerman, analyzing Thomas's life and work, observes that,

An important theme developed in *The Map of Love*, and one that had long troubled Thomas's questioning mind, was the theme of art as illusion, of religion as illusion. Allied to this religious nature was an unwavering honesty he always questioned the validity of his experience, probing what were for him the fundamental truths of art and religion. (84)

Echoes of Auden, especially of his early verses are frequent in Prince's *Poems* (1938). Auden's approach to Walter de la Mare whom he regarded as his pride is also indicated. "In the sniffed and poured snow on the tip of the tongue of the year / That clouts the spittle like bubbles with broken rooms." There are also several references from the War poets to de la Mare's genius and personality influencing Auden's poems of the early phase. MacNeice records:

All the lost interpretations,
All the unconsummated consummations,
All the birds that flew and left the big sky empty
Come back throwing shadows on our patience. (211)

In the sonnet sequence "O Dreams, O Destinations," Day Lewis speaks of the War poets's delight in Auden's musical art:

They are the lispings rushes in a stream—
Grace-notes of a profound, legato dream. (216)

The couplet shows the War poets's appreciation of the varying notes in Auden, of both grandeur and lyric grace, although they are here fascinated more by the lyre than by the trumpet, "the wild tongue."

The War poets, who had articulated the verbal melody and message of Wordsworth, "a slave's dream on ... bivouac hearth," chose, being conscious of their "limited objective" and their future, the modern poets Auden and Thomas as their model of perfection. Prince's yearning for freedom, despite his unambiguous choice for Auden's historic sense and structure, stood divided and defeated between personal love and impersonal poetry, between love and fear, "the sighing distances beyond... each height of happiness" and "the vista drowned ... in gold-dust haze." Day Lewis comments:

But look, the old illusion still returns,
Walking a field-path where the succor burns
Like summer's eye, blue luster-drops of noon,
And the heart follows it and freshly yearns.... (219)

But his contemporary poets, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys, confirmed their faith in the paradoxical structure of Thomas's *18 Poems* "as succory holds a gem of halcyon ray..." and prepared themselves to "cast image" of their joys ... beyond" their "senses' reach" (217). Day Lewis evaluates their changeover:

Summer burns out, its flower will tarnish soon—
Deathless illusion, that could so relay
The truth of flesh and spirit, sun and clay
Singing for once together all in tune. (220)

The War poet Prince's *Poems* contains an indirect reference to the sublimity of Auden's *Poems* (1928), "this yellow grave of sand and sea". Three early poems of Prince touch on Auden's friendship, his tragic destiny and his steadfast devotion to his mission. The nobility of Auden's character, "the dry tide-master," the breadth of his vision, "a sovereign strip," the alternation of sonority and delicate cadence in his music, "the heavenly music over the sand" are all recognized by Prince even in his nonage. Thomas relays:

We lying by seasand, watching yellow
And the grave sea, mock who deride
Who follow the red rivers, hollow
Alcove of words out of cicada shade.... (145)

But notwithstanding his appreciation of Thomas's *18 Poems*, "a calling for colour calls with the wind ... that's grave and gay as grave and sea," "sounds with the grains ... hiding the golden mountains and mansions ... of the grave, gay, seaside land," the dominating influence, Prince's "heart's blood" in the early phase was Auden, "the golden weather":

The lunar silences, the silent tide
Lapping the still canals, the dry tide-master
Ribbed between desert and water storm,
Should cure our ills of the water
With a one-coloured calm.... (*Poems*)

Day Lewis's referring to Prince's journey as " ... youth time passes down a colonnade / Shafted with alternating light and shade. / All's dark or dazzle there..." (217) marks the discovery or rediscovery of Auden. "Only your fire, which cast them, still seems true" (218). The liberating effect of Auden's verse and the sublime heights that his poetry attained and encompassed are alluded to in MacNeice's poem "London Rain" that implies the intensification of Prince's bewilderment:

The rain of London pimples
The ebony street with white
And the neon-lamps of London
Stain the canals of night

And the park becomes a jungle
In the alchemy of night. (183)

Prince re-discovered Auden, especially his great poem *Poems* (1928), under Spender's enthusiastic guidance. "Oh youth-charmed hours, that made an avenue / Of fountains playing us on to love's full view." MacNeice also claims in the poem "The Return" that Spender was instrumental in turning Prince's attention to the aesthetic beauty of Auden's early work:

Notwithstanding which, notwithstanding
The hospital—the icicles round the landing—
Expecting Birth, we know that it will come
Sooner or later banding. (*MCP*)

There are unmistakable reminiscences and verbal echoes of Auden's *Poems* in the early verses of Spender. The allegorical quality which Spender admires in Auden's poetry and which is illustrated in several passages of *Twenty Poems* (1930)—"These trumpets snored / Less golden by my side, when you were there" (18) and "Avoid these chasms and steep gaps in space / Sense should grope on all fours..." (19)-- with the corresponding massiveness of idiom and the majestic measure conveying a severally controlled emotion are Auden's chief legacies to the poetic tradition. Spender owed much to Auden, acknowledged as the "undisputed conqueror," in discovering his own idiom, and the impact, not merely in stray verbal echoes, but in the whole tenor and verse movement, is fully perceptible in *Twenty Poems*. His long study of Auden's *Poems* (1930) helps to strengthen the impact.

Fuller's poems "August 1938" and "The Giraffe" record the young disciple's emulatory zeal, but the sense of distance is manifest. He speaks of Auden's significant, proleptic form but there is an equal emphasis on the other, more human, aspects of Thomas indicating the young poet's attempt at identifying with his venerable predecessor, Yeats. That the thought of Auden occupied Fuller's mind in a much greater degree since 1938 is evident from references in the lines of Thomas:

An enamoured man alone by the twigs of his eyes, two fires,
Camped in the drug-white shower of nerves and food,
Savours the lick of the times through a deadly wood of hair
In a wind that plucked a goose,
Nor ever, as the wild tongue breaks its tombs,
Rounds to look at the red, wagged root. (*Poems*)

Fuller's response to Auden's musical art is intenser; but it indicates the same duality as noted in the early phase of Day Lewis, his struggle for an identification with Auden's art song that is never really realized. Thomas comments: "Over the choir minute I hear the hour chant..." (89). His poem "It is the Sinners' Dust-tongued Bell" signifies despair, a feeling that Fuller would never be able to probe its depths:

Time's coral saint and the salt grief drown a foul sepulchre
And a whirlpool drives the prayerwheel;
Moonfall and sailing emperor, pale as their tide-print,
Hear by death's accident the clocked and dashed-down spire
Strike the sea hour through bellmetal. (*Poems*)

The lines, as they convey half-facetiously, suggest a certain aloofness; the aloofness is prompted by a sense of awe. But the other references in the early poems of Fuller partly humanize Thomas and temper this reverential awe with a half-hesitant feeling of affinity. The allusion to Day Lewis's answer to Auden's inspiration in the symphonic poem "A Time to Dance" is clear evidence that Fuller was also reading Day Lewis's art song during this period. Fuller's natural modesty prevented him from drawing any explicit parallel between Auden and Thomas, but the analogy was there in his mind according to Day Lewis: "Their fingers itch to tear it and unwrap / The flags, the roundabouts, the gala day" (*DCP* 217).

To say that Rook's self-doubts, his awareness of his own limitations in the poems "Oxford," "War," and "The Cloud Darkens" forced him to abandon the unattainable pursuit of Auden's aesthetic distance, "Shall I, struck on the hot and rocking street, / Not spin to stare at an old year," and also his search for parallelism between himself and Thomas is to emphasize only one aspect. The approach of the two poets, Auden and Thomas, to life and to their poetic vocations was fundamentally different, "toppling and burning in the muddle of towers and galleries"; and although in the arduous poetic process of Auden and Thomas Rook may have discovered an edifying pattern, his own destination lay in a contrary direction. Thomas explains:

Time marks a black aisle kindle from the brand of ashes,
Grief with disheveled hands tear out the altar ghost
And a firewind kill the candle. (*Poems*)

MacNeice's remark on Rook's poems indicates this alteration in taste. "And doom all night is lapping at the door, / Should I remember that I ever met you-- / Once in another world?" (*MCP* 189).

