

Dylan Thomas's "A Refusal to Mourn..." : A Dramatic Art Song

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Abstract

The dramatic art song "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London" is about Dylan Thomas's optimism in human possibilities for progressive enlightenment in the world rather than about a religious certainty that comes right in the earnest. Thomas's refusal to lament the death of a child in the London air-raid testifies to his refusal to be political, social and historical in his functioning as he has been committing himself to empathize with the tragic sufferings of the fellowbeings since the beginning of his poetic career. His commitment to disinterested goodwill and action stands in contrast to the non-committed functioning of his contemporary poets who refuse to mourn the death of a child due to their being committed to function as poets of their own choice, love, pity and peace, their being adopted to work for the romantic, political, patriotic and historical tradition. Hence this paper, adopting a figurative approach, endeavours to decipher the essential statement and to decode the much compressed, obscure meaning of this popular poem as the critics's focus on the poem is limited more to paraphrasal and stylistic levels.

Keywords: paradoxical, altruistic, pagan, pragmatic, vicarious, empathic, amoral, apolitical, salvation and metempirical.

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INTRODUCTION

Dylan Thomas's paradoxical poetry and dramatic art songs show two distinct and contradicting motifs. His creative quest is marked by a deepening inward tendency of self-exploration, the sceptic poetic process of altruistic impersonal art unlike the visionary contemporary poets, but there is also a parallel effort to project the self into other identities, to attain to a disinterested perception of discreet particulars through an extinction of personality. He adapts Yeats's cyclical pattern and polygonal vision of noble impersonal art to transform the tragic defeat of the adventurous political poets and the adventitious war poets, their tragic love of W.H. Auden's sound pattern into dramatic art songs of tragic gladness, "down, down, down, under the ground ... under the floating villages ... turns the moon-chained and water-wound ... metropolis of fishes." He explains the underlying life-centric process and his salvation to the affected and the affective contemporary poets in the six dramatic art songs written during his poetic career in contrast to Auden's Word-centric metaphysical art songs, his amoral impersonal sound pattern:

There is nothing left of the sea but its sound,
Under the earth the loud sea walks,
In deathbeds of orchards the boat dies down

And the bait is drowned among hayricks....
(Dylan Thomas 38)

Thomas achieves genuine disengagement, the attitude of a true comedian who is both involved in and detached from the events and affairs of life. He emulates the Audenesque objective technique in his songs, but his actual responses to contemporary poets's painful experiences show a keener commitment, "in the fire of his care his love in the high room ... and the child not caring to whom he climbs his prayer ... shall drown in a grief ... and mark the dark eyed wave, through the eyes of sleep ... dragging him up the stairs to one who lies dead (DT 126). Such commitment to vicariousness is incompatible with the paradox of death-in-life, the artistic process of aesthetic amoral detachment and the tragic vision of the metaphysical artist Auden who could no longer find anchorage in disinterested friendship, and his growing disillusionment and sense of alienation find frequent expressions of bitter cynicism, hatred and anger, "and you, my father, there on the sad height ... curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray ... do not go gentle into that good night ... rage, rage against the dying of the light" (DT 48).

Thomas's paradox of life-in-death, his poetic process of impersonal art and his comic vision of tragic

joy is a legacy from the pagan artist Yeats whose “last confession” that his art songs “had brought no fabulous symbol there ... but my heart’s victim and its torturer” explains his poetic process of gentle impersonal art and personal identity in the miseries of the fellow-poets:

And give his own and take his own
And rule in his own right;
And though it loved in misery
Close and cling so tight,
There’s not a bird of day
That dare extinguish that delight. (*Collected Poems*
234)

In *18 Poems*, Thomas loves the poetic process of life-in-death and the sceptic poetic tradition of Hardy and Yeats vis-à-vis Auden’s self-extinguishing intellectual process of death-in-life and John Donne’s metaphysical artistic process, “the cloudy bases of the breath ... translating to the heart ... first characters of birth and death.” That he strikes a discordant note even in his early phase is equally evident:

In the beginning was the secret brain.
The brain was celled and soldered in the thought
Before the pitch was forking to a sun;
Before the veins were shaking in their sieve,
Blood shot and scattered to the winds of light
The ribbed original of love. (83)

Thomas’s *25 Poems*, defying the death-centric Auden’s Eliotian process of metaphysical aesthetic structure, stands as a symbol of life-centric vicarious impersonal art and the Yeatsian sceptic poetic tradition:

In trust and tale I have divided the sense,
Slapped down the guillotine, the blood-red double
Of head and tail made witnesses to this
Murder of Eden and green genesis. (DT 139)

In the transitional poem *The Map of Love*, Thomas articulates what he has done in the early poetry 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. He explains his early pragmatic functioning, his poetic licence, freeplay and freelove as a hope for great poetry to the pre-war poets fallen in love with the Wordsworthian spontaneity and Auden’s aesthetic, amoral metaphysical functioning:

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.... (DT
25)

In contradistinction to Auden’s thesis on 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.

Thomas’s later poem *Deaths and Entrances*, as a whole, stands as a parody of his preceding poems, especially his *18 Poems* of the empathic impersonal art

and the successful pragmatic functioning, “dressed to die, the sensual strut begun ... with my red veins full of money ... in the final direction of the elementary town ... I advance for as long as forever is” (DT 140). He explains the continuity of his comic vision of moral disinterestedness, his self-indicating, self-vindicating, self-dedicating process, the process of cyclical pattern, transfiguration and tragic happiness in his poetry in contrast to Auden’s continuity of his tragic vision of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness, his self-surrendering, self-extinguishing, self-reproving process, the process of historical pattern, the transubstantiation and the tragic wisdom:

Unluckily for a death
Waiting with phoenix under
The pyre yet to be lighted of my sins and days,
And for the woman in shades
Saint carved and sensual among the scudding
Dead and gone, dedicate forever to my self
Though the brawl of the kiss has not occurred
On the clay cold mouth, on the fire
Branded forehead, that could bind
Her constant.... (DT 141-42)

Though there is parallelism between *18 Poems* and *Deaths and Entrances*, the later poem remains separate and distinct in craftsmanship, “winter completes an age ... with its thorough levelling” and free from the sprawling obscurity and ambiguity of the early poem, “the eyes huddle like cattle, doubt ... seeps into the pores and power.” Auden discerns that *Deaths and Entrances* may be read as a comic counterpart to *18 Poems* and its two visions, the humorous and the tragic, “heaven’s tourbillions of rage ... abolish the watchman’s tower ... and delete the cedar grove ... as winter completes an age,” are not presented in an inclusive framework in the early poem of no delimitation, “cold the heart and cold the stove ... ice condenses on the bone” (Auden, *Collected Poems* 271). In *18 Poems*, Thomas does not present the complex ironic vision in which affirmation and negation clash and coalesce or the historic vision, or the socio-political vision but the poetic vision of empathic impersonal art and the sceptic poetic tradition of Hardy and Yeats, “ebbs from the heavy signet ring” according to Auden.

Cecil Day Lewis perceives a self-parody between *18 Poems* and *Deaths and Entrances* in the underlying life-inducing process of cyclical pattern, transfiguration and tragic happiness:

Once again it is summer:
Wildflowers beflag the lane
That takes me away from the golden lands,
Heart-wrung and alone.
The best I can look for, by vale or hill,
A herb they tell me is common enough – self-heal.
(*Collected Poems* 271)

While the early Thomas reveals himself as obscure and vague, more compressed and more

ambiguous, a bolt from the blue throwing an implicit challenge to Auden's poetry, the later Thomas as a poet of greatness obscuring the popularity of Auden among the contemporary poets, "something large ... is barging up beyond the down ... chirruping, hooting, hot of foot" (*Collected Poems* 251) according to Louis MacNeice. He observes:

Beyond that wall what thing befall?
My eye can fly though I must crawl.
Dance and dazzle --- Something bright
Ignites the dumps of sodden cloud,
Loud and laughing, a fiery face.... (252)

Moreover, Day Lewis perceives that Thomas in *18 Poems* is half-envious of Auden's grandeur as a poet of pure aesthetic and his unrivalled greatness as a ruler among the poets of the thirties but in the later art song "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London," he reveals himself as a perfect artist of the Audenesque stature and aesthetic amoral pitiless attitude which is the extinction of the sympathetic impersonal art of his early poem *18 Poems*, "a full gamut of setting and rising." He explains: Something touched him. Always the scene Was to haunt his memory— Not haunt – come alive there, as if what had been But a flowery idea took flesh in the womb Of his solitude, rayed out a rare, real bloom. (*DCP* 286)

MacNeice, having seen Thomas's poetry as implicit of anti-metaphysical inclusive structure, "earth water stars and flesh—the seamless coat ... which is the world, he left" (*MCP* 260), harmony and co-existence, his gradual "movement" as a paradoxical poet of magnanimous disinterestedness and waxing popularity, observes that Thomas's Audenesque pitiless art song "A Refusal..." as a "slow movement" to Auden's aesthetic pattern and to his waning popularity, "place of skull." He foresees Thomas's downfall as imminent as Auden's:

The movement ends, the train has come to a stop
In buttercup fields, the fiddles are silent, the whole
Shoal of silver tessellates the aquarium
Floor, not a bubble rises.... (260-61)

MacNeice forewarns that Thomas's continuous moving away from "andante" to Auden's accomplished artistry and workmanship would endanger his future and see him as depressed and mad as the political poets, the lovers of Auden's sound pattern:

And what happens next on the programme we do not know,
If, the red line topped on the gauge, the fish will go mad in the tank
Accelerando con forza, the sleeper open her eyes
And, so doing, open ours. (261)

The lost political poets of pity, Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and MacNeice understand that

Thomas's accomplished work "A Refusal..." points in a different direction. MacNeice's poem "The Casualty" provides the most exhaustive treatment so far of Thomas's objectivity and dramatic talent, although his argument that Thomas in the later song "A Refusal..." consciously moving away from the element of pity of his early poem *18 Poems* and his early song "Altarwise by Owl-light" to Auden's sound pattern and his immortal art betrays special pleading: For above all that was your gift—to be Surprised and therefore sympathetic, warm Towards things as well as people, you could see The integrity of differences—O did you Make one last integration, find a Form Grow out of formlessness when the Atlantic hid you? (270-71)

MacNeice surprises at Thomas's functioning as an artist of metaphysical sensibility in his dramatic art song "A Refusal..." as an artist of death-centric tradition deviating from his characteristic functioning as a poet of life-centric tradition, "lyrical surprise" (270) although he has achieved the unified sensibility, the fusion of contrary emotional identities, the paradoxical structure of dramatic instinct and power in his poetry.

While it is true that Thomas's major poetry records his deepest personal anxieties, the readers can note at the same time his keen interest in dramatic art song, his ambition to make a significant contribution to this genre. In *18 Poems* written for the resurrection of the fallen political poets, he hints at his ambition to attempt the art song of Auden's grandeur and structure on the line of the Yeatsian life-centric cyclical pattern: All all and all the dry worlds lever, Stage of the ice, the solid ocean, All from the oil, the pound of lava. City of spring, the governed flower, Turns in the earth that turns the ashen Towns around on a wheel of fire. (DT 26)

In *25 Poems*, Thomas is ambitious to make a great contribution to the genre of dramatic art song that Auden has done in metaphysical art songs: Man was the scales, the death birds on enamel, Tail, Nile, and snout, a saddler of the rushes, Time in the hourless houses Shaking the sea-hatched skull, And, as for oils and ointments on the flying grail, All-hollowed man wept for his white apparel. (DT 75)

Thomas proves his mettle as an artist of dramatic songs in the sequence of sonnets "Altarwise by Owl-light" written for the salvation of the disgraced lovers of Auden's immortal art. He uncovers the *leit-motif* of his sonnets:

Clings to her drifting hair, and climbs;
And he who taught their lips to sing
Weeps like the risen sun among
The liquid choirs of his tribes. (DT)

Thomas's early dramatic art song of gentle impersonal art, "my nest of mercies in the rude, red tree" (Thomas, *Collected Poems* 38) designed on Yeats's Byzantium poems, his paradox of life-in-death and his pagan poetic tradition, "my ghost in his metal neptune ... forged in man's mineral" vis-à-vis Auden's Eliotian amoral aesthetic impersonal art, his paradox of death-in-life and his metaphysical tradition, "man was Cadaver's masker, the harnessing mantle ... windily master of man was the rotten fathom" makes him a poet in the process of divination, a poet of success, popularity and influence among the poets of the thirties, Auden, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, "this was the god of beginning in the intricate seawhirl ... and my images roared and rose on heaven's hill" (DT).

