

Dylan Thomas's "Over Sir John's Hill": The Motif of His Art Songs

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: October 11, 2020

Accepted: December 13, 2020

Published: January 31, 2021

Volume: 10 Issue: 1

Advance access: January 2021

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

In the last dramatic art song "Over Sir John's Hill," Dylan Thomas reiterates that the motif of his art songs has been the Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, the mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song as seen in his early poem *18 Poems*. His Yeatsian process of tragic happiness, his warm impersonal art, his paradoxical sensibility that makes him an artist of success and popularity in contrast to W.H. Auden's Eliotian motif of metaphysical process of self-annihilation and immortal art, his aesthetic amoral impersonal art, his tragic vision of art song which deprives him of his grandeur and influence. However, the main thrust is extending to the dismembered and discontented Auden the very same process of regeneration that Thomas has offered to the victims of Auden's art song while ignoring everything about ... allegations of tilting, toppling and conspiracy against him. The song also testifies to his Yeatsian cosmopolitan culture maintaining his equanimity and magnanimity when he confronts an atmosphere of envy and ill-will, and hatred and violence.

Key words: Motif, Metaphorical, Metaphysical, Transmutation, Pragmatic, Texture, Tilting, Enthralled, Ameliorate, Analogous, Testify, Cosmopolitan

INTRODUCTION

Of the many paradoxes that characterize the literary efforts of the poets of the thirties, the forties and the fifties, one is, as Dylan Thomas points out in the last poem *In Country Sleep*, the ambition to write pure poetry, a work of art that assures immortality:

As the rain falls, hail on the fleece, as the vale mist rides
Through the haygold stalls, as the dew falls on the wind-
Milled dust of the apple tree and the pounded islands
Of the morning leaves, as the star falls, as the winged
Apple seed glides,
And falls, and flowers in the yawning wound at our sides,
As the world falls, silent as cyclone of silence. (*Poems* 80)

The introspectiveness that is noted in much of what may be called the Wordsworthian poetry of the inactive political poets of the thirties, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice and the romantic war poets of the forties, Roy Fuller, Alan Rook, Keidrych Rhys and F.T. Prince, while conflicting with W.H. Auden's Eliotian metaphysical art and Thomas's Grecian altruistic art songs, turn their visionary poems into interior monologues, "and alone in the night's eternal, curving act ... they yearn with tongues of curlews for the unconceived ... and immemorial sons of the cudgeling hacked ... hill." Despondence seizes the dejected Movement poets whose early poems are, as it were, symbolic of an urge for immortal art that most creative poets of the early decades exhibit in varied levels, "the vaulting does

roister, the horned bucks climb ... quick in the wood at love where a torch of foxes foams... all birds and beasts of the linked night uproar and chime." MacNeice underscores the passion for immortal art as underlying motif of poets of the inter-war period, "under the surface of flux and fear there is an underground movement ... under the crust of bureaucracy, quiet behind the posters ... unconscious but palpably there—the Kingdom of individuals" (*Collected Poems* 270).

In the last phase, Auden's renewed study of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* during his American trip and T.S. Eliot's musical grandeur in *Four Quartets* to which he responds with gusto helps to continue the spirit of his early phase, the urge for architectural art song and immortality, "his last train home is Purgatory in reverse," "instantly and it would be permanently ... God was uttered in words and gulped in gin" (*MCP* 258). Thomas recasts "the gravest ghost," the existential Eliotian motif of Auden's last phase:

A hill touches an angel. Out of a saint's cell
The nightbird lauds through nunneries and domes of
leaves
Her robin breasted tree, three Marys in the rays.
Sanctum sanctorum – the animal eye of the wood
In the rain telling its beads.... (*Poems* 79)

In the disturbing and richly meditative poems of the last phase, *The Age of Anxiety* and *Nones*, Auden reflects a sudden gloom, an awareness of the mystery of life that finds an analogue in Thomas's poem "A Winter's Tale":