In the poem "General Martel," Rhys does not merely suggest that there has been an increase in the powers of comprehension; there is also the implicit contention that Auden's metaphysical thought no longer strikes the poets as profound. Thomas conveys: "Because there stands, one story out of the bum city, / That frozen wife whose juices drift like a fixed sea / Secretly in statuary... (*Poems*). To Lewis, Auden's *Poems* was a great liberating force; it brought in new enlightenment and delivered his contemporaries from the human bondage of Romanticism. But in the process it also created its own dogma and set of beliefs. "Grief with drenched book and candle christens the cherub time / From the emerald, still bell; and from the pacing weather-cock / The voice of bird on coral prays" (*Poems*). Keyes perceived that Auden comprehended and articulated his age, but he was also circumscribed by his own historical era. "There is loud and dark directly under the dumb flame, / Storm, snow, and fountain in the weather of fireworks, / Cathedral calm in the pulled house..." (*Poems*). MacNeice observes that Keyes held himself from Auden with a cautious aloofness and never regarded him with the pride of personal possession as he did Owen:

And when the night came down upon the bogland
With all-enveloping wings
The coal-black turfstacks rose against the darkness
Like the tombs of nameless kings. (*MCP* 188)

The statement is a half-truth; it does not take into account Keyes's peculiar temperament and the individuality of his approach quite identical to MacNeice's.

In the poem "The Child at the Window," Lewis's dialectic "the salt person and blasted place" (*Poems*) brings him very close to the deterministic concept of Sassoon, "time blots our gladness out... let this with love abide..." (*CV* 90). But his observation that his contemporary War poet Prince's juvenilia appeared to have been content with "the shaft of darkness," "earth's-concentric mysteries" in the early poetry of the Romantic Wordsworth, "from blank and leaking winter sails the child in colour," recognized some scope for volitional choice, "a cypress walk to some romantic grave" (*DCP*), in the Word-concentric mystery of Auden's *Poems*. He could refuse in his mature individual collection of poems to submit to the restrictive and retrogressive dogmas of the modern Auden and widen the area of thought and culture. To quote the words of Thomas: "Forever it is a white child in the dark-skinned summer / Out of the font of bone and plants at that stone tocsin / Scales the blue wall of spirits... (*Poems*). But he chose to uphold those dogmas as absolute thus missing the purely relative significance of "the burden of the mystery," the "blessed mood" and "the still sad music of humanity" heard in Wordsworth's later poem "Tintern Abbey" and the "spirit free" of Sassoon, his "sad heart" singing "the windows of the world are blurred with tears." Thomas also comments: "Shakes, in crabbed burial shawl, by sorcerer's insect woken, / Ding dong from the mute turrets" (*Poems*).

While Lewis was gentle in underscoring the sentiments of philosophic love of Prince, Keyes was satirical of Prince's affective language of passionate love of dogmas. Thomas unfolds: "If the dead starve, their stomachs turn to tumble / An upright man in the antipodes / Or spray-based and rock-chested sea... (*Poems*). Before the War broke, Prince was dreaming rapturously about deathless poetry conceived as "emotion recollected in tranquility," "that breathless inspiration ...of pampas grasss, crab-tree's attentive pose." And even after the outbreak of War he remained satisfied with Auden's current ethical and religious ideas, "seaparsley" and "the urchin grief" (*Poems*). Prince did not set himself, as Wordsworth did later, to the task of exploring the human heart, "a hyleg image ...nutmeg, civet," relieved of the trappings of theology. But Keyes hastens to add that Auden was not less gifted than Wordsworth in metaphysical and imaginative powers. Thomas repeats: "I mean by time the cast and curfew rascal of our marriage, / At nightbreak born in the fat side, from an animal bed / In a holy room in a wave" (*Poems*). The implication is that Auden too martyred himself to the immediate needs of his age, "that diamond-point, extreme ... brilliance ... on ... a classic theme." Keyes's moral indignation at Prince's "youthtime" rapture and affective language is analogical to Owen's anger at Rupert Brook's glorification of legendary war. In the poem "Exposure," Owen disapproves of the defence of war:

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced cast winds that knife us...
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens. (*CV* 119)