In the transitional dramatic art song "After the Funeral," Thomas sings for the freedom of the impassive pre-war poets, Fuller, Rook and Rhys oscillating between the Wordsworthian process of spontaneous personality and Auden's Eliotian process of extinction of personality, the passive Prince in between Auden's art and personal love and the active poet Alun Lewis divided in his love between Wordsworth and Siegfried Sassoon and the heroic poet Sidney Keyes in between Wordsworth and Wilfred Owen. He explains:

The rod bends low, diving land,
And through the Sundered water crawls
A garden holding to her hand
With birds and animals.... (DT)

During the transitional period, Thomas aspires to compose a few art songs of the Audenesque manner and the Yeatsian focus to "cure" the contemporary war poets's "ills" and their divided approach, "sounds with the grains," to Auden's "heavenly music over the sand." He envisions:

Bound by a sovereign strip, we lie,
Watch yellow, wish for wind to blow away
The strata of the shore and drown red rock;
But wishes breed not, neither
Can we fend off rock arrival,
Lie watching yellow until the golden weather
Breaks, O my heart's blood, like a heart and hill. (DT 145)

Thomas means the Yeatsian dramatic songs of cyclical pattern and magnanimous impersonal art quite distinct from the divided, dissociated sensibility of the political poets, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, "ding dong from the turrets," the metaphysical sensibility of Auden and his aesthetic pattern "I mean by time the cast and curfew rascal of our marriage" (89).

In the later dramatic art song "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by, Fire, of a Child in London," Thomas explores how far the contemporary poets's principal aim to write poems of immortal greatness, his own aim of offering hope for poetry and happiness to the afflicted contemporary poets is realized. He

contradistinguishes his committed functioning as a poet of life of birth and death, altruistic disinterestedness from the contemporary poets's social, political and historical interestedness, their non-committed, evasive and refusing role during war time:

He who blew the great fire in
And died on a hiss of flames
Or walked the earth in the evening
Counting the denials of the grains.... (DT)

In "Poem in October," he examines how far Owen's dictum that poetry of eternal pity and pacifism is relevant or irrelevant to the poetry of war poets and the realistic poets, how far Eliot's principle that all immortal poetry is ironic and metaphysical sounds perfect to Auden's poetry and how far Yeats's sober and sagacious position that great poetry is ahistorical, apolitical and asocial stands relevant to his own poetry of success and popularity. Thomas brings out the contrast between his disinterested goodwill and action during war time in conjunction with his pragmatic ahistorical, asocial and apolitical functioning in the past and the futuristic concern, the immortality conscious contemporary poets who turn a blind eye to what happens in and around them in the war-torn world:

Trot and gallop with gulls upon them
And thunderbolts in their manes.
O Rome and Sodom To-morrow and London
The country tide is cobbled with towns.... (DT)

In "Fern Hill," Thomas observes that Prince's speculation whether Auden as an Eliotian artist would have found his ultimate salvation in writing ironic poetry of pure sound pattern had he not been made unpopular by Thomas's Yeatsian paradoxical poetry of organic pattern and his life-centric appeal to the contemporary war poets is purely academic. He underscores that his poetry as well as his dramatic songs of caring impersonal art and tragic joy has been continuously offering salvation to the affected contemporary poets who make him popular and Auden unpopular and he imputes the rise and fall of Auden's influence and reputation to his continuous conflicts with the performance of his contemporaries, his poetry of continuous aesthetic distance and coldness, scorn and hate, howl and scowl:

And steeples pierce the cloud on her shoulder
And the streets that the fisherman combed
When his long-legged flesh was a wind on fire
And his loin was a hunting flame.... (DT)

And in the last art song "Over Sir John's Hill," he yet raises the same question that has provoked divergent opinions on his dramatic songs. What he has done in the early, transitional and later free play with Auden's art songs is his relentless metempirical vision of his dramatic songs, his *leit-motif* of tragic gladness, his moral disinterestedness and altruistic pagan poetic tradition that lead the half-sound lovers and the unsound lovers of Auden's musical pattern to life of

sound comforts and happiness in contrast to Auden's perseverant metaphysical art songs, his tragic wisdom, his aesthetic amoral disinterestedness and historical tradition leading the lovers to war and peace, power and pride, alienation and estrangement "and ruin and causes ... over the barbed and shooting sea assumed an army ... and swept into our wounds and houses" (DT 63). He continues to adhere to the same free play and free love in his last art song that persuades the much depressed Auden to alter his death-centric metaphysical process, his aesthetic amoral impersonal art to life-centric impersonal art for a better life, position and place:

Coil from the thoroughfares of her hair
And terribly lead him home alive
Lead her prodigal home to his terror,
The furious ox-killing house of love. (DT)

In the last dramatic art song Thomas reaffirms that he does not really flinch from the vicarious impersonal art of his early works even when the realistic and the war poets, the celebrants of his magnanimous impersonal art make a break and become the lovers of romantic tradition; he evolves a paradoxical framework in which the contemporary poets's dubieties, both as artist and as a human being, are objectified, thus achieving a coalescence of the element of mercy and the impersonal:

Good-bye, good luck, struck the sun and the moon,
To the fisherman lost on the land.
He stands alone in the door of his home,
With his long-legged heart in his hand. (39)

Thomas has been functioning since the first dramatic art song as an artist of Yeatsian altruistic pagan tradition promising life of harmony and co-existence regardless of love or hate of his contemporary poets and establishing himself as a popular and successful artist till the end of his poetic career unlike Auden who starts his career as a successful and popular artist of Eliotian aesthetic amoral art and immortality, aesthetic distance and co-inherence loses his literary reputation in the middle phase while anxious about his uncertain future in the last phase.

Thomas's altruistic functioning as an artist of dramatic monologue and introspection during war or peace time has been similar to Yeats's functioning as an altruistic artist of pagan tradition, "that civilisation may not sink ... its great battle lost" in contrast to Eliot's functioning as an artist of phonocentric and logocentric traditions with his European megalomaniac sensibility, "our master Caesar is in the tent ... where the maps are spread ... his eyes fixed upon nothing ... a hand under his head" (YCP 287). Yeats, comparing his pagan unified sensibility and his gentle impersonal art to the altruistic painting "Michael Angelo left a proof ... on the Sistine Chapel roof" setting "a purpose" for "profane perfection of mankind" vis-à-vis "the secret working mind" of the contemporary artists "for a God

or Saint" (302), explains his soundless pattern of introspective functioning:

There on that scaffolding reclines
Michael Angelo.
With no more sound than the mice make
His hand moves to and fro.
Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
His mind moves upon the silence. (YCP)
It is Yeats's later poem *The Tower* that serves as model of dramatic art song and Thomas Hardy's poem *Poems of the Past and the Present* as the source-book to the young Thomas to set himself to the dramatic task seriously in the early poem *18 Poems*. Thomas admits:
Man of my flesh, the jawbone riven,
Know now the flesh's lock and vice,
And the cage for the psyche-eyed raven.
Know, O my bone, the jointed lever,
Fear not the screws that turn the voice,
And the face to the driven lover. (DT)

Thomas shows commendable skill in the delineation of subject, conflicting situations and characters in the paradoxical construction of the poem *18 Poems* written for the cultivation of the creative mind under the pagan influences of Hardy and Yeats and their altruistic impersonal art according to MacNeice:

The saint on the pillar stands,
The pillars are two,
A young man opposite
Stands in the blue,
A white Greek god,
Confident, with curled
Hair above the groin
And his eyes on the world. (MCP 180)

Ceaselessly in quest of his own identity, Thomas has realized that Yeats's life-centric process, his magnanimous impersonal dramatic song is his appropriate vehicle rather than Auden's aesthetic amoral impersonal art song or any other metaphysical art. He explains:

All all and all the dry worlds couple,
Ghost with her ghost, contagious man
With the womb of his shapeless people.
All that shapes from the caul and suckle,
Stroke of mechanical flesh on mine,
Square in these worlds the mortal circle. (DT)

Towards the end of the poem *18 Poems* Thomas envisions that it is within his power to produce, after a few attempts, a fine imitation of Auden's historical art song, but that would hardly satisfy a creative artist who must find and establish his own idiom. He resolves to compose Yeatsian dramatic art songs that console, sustain and offer hope of harmony and co-existence to the disappointed poets in contrast to Auden's Eliotian art songs that invoke historical power and pride, hatred and anger, conflict and complication, disillusion and diffusion, war and peace among people:

Flower, flower the people's fusion,
 O light in zenith, the coupled bed,
 And the flame in the flesh's vision.
 Out of the sea, the drive of oil,
 Socket and grave, the brassy blood,
 Flower, flower, all all and all. (DT)

Thomas envisages that a paradoxical dramatic song must plunge directly into action and avoid descriptive statements to gain in dramatic effect as far as the subject permits. He learns this method through a series of experiments and makes his later dramatic songs, "A Refusal...", "Poem in October," "Fern Hill" and the last song "Over Sir John's Hill" a virtuoso performance of quite dazzling accomplishment. Vernon Watkins holds that Thomas's dramatic art songs are an offshoot of his poetry, and both his poetry and dramatic songs are altruistic impersonal art, careful pagan art written for the lost lovers of Auden's song pattern, "light in the branches weaves ... hard is the waiting moment while it waves ... this tree whose trunk curves upward from the stream ... where faltering ripples strum" (*Modern Verse* 365).

Thomas's early venture, "Altarwise by Owl-light" opens with the promise of an alternative dramatic art song of caring and sharing, a sceptic alternative poetic process of life-in-death to Auden's metaphysical process of death-in-life, tragic joy to tragic sorrow "altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house ... the gentleman lay graveward with his furies" and reinforces the scope of art song to the lost lovers of Auden's song pattern, the disgraced political poets Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, "... penny-eyed, that gentlemen of wounds" in contrast to the vivid metaphysical image of the poet-pilgrim Auden in "the Christward shelter," "Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam ... bit out the mandrake with to-morrow's scream" (DT 28). Much of the dramatic art song "After the Funeral," his next attempt, is taken up by the descriptions of natural sounds implicit of the functioning of the war poets in the pre-war time; and when the sound of war stirs the insensitive soldier poets out of their languorous trance, their dream of the Wordsworthian greatness and Auden's immortal art, they move with a haste that seems almost comical, and in the case of the sensitive war poets their chivalric gestures are sickeningly sentimental, "after the funeral, mule praises, brays" (DT 25). Fuller, Rook and Rhys are mainly reflective and descriptive, although there are lines and phrases in the poems of Lewis and Keyes suggesting motion. The earlier poems of the impassive war poets are pleasure-centric, "when all my five and country senses see" and impervious to the influence of the pity of war, "and blind sleep drops on the spying senses, ... the heart is sensual, though five eyes break" (146) and the perceptively active war poets are highly critical of their contemporary war poets "on no work of words" and are sensitive to their predecessors's pity of war and conscious of perpetuating their work, "to

surrender now is to pay the expensive ogre twice ... ancient woods of my blood, dash down to the nut of the seas ... if I take to burn or return this world which is such man's work" (105). The political poets of pity Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, after having incurred loss and fallen in love with the moral disinterestedness of Thomas, remain as insensitive to the pity of war as the romantic war poets, "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).