Bird, he was brought low,
 Burning in the bride bed of love, in the whirl-
 Pool at the wanting centre, in the folds
 Of paradise, in the spun bud of the world.
 And she rose with the flowering in her melting snow.
 (*Poems 23*)

In these existential poems, Auden embraces Soren Kierkegaard's "dread" associated with the paradoxical situation of freedom and finiteness. *The Age* is in the nature of a sympathetic satire on the dramatic songs of Thomas who persuades the depressed war poets to transcend their anxiety through human effort:

Temporals pleading for eternal life with
 The infinite impetus of anxious spirits,
 Finite in fact yet refusing to be real,
 Wanting our own way, unwilling to say Yes
 To the Self-So which is the same at all times,
 That Always-Opposite which is the whole subject
 Of our not-knowing.... (Auden, *Collected Poems* 408)

Auden hopes to regain his greatness and popularity with the patronage of the erstwhile friends of Thomas, the lost political poets of the thirties and convince them of the significance of his paradox of death-in-life and urge them to work against the popular Thomas and his influence. Thomas records:

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.... (*Poems*)

Auden renews the early urge that the contemporary poet himself must undergo a similar process involving a rejection of not merely the neo-romantic Thomas, but also of all those Yeatsian pagan tradition which has held him enthralled so long.

In fact, Auden's last phase of his poetic carrier is "a leap into the void," an abject surrender to God in which man has no foothold, and his faith alone can lead him into a new world beyond all rational thought. "The more the suffering the more the religious existence ..." (256) wrote Kierkegaard and his belief that to be a Christian one must allow oneself to remain a victim of despair has a touching appeal to Auden. Life is absurd precisely because, though God exists, men guided by sense perceptions cannot know Him. "An unbridgeable abyss," writes Justin Replogle, "separates man from God. By nature limited to temporal experience ... men can never leap across to the timeless, multi-dimensioned existence on the other side" (53). Thus, God, in a sense, is predetermined existential necessity. Since only by submitting to God's design can men be free, human freedom is synonymous with religious faith. His ironic appeal to his contemporary poets to work against Thomas who has been world-centric and acting against poetic justice and God's will:

As a sheet, near as a wall,
 Out there as a mountain's poise of stone,
 The world is present, about,
 And I know that I am, here, not alone
 But with a world, and rejoice
 Unvexed, for the will has still to claim
 This adjacent arm as my own.... (*Nones*)

Unlike Thomas's self-contented functioning as Yeatsian artist of Grecian altruistic art song, popularity and appeal, paradoxical sensibility, "clings to her drifting hair, and climbs," Auden continues to function with his immortal vision of immortal art as existential, metaphysical and intellectual as the intense pilgrimage of his ancestor, Eliot and as grumbling and unfulfilled, damned and frustrated as his political contemporary poets. In the last phase, Auden's functioning as a metaphysical artist of pure being and pure art, power and pride among the young Movement poets as celebrants of his musical pattern is identical to his functioning in the early phase in the midst of the political poets, the worshippers of his art songs. Thomas explains, "... he who taught their lips to sing ... weeps like the risen sun among ... the liquid choirs of his tribes" (*Poems 37*).

However, the lost political poets reject Auden's appeal for their support to confront Thomas with whom their relationship stands strained as his later songs divert from the theme of his early poem *18 Poems* and aspire towards Auden's metaphysical, ironic art. MacNeice, representing the political poets, disapproves of Auden's scheme and Thomas's metaphysical modes of his later songs and his timeless love, "Time will brief us, briefed himself to oppress ... the man who looks and finds Man human and not his friend" (*MCP*). Day Lewis separates himself from the influences of both Auden and Thomas:

Separation's my métier, then, sifting through form the
 formless:
 Creation my end, to subdue and liberate time in the
 timeless.
 I find the whole in elusive fragments: let one be caught
 And profoundly known – that way, like a skeleton key,
 the part
 May unlock the intricate whole. (*Collected Poems* 316)