The sharp tonal shifts in the War poets from the gay to the serious and from the serious to the gay indicate an effort to communicate contrary experiences, to unfold the swift movements of thought and aesthetic of Auden and Thomas. They were also reminded of the Left-lenient poets's love of Auden's musical structure and the consequent fall, their mixed experiences of love and fear, the non-intellective mode of perception and non-moral attitude of the ideal poetic character: here the self is conceived as barrier against sympathetic identification. "To surrender now is to pay the expensive ogre twice" (*Poems*). Prince's mind is partly abstracted and in such a state of tranced aloofness he is unable to respond fully to the reality of the situation. His experience, however, is

not painful. Then, Auden's process of intensity forces upon Fuller, Rook, and Rhys the thought of death and the vehemence of pain is never experienced. Day Lewis's useful commentary shows that the War poets seek or create a relief situation:

Tonight, as flyers stranded
On a mountain, the battery fading, we tap out
Into a snow-capped void our weakening
Vocations and desires. (274)

He attributes their failure to personal comforts and concerns, their "pinprick" of "sightless hours, and pallor of weeks unquickened." There are several reasons for the abandonment of their dream-project. Distraction, anxiety, and fatigue must have contributed their share; the failure to drown the Audenesque echoes wholly may have proved another obstacle. To quote the words of MacNeice is very convincing: "Sleep to the noise of running water / To-morrow to be crossed, however deep..." (*MCP*).

Thomas's dream-like state in *18 Poems* gives way to a poignant sensation of the brevity of life and poetry. To him the richness of the artistic heritage is both an advantage and a hindrance:

One wound, one mind, spewed out the matter,
One breast gave suck the fever's issue;
From the divorcing sky I learn the double,
The two-framed globe that spun into a score;
A million minds gave suck to such a bud
As forks my eye;
Youth did condense; the tears of spring
Dissolved in summer and the hundred seasons;
One sun, one manna, warmed and fed. (58-59)

Thomas's *18 Poems* demonstrates that the need to assimilate the past is as vital as to drown the echo of the predecessors and carve out an independent path. He projects Thomas Hardy's vision contained in *Poems for the Present and the Past* and Hardy's poem "On an Invitation to the United States" exemplifies the ideal of structure that reconciles contradictions:

My arduous for emprise nigh lost
Since Life has bared its bones to me,
I shrink to seek a modern coast
Whose riper times have yet to be;
Where the new regions claim them free
From that long drip of human tears
Which peoples old in tragedy
Have left upon the centuried years. (*Collected Poems* 97)

To receive the total impact of the experience one must be along with the poet the full weight of human agony, "that long drip of human tears." In *18 Poems*, Thomas emulating Hardy absorbs within himself the pain and the desolation afflicting the human heart, "the human halves" of the poets of thirties and retain only their quintessences. The problem of reconciling tradition with individual talent becomes increasingly more difficult with the succeeding poem *25 Poems*. He affirms:

And death shall have no dominion.
No more may gulls cry at their ears
Or waves break loud on the seashores;
Where blew a flower may a flower no more
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;
Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of characters hammer through daisies.... (*Poems* 31)

In "Poetic Origins and Final Phases," Harold Bloom, underlining "the relation of poetic strength to poetic influence," writes that "poetic strength comes only from a triumphant wrestling with the greatest of the dead, and from an even more triumphant solipsism" (218).

The War poets's rejection of Auden, "the ghost of time," "an age coarse custom has buried alive" like Prince's repudiation of Thomas's "life-blood" miss the contrary direction of the poet's mind and art. But the thesis of art-conscious Lefties, Day Lewis, Spender, and MacNeice, on their acceptance and rejection of Auden has the neatness of a diagram. The knowledge of contemporary climate, the transience of their poetry, the omnipresence of Auden's art, and equally the unending attendant pain chills their mind's responsiveness to Auden's cold beauty. Their pain is born of involvement, of gnawing self-consciousness associated intensity with horror. MacNeice, whose perceptive commentary helps the readers much to understand the difficult and remarkable passage of the poem "On No Work of Words," suggests that Auden's *Poems* contain an apprehension of an ultimate reality which is impersonal. He persuasively argues that Auden does not represent a

mere impersonal order and stresses the Christian implications of the poems: "The boom of dawn that left her sleeping, showing / The flowers mirrored in the mahogany table" (*MCP*). There were other needs and aspirations, "conscience, need, imagination," equally compulsive ; and although the readers can note the choice of a particular norm at a particular phase, the inner struggle continued throughout. "The fabric of tears; but in truth / it is we, not time bleed" (*DCP*). Day Lewis remembers:

We lament not one year only
Gone with its chance and change
Disavowed, its range of blessings unbought or unpaid for,
But all our time lost, profitless, misspent. (273)

Harold Bloom holds that "initial love for the precursor's poetry is transformed rapidly enough into revisionary strife, without which individualism is not possible" (219).