The passive war poet Prince is romantic as well as metaphysical, "once it was the colour of saying." His poetic romance *Poems* is long and sprawling, covering his wanderings in the underworld, beneath the metaphysical Auden, and through the field of air. The action, however, is thin, despite a bewildering chain of events, and even this tenuous action is smothered by description and verbiage. It seems that Thomas could find no adequate objective equivalent for Prince's pilgrimage for Auden's immortal art. As Prince's *Poems* proceeds, it becomes clear that his journey is as much ideal as physical; the meanderings in space being intended to parallel and concretize the spiritual quest of the ironic, metaphysical sensibility of the Oxford Auden, "now my saying shall be my undoing ... and every stone I wind off like a reel" (DT 109). And it is Auden's agonized groping on the dark shores of life, "a saint about to fall" that give the poem *Another Time* its power, although his effort to make *The New Year Letter* complicates and muddies his symbolism, "cry joy that hits witchlike midwife second ... bullies into rough seas you as gentle ... and makes with a flick of the thumb and sun ... a thundering bullring of your silence and girl-circled island" (DT 19-20).

Day Lewis perceives that the readers may deplore the lack of action in Thomas's early and transitional dramatic art songs, "her wings bear hard ... on the vibrant air," it is these tentative efforts that help him to learn and foresee surprisingly quickly the art of handling plot in the later songs, "the threat and pulse of wings, the throat levelled towards the horizons, we see ... they are prophecy" (*DCP* 204). Spender sees that much of the early song is cloying, and there are several descriptions in the transitional song that contribute little to the song pattern, "I was the sea, I was the island ... where the casqued heroic head ... lay and was remembered" (*Still Centre* 90); but, as MacNeice demonstrates, there are evidences of a firmer control, and of greater play of the dramatic imagination in Thomas's early song than in his transitional song:
 And if the world were black or white entirely
 And all the charts were plain
 Instead of a mad weir of tigerish waters,
 A prism of delight and pain,
 We might be surer where we wished to go
 Or again we might be merely

Bored but in brute reality there is no
Road that is right entirely. (*MCP* 181)

While Thomas's early and transitional art songs cover the period of apprenticeship, description and imagery form part of the paradoxical songs and vivify the characters. In the four mature dramatic art songs, "A Refusal...", "Poem in October," "Fern Hill" and "Over Sir John's Hill," the introductions are brief, and the poet gets on with the action without circumlocution. E.J. Scovell explains:

I see them small, distinct,
Dark, and see on the sheen of what wings they fly,
The two lit wings of land and sea,
The one vane of the sky....

Although Auden shows admirable deftness in delineating and arranging situations and gives the impression of uninterrupted progression, the songs leave the follower and the lover with a sense of void that is not adequately filled up, and this takes them to a much larger question of living than that of mere craftsmanship, "and see, not near nor far ... the black-brown cliffs stand with their green slopes of grass ... stippled with darkness. All of space ... is the sand's width between" (*MV* 372). G.S.Fraser perceives that Thomas's occasional pagan songs are dramatic monologues of introspection over life of birth and death, sorrows and joys rather than stream of timeless consciousness, "beauty but for a moment shone ... the likeness of a cloud or wave ... whose momentary aspect, gone ... the sieve of memory cannot save" (*MV* 403).

One significant aspect of Thomas's dramatic art songs of self-sacrifice and redemption, altruism and pagan tradition is that the action is built up more on contrast than on conflict and it is interesting to note how this determines and activates the afflicted realistic poets and the affected war poets to hope for harmony and co-existence in sharp contrast to Auden's metaphysical and existential art that commands the lovers to war and death of the challenger of his greatness. Kathleen Raine explains the success of Thomas's dramatic art songs and their tragic joy in contrast to the failure of Auden's art songs and their war mongering:

My bright yet blind desire, your end was this
Death, and my winged heart murderous
Is the world's broken heart, buried in his,
Between whose antlers starts the crucifix. (*MV* 374)
The essence of dramatic action of Auden's songs lies in conflict, and the clash of opposites ensures both complications and development.

In the poem "In the Strangely Isle," Michael Roberts holds that in the dramatic art songs that transfigure vividly birds, beasts, trees, flowers, fruits, mosses, bowers, wind, sea-waves, sun, moon, and stars, Thomas enters into the mysterious organic processes of

birth, growth, fruition, decay, and death and projects Yeatsian gentle impersonal art and sober functioning:
In the strange Isle,
In the green freckled wood and grassy blade,
Strangely the man, the panther and the shadow
Move by the well and the white stones. (*MV* 363)

Thomas's dramatic art songs demonstrate the concreteness, the weightiness, the empathic quality, the rich, sensuous grasp of Yeats's imagery, especially of his nature imagery according to Watkins:

Startled he stands,
Dazzled, where darkness is green, where the sunlight is black,
While his mother, grazing, is moving away
From the lagging star of those stars, the unrisen wonder
In the path of the dead, fallen from the sun in her hooves
And eluding the dead hands, begging him to play. (*MV*)

W.R. Rodgers perceives that another quality, allied to Thomas's power of entering into the heart of natural desires of the contemporary poets, "in that land all's lackadaisical," is his energetic dynamism refusing to be caught up in static images but relenting to disinterested goodness and action:

No lakes of coddled spawn and no locked ponds
Of settled purpose, no netted fishes;
But only inkling streams and running fronds
Fritillared with dreams, weedy with wishes;
Nor arrogant talk is heard, haggling phrase'
But undertones, and hesitance, and haze.... (381)

From stylistic considerations, Thomas may be said to have attained peak in the later dramatic art songs. The ode-stanza, a natural development from the sonnet-form, combines intensity with opulence, "on clear days mountains of meaning are seen ... humped high on the horizon; no one goes ... to con their meaning, no one cares or knows" (*MV*). In imagistic pattern, Thomas's last poem *In Country Sleep* and his last song "Over Sir John's Hill" remain chiefly allied to the Grecian sculpture -- the use of epithets and substantives reinforces the effect, and the manner is hardly conducive to the portraiture of dramatic action involving temporal movement. Auden's *The Age of Anxiety* develops the narrative manner in a new direction, combining bare, direct statements with symbolic suggestiveness. Rodgers brings out Auden's death-centric, logocentric tradition of Eliot, his metaphysical pattern and phonocentric impersonal art:
Here, where the taut wave hangs
Its tented tons, we steer
Through rocking arch of eye
And creaking reach of ear,
Anchored to flying sky,
And chained to changing fear. (*MV*)

In the later dramatic art song "A Refusal..." Thomas uses the expressive phrase "a refusal" to

repudiate the retrospective, retrogressive and metaphysical functioning of his contemporary poets, their longing for immortality and their scorning of the fellow-poets, and to affirm his asocial, apolitical and ahistorical functioning in harmony with Yeats's pagan altruistic functioning. On the whole, the song is reminiscent of the underlying dynamic power of his early poem *18 Poems* according to Rodgers:

No cause there comes to term, but each departs
Elsewhere to whelp its deeds, expel its darts;
There are no homecomings, of course, no good-byes
In that land, neither yearning nor scorning,
Though at night there is the smell of morning. (MV)
Rodgers brings out Thomas's life-centric pagan altruistic tradition of Yeats, his cyclical pattern of life and death in the song "A Refusal...":

Us on that happy day
This fierce sea will release,
On our rough face of clay,
The final glaze of peace.
Our oars we all will lay
Down, and desire will cease. (MV)

Thomas's dramatic art song like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* centres on a family feud, but here the opposition takes on a moral character. The design is, however, simple, good and evil being placed, as in the later song "A Refusal..." in exclusive categories. But even the possibilities of a bare opposition on the physical plane are avoided. Thomas unfolds his inclusive structure:

Round her trailed wrist fresh water weaves,
With moving fish and rounded stones
Up and down the greater waves
A separate river breathes and runs... (DT)

Auden, in his existential pilgrimage, takes ironic historical cover away from the gaze of the war-ridden world although his situation is fraught with uncertainty and danger; the political poets Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, after their fall and loss in career and life, after their love of Thomas's apolitical functioning, refuse to be apolitical poets *sans* pity of war; the happiness of the romantic lovers Fuller, Rook, Rhys and Prince is never actually threatened, and even the mild shudder and apprehension of war is at least momentarily absorbed in the pleasurable sensations of Lewis and Keyes and in their romantic union with the poets of pity, Sassoon and Owen. Thomas contradistinguishes his ahistorical, asocial and apolitical functioning similar to his functioning in the early poem *18 Poems* and dissimilar to the socio-political-historical contemporary poets according to Roberts:

Silent, invisible, the bombs explode,
The dead and wounded walk the cancelled streets,
Colour and form run through the brittle pages,
And Time can crumble all, but cannot touch
The book that burns, faster than we can read. (MV 364)

In "A Refusal..." Thomas focuses chiefly on the inward states of his own Yeatsian functioning as an

altruistic poet committed to the pagan poetic tradition, the comic vision of dramatic songs and tragic happiness, and this inner drama takes place against a background into which he weaves varied contrasts, the melodrama of the contemporary poets functioning as poets of love, pity and peace in commitment with their philosophic, historical and political tradition and their dreams of immortality.

REVIEWS, METHODS AND OBJECTIVES

John Ackerman holds that "the language and ideas to be found in Thomas's work had little in common with the imagery and ideas in the work of, say, Auden, T.S. Eliot or Yeats. Neither did it derive, to any great extent, from the nineteenth-century romantic poets" (18). One may readily agree with the view that in stylistic maturity the poem "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire of a Child in London" surpasses anything Thomas had written before, and it is also true that, at the formal level, the early poem *18 Poems* sets the thematic pattern for this later poem. Walford Davies, commenting on the poem, writes that "by omitting the hyphens and commas, Thomas creates ... the impression of unity and one-ness that governs his approach to the tragedy" (69). The poet refuses to mourn the death, according to Ackerman, because he "wishes to accept the natural and inevitable processes of life. He is the religious artist who celebrates life" (118). However, this poem is about Thomas's optimism in human possibilities for progressive enlightenment in the world rather than about a religious certainty that comes right in the earnest.

The reader engaged in the textual analysis of the poem, when focuses on the "multiplicity" of the text, could find the core meaning of the poem as "the total existence of ... a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation" (Roland Barthes 150), as "a text is ... a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (149). The suffering of war and the death of a child provokes multiple reactions of multiplicity of meaning of multiple dimensions and multiple tissues of culture. Thomas's refusal to lament the death of a child in the London air-raid testifies to his refusal to be political, social and historical in his functioning as he has been committing himself to empathize with the tragic sufferings of the fellowbeings since the beginning of his poetic career. His commitment to disinterested goodwill and action stands in contrast to the non-committed functioning of his contemporary poets who refuse to mourn the death of a child due to their being committed to function as poets of their own choice, love, pity and peace, their being adopted to work for the romantic, political, patriotic and historical tradition. Hence this paper, adopting a figurative approach, endeavours to decipher the essential statement and to decode the much compressed, obscure meaning of this popular poem as the critics's

focus on the poem is limited more to paraphrasal and stylistic levels.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In the opening stanza of the dramatic art song “A Refusal...,” Thomas’s projects figuratively the predicament of the war poets, “bird beast and flower,” who belong to the historical, social and political tradition, their doubts, perplexities and agonies that beset modern sensibility, and the impression persists that the dreaming war poets’s responses to the death of the child in the war are in excess of their actual situation:

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last light breaking
And the still hour
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness.... (DT 18)

The theme of the pre-war poems of Fuller, Rook and Rhys apparently centre on the opposition of the actual and the ideal, Thomas’s cyclic process of life-in-death and Auden’s metaphysical process of death-in-life, Wordsworth’s process of spontaneity and powerful personality and Owen’s process of impersonal poetry of pity, but the framework of their poems do not satisfactorily project this opposition. Thomas presents their dubious situation:

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....
(DT 69)

The dreaming, self-indulgent war poets, in search of immortal greatness, turns a deaf ear to the sounds of the masters of modernistic art and to the half-rhythmic poet of pity and pacifism, “night after night we watched him slaver and crunch away ... the beams of human life ... the tops of topless towers” (MCP 218) according to MacNeice.