In *An Italian Visit*, Day Lewis reveals himself as a lover of Edward Thomas's romanticism, "the mole snout blunt under his pilgrimage of domes ... or, butter fat goosegirls, bounced in a gambo bed," Spender in *The Edge of Being* as a passionate lover of Shelley, "their breasts full of honey, render their gander king ... trounced by his wings in the hissing shippen" and MacNeice as a sensuous lover of John Clare and a connoisseur in *Holes in the Sky* and *Ten Burnt Offering*, "long dead ... and gone that barley dark where their clogs danced in the spring ... and their firefly hairpins flew, and the ricks ran round..." (*Poems 84*). Thomas perceives that in the last phase, the disgraced time-conscious poets recapture the Wordsworthian romanticism, the original influence of their early phase; although not yet chastened by sorrowful failure, they are still haunted by visions of immortality, continue to be harried and troubled by wild passion for immortal song pattern, "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" (*Poems 38*).

In the last phase, the experimental experiences of the inactive war poets, Fuller in *Epitaphs and Occasions* and Rhys in *The Black Season* feel the need to extricate themselves from the deepening shadows of war and death, from

the paradoxical process of Thomas and prompt a return to the Wordsworthian Edmund Blunden's poetry, "from the broomed witch's spume you are shielded by fern ... and flower of country sleep and the greenwood keep ... lie fast and soothed ... safe be and smooth from the bellows of the rushy brood." The enchantment and the disenchantment of the political poets for Thomas and their penchant for Wordsworthian romanticism is identical to the love and hate of the inactive war poets, Fuller, Rook and Rhys for the warm impersonal art of Thomas, "the soul walks ... the waters shorn ... this night and each night since the falling star you were born ... ever and ever he finds a way, as the snow falls." Both the group of poets, being self-conscious or time-conscious, are not ready to endure Thomas's objectivity and disinterestedness, "tolls to sleep over the stalls ... of the hearthstone tales my own, lost love" (*Poems*). They incline to the romantic art to get "each man's private dream" of pure poetry and personal comforts realized, "cruising away from thought with *an old accordion playing* ... not that it is, her accompanist plucks a banjo ... *On a Sunday afternoon*" (*MCP*). Day Lewis differentiates that the war poets' change of love is due to their fear of Thomas's transfigurative *modus operandi*, their consciousness of mortality "as though the wild had begun to spill ... over a rampart soon to be drowned ... with all its guards of domesticated ground" (*DCP* 283) and that the lost realistic poets' shifting of love is due to their belief in the *modus vivendi*, their consciousness of the poetry of pity, "and they were one voice, there comes a shrill ... delirious mewing, thin as air ... a wraith-like rumour, nowhere and everywhere" (*DCP*). Ted Hughes comments on the lethargic functioning of the war poets of the forties and the indolent performance of Auden and his contemporaries of the thirties in the last phase, "fatigue with indolence, tiger and lion ... lie still as the sun. The boa-constrictor's coil ... is a fossil. Cage after cage seems empty, or stinks of sleepers from the breathing straw ... it might be painted on the nursery wall" (Hughes 4).

During the time of war, the heroic war poet Sidney Keyes may have re-orientated his poetic ideal from William Wordsworth to Wilfred Owen's pacifistic pity "in the land of hearthstone tales ... loping and bleating roughly and blithely," and the active war poet Alun Lewis to Siegfried Sassoon's nationalistic pity, "out of a lair in the flocked leaves in the dew dipped year ... to eat your heart in the house in the rosy wood" (*Poems* 79) and both of them lay down their lives for the cause of peace and patriotism while articulating their faith in the immortality of Owen and Sassoon, "and the second comers, the severers, the enemies from the deep ... forgotten dark, rest their pulse and bury their dead in her faithless sleep" (88). The "slow and deep' companionship of Prince with the "good" and witty Auden, and his intimations of immortality, "spelled rare and wise" in the early *Poems* offer a welcome hope to Auden, but the relief is temporary, "my girl ranging the night in the rose and shire ... of the hobnail tales" (*Poems*). Towards the end of his poem "Soldiers Bathing," Prince, the lover of the Eliotian Auden becomes the lover of the romantic existentialism of Emily Bronte "and prince of ice to court the honeyed heart from your side