There is, however, an added realization that there is a higher mode of knowledge in Thomas's early poetry the attainment of which liberates their mind from pain and death. Thomas records:

And death shall have no dominion
Dead mean naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot.... (*Poems*)

Auden's contemporaries were struck by Thomas's self-effacement of the poet's personality, the impersonal, objective treatment of natural phenomena, and the serene, impassioned quality of *25 Poems*. "Look, in what scarlet character they speak! / For this their russet and rejoicing week / Trees spend a year of suns on their pride" (*DCP* 169). Day Lewis in *Overtures to Death*, especially in the sonnets "O Dreams O Destinations," Spender in *The Still Centre*, and MacNeice in *The Earth Compels* speak in a new voice; their poems demonstrate, if the grandeur of Auden is partly sacrificed, there is a distinct gain in economy and in directness:

Our freedom as free lances
Advances towards its end;
The earth compels, upon it
Sonnets and birds descend;
And soon, my friend,
We shall have no time for dances. (104)

Auden's contemporaries moved in a new direction—the accent strikes the observer refreshingly modern—but the transition remains uncompleted. Harold Bloom remarks that " all poetic odes of incarnation are therefore Immortality odes, and all of them rely upon a curious divinity that the ephebe has imparted successfully, not to himself, but to the precursor" ("Poetic Origins").

Apparently, the poem "On no Work of Words" representing the *locus classicus* of Thomas's *The Map of Love* offers a comparative and contrastive estimate of the time-conscientious poets, Day Lewis, Spender, and MacNeice and the life-conscious War poets, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys. The issues involved are wider and cover the whole range of aesthetic transcendence and intensity of Auden. He seeks to correlate two apparently divergent areas of experience:

Ancient woods of my blood, dash down to the nut of the seas
If I take to burn or return this world which is each man's work. (*Poems*)

In tracing the varying moments of the War poets's responsiveness to the poetic process of Auden and Thomas and their candour, Thomas recognizes the separateness of each mood:

After the funeral, mule praises, brays,
Windshake of sailshaped ears, muffle-toed tap
Tap happily of one peg in the thick
Grave's foot, blinds down the lids, the teeth in black,
The spittled eyes, the salt ponds in the sleeves.... (*Poems*)

The contrariness is not dissolved, and the thought-process resembles a flow rather than a cluster. To reconcile the comic vision with the frightening spectre of the shrunken mood of the fellow-beings would involve the telescoping of two different perspectives. This Auden seldom achieves; what is noted chiefly is a juxtaposition of contraries. In some poems of the early poetry and in the transitional poem, however—particularly in the later phase—Thomas comes close to an inclusive vision and paradoxical structure. MacNeice felicitates:

The first train passes and the windows groan,
Voices will hector and your voice become
A drum in tune with theirs, which all last night
Like sap that fingered through a hungry tree
Asserted our one night's identity. (*MCP*)

Auden's mockery deepens the poignancy of the situation and not just serving as a relief, according to MacNeice.

MacNeice sensing a change of heart in the War poets from Auden to Thomas, comments: "the Stranger in the wings waiting for his cue ... the fuse is always laid to some annunciation" because they felt that "surprises keep" them "living..." (MCP). Lewis and Keyes understood that the War poet must, if he is to find his own bearing in an evolving society, discern the laws of change and the shifting patterns of ideas and norms, and express the deepest urges of the contemporary epoch. It is anticipated that the War poets are moving to break the influence of Auden and make up their mind to emulate the ideals of Thomas, Sassoon, and Owen

(Though this for her is a monstrous image blindly
Magnified out of praise; her death was a still drop;
She would not have me sinking in the holy
Flood of her heart's fame; she would lie dumb and deep
And need no druid of her broken body). (Poems)