But after the outbreak of war, the romantic war poet Fuller in *Poems* and *The Middle of a War*, while in search of ideal beauty, emulates the Wordsworthian process, “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (“Preface” 180) to achieve immortality, “golden dissolving under the water veil.” In *Soldiers, This Solitude*, Rook explains his love for Wordsworth’s tranquility and his resistance to the modernistic formative forces, “a she bird sleeping brittle by ... her lover’s wings that fold to-morrow’s flight,” and Rhys, in *The Van Pool and Other Poems*, explains that the mood of his dreaming contemporary war poets is indifferent and insensitive to the terrors of war “a blade

of grass longs with the meadow ... a stone lies lost and locked in the lark-high hill” (DT). The setting in Fuller’s *A Lost Season*, Rook’s *These are My Comrades*, and Rhys’s *Poems from the Forces*, their divided commitment to the impersonal art of Auden and Thomas provides an occasion for conflict; but however painful the problem of choice may be, their final discovery of the real identity of Thomas as a poet of vicarious impersonal art, “mankind making” takes away much of the edge of dilemma. They recall thankfully the success of Thomas’s *18 Poems*, “good luck to the hand on the rod ... there is thunder under its thumbs ... gold gut is a lightning thread ... his fiery reel sings off its flames” and his consistent functioning as a pragmatic poet of lyric impulse during the time of peace or war like Yeats, “the whirled boat in the burn of his blood ... is crying from nets to knives” while rejecting the metaphysical impersonal art of the Eliotian Auden, the pacifistic, satirical pity of Owen and Sassoon and the Wordsworthian spontaneity and greatness, “Oh the sheerwater birds and their boatsized brood ... Oh the bulls of Biscay and their calves” (DT 35).

Although the war poets Lewis and Keyes in search of identity express in the early war poems their trust in the stability of the anchorage of Wordsworth, their memory of the war poetry of Sassoon and Owen, the historical sorrow of Auden, the grandeur of his aesthetic impersonal art and the vicarious impersonal art of Thomas -- of the dark chasm that both fascinates and frightens the mind—persists, “the shy is torn across ... this ragged anniversary of two ... who moved for three years in tune ... down the long walks of their vows” (DT 104). In *Raider’s Dawn*, the active war poet Lewis struggles in love between Wordsworth and Sassoon, and in *The Iron Laurel* Keyes wrestles with his divided love of Wordsworth and Owen. In sharp contrast to the inactive contemporary war poets, Thomas sees Lewis and Keyes moving under the spell of Sassoon and Owen respectively, “with the incestuous secret brother in the seconds to perpetuate the stars ... a man torn up mourns in the sole night” (DT). In the posthumous collection of poems *Ha!Ha! Among the Trumpets* Lewis, refusing to heed to Auden’s paradox of death-in-life, his aesthetic, amoral impersonal art, “thin air above the clouds” and Thomas’s paradox of life-in-death, his moral disinterestedness, “vain divination of the sunless stream” (DCP 219), articulates his oneness with Sassoon’s satirical and sentimental pity in contrast to his incommunicative contemporary war poets:

The valleys crack and burn, the exhausted plains
Sink their black teeth into the horny veins
Stragglers the hills’ red thighs, the bleating goats
--Dry bents and bitter thistles in their throats--
Thread the loose rocks by immemorial tracks,
Dark peasants drag the sun upon their backs.
(*Contemporary Verse* 294)

Lewis declares his faith in Sassoon’s patriotic pity as a contrast to Wordsworth’s “moral being” (“Tintern

Abbey" 570): "Death strikes their house / The windows pour into their heart / And the doors burn in their brain" (DT).

In *The Cruel Solstice*, published posthumously, Keyes while rejecting Auden's historic tradition and Thomas's poetic tradition, "the veiled Word's flesh, a near annunciation" (DCP 218), as unrealistic and irrelevant, "there is no virtue now in blind reliance on place or person or the forms of love ... the storm bears down the pivotal tree, the cloud ... turns to the net of an inhuman fowler ... and drags us from the air," expresses his faith in Owen's pacifistic patriotic pity in contrast to his contemporary war poets confronting the problem of communication, "our wings are clipped yet still our and luck lies in our parting ... those cries and wings surprise our surest act" (MV 421). He glorifies Owen's pity of war as "cold Aegean voices (420), "a stormy day, granite peak ... spearing the sky" in contrast to his contemporaries's insensibility, "words flower like crocuses in the hanging woods ... blank though the dalehead and the bony face" (CV 321). Keyes incarnates Owen as "a saviour ... rarer than radium ... commoner than water, crueller than truth" (DT). Thomas, explaining the gradual change of heart in Lewis and Keyes, comments, "our own true strangers' dust ... ride through the doors the unentered house ... exiled in us we arouse the soft unclenched, armless, silk and rough love that breaks all rocks" (DT 135). The death of Lewis and Keyes, Day Lewis observes for the cause of pity is more honourable than the realistic poets's loss of pity, "dead youth, forgive us if, all but defeated ... we raise a trophy where your honour lies" (DCP). However, Thomas disapproves of the nationalistic, patriotic poetry of Lewis and Keyes as well as their forefathers of pity of war, "prisoners of wishes locked their eyes ... in the jails and studies of his keyless smiles" (DT).

And in a contrasting manner Prince's *Poems*, in dream of harmonious order immune from the sorrow of war, is not fundamentally antithetical to the divine order of Auden, "singly lie with the whole wide shore ... the covering sea their nightfall with no names." (DT 88). He stands still between personal love and impersonal love of Auden's art that overbalances the final assurance, "one gesture of the heart or head ... is gathered and split ... into the winding dark." He performs as a worshipper of Auden and an indiscriminate severe critic of Thomas as well as the poets of the First and the Second World Wars. Thomas evaluates his insensibility in a disdainful manner:

And wicked wish,
Down the beginning of plants
And animals and birds,
Water and light, the earth and sky,
Is cast before you move,
And all your deeds and words,
Each truth, each lie,
Die in unjudging love. (DT 137)

MacNeice estimates him as a suckling, "thus were we weaned to knowledge of the Will ... that wills the natural world but wills us dead" (MCP).

Thomas, commenting on the functioning of the romantic, divided and heroic war poets moving on complete socio-political-historical paths, remarks:
Turns in the dark on the sound they know will arise
Into the answering skies from the green ground,
From the man on the stairs and the child by his bed.
The sound about to be said in the two prayers
For the sleep in a safe land and the love who dies....
(DT 126)

He perceives that the self-centred concern of the inactive, bewildered war poets, Fuller, Rook, Rhys and Prince for safe survival and immortality stands as a contrast to the self-sacrificing heroic war poets Lewis and Keyes, their insensitivity to the misery of war stands incongruous to the sensibility of poets of the World War I. So, to call them as war poets is a misnomer according to Thomas, "and the second comers, the severers, the enemies from the deep ... forgotten dark, rest their pulse and bury their dead in her faithless sleep" (DT 88). Auden comments as "darkness and snow descend ... the clock on the mantelpiece ... has nothing to recommend" (ACP 271).

In the second stanza of "A Refusal..." Thomas conceives of Auden as the supreme master of dramatic objectivity and historical consciousness. The continuous running of the first and the second stanzas with no punctuation mark implies that the existential poet Auden who sounds patterns of death and eternity, power and pride, faith and immortality adopts a non-committed and unconcerned attitude towards the sorrow of war, the death of the child which is similar to the inactive war poets, as a whole, who articulate sounds of fear and death, love and hatred. Thomas presents Auden as a faithful worshipper of metaphysical process, sound pattern and immortality:

And I must enter again the round
Zion of the water bead
And the synagogue of the ear of corn
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound
Or sow my salt seed
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn.... (DT)

Thomas's portrayal of Auden's early poems and images shows that Auden, influenced by Walter de la Mare and Eliot, regards depersonalization as the highest aesthetic ideal and his creative self of historical knowledge, released from the human self, is able to enter into other objects and to render each object in its uniqueness and complexity. He projects Auden's metaphysical process of death-in-life:
This I know from the native
Tongue of your translating eyes. The young stars told me,
Hurling into beginning like Christ the child. (DT 142)

Auden's early phase reveals certain important features of his poetry. First, Auden as the aspiring youth in his juvenile poems, the self-exiled visionary in *Poems*(1928), the Eliotian lover in exultation and agony in *Poems*(1930) and *Look Stranger!* -- these characters are sharply drawn and should be differentiated from simple types, but they little resemble complex flesh-and-blood individuals, "habitual breathing ... of clocks where time means nothing" (*DCP* 173).

The poems of the transitional and middle phases, *Another Time*, *The New Year Letter* and *For the Time Being* that show Auden as the lonely existential quester aspiring for immortality are all partial projections of his own impersonality. However, he could attain to this impersonality only in a limited sense and in a limited area under the influence of the French symbolist Rilke whose existential art of subjectivism is identical to the metaphysical art of de la Mare and Eliot. Thomas portrays:

Love, my fate got luckily,
Teaches with no telling
That the phoenix' bid for heaven and the desire after
Death in the carved nunnery
Both shall fall if I bow not to your blessing
Nor walk in the cool of your mortal garden
With immortality at my side like Christ the sky. (DT
141)

But all these poems reflect the varying aspects of the spiritual self of Auden as the poet-pilgrim.

Auden's poetry becomes especially effective when he conveys pain and perplexity, when he experiences anguish and spiritual anxiety of historical generations, and this is equally noticeable when he portrays his contemporary poets who do not reflect his own sound pattern. Day Lewis's awed wonder, Spender's dejection, MacNeice's bewildered alarm and agony and the desolate Prince standing alone are some of the most effectively realized situations in Auden's poetry, and they show the direction of his metaphysical mind and genius, "lucklessly she must lie patient ... and the vaulting bird be still. (DT). And it is equally true that he is drawn invariably to write the most serious kind of Word-centric poetry that explores the tragic mystery of existence and immortal art, and that he has indeed an abhorrence of the kind of work that has a palpable design. In this respect, he falls in line with the pleasure-centric war poets who dream of the Wordsworthian greatness without showing any concern for the sorrow of war. Thomas underscores:

The conversation of prayers about to be said
By the child going to bed and the man on the stairs
Who climbs to his dying love in her high room,
The one not caring to whom in his sleep he will move
And the other full of tears that she will be dead.... (DT)
Hence their refusal to mourn the death of the child in the London air-raid, their refusal to function as a poet of pity during war time according to Thomas, "O my true love, hold me ... in your every inch and glance is the

globe of genesis spun ... and the living earth your sons" (DT).

Auden's most significant poems have the character of parables, although he is averse to rigid, systematized parables. Day Lewis holds:

Beyond our powers and our time,
Behind the pinnacle of stars, the horizon sleep,
Beneath the deepest kiss of heaven's azure
And the roots of Atlantis flowers. (*DCP* 274)
MacNeice perceives that Auden's poetic manner is indicative of not merely the quality of his craftsmanship but also of his attitude to life. He imputes Auden's "highmindedness" as "the permanent bottleneck" to pity the death of the child:
Never to fight unless from a pure motive
And for a clear end was his unwritten rule
Who had been in books and visions to a progressive school
And dreamt of barricades, yet being observant
Knew that that was not the way things are:
This man would never make a soldier or a servant. (*MCP*)

In the middle phase, as Auden has been jostling for the unification of sensibility and immortality of his song pattern through the existential process of death-in-life, he perceives that time-spirit, any involvement in the issues of politics and war would be detrimental to his pursuit of pure poetry. One recurrent image in Auden's poetry is that of a pilgrim on a pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in his poems of the early phase he stands as quester who distrusts dogma and certitude and journeys across darkness carrying the burden of anxiety, the self-dissolving logocentric tradition. Day Lewis observes:
Light drops, the hush of fallen ash, submission
Of a dying face now muted for the grave;
Through mansion, lake and the lacklustre groves
We see the landscape of their dissolution. (*DCP* 174)
The spiritual disturbance and uncertainty of his contemporary poets are reflected in art songs of the early and middle phases, and this inward debate, a poetic analogue of conflict, gives his poems a dramatic character.