before sunrise" (*Poems*). Prince's half-hearted approach to Auden's artistic process corresponds to that of the fallen political poets, "a spinney of ringed boys and ganders, spike and burn." The Movement poet Hughes makes a parody of Prince's nonchalant and insignificant functioning, "the apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun ... the parrots shriek as if they were on fire, or strut ... like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut" (Hughes). Thomas, commenting on the position of passive war poet Prince as incommunicado, "the rod bends low, divining land ... and through the sundered water crawls ... a garden holding to her hand ... with birds and animals...." (*Poems* 37-38), explains that the beginning and the end of the inactive and active war poets' poetic journey is reminiscent of the Wordsworthian romanticism and passivity, "with men and women and waterfalls ... trees cool and dry in the whirlpool of ships ... and stunned and still on the green, laid veil ... sand with legends in its virgin laps..." (*Poems*). In the last phase, all the war poets reveal themselves as defenders of life and love, pity and fear and opponents of Auden's metaphysical process of death-in-life and immortal vision of art song, "no Time, spoke the clocks, no God, rang the bells ... I drew the white sheet over the islands ... and the coins on my eyelids sang like shells" (147). The war poets' continuous shifting from romanticism to modernism and finally to the decadent romantic art, from "this prayer, this hymn, this feckless word," according to MacNeice, spells "out a Machiavellian creed ... though the evil Past is ever present ... and the happy Present is past indeed..." (*MCP* 234).

The Movement poets of the fifties, Philip Larkin, John Holloway, D.J. Enright, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and Elizabeth Jennings, falling in love with Auden's immortal art, dream of the song pattern and stand divided between love and fear in their artistic process. Thomas points out:

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.... (*Poems*)

The antithesis between sleep and wakefulness, "between my body and the day" explains the anticipated agonizing conflict between Auden, the poet of amoral aesthetic transcendence and Thomas, the poet of moral disinterestedness, between the historic, existential tradition and the sceptic poetic tradition in the early poems of the Movement poets worshipping Auden's early poem *Poems* as the testament of pure art. In the last dramatic song "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas persuasively demonstrates that Auden's declining literary reputation and influence is due to his Eliotian leit-motif of immortal vision of immortal art song and immortality, his death-centric metaphysical process and ascetic aloofness in contrast to his own increasing greatness and success that he attributes to his Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, Grecian altruistic art songs and paradoxical sensibility:

Oh he
Comes designed to my love to steal not her tide raking
Wound, nor her riding high, nor her eyes, nor kindled
hair,

But her faith that each vast night and the saga of prayer
 He comes to take
 Her faith that this last night for his unsacred sake
 He comes to leave her in the lawless sun awaiting....
 (*Poems*)

With the descending of gloom and doom about the future of Auden and his contemporary friends, Larkin in the maiden volume of poems *The North Ship* struggles hard to retain Auden's metaphysical vision of aesthetic amoral impersonal art, his historic process of living-in-death as enacted in *Poems* as an inspiration for immortal art, "the low hills lay purring round the sun." He hopes that Auden would recover as an artist of architectural art and Eliotian grandeur in contrast to the political and the war poets' frustrated functioning and Thomas's sensual, perfunctory functioning. Thomas records:

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

Larkin's poem "Night Music" hints at this "at one the wind rose ... and with it the noise ... of the black poplars" (Larkin, *Collected Poems* 301). The titular poem "The North Ship," while paying a glowing tribute to the historical tradition of Auden under the tutelage of de la Mare, Eliot and Rilke, perceives his pilgrimage of suffering and immortal art as the journey of the Magi, "I saw three ships go sailing by ... over the sea, the lifting sea ... and the wind rose in the morning sky ... and one was rigged for a long journey" (*LCP* 302).