To the War poets, the archetypal form of Thomas stands as a stark contrast to Auden's historic archetype. Obviously, Thomas's early works and his transitional work vindicate the successful process of creativity and productivity, his poetic pattern and happiness. The War poets, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys heaved a sigh of relief as the world-centric Thomas's *18 Poems* offers a hope for poetry for their poetic mind fumbling around Auden's "foreign-looking luggage" and "the unheard-of constellations wheel" (MCP 193), his historic consciousness involving "a perception" of "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country" ("Tradition" 169). They perceived "like wavering antennae feel ... around the sliding limber towers of Wall Street ... into the hinterland of their own future ... behind this excessive annunciation towers"; while "tracking their future selves through a continent of strangeness," they moved like "the liner ... to the magnet" (MCP). MacNeice points out the rationale underlying the War poets's choice of Thomas:

With prune-dark eyes, thick lips, jostling each other
These, disinterred from Europe, throng the deck
To watch their hope heave up in steel and concrete
Powerful but delicate as a swan's neck.... (MCP)

This explains why Thomas's de-idealized earth-centric poetic tradition is deeper than Auden's ideological historicism; Auden's Word-centric historic consciousness can be learnt through study and intellectual effort, but Thomas's de-centred, ex-centric poetic ideal demands a different kind of understanding—the reader must be able to experience his vision. While Prince remains dilemmatic till the end, his contemporary poets were unambiguous in their choice. "In deathbeds of orchards the boat dies down / And the bait is drowned among hayricks... (Poems 38).

The individual voice of Thomas is that the task of a poet is to render the journey of his active mind; and if his rendering is to gain depth, he must undergo the whole journey himself and assimilate the universal experience into his own personal consciousness. This is what his poetry has amply demonstrated:

After the feast of tear-stuffed time and thistles
In a room with a stuffed fox and stale fern
I stand for, for this memorial's sake, alone
In the shrivelling hours with dead.... (Poems)

MacNeice critiques the grand finale of the poetic journey of the War poets, their dreams and destinations:

But dream was dream and love was love and what
Happened—even if the judge said
It should have been otherwise—and glitter glitters
And I am I although the dead are dead. (210)

On the whole, the poetic functioning of the War poets has been "in a warring absence," "pulled it in through" and "wrapped it around him, all ... his faith and his despair a ball of black ... and he himself at the centre of the ball" (MCP 198).

Auden's idea of the Eliotian historic sense of metaphysical tradition and of poet's personality, "the shrubbery dripped, a crypt ... of leafmould dreams ... a tarnished ... arrow over an empty stable ... shifted a little in the almost wind" (MCP 191-92), as suggested in *Poems* (1928) and *Poems* (1930) are allegorically narrated in the prose stories of *The Map of Love*, but the stress of the narrative voice is a continuation of the poet's tone in the poem "After the Funeral." MacNeice gives a sketch-map of Thomas's poetics, his poetic language and poetic functioning:

Going upstairs to die in a bare room
He tried to square his accounts; lying in bed
He summoned home his deeds drew back
Sixty years' expended thread.... (198)

He unfolds the plot and the technique of Thomas's stories as well as the communicative functioning, the structural concerns of Auden, his contemporaries, and the War poets:

The slurred and drawled and crooning sounds,
The blurred and suave and sidling smells,
The webs of dew the bells of buds,
The sun going down in crimson suds—
This is on me and these are yours. (191)

Thomas's query, again, leads to a consideration of the nature of knowledge itself in the first story "The Tree." The early assumption of Thomas raises the pertinent query in the stories: Was Auden less concerned about humanity because of the breadth of his knowledge, or because of the inadequacy of his vision? Thomas as "a sudden angry tree" does not reject philosophy or the rational mode; what he attempts is a synthesis of thought and experience, and this is more clearly brought out in *18 Poems* in which "a horse neighed / And all the curtains flew out of / The windows; the world was open" (*MCP*).