In the third stanza of the most dramatic of Thomas's dramatic song "A Refusal...", the situation involving the response of the lost political poets of pity to the death of the child in the war is more complicated. It posits two alternative choices both of which are partly valid, and each attitude by itself gives a distorted view of war-ridden reality. Tragedy may ensue out of a collision between right and wrong, between moral good and moral evil. But tragic action may also involve two contending loyalties, the clash of two forces each of which has spiritual value and can rightfully claim human allegiance. In fidelity to imaginative aspiration for Auden's song pattern, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, like Auden, forsake their social obligations

as poets of pity, and also in a sense rejects life in its totality, and this self-divisions ending in waste could attain tragic grandeur during the war years. Thomas portrays:

The majesty and burning of the child's death.
I shall not murder
The mankind of her going with a grave truth
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath
With any further
Elegy of innocence and youth. (DT)

In *Poems 1943-1947*, Day Lewis depicts his self-division and his insufficiency in his functioning as a poet during the time of war:

So many words to unsay,
So much hue and cry
After a wisp of flame,
So many deaths to die
Ere the heart runs dry. (290)
He could not exploit adequately the problem of choice between Owen's pity and Thomas's apolitical pity. Again, he paints himself as an unsubstantial and slightly malevolent fantasy as Auden, the Eliotian artist untouched by emotions and relentlessly cruel:
The sea rolled up like a blind, oh pitiless light
Revealing, shriveling all! Lacklustre weeds
My hours, my truth a salt-lick. Love recedes
From rippled flesh bared without appetite. (DCP 291)
Day Lewis senses "only my heart was shaking ... within me, and then it stopped" (DCP) and sets the rising and falling of his pity for the London child died in the war:

Instinct was hers, and an earthquake hour revealed it
In flesh – the meek-laid lashes, the glint in the eye
Defying wrath and reason, the arms that shielded
A plaster doll from an erupting sky. (DCP)
His mind is suddenly assailed by a strange morbidity, the fear of approaching insanity. The lines convey poignantly the dread of the void, and the poet Day Lewis no longer prays for the prolongation of the trance; he wants to return to actuality, although he knows that the world is both sweet and bitter.

In the case of Spender who maintains that the sensuous warmth of human emotions admits of no substitute upholds that the cause of this dislocation is common for the poet's divided response, "I see the tigrion in tears ... in the androgynous dark" (DT), between "the aspiring" and the "renouncing." He retraces:

Shut in himself, each blind, beaked subject kills
His neighbour and himself and shuts out pity
For that one winging spirit which fulfills. (*Ruins* 45)
Day Lewis, commenting on Spender's loneliness as "a stranded time, neap an annihilation of spirit" (DCP), explains his confused state:
No argument for living could long
Sustain these ills: it needs a faithful eye, to have seen all
Love in the droop of a lash and tell it eternal

By one pure bead of its dew-dissolving chain. (DCP)

During the time of war, MacNeice could refuse the message of Owen's pity and see his contemporary poet as a fragile dreamer as Auden whose vision of aesthetic amoral art crumbles the moment it faces an unsympathetic stare:

And thence conceive a vague inaccurate notion
Of what it meant to live embroiled with ocean
And between moving dunes and beyond reproving
Sentry-boxes to have been self-moving. (MCP)
He focuses on the pathetic condition of the defeated poets of pity:
For whom, if the ocean bed should silt up later
And living thoughts coagulate in matter,
An age of mainlanders, that dare not fancy
Life out of uniform, will feel no envy-- (MCP 250)

The political poets divided mind seems to emphasize only the negative aspect of each side. The apparently impersonal statement of Thomas carries the stress of personal anxiety of the lost political poets of pity:

Never shall my self chant
About the saint in shades while the endless breviary
Turns of your prayed flesh, nor shall I shoo the bird
below me.... (DT)

Thus although the impression persists that each side is right within limits, it appears that the realistic poets's vision of poetry of pity is ironic rather than tragic. Their non-committed functioning, their commentaries on the contemporary poets's aspiration for immortality in time of war is as ironic as Auden and as evasive as the war poets, "with the incestuous secret brother in the seconds to perpetuate the stars ... a man torn up in the sole night" (DT). The conflicting mind of Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice would have gained in depth and intensity if the positive aspects of each alternative were stressed according to Thomas:

Will be the same grief flying. Whom shall they calm?
Shall the child sleep unharmed or the man be crying?
The conversation of prayers about to be said
Turns on the quick and the dead, and the man on the stair
To-night shall find no dying but alive and warm. (DT)
But the poets intend a different effect and present a play of contrasts in which the varied elements are tested and at least partly repudiated.

In the first three stanzas of the song "A Refusal..." the clash of dynasties and generations offers a scope for dramatic conflict; but in the last stanza the dramatic potentiality is nearly exhausted, and the main argument of Thomas that each generation is succeeded and supplanted by its successors minimizes the importance of any possible battle on the physical plane. The fate of Auden, the political poets of the thirties and the visionary and the heroic war poets of the forties is foredoomed, and the emergence of Thomas as

a superior poet of noble impersonal poet does not allow of any meaningful opposition. Thomas explains:
 Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
 Robed in the long friends,
 The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
 Secret by the unmourning water
 Of the riding Thames.

After the first death, there is no other. (DT)

The last stanza marks a clear shift in perspective. Yeats's poem "A Prayer for My Daughter" supplies the myths of immortal beauty, the poets's dramatic functioning of the poets of war time, and Thomas's task is to image them and incorporate their characteristics into his song.

The emphasis is on the poetical character rather than the conflicting situation, and Thomas's emergence as the central figure gives cohesion to the incidents in the song. His functioning as the poet of life and death, objectivity and magnanimity, scepticism and altruism and asocial, apolitical and ahistorical pragmatic poetic tradition stands as stark contrast to the functioning of the poets of war time. The situations of the lost political poets appear needlessly complicated, and it becomes evident that their poetry would gain through excision of hate and pity that breed "all evil chances chief" and block the way to unified sensibility, "if there's no hatred in a mind ... assault and battery of the mind ... can never tear the linnet from leaf" (*YCP* 160). Again, if the shift of the inactive war poets's interest from Wordsworth to Auden and to Thomas is intended to secure greater concentration and immortal greatness, their ambition would be scarcely realized and they should learn that "hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned ... by those that are not entirely beautiful" (159). The dramatic impact of Prince's failure to work for Auden's impersonal art hinges upon his personal love, and this is not conducive to tragic grandeur. Prince never loves Auden's art as he is attached to his romantic love, and his betrayal does not carry the intended effect. His attachment to Auden's song pattern, as revealed in particularly in *Poems* is passionate, "dispensing round ... their magnanimities of sound ... nor but in merriment begin a chase ... nor but in merriment a quarrel." But his passion has a touch of the absurd, and even the gracious Thomas, while persuading him to "live like some green laurel ... rooted in one dear perpetual place" (*YCP*) can hardly conceal his irritation:

Like the sun's tears,
 Like the moon's seed, rubbish
 And fire, the flying rant
 Of the sky, king of your six years. (DT 137)

The active war poet Lewis too is frequently carried away by sentiment and indulges in high-falutin speeches of "intellectual hatred" and "opinions ... accused"; but Keyes's tranced rapture in Owen's pacifistic pity, "opinionated mind" (*YCP*) and anger proves too much even for him. Their dramatic death

seems to introduce deliberately a note of realism to counterbalance the sentimental excess. However, the effect proves to be the reverse of what may have been intended, and both the deaths of the heroic poets of the World War II, Lewis and Keyes to illuminate the deaths of their predecessors and the heroic poets, Sassoon and Owen, of the World War I, look a little comical, "brave deaths of only ones but never found ... now see, alone in us, ... our own true strangers's dust ... ride through the doors or our unentered house" (DT).

Thomas's cries and lamentations, his process of transfiguration, his tragic gladness, his magnanimous disinterestedness and his pragmatic functioning which are chiefly the moral characteristic of Yeats's poetry "that it is self-delighting... self-appeasing, self-affrighting" are far removed from the intensity of anguish, "scowl" and "howl," scorn and indignation as witnessed in the existential art of Auden and his passionate lovers, or in the "brave deaths" of Lewis and Keyes, and Auden seems to have a spurious element of insensitivity, indifference that dilutes the effect, "exiled in us we arouse the soft ... unclenched, armless, silk and rough love that breaks all rocks" (DT), "for arrogance and hatred are the wares ... peddled in the thoroughfares" (*YCP*). The poet's success or failure, happiness or depression, popularity or unpopularity, inclusiveness or exclusiveness, immortality or mortality, innocence or experience does all depend upon his process of making impersonal art, metempirical or metaphysical, pagan poetic tradition or historic existential tradition, "ceremony is the name for the rich horn ... and custom for the spreading laurel tree" (*YCP*). Edwin Muir maintains that it is all due to "the road" the poet chooses:

The ancestral deed is thought and done,
 And in a million Edens fall
 A million Adams drowned in darkness,
 For small is great and great is small,
 And a blind seed all. (*MV* 357)
 The difference lies between "the road already taken" and "the road that is not tread."

The last line of "A Refusal..." "after the first death there is no other death" (DT) implies that both Auden and Thomas have been progressing as an artist since the first art song without effecting any change in their respective *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*. Auden's paradox of death-in-life and his aesthetic amoral impersonal art which he has been sounding as the keynote of his poetry and his art songs since the first unpublished juvenile poem "The Carter's Funeral," "little enough stays musing upon ... the passing of one of the masters of things ... only a bird looks peak-faced on ... looks and sings" (*New Verse* 5) and the first published poem *Poems* (1930) in which he insists on irony as the working principle for perfect craftsmanship "to destroy the efflorescence of the flesh ... the intricate play of the mind, to enforce ... conformity with the orthodox bone ... with organized fear, the articulated

skeleton.” He means that a work of art needs to be played on both sides:

Needs more than the admiring excitement of union,
More than the abrupt self-confident farewell,
The heel on the finishing blade of grass,
The self-confidence of the falling root,
Needs death, death of the grain, our death,
Death of the old gang.... (*Poems* 66)

Thus, the death-centric Eliotian metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral impersonal art, the principle of irony has been the *leit-motif* of Auden’s artistic career, “end and beginning are here one” (*MV* 361) and “the runner never leaves ... the starting and the finishing tree ... the budding and the fading tree” (*MV*) according to Muir.

Quite contrastingly Thomas, directing the lost lovers of Auden’s song pattern to the life-centric Yeatsian metempirical process and generous impersonal art, sings of the lyric impulse of his first art song “Altarwise by Owl-light”:

Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;
Break in sun till the sun breaks down,
And death shall have no dominion. (*DT* 31)

The *leit-motif* of his dramatic art song repudiates Auden’s Eliotian historical tradition and emulates Yeats’s pagan poetic tradition, “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 ... lifts its head to the blows of the rain” (*DT*) till his last dramatic art song. Yeats explains the motif of his dramatic songs in “Sailing to Byzantium”

Once go out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake.... (*YCP* 163)

What motivates Thomas in the transitional and the later dramatic art songs is nothing but the same intention of awakening and directing the ignorant contemporary poets to choose the Yeatsian life-centric poetic process and warm impersonal art as an alternative to Auden’s Eliotian death-centric artistic process and cold aesthetic distance. Thomas shows the Yeatsian paradox of life-in-death and magnanimous impersonal art to the romantic war poets as the alternative poetic process to Auden’s metaphysical process. In the early poem *18 Poems*, he explains, “light breaks where no sun shines ... where no sea runs, the waters of the heart ... push in their tides” (94). Muir perceives that in the later dramatic art song “A Refusal...” Thomas sings of the Yeatsian cyclical pattern, his altruistic pagan tradition that he demonstrates in the early poem *18 Poems*, “as yours beneath the ever-breaking bough ... and vast compassion curving like the skies” (358).