But Larkin's contemporary poet Hughes is too firmly committed to what he considers morally right to be able to convert the Movement poets' tragic vision of impersonal art and eternal suffering into Yeatsian Thomas's tragi-comic vision of art and happy living. Thomas explains the process of change in Hughes:

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

Hughes, identifying Auden's artistic process of intensity with the sleeping movement of the boa-constrictor, enumerates the realistic and the war poets' ignorant functioning and their suffering as a jaguar, "who runs like the rest past these arrives ... at a cage where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized ... as a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged ... through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes ..." (Hughes). In "The Thought-Fox," Hughes commends Thomas for his Yeatsian cyclical process, transfiguration and transformation, human impersonal art and paradoxical vision as evidently seen in the early poem *18 Poems* and the early art song, "across clearings, an eye ... a widening deepening greenness ... brilliantly, concentratedly ... coming about its own business" (Hughes 7). He takes over Thomas's paradoxical vision of merciful impersonal art, "cold, delicately as the dark snow ... a fox's nose touches twig, leaf ...," his poetic process of life-in-death to initiate his career as poet, "the clock sticks ... the page is printed" (Hughes).

In the transitional and the later dramatic songs, "After the Funeral," "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London," "Poem in October" and "Fern Hill," Thomas explores the origin, nature, and function of art song and also the relationship between art song, nature and human life in contrast to his contemporary poets of immortal and mortal concerns, "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" (*Poems* 37). In the first and the last art songs, "Altarwise by Owl-light," and "Over Sir John's Hill," he dwells chiefly on the relation between the historical, philosophic tradition and the pagan altruistic poetic tradition established by the great masters of the past, Eliot and Yeats respectively "one by one in dust and shawl ... dry as echoes of and insect-faced ... his fathers cling to the hand of the girl ... and the dead hand leads the past" (*Poems*).

Thomas's early art song is obviously "the fortune of" the influence of the later Yeats and "natural parallel" to the motif of moral disinterestedness and tragic joy of his early poem *18 Poems* and Yeats's song "Sailing to Byzantium" vis-a-vis Auden's aesthetic amoral art song, "the natural peril ... a steeplejack tower, bonerailed and masterless ... no death more natural" (*Poems* 73). In the last stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium," Yeats explains the leit-motif, the *modus operandi* and the *modus vivendi* of his paradoxical song:

Once 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 enameling
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, present, or to come. (*YCP* 163)

Yeats holds that the artists are without the conative impulses like fear, hope, and wrath to which the mortal men are subject, and this freedom affords an impersonal vision of pure poetry: To be involved in experience and swayed by rage and passion is to fall from beatitude. In the early poem *18 Poems*, Thomas's directing the weather-beaten political poets to transfigure and transform their sorrowful experiences into poetic images, alchemize their tragic suffering into tragic joy is identical to Yeats's leit-motif of considerate impersonal art in *The Tower*, "that deep considering mind ... into the labyrinth of another's being" (*YCP* 166) in contrast to Auden's inconsiderate Eliotian impersonal art. Thomas acknowledges:

The boat swims into the six-year weather,
 A wind throws a shadow and it freezes fast.
 See what the gold gut drags from under
 Mountains and galleries to the crest! (*Poems*)

Initially, Thomas envisages the advance of Auden's grand musical avant-gardism, "Time tracks the sound of shape on man and cloud ... on rose and icicle the ringing handprint" as (Thomas, *Collected Poems* 37) as the motif of his sequence of sonnets "Altarwise by Owl-light" and finds a corroboration of his early poem, "one light's language in the book of trees" in Yeats's paradox of life-in-death, his transmutation

of tragic suffering into happiness over Auden's proud metaphysical process of death-in-life and his historical sorrow, "a Bible-leaved of all the written woods ... strip to this tree" (*TCP*).

Thomas's early song pays greater attention to the inner predicament of the fallen poets of the thirties, and describes their defeat as more spiritual and creative than physical and mortal. He brings out:

Doom on deniers at the wind-turned statement.
Time's tune my ladies with the teats of music,
The scaled-sawers, fix in a naked sponge
Who sucks the bell-voiced Adam out of magic,
Time, milk, and magic, from the beginning.
Time is the tune my ladies lend their heartbreak.... (*TCP* 36)

Thomas is pained to find that the political poets as lovers of Auden's art song no longer possess the serene, sober free contemplativeness that becomes an artist of perfect work of art, but betray on the other hand the disturbing symptoms of the mortal condition.