Auden's intellect is divorced from actuality, "the old story is true of charms fading"; and while his erudition helps him to arrive at a satisfying system of thought, it also alienates him from the human situation. According to Thomas, knowledge gives clarity, but knowledge is meaningful only when it is based on concrete experiencing. Auden's vision is in this sense partial. The tone of his poetry is dialectic, a complex structure of "the pain or the panic" adopting the ironic technique of the cold enemies and cold war towards the poets of experiential truth and paradoxical structure, "massing for action on the cold horizon." MacNeice, outlining the summum bonum of the second story "Enemies" which reflects Auden's *Poems* and Thomas's *25 Poems* as "flotsam and wrack; the bag of old emotions," compares and contrasts the aesthetic process of Auden and Thomas:

The same but difference and he found the difference
A surgeon's knife without an anaesthetic;
He had known of course that this happens
But had not guessed the pain of it or the panic.... (*MCP*)

Thomas's range may have been less ample than Auden's, but he chooses the arena of human passions in preference to grand passions, "calyx upon calyx, Canterbury bells in the breeze," depth to sublimity, paradox to irony, "the powdered faces moving ... like seaweed in a pool." This is quite obvious in *25 Poems* which Thomas refers to in the allegorical story "The Dress." MacNeice relays:

Being shortsighted himself could hardly see it—
The white skirts in the grey
Glade and the swell of the music
Lifting the white sails. (193)

Thomas does not say that he sacrifices the grand passion to the human heart; on the other hand, he claims, as MacNeice pertinently points out, that he is attempting a more arduous flight than Auden's, that his sonnet sequence "Altarwise by Owl-Light" is to be the veritable epic of the human soul and musical excellences: "Life in a day: he took his girl to the ballet."

Thomas, as it were, reconstructs Auden's intentions, and Auden also modifies his earlier judgement that there is no music in Thomas's *18 Poems* "raging for the personal glory," "the rightness of a god" (*Look Stranger!* 17) comparable to "forests of green" (13), "sounds of riveting (15), "a wild estate" (29). In depicting the inner world of man—and more specifically, the human heart—Thomas makes a sacrifice; his poetic powers could serve much higher needs, but he employs them to the humbler task of exploring human experience. The nature of the experience that Thomas seeks to convey in the sonnets is further elaborated in MacNeice's poem which suggests that Thomas's task was more difficult than Auden's:

Waking at times in the night she found assurance
In his regular breathing but wondered whether
It was really worth it and where
The river had flowed away
And where were the white flowers. (194)

The story "The Orchards" records symbolically MacNeice's final attainment of the significant form in *Poems* (1935) synonymous with pain and puzzlement: "Till his sickness took him ... he could not leave the house," "his eyes lost their colour," "his speech began to wander," and "memory ebbed." His further information that Thomas is deeper than Auden implies value-judgement; the inner reality of the human mind—its groping in darkness for light, for self-realization—is richer in depth than the more imposing actions on the cosmic plane that Auden considers his appointed mission to render. MacNeice qualifies this comparison by stating that Thomas's depth does not necessarily indicate an intrinsic superiority. "And his soul went out on the ebbing / Tide in a trim boat..." (196).

The story "The Visitor" narrates the story of Day Lewis's poetry showing a continuous development of his consciousness, a gradual ripening of mental powers, and Thomas's penetrative insight is a product and also a part of contemporary culture. MacNeice perceives:

It all began so easy
With bricks upon the floor
Building motley houses
And knocking down your houses
And always building more. (*MCP*)

Once the assumption of uninterrupted evolutionary growth is granted the natural corollary is that each successive generation is more advanced in thought than the preceding one.

The ideas and values that the ancestors acquired with great effort and through considerable struggle become the natural acquisitions of their descendants, and what was regarded as recondite at an earlier age is comprehended even by young minds at a later stage of history. MacNeice relates the experiential truth of Spender's poetry:

Until the day she tumbled
And broke herself in two
And her legs and arms were hollow
And her yellow head was hollow
Behind her eyes of blue. (196-97)

Auden's theology must have seemed profound and abstruse in his own time, but after the interval of a decade and a half it is now well within the range of Thomas not advanced enough in age and maturity, according to Spender.

The poems of the War poets Fuller, Rook, and Rhys do not merely suggest that there has been an increase in the powers of comprehension. Their rejection of Auden's poetic process and acceptance of Thomas's is suggested in the story "The Mouse and the Woman." MacNeice narrates:

And in the city at night where drunken song
Climbed the air like tendrils of vine
He bared a knife and slashed the roots and laid
Another curse on Cain. (*MCP*)