Watkins’s findings underline an important aspect of Thomas’s poetic genius, his transformation of tragic failure into tragic joy as evident in the dramatic song “A Refusal...” His song comes to life when he communicates his poignant creative experiences, and not when he seeks to escape from his personality:

White blossom, white, white shell; the Nazarene
Walking in the ear; white touched by souls
Who know the music by which white is seen,
Blinding white, from strings and aureoles,
Until that is not white, seen at the two poles,
Nor white the Scythian hills, nor Marlowe’s queen.
(*MV* 366)

What Thomas demonstrates in the song “A Refusal...” is his persistent functioning as a poet of lyric impulse, the “music of colours,” the life of birth and death, impersonal art and mercy at variance with the heroic war poets dying for the eternity of nationalistic pity and pacifistic pity, “the daisies,” and the metaphysical artist Auden dying for the immortality of phono-centric tradition, “the Atlantis.” While the war poets’s fighting is tinged with love and hatred and Auden’s artistic functioning has traces of bitterness and scorn, indignation and arrogance, pride and power of the Helen of Troy, Thomas’s sober functioning since *18 Poems* as a poet and an artist of paganism and altruism, disinterestedness and magnanimity, harmony and co-existence is characteristic of the old man Hector in Homer’s *Iliad*. So, what Thomas has done in the dramatic song “A Refusal...” is parodic of Yeats’s poetry of life and death, paradoxical structure and his pagan altruistic impersonal art, his “plain home truth,” “here is no glory of the Star and Garter ... nor the obscure theology of the Goat and Compasses...” rather than Auden’s Eliotian aesthetic amoral sound pattern and his ironic metaphysical truth, “that the world lives by labour and barter ... and all things, in the long run, end up shabby” (*MV*).

Findings and Interpretations

In poetry, Thomas proceeds through a process of imitation and adaptation and finally discovers his own idiom, “a bird’s sleepy cry ... among the deepening shades” (*YCP* 168); in the later dramatic songs he does not find his own vocabulary but adapted fully the serene, sober and sagacious functioning of Yeats as an artist. Yeats’s asocial, apolitical and ahistorical, his altruistic impersonal pragmatic attitude keeps him “dancing like wave” unlike a metaphysical artist or a crazy dreamer, “a dead man in his grave ... no ups and downs, my pretty ... a mermaid, not a punk” as “a drunkard is a dead man ... and all dead men are drunk.” He affirms:

Sobriety is a jewel
That I do much adore;
And therefore keep me dancing
Though drunkards lie and snore. (268)

When Thomas states in *18 Poems* that he wants to make a revolution in the art song as Auden has done in the song pattern of *Poems*, he is thinking, as he himself suggests, of establishing an Yeatsian school of dramatic songs, “my grave is watered by the crossing Jordan ... the Arctic scut, and basin of the South ... drip on my dead house garden” which would supplant the metaphysical school and replace sentiment by passion, “seek me landward, marking in my mouth ... the straws of Asia, lose me as I turn ... through the Atlantic corn.” He envisions:

Who blows death’s feather? What glory is colour?
I blow the stammel feather in the vein.
The loin is glory in a working pallor.
My clay unsuckled and my salt unborn,
The secret child, I sift about the sea
Dry in the half-tracked thigh. (DT 99)

The dominating influence on Auden’s art songs is Eliot whose adoptions of the songs of the metaphysical poet John Donne are particularly popular and the sentimentality of these songs repels the passion and the metempirical poetic process of Yeats and Thomas.

Auden’s method of composition of art song could not obviously permit any conscious, creative designing on Thomas’s part, but the recurrent parallels both in situation and idiom, especially in “Altarwise by Owl-light,” “when the worm builds with the gold straws of venom ... my nest of memories in the rude, red tree” (*TCP*) which point to Yeats’s intentions in *The Tower*:

The death of friends or death
Of every brilliant eye
That made a catch in the breath—
Seem but the clouds of the sky
When the horizon fades... (*YCP*)

MacNeice points out some good songs in the early phase of Auden’s Eliotian historical pattern and amoral metaphysical art, and it is true that in several instances of the sonnets Thomas attains, if only briefly, a quality of passion for Yeatsian cyclical pattern and altruistic impersonal art:

It’s no go my honey love, it’s no go my poppet;
Work your hands from day to day, the winds will blow the profit.
The glass is falling hour by hour, the glass will fall for ever,
But if you break the bloody glass you won’t hold up the weather. (*MCP* 117)

Thomas’s early dramatic art song as it finally emerges shows, however, that it is little better than a variation on Auden’s melodramatic art song. He borrows from the songs of Yeats to enhance the dramatic effect of his early song; but there is little evidence of any creative adoption in the transitional song “After the Funeral” and the song turns out to be a mixture of Audenesque stylistics and Yeatsian lyric impulse, “after the feast of tear-stuffed time and thistles ... in a room with a stuffed fox and a stale fern ... I stand, for this memorial’s sake, alone ... in the

snivelling hours with dead” (DT). In *Last Poems*, Yeats reaffirms his sceptic poetic tradition of his substantial dramatic song, “no dark tomb-haunter once; her form all full ... as though with magnanimity of light ... yet a most gentle woman...,” his metempirical vision of art song, “in a breath ... a mouthful held the extreme of life and death” and his process of tragic gladness, his vicarious impersonal art and polygonal poetic character, “propinquity had brought ... imagination to that pitch where it casts out ... all that is not itself” (*YCP*289).

In the later dramatic art songs Thomas, while placing the Audenesque stylistics which the lovers of Auden’s art fail to place under delimitation, demonstrates his Yeatsian soundless empathic impersonal art beyond the influence of Auden’s phocentric tradition according to Muir:

There the ship sailing safe in harbour
Long since in many a sea was drowned.
The treasure burning in her hold
So near will never be found,
Sunk past all sound.... (*MV*356)

Although Thomas’s dramatic art song “A Refusal...” reads like an improvisation, every now and then an authentic feeling flashes through Thomas’s lines, especially in the last stanza given to the betrayed poets. Explaining the foredoomed failure of the contemporary poets of war time, Muir commends the song for Thomas’s progression as an artist of Yeatsian cyclical pattern and altruistic pagan tradition:

There a man on a summer evening
Reclines at ease upon his tomb
And is his mortal effigy,
And there within the womb,
The cell of doom.... (*MV* 357)

In the art songs, Auden narrates the different stages through which he reaches the final phase of serene contemplativeness, “unluckily for a death ... waiting with phoenix under ... the pyre yet to be lighted of my sins and days” (DT). In the dramatic songs, Thomas seldom narrates; he unfolds the process of thought of his contemporary poets in its totality and complexity and this enactment of the process of becoming produces a sense of dramatic immediacy, “and for the woman in shades ... saint carved and sensual among the scudding ... dead and gone, dedicate forever to my self ... though the brawl of the kiss has not occurred ... on the clay cold mouth...” Lewis and Keyes conceive the ideal poetry of pity from the beginning as a symbol of perfection, of absolute beauty and knowledge, “on the fire ... branded forehead, that could bind ... her constant,” and although their posthumously published poems suggest movement and gradual ascent, there is no progressive development in thought and attitude. In the poems of the Fuller, Rook, Rhys and Prince, the effect of the analogies that follow is cumulative and their responses do not undergo any change, “nor the winds of love broken wide ... to the wind the choir and cloister ... of the wintry nunnery of

the order of lust ... beneath my life....” The antithesis between the poets and the mortal world on which the fallen political poets build their poems is fixed, and the postulation does not permit any movement or growth, “that sighs for the seducer’s coming ... in the sun strokes of summer” (DT). Thomas’s song “A Refusal...,” on the other hand, renders fully the drama of his creative journey of soft impersonal art, disinterested goodwill and action “they, that thrust back the water ... softly crumple now and close, stream in his wake” (MV 371).

If the predominant effect of Thomas’s dramatic art song “A Refusal...” is scenic and sculptural, the succession of scenes and images marks a kind of creative progression on the line of the pagan altruistic artist Yeats, even in the early poems, “that ancient miracle makes moist your lip ... with Cana’s feast.” Thomas, unlike Owen and Auden, does not start with a formulated thought or premise, “water of life no prophet could divine ... whose eyes now know a month lighter than shade.” Watkins underscores the influence of Yeats in Thomas’s dramatic song: “down the dark, echoing walls of some deep well ... where a stone, plunging, woke you from your sleep ... your angel spoke the moment that it fell” (MV 369). Thomas’s characteristic method is exploration that involves and includes questioning, debate, oscillation, and consequent shifts in attitude and mood; and although many of his contemporary poets’s poems end in irresolution, there is a distinct advance in realization at the end of the song “A Refusal...” Muir sees: I should have worn a terror-mask, should be
A sight to frighten hope and faith away,
Half charnel field, half battle and rutting ground.
Instead I am a smiling summer sea
That sleeps while underneath from bound to bound
The sun-and star-shaped killers gorge and play. (MV)

However, Day Lewis perceives that the song “A Refusal...” reveals another important fact; Thomas projects a part of his own self into the artistic character of Auden. This means that he starts severing himself from the vicarious impersonal character of his early poem *18 Poems*, that he should lose his popularity and end as hopeless as Auden, “but by this slow ... fissure, this blind numb grinding severance ... of floe from floe ... merciless god, to mock your failures so!” (DCP 260). Spender thinks that the portraiture of Auden’s character is objective and that Thomas accepts the stark reality of Auden’s metaphysical pattern of death-in-life though it means accepting the worst, “the source ... of back-ache” and “stinking life” of Auden to Thomas’s own, “the miles and hours upon you feed ... they eat your eyes out with their distance ... they eat your heart out with devouring need ... they eat your death out with lost lost significance” (*Poems of Dedication* 45). MacNeice observes that Thomas’s art song interrupts the Yeatsian pattern of life-in-death in the sense that it has no intimate connection with the moods of the man

Thomas, the “heartache” of his empathic poetical character, “and when you get down ... the house is a maelstrom of loves and hates where you ... having got down – belong” (MCP).

Thomas contends that his later song “A Refusal...” is not a deviation from the empathic impersonal art of his main poetry, especially his early poem *18 Poems* but a self-vindication of his disinterested goodwill and action which is the *leit-motif* of his poetry as well as his preceding art songs identical with the altruistic pagan tradition of Yeats in contrast to Auden’s Eliotian art songs of un pity and immortality:

I climb to greet the war in which I have no heart but only
That one dark I owe my light,
Call for confessor and wiser mirror but there is none
To glow after the god stoning night
And I am struck as lonely as a holy marker by the sun.
(DT)

Towards the end of the succeeding song “Poem in October,” Thomas refutes the time-conscious poets’s misreading of his dramatic song “A Refusal...,” their misinterpretation of his cynical pity in *18 Poems* as Owen’s pity and their mistaking of his Yeatsian empathy as Auden’s aesthetic amoral indifference. His defence of his art songs as a whole, his persistent functioning as a poet and an artist of magnanimous impersonal art stands as an answer to the political poets’s offensive criticism of his dramatic song “A Refusal”:

It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.
(DT 116)

In *18 Poems* Thomas, being skeptical about the functioning of the historical minded Eliotian Auden and the time-conscious poets of Owen’s pity, functions as an ahistorical, apolitical and asocial poet sharing the sufferings of the realistic poets and offering “the boys of summer in their ruin” (DT 72) hope for poetry and survival in tragic happiness.

Moreover, In *Look Stranger!* Auden perceives that Thomas’s early poem *18 Poems* of Yeatsian empathy and impersonal art offering salvation to the fellow-poets’s suffering is different from the pacifistic pity of Owen whom the realistic poets of the thirties, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice fail to perpetuate, “the Priory clock chimes briefly and I recollect ... I am expected to return alive ... my will effective and my nerves in order ... to my situation ... poetry is in the pity.” What Thomas wants is that poetry is “to be rooted in life ... these moods give no permission to be idle ... for men are changed by what they do” (*Look Stranger!* 46). However, Auden is satirical of all the poets of pity, active or passive, adventurous or adventitious, sentimental or cynical in time of crisis:

“the cluster of mounds like a midget golf course, graves ... of some who created these intelligible dangerous marvels ... affectionate people, but crude their sense of glory” (*LS* 11).