In the sequence of sonnets, "Altarwise by Owl-light," Thomas notes a sharp demarcation between the life-centric process of self-exploration and self-development, transfiguration and transformation similar to his early poem *18 poems* and Auden's death-centric process of eternal suffering and eternal art:

Always good luck, praised the finned in the feather
Bird after dark and the laughing fish
As the sails drank up the hail of thunder
And the long-tailed lightning lit his catch. (*Poems*)

The spacious freedom of the political poets, the limitation of mortal desires conflicts with Auden's metaphysical process of intensity and immortal art, his historical consciousness of self-annihilation and metaphysical reality, "always good-bye, cried the voices through the shell ... good-bye always, for the flesh is cast ... and the fisherman winds his reel ... with no more desire than a ghost" (*Poems*). Both in the early poem and the art song Thomas's motif is identical to Yeats's process of life-in-death and pagan altruistic impersonal art, "the death of friends, or death ... of every brilliant eye ... that made a catch in the breath" and antithetical to Auden's Eliotian intellectual process of death-in-life and aesthetic amoral art, "seem but the clouds of the sky ... when the horizon fades ... or a bird's sleepy cry ... among the deepening shades" (*YCP* 168). Yeats insists on the process of laboring, the process of transfiguration and transformation for the tragic rejoice of the work of art:

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul
Nor beauty born of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil. (184)

In the transitional dramatic 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 Lewis divided in his love between

Wordsworth and Sassoon and the heroic poet Keyes in between Wordsworth and Owen. He explains:

See what clings to hair and skull
As the boat skims on with drinking wings!
The statues of great rain stand still,
And the flakes fall like hills. (*Poems*)

In the song "After the Funeral," Thomas's leit-motif reflects the paradoxical sensibility of Yeats, "in a breath ... a mouthful held the extreme of life and death," his mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, "no dark tomb haunter once; her form all full as though with magnanimity of light ... yet a most gentle woman" (*YCP* 289) in contrast to the extremities of the war poets' personal poetry and expression of personality and Auden's Eliotian metaphysical intellectualism and extinction of personality, "all sleek and new". Thomas's showing to the war poets' the Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, mythopoeic functioning recalls Yeats's telling that a work of art involves man's enterprising rather than impassiveness or passivity "that we must labour to be beautiful ... it's certain there is no fine thing ... since Adam's fall but needs much laboring" (*YCP* 64).

During the transitional period, Thomas aspires to compose a few more art songs of the Audenesque structure and the Yeatsian theme to "cure" the contemporary war poets' "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. (*Poems* 145)

Thomas means to vindicate that the Yeatsian dramatic songs of cyclical pattern, disinterested goodwill and action and paradoxical sensibility, "grief with disheveled hands tear out the altar ghost ... and a firewind kill the candle," stands quite distinct from the divided, dissociated sensibility of the political poets, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, "time marks a black aisle kindle from the brand of ashes" and the metaphysical sensibility of Auden and his aesthetic pattern, "and all love's sinners in sweet cloth kneel to a hyleg image ... nutmeg, civet, and sea-parsley serve the plagued groom and bride" (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' 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 and death, altruistic pragmatism and moral disinterestedness from the contemporary poets functioning as poets of love, pity and peace, romantic, political and historical interestedness refusing to see the reality of war:

Strike and sing his catch of fields
For the surge is sown with barley,
The cattle graze on the covered foam,
The hills have footed the waves away.... (*Poems*)

The leit-motif of Thomas's later song in several ways recalls Yeats's poem "A Prayer for My Daughter." His pragmatic functioning, his disinterested goodness and action in the song "A Refusal..." while identical with the motif of his early poem *18 Poems* and his early, transitional songs, "rooted in one dear perpetual place," evokes Yeats's empathy, his disinterested goodness and action free from the personal love, pity and hatred as he "knows that to be choked with hate" augurs well of "all mischief" and "if there is no hatred in a mind ... assault and battery of the wind ... can never tear the linnet from the leaf" (*YCP* 160).