In Prince's poems, there is also the implied contention that Auden's thoughtful aesthetic no longer strikes him as profound, "the gardenias ... became the décor of a funeral." Whereas the diminishing admiration of Lewis and Keyes for the conceptual framework underlying Auden's work necessarily conditions their estimate of the worth of his poetry. "His hands were always clenched, an eagle / Riveted on a world of vice... (*MCP*). The extension of human consciousness does not, however, lessen the historical significance of Sassoon's poetry or the significance of Owen's era. Auden was a great liberating force; he brought in new enlightenment and delivered poetry from the bondage of romanticism. "Going upstairs he built, block upon block, / An Aztec pyramid of sacrifice" (*MCP*). But in the process he also created his own dogma and set of beliefs in human sacrifices. Auden comprehended and articulated his age but he was also circumscribed by his own historical Eliotian era. Thomas makes "words that sets man's joy and suffering there in constellations." To quote Day Lewis's "word over all":

We speak of what we know, but what we have spoken
Truly we know not—
Whether our good may tarnish, our grief to far
Centuries glow not.
The Cause shales off, the Humankind stands forth
A mightier presence,
Flooded by dawn's pale courage, rapt in eve's
Rich acquiescence. (222)

While the first six novelettes provide the clue to the paradox of the time-conscious poets's acceptance and rejection of Auden, the last story "The Map of Love," a narrative version of the symbolic poem "After Funeral," helps the readers understand better why Thomas left both the historic consciousness of Eliot and Auden, the language of complexity and irony, and the structure of historic power and tragic reality. "His wife and three of his three children dead, / An old man lay in the sun, perfectly happy" (*MCP*).

III. Conclusion

In *18 Poems*, Thomas has shown "the pulse of summer in ice" to the grievous poets of the thirties, "the boys of summer in the ruin" (71) and in *25 Poems*, he breaks "the bread" and enacts "the resurrection in the desert ... death from a bandage," "rivers of the dead around my neck" (38), the sonnets "Altarwise by Owl-Light" for his alteregos, Day Lewis, Spender, and MacNeice whose love for Auden's musical structure led "to dusts and

furies." In this regard, Thomas's paradoxical poetic structure, his "intricate image," his "man-iron sidle" (73), "the natural parallel," the language of paradox and co-existence stands as a sharp contrast to Auden's significant form and grand manner "the long world's gentleman," his language of irony and dissociation. Thomas who had shown vicariousness to the afflictions of the poets of the thirties in his early poetry extended the same in his transitional poem to the dilemmatic War poets. "The grave and my calm body are shut to your coming as stone, / And the endless beginning of prodigies suffers open" (*Poems*). His cynical concern, his un pity for the War poets has been his poetic character emanated from--"the singing workmen shape and set and join ... their frail new mansion's stuccoed cove and quoin" (*HCP* 90) and "old lecher with a love on every wind" (*YCP*)-- the poetic tradition of Hardy and Yeats, his "nests of mercies in the rude, red tree". In the poem "The Dead Drummer Hodge," Hardy defines the meaning of percipient and objective structure: "his landmark is a kopje-crest ... that breaks the veldt around" (80). And in "A Bronze Head" Yeats, while underscoring the Eliotian elegant structure, murmurs the mystery of impersonal structure underlying his poetry: "Propinquity had brought / Imagination to that pitch where it casts out / All that is not itself" (289). Thus, Thomas's poetic functioning has been a persistent search for a coherent form that would explain the tragic mystery of life and offer a mode of release for co-existence and this exploratory mind is also evident in his later poems.

Thomas's *Deaths and Entrances* is an impassioned expression of "the extreme of life and death," the War poets's "anxieties of poetic influence," Prince's passion for Auden's aesthetic transcendence, "all sleek and new," "the wildness" of Fuller, Rook, and Rhys for the art of Thomas, and the uncertainties and doubts of Auden's soul, the "vision of terror that it must live through ... had shattered" (*YCP* 289). In Auden's *Another Time*, the readers can witness this anxious search for the meaning of his influence and salvation, culture and anarchy, mortality and immortality in the absurd world of meaninglessness and free play. MacNeice compares:

The luck and pluck and plunge of blood,
The wealth and spilth and sport of breath,
And sleep come down like death above
The fever and the peace of love... (191)

The poststructuralist Harold Bloom holds that "poets tend to think of themselves as stars because their deepest desire is to be an influence, rather than to be influenced, but even in the strongest, whose desire is accomplished, the anxiety of having been formed by influence still persists" (220).

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