What Thomas sings of his “heart’s truth” and “October blood,” the poetic images of intensity and soft impersonal art, in his early poems persists in his transitional, later poems and his art songs past and present. He also anticipates the continuation of his identical functioning in the ensuing songs “Fern Hill” and “Over Sir John’s Hill”:

O may my heart’s truth
Still be sung

On this high hill in a year’s turning. (DT)

In the last song “Over Sir John’s Hill” also, Thomas shares Auden’s tearful sorrow and anxiety and persuades him to function as a pragmatic poet “dying for the people” rather than a poet for original sin, history and faith to ensure his future. He projects, apart from explaining the sufferings of the lovers of Auden’s aesthetic amoral art and his own salvation offered to them, his own waxing popularity as a poet and an artist of magnanimous impersonal art in contrast to Auden’s anxiety and loneliness, his waning popularity as an artist and analyst among the poets of the thirties and the forties. Thomas attributes his success and greatness as an artist to the influence of the sceptic poet Yeats:

The heron, ankling the scaly
Lowlands of the waves,
Makes all music; and I who wear the tune of the slow,
Wear-willow river, grave,
Before the lunge of the night, the notes on this time-shaken
Stone for the sake of the souls of the slain birds sailing.
(DT 114)

In the last song “Over Sir John’s Hill” of the Audenesque structure, Thomas’s persuasion of the existential Auden to make his metaphysical artistic process pragmatic and productive confluences with his caring impersonal art that voices promises of prospective future to the vociferous poets of the thirties and the voiceless war poets of the forties., the lost lovers of Auden’s immortal art.

In contradistinction to the metaphysical aesthetic concern of Auden who “escaped from bitter youth ... escaped out of her crowd ... or out of her black cloud” dances “on the leaf-sown, new-mown, smooth ... grass plot of the garden” (*YCP* 252), the crazy functioning of the visionary war poets and the pity conscious political poets’s sceptical functioning, Thomas in “A Refusal...” is distinctive in his two major concerns. First, as Thomas churns out scene after scene, his amused detachment is replaced by increasing involvement in leading the inactive war poets to the poetic process of life-in-death, to function as poets of sceptic altruistic tradition and success, and this is particularly noticeable in the last stanza. Secondly, although Thomas has little illusion about the artistic

significance of the work of art, he feels less diffident about the success of the pure art song among the readers. Roberts upholds:

Trees crash at midnight unpredicted,
Voices cry out,
Naked he walks, and with no fear,
In the strange isle, the wise and gentle. (*MV*).

He thinks that Auden could continue to be a popular artist if he so chooses, and he hopes that his tragic song would satisfy popular taste if the principal role of Thomas were acted by Auden:

Beethoven deaf and Milton blind,
Melville, forsaken of the valiant mind,
Beyond the inhuman pattern, men,
Broken, ephemeral, undismayed. (*MV*)

In the last poem *In Country Sleep*, Thomas is principally concerned with this inner reality, and his last dramatic art song “Over Sir John’s Hill” suggests to Auden the area of experience that he could have explored as an artist, “and you shall wake, from country sleep, this dawn and each first dawn ... your faith as deathless as the outcry of the ruled sun” (DT 81).

Muir, while witnessing the identical consistency both in Auden and Thomas as far as their *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* are concerned, perceives that the dramatic song “A Refusal...” upholds Thomas’s early functioning as an asocial, apolitical and ahistorical poet caring for the sorrow of the fellow-beings which contradicts the realistic poets’s adverse criticism of the song as a deviation from the pity of the early poem *18 Poems*, as an initial moving towards Auden’s aesthetic coldness aspiring for Auden’s immortality. However, he underscores how the perseverant amoral Auden suffers unsuccess and unpopularity in contrast to the increasing success and popularity of the relentless warm Thomas:

There the beginning finds the end
Before the beginning ever can be,
And the great runner never leaves
The starting and the finishing tree,
The budding and the fading tree. (*MV*)

Muir who imputes Auden’s overweening pride and power, his rising popularity in the early phase to his Eliotian metaphysical artistic process of intensity attributes his declining appeal and influence in the middle phase to the same historical process. In contrast, it is Thomas’s Yeatsian life-centric artistic process and altruistic impersonal art that wins him laurels and unmakes Auden’s greatness among his lovers. The regression of Auden is due to his metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral pattern and the progression of Thomas to the metempirical process of altruistic cyclical pattern according to Muir:

The ancestral deed is thought and done,
And in a million Edens fall
A million Adams drowned in darkness,
For small is great and great is small,
And a blind seed all. (*MV*)

Thomas's life-centric and labour-involving poetic process and his warm impersonal art in harmony with Yeats's cyclical pattern and altruistic functioning establishes him as a poet as well as an artist of success, appeal and popularity among his contemporaries while Auden's death-centric and Word-centric Eliotian artistic process and his ironic aesthetic amoral impersonal art deprives him of his established position, popularity and appeal among the lovers of his grand art.

Auden's inward debate in his early and middle phases, a poetic dialogue of conflict, gives his poems a dramatic character. His existential quest in the last phase also points to the existential drama of alienation and anxiety in which he could have excelled had he attempted. Iain Fletcher portrays Auden as an existential dramatist:

They are aware
Of absence, as I am aware
Of the creeping essence of unsleeping presence,
And would refuse the engagement
Leaving their laughing to glide still farther and farther
(Like a flying away of doves...)

Ironic as shadows that mimic the conceptual pleasures of man. (MV418)

Lascelles Abercrombie observes that poetic drama neglects, except only for preserving the necessary credibility, the outer shells of reality, and directly seeks to imitate the core; and this he calls the "emotional reality" ("Function of Poetry in the Drama" 154). Eliot also remarks that poetic drama strives to reach beyond "the namable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life when directed towards action" ("Poetry and Drama" 85).

In the poem "Prayer for My Daughter," Thomas finds in Yeats's idealized picture of Helen as the description of the character of a metaphysical artist "who chooses right, and never find a friend." Yeats remarks:

Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy.... (YCP)

The passage also reminds Thomas of Yeats's description of the "most violent ways" in Helen's character, "being high and solitary and most stern," in the poem "No Second Troy," "what could have made her peaceful with a mind ... the nobleness made simple as a fire ... with beauty like a tightened bow, a kind ... that is not natural in an age like this ... (73). In *18 Poems*, Thomas shows that many of Auden's criticism of the passionate lovers of his impersonal art echo Helen's phrases of contempt and hatred for her lover Paris of adolescent desire without courage, "stake the sleepers in the savage grave ... that the vampire laugh." He recasts:

The patchwork halves were cloven as they scudded
The wild pigs' wood, and slime upon the trees
Sucking the dark, kissed on the cyanide,

And loosed the braiding adders from their hairs,
Rotating halves are horning as they drill
The arterial angel. (DT)

MacNeice also describes Auden's grand artistic beauty as "fatal," "something of glass about her, of dead water ... chills and holds ... far more fatal than painted flesh or the lodestone of live hair ... this despair of crystal brilliance" as Helen's "Circean beauty." He explains that the contemporary poets' passion for Auden's sound pattern as "Narcissus' error that enfolds and kills us" and realizes, "be brave, my ego, look into your glass ... and realise that that never-to-be-touched ... vision is your mistress" (MCP 76). Edwin Muir calls the early Auden's art song that destroys the creative life of his contemporary political poets, "that halts the turning sun" with "endless departure, endless rest ... end and beginning here are one" as "the toy horse" Dumb wooden idol, you have led
Millions on your calm pilgrimage
Between the living and the dead,
And shine in your golden age. (MV)

In the last phase, Auden gives the pilgrimage-pattern in *The Age of Anxiety* the symbolic character of an existential drama and he shifts his focus to the interior region, the proceedings of his early phase in the artistic process of the ignorant dilemmatic contemporary poets, "and the great runner never leaves ... the starting and the finishing tree ... the budding and the fading tree." The poet-pilgrim journeys from bafflement to sad wisdom, and the framework of the poem does not permit any conflict on the physical plane; conflict in the usual sense is here replaced by spiritual tension generated by perplexity, awe, and ambivalent intention of his contemporary poets of the thirties and the forties. Muir recasts:

There the ship sailing safe in harbour
Long since in many a sea was drowned.
The treasure burning in her hold
So near will never be found,
Sunk past all sound. (MV)

Auden's thinking is that in the middle phase he is self-deceptive as to the quality of his own poetry when he expresses the hope that *The Age of Anxiety* would be a success among his contemporaries and would redeem his literary reputation.

The manner in which Auden continues the work shows his non-involvement, and Roberts's jesting comments leave the readers in no doubt about his opinion in regard to its worth, "calcine the amorphous dust ... destroy the inert substratum, break ... too late, the pattern: dust attains ... quicker than tardy death, the shining dark" (362). In the poem "In the Strange Isle," He comments on Auden's earnest efforts to bestow the needless stylistics on the tragic drama *The Age of Anxiety*, "ceaseless the struggle in the twining circle ... the gulls, the doves, and the dusk crows ... the fangs of the lily bleed, and the lips ... of the rose are torn" (MV).

It is undoubtedly true that Thomas does not initially share Auden's enthusiasm:

Land, land, land, nothing remains
Of the pacing, famous sea but its speech,
And into its talkative seven tombs
The anchor dives through the floors of a church. (DT)
Thomas, however, holds the view that he has enough critical judgement to discern the immaturity of the work; only he is reluctant to speak, even to think, disparagingly of the work in deference to Auden.

Besides, Thomas shows no bitterness or hate towards the self-seeking heroic war poets, Lewis and Keyes, "sufferer with the wound ... in the throat, burning and turning," the self-indulgent lost political poets remembering their past failure and the passive war poet Prince dreaming of Auden's aesthetic, "all night afloat ... on the silent sea we have heard the sound ... that came from the wound wrapped in the salt sheet" as well as no love for the impassive war poets Fuller, Rook and Rhys who defy the warring note of the metaphysical Auden, "the salt sheet broke in a storm of singing" and heed to his own vicarious impersonal art, "the voices of all the drowned swam on the wind." He continues to uphold his kind disinterestedness that is the secret of his success as a poet of great influence:

Open a pathway through the slow and sail,
Throw wide to the wind the gates of the wandering boat
For my voyage to begin to the end of my wound,
We heard the sea sound sing, we saw the salt sheet tell,
Lie still, sleep becalmed, hide the mouth in the throat,
Or we shall obey, and ride with you through the drowned. (DT 65)

Thomas perceives that the felicity that both Lewis and Keyes expect in their personal identity with Sassoon and Owen respectively is only intense in degree than the realistic poets's expected happiness, and this absence of any fundamental opposition precludes genuine conflict:

And prophets loud on the burned dunes;
Insects and valleys hold her thighs hard,
Times and places grip her breast bone,
She is breaking with seasons and clouds.... (DT)

Auden, commenting on the fate of poetry of pity and patriotism, contrasts the visionary pity of his contemporaries of the thirties with the patriotic pity of Lewis and Keyes, the mortal concern of the realistic poets and the immortal concern of the heroic war poets and their commitment to death for the cause of pity, "instruments ... to take the measure of all queer events ... and drugs to move the bowels or the heart." He differentiates:

A watch, of course, to watch impatience to fly,
Lamps for the dark and shades against the sun;
Foreboding, too, insisted on a gun,
And coloured beads to soothe a savage eye. (NYL 164)

In Auden's perception, the opposition between the inactive war poets and the heroic war poets on the one hand and the realistic poets on the other hand takes on a moral dimension. However MacNeice, disagreeing with Auden's observation, perceives that the time-conscious pity of the realistic poets as well as the patriotic pity of the heroic war poets and their identical search for a proud life of love and pity, happiness and peace is quite distinctive from the dilemmatic romantic war poets's dreaming of immortal greatness and their insensitivity to the sorrow of war and the anxious Auden waiting for immortality and his indifference to war dread and death. The attitudes of Fuller, Rook, Rhys, Prince and Auden towards war are identically "ruthless" as they are conscious of achieving the pride and power of immortality, as they are too passive and innocent for direct confrontation with the moral evil. Auden's contrast between the heroic war poets of the forties and the time-conscious poets of the thirties, of light and shade, of heroic pity and passive pity, innocence and malignity produces little complexity of effect according to MacNeice:

This is a bit like us: the individual sets
A course for all his soul's more basic needs
Of love and pride of life, but sometimes he forgets
How much their voyage home depends upon pragmatic
And ruthless attitudes—destroyers and corvettes. (MCP 222)

Day Lewis, while rebuking the inactive and insensitive war poets's *ipso facto*, their hum and haw around the Wordsworthian greatness and Auden's immortality, "a calmer stream, a colder stream" (244) and their irresponsible singing of "what came into their head" (243) and commending the responsible functioning of the active war poets for immortalization of the poetry of pity, "the word ... of hope and freedom high," projects his love and hate in describing the sensibility of the war poets:

The river this November afternoon
Rests in an equipoise of sun and cloud:
A glooming light, a gleaming darkness shroud
Its passage. All seems tranquil, all in tune. (DCP)

Spender's poems "Dusk," "At Night," "In a Garden," "The Barn" and "The Coast" in *Ruins and Visions* testify to his fascination for nature, his instinctive romantic drive of the pity of Owen in presenting the war poets's dreaming of "timeless Being." The images of silence are concrete and accretional and by elimination leading to complete effect of repose:

A terra cotta blanket
Of dark, robs one by one
Recognition from villages,
Features from flowers,
News from men,
Stones from the sun. (Ruins 79)

MacNeice's critical comments on the performance of the war poets are an admixture of praise and dispraise, "loves and hates." He disapproves of the inactive war poets for their change of heart from Wordsworth to Auden and to Thomas, from fear to love, from death to life, "an age of mainlanders, that dare not fancy ... life out of uniform, will feel no envy" (*MV*) and commends the active war poets for resolving to be unambiguous in their choice to immortalize the poetry of pity and peace, Sassoon and Owen "between moving dunes and beyond reproving ... sentry-boxes to have been self-moving" (*MCP*) while scoffing at Prince for remaining sensual and ambiguous till the end "sizzles with stinking life," "and when you get down ... the field is a failed or a worth-while crop, the source ... of back-ache if not heartache" (*MCP*). He underestimates the fear-stricken role of the lost political poets "bound to a desk by conscience or by the spirit's ... hayfever," "who were too carefree or careful" and all the inactive war poets "who lived in the wrong time or the wrong place" as "minor poets," whose "books are library flotsam" and "some of their names—not all—we learnt in school ... but, life being short, we rarely read their poems ... mere source-books now to point or except a rule." However, MacNeice contradistinguishes the heroic war poets of pity, Lewis and Keyes from their contemporaries and ranks them as major poets enlightened by the Great War poets, Sassoon and Owen, "for if not in the same way, they fingered the same language ... according to their lights," as the ancient Chorus of the dramatic war poetry, "for them as for us ... chance was a coryphaeus who could be either ... an angel or an *ignis fatuus*."

In "Summer and Winter," G.S. Fraser praises Thomas's dramatic song "A Refusal..." and his portraiture of the slow movement of poets of the forties anxious about the uncertain future of their poetry of immortal art, love, pity and peace as, "a diminishing sky," "a perspective other than retrospect ... that hurts and holds the eye"; in his own presentations of his contemporary poets as regressive and retrogressive, living and inanimate, as "summer and winter," "summer can ripen common flesh on the sea-shores ... and makes its whorlings whisper like sea-shells," he shows Yeatsian keenness of perception and his kind impersonal art as experienced in the early poem *18 Poems*:

Winter does not offer escape
Forward or backward from its final landscape
And on all sides its skies fall
As if the whole world a theatre
Where the round year had taken its curtain call.
Winter offers us, for instance,
The nerves of a leaf on a puddle ice
And the terrible nearness of distance. (*MV* 402)
If Thomas's dramatic art song "A Refusal..." conveys, in the main, his deepest creative states and experiences, he yet shows remarkable objectivity in rendering the

contemporary poets's natural desire for objective immortal art and their phenomena.

Thomas's moral disinterestedness as witnessed in the later dramatic art song "A Refusal..." has an analogy to his own early poem, "I see the pulse of summer in the ice" in which he persuades the fallen poets of time consciousness to alchemize their sorrowful failure into tragic joy to regain their lost status:

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

Thomas's articulate energy, his altruistic functioning in the song "A Refusal..." is in harmony with Yeats's altruistic pagan tradition as implied in the later poem "The Wheel":

Through winter-time we call on spring,
And through the spring on summer call,
And when abounding hedges ring
Declare that winter's best of all;
And after that there's nothing good
Because the spring-time has not come—
Nor know that what disturbs our blood
Is but its longing for the tomb. (*YCP* 179)

The artistic process of life-in-death, the artistic manner of transfiguration of the art song "A Refusal..." is indicative of not merely the quality of Thomas's poetry, his craftsmanship but also of his pragmatic, altruistic attitude to life and his contemporary poets. Muir underscores:

So from the ground we felt that virtue branch
Through all our veins till we were whole, our wrists
As fresh and pure as water from a well,
Our heads made new to handle holy things,
The source of all our seeing rinsed and cleansed
Till earth and light and water entering there
Gave back to us the clear unfallen world. (*MV*)
Muir also points out that Thomas has little motor imagery and is most leisurely in movement free from the controlling forces of power and pride:
See me with all the terrors on my roads,
The crusted shipwrecks rotting in my seas,
And the untroubled oval of my face
That alters idly with the moonlike modes
And is unfathomably framed to please
And deck the angular bone with passing grace. (*MV*)

In this regard, the driving forces are very active and intense in the functioning of historical Auden, the political Lewis and the pacifistic Keyes compared to Thomas's free love and free play during war time. In "A Refusal..." Thomas shows a greater dramatic quality than the heroic war poets Lewis and Keyes and the metaphysical Auden; and the difference lies in the fact that while Lewis, Keyes and Auden are

chiefly interested in communicating ideas, Thomas renders experiences and moods that continually fluctuate. And these changing responses to the death of the child are placed in the context of concrete, particularized situations. Muir contradistinguishes Thomas's poetic manner and his impersonal empathy and the contemporary poets's artistic process of immortal art, his Yeatsian altruistic functioning and their refusal, their philosophic resignation to mourn the death of the child in the war:

Eternity marvels at your counted years
And kingdoms lost in time, and wonders how
There could be thoughts so bountiful and wise
As yours beneath the ever breaking bough,
And vast compassion curving like the skies. (*MV*)
Archibald Macleish pertinently observes that "with all great, true poets the poem is not the perfected expression of a predetermined thought but is itself the process of its thinking moving from perception to perception, sense to sense" (168).

MacNeice, while comparing and contrasting Thomas's achievement as a poet and an artist, is certain that his poetry of paradoxical structure, "integrity of differences" and his success as a poet of self-discovery is enough to assure him of immortality but he is skeptical about his popularity as an artist parodic of the Audenesque song pattern aiming at immortality:
Being mature and yet naïve a lover
Of what is not himself—but it becomes himself
And he repays it interest, so has had
A happy life and will die happy; more—
Belongs, though he never knew it, to the Kingdom. (*MCP*)

Day Lewis, having watched "the journeying scene" of the "two travellers" Auden and Thomas, "one is preoccupied, one just stares" (*DCP* 293), perceives "indifferently" that their mortality or immortality depends upon their last poems, their *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*:

What each of them shares
With his fellow-traveller, and which is making the best of it,
And whether this or the other one
Will be justified when the journey's done,
And if either may carry on some reward or regret for it
Whither he fares. (*DCP* 294)
Muir is doubtful about the immortality of Auden's metaphysical or existential art ridden with cold distance and ironic tone:
And all that radiant kingdom lies forlorn,
As if it had never stirred; no human voice
Is heard among its meadows, but it speaks
To itself alone, alone it flowers and shines
And blossoms for itself while time runs on. (*MV* 359)

Auden could portray images of absolute calm, but mostly he projects into statuesque repose a sense of suspended movement, a highly articulate Word-centric

metaphysical idea for making his aesthetic amoral impersonal art, "for it is timeless land, it lies ... between the act and the attrition" according to Rodgers:
In that land all Is, and nothing's Ought;
No owners or notices, only birds;
No walls anywhere only lean wire of words
Worming brokenly out from eaten thought;
No oats growing, only ankle-lace grass
Easing and not resenting the feet that pass... (380)
However, Auden's artistic process of aesthetic amoral impersonal art could find its successor in the Movement poet, Philip Larkin as a hope for immortality. Larkin affirms that Auden who has been a source of greatness for all the contemporary poets of the thirties and the forties would continue to appeal to the readers and immortalize his historical art, "and all mankind from end to end of the earth ... will call him with one voice" (*MV*).

In contrast to Auden's amoral artistry, "and his strength is the desolate stone of fallen cities" (*MV* 375) lost in "nightmare" and menace about his eternity, Raine estimates that Thomas's paradoxical poetry and dramatic art songs would certainly be blessed with immortality for he offers to the hopeless poets promise for prospective career and happy living:
I piece the divine fragments into the mandala
Whose centre is the lost creative power,
The sun, the heart of God, the lotus, the electron
That pulses world upon world, ray upon ray
That he who lived on the first may rise on the last day. (376)

Muir also holds that Thomas who has transformed the paradox of death-in-life into life-in-death, the metaphysical artistic process into the metempirical poetic process, the tragic sorrow into tragic joy, the tragic vision of Word-centric art song of dramatic action into comic vision of life-centric dramatic song and the death-centric Eliotian ironic structure and historical idea into life-centric Yeatsian paradoxical structure and lyric impulse and achieved greatness and popularity that unmakes Auden's influence and greatness is bound to be blessed with immortality:
Then he will come, Christ the uncrucified,
Christ the discrucified, his death undone,
His agony unmade, his cross dismantled... (360)
Thomas's poetic career of noble impersonal art, his free play, free love and his pragmatic functioning as witnessed in his dramatic songs and poetry finds a follower in the Movement poet, Ted Hughes according to Rodgers:
No enormous beasts, only names of them;
No bones made, bans laid, or boons expected,
No contracts, entails, hereditaments,
Anything at all that might tie or hem. (*MV*)

Thus, the socio-politico-historical and existential poets's refusal to mourn the death of the

child in the war time implies their refusal to become aware of the mortal man's consciousness of the death-ridden war. Their transcendental indifference to the reality of war, their transmigration into the souls of their predecessors, their involvement in perpetuating the vision of the socio-politico-historical tradition complicates their functioning and imputes to their tragic failure in realizing their dream of immortal art. In contradistinction, Thomas's functioning as an artist of munificent transcendental art, tragic joy and Yeatsian altruistic pagan tradition, as a man of disinterested goodness and action makes a massive contribution to his success, reputation and greatness among the poets of the thirties and the forties.

CONCLUSION

In the dramatic art song "A Refusal..." Thomas demonstrates his apostatic functioning, his asocial, apolitical and ahistorical functioning revealing his poetical character of moral disinterestedness as evident in his preceding dramatic art songs as well as his paradoxical poetry structured for the salvation of the affected and the affective contemporary poets and reflecting Yeats's magnanimous impersonal art and his soundless cyclical life pattern, "grief fills the voice with water, building ... ruin on the ruining land. Sheltering ... in sea he breathes dry land, dry grave and dwelling" in contrast to Auden's metaphysical aesthetic amoral pattern showing the apocalyptic functioning as the Apotheosis of the historical art songs, "sheltered in soon all of us to be ... that memory against the scuppering rocks ... the spilling aprons of the sea" (MV 410) under the influences of the metaphysical de la Mare, the intellectual Eliot and the existential Rilke, "out of the urn a size of a man ... out of the room the weight of his trouble ... out of the house that holds a town ... in the continent of a fossil" (DT). On the whole, Thomas's refusal to function like the contemporary poets of war time, his total commitment to functioning as a paradoxical artist of life-in-death and dramatic art song is symbolic of his faith in Yeats's altruistic pagan tradition, "hearts with one purpose alone ... through summer and winter seem ... enchanted to a stone ... to trouble the living stream" (YCP 153), his poetic culture of disinterested goodwill

and action of "a man ... that lives in memory" rather than Auden's aesthetic amoral disinterestedness or his immortality-centric metaphysical historical tradition, "never to have lived is best, ancient writers say ... never to have drawn the breath of life, never to have looked into the eyes of the day ... the second best's a gay goodnight and quickly turn away" (192).

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