In "Poem in October," Thomas examines how far Owen's dictum that poetry of 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 and how far Yeats's serene, sober and sagacious functioning makes Thomas's functioning ahistorical, apolitical and asocial, great, successful and popular like his early poem and his early and transitional songs. As Yeats explains his pragmatic functioning as a lover of life, vicarious impersonal art in the song "A Drunken Man's Praise of Sobriety" in contrast to his contemporary poets committed to aesthetic functioning and escapism:

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

Thomas contradistinguishes his distinctive down-to-earth functioning in conjunction with Yeats's pagan altruistic functioning during war time, as he knows that "an intellectual hatred is the worst" and "opinionated mind" and "opinions are accursed" (*YCP*), from the immortality conscious functioning of the poets of war time who turn a blind eye to what happens in and around them in the war-torn world, "a drunkard is a dead man ... and all dead men are drunk," to the concerns of a common man. Thomas explains:

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....(*Poems*)

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 poets is purely academic. He underscores that his early poem, his early and transitional art songs are a success as their modes of processing and operation are in harmony with Yeats's cyclical process of life and death, his sharing and caring impersonal art, his tragic joy. So, it is his continuous process of self-exploration, self-dedication and self-advancement, the Yeatsian motif of free play and free love, "self-delighting ... self-appeasing, self-affrighting" (*YCP*), the life-centric process and the magnanimous mortal art song rather than self-indulging, self-annihilating and self-perpetuating immortal art song that makes him fortunate both in poetic career and personal life; he imputes the failure of Prince's ambition to make immortal art song to his

conflicting motives which also disappoints Auden's expectation to immortalize his art song through Prince:

One by one in dust and shawl,
Dry as echoes and insect-faced,
His fathers cling to the hand of the girl
And the dead hand leads the past.... (*Poems*)

In "Easter 1916" written during the time of Irish Civil War, Yeats sings of the leit-motif of his paradoxical song, "a terrible beauty":

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream, (*YCP* 153)

It is Thomas's Yeatsian theme, his *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* that make his early poem, his early and transitional songs a success, his poetic career popular and his life prosperous and happy in contrast to the tragic failure of the war poet Prince divided between personal love and impersonal art besides being ignorant of Auden's metaphysical process of intensity.

In the last dramatic song "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas yet upholds the Yeatsian paradoxical sensibility, *modus operandi*, *modus vivendi* and leit-motif in the song "Byzantium," "marbles of the dancing floor ... break bitter furies of complexity ... those images that yet ... fresh images beget ... that dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea" (*YCP* 210) to offer the Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song as a viable alternative to Auden's immortal vision of metaphysical art song and immortality as a hope for a promising future to his hoping against hope. He also focuses on his sober and sagacious functioning identical to Yeats's cosmopolitan functioning amid the contemporary poets' overt gestures of avenging, violence, war mongering against his name and fame and the divergent commendations of the poets of the fifties on his dramatic songs. Thomas explains:

Leads them as children and as air
On to the blindly tossing tops;
The centuries throw back their hair
And the old men sing from newborn lips.... (*Poems*)

While the young Movement poet Larkin in the early poem *The North Ship* espouses the cause of Auden's early poem *Poems* and the metaphysical motif of his art songs, Hughes in *Hawk in the Rain* emulating the Yeatsian Thomas, reaffirms what Thomas has done in the early poem *18 Poems* and the dramatic art songs that followed, the process of transfiguration and transformation, his self-indicating, self-dedicating, self-vindicating moral disinterestedness, his Grecian altruistic functioning that leads the half-sound lovers and the unsound lovers of Auden's musical pattern to life of sound comforts and happiness. Thomas's noble gesture of free love and free play to the drowning Auden is to see him liberated from the metaphysical concerns of eternal flux and eternal art, pure aesthetic and amoral attitude despite his allegations of conscription and tilting scheme aided and abetted by the political poets of the thirties and the Movement poets of the fifties. His disinterested goodness and action reveals himself as an artist of modesty and magnanimity analogous to the cosmopolitan culture of Yeats. Thomas explains:

Down, down, down, under the ground,
Under the floating villages,
Turns the moon-chained and water-wound
Metropolis of fishes.... (*Poems*)

In the last dramatic art song, Thomas reiterates that in the later dramatic art songs he does not really flinch from the Yeatsian vicarious impersonal art of his early poem as well as the main concern of his early and transitional dramatic art songs, that the motif of his later art songs is inextricably intertwined with all the dramatic art songs that preceded and succeeded as they are all Yeatsian in motif, in the *modus operandi* and the *modus vivendi*. Moreover, the last song demonstrates that he could continue to function with the same theme and ruling energy even when he is dying lonely, when the realistic and the war poets, the celebrants of his magnanimous impersonal art make a break and become the lovers of romantic tradition. In the last dramatic song, he evolves the paradoxical framework of Yeats in which the contemporary poets' 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. (*Poems* 39)

Yeats, comparing his pagan unified sensibility and his gentle impersonal art to the altruistic painting that "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 mortal vision of pagan altruistic soundless art song and 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*)

Thomas's functioning as an artist of paradoxical sensibility and Grecian altruistic impersonal art during war or peace time has been similar to that of Yeats, "that civilisation may not sink ... its great battle lost" in contrast to the Eliotian Auden functioning as an artist of power and pride, European megalomaniac sensibility and intensity similar to that of "our master Caesar is in the tent ... where the maps are spread ... his eyes fixed upon nothing ... a hand under his head" (*YCP* 287).

Moreover, the last art song "Over Sir John's Hill" belies MacNeice's prediction of Thomas's downfall and carves a niche for himself as a leading poet and artist identical to the name and fame of his early poem and his early song in contrast to Auden's "diminishing" reputation and influence, "winter has a diminishing sky ... and a perspective other than retrospect ... that hurts and holds the eye." G.S. Fraser perceives that Thomas's Yeatsian Grecian altruistic poetical character is carved in stone in the last art song analogous to the poetical character of his early poem *18 Poems* and his other art songs:

Winter offers us, for instance,
The nerves of a leaf on a puddle of ice
And the terrible nearness of distance.
As if being aware, one stood
At the wrong, the small end of a corridor. (*Modern Verse* 403)

The political poets of the thirties, the war poet of the forties and the Movement poets of the early fifties are disappointed and disgraced in their wild pursuit of Auden's immortal art. Auden himself suffers a setback in his appeal as an artist of immortal art, "night and the reindeer on the clouds above the haycocks ... and the wings of the great roc ribboned for the fair!" (*Poems*). Thomas explains Auden's ecclesiastical sentiment and the political, the war and the Movement poets' self-deceiving functioning ignorant of Auden's metaphysical process of intensity as *ignis fatuus*:

Waking alone in a multitude of loves when morning's light
Surprised in the opening of her nightlong eyes
His golden yesterday asleep upon the iris
And this day's sun leapt up the sky out of her thighs
Was miraculous virginity old as loaves and fishes,
Though the moment of a miracle is unending lightning
And the shipyards of Galilee's footprints hide a navy of doves. (*Poems* 106)

Thomas, on the contrary, has been throughout his poetical career continuing his search for the proper vehicle, and this search is intimately connected with his appraisal of the contemporary poet's immortal vision of art song and immortality, his Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation and his mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song.

Deaths and Entrances, Thomas's later poem, achieves the necessary fusion of largeness and depth, but he still feels an inward compulsion to attempt the Audenesque work of art in the later phase to establish the fact that the motif of his art songs written in time of peace or war and his modes of approach and operation are uniformly identical to each other and similar to that of his early poem as they are typically Yeatsian in character and functioning, similar in their mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song and dissimilar to Auden's Eliotian immortal vision of metaphysical process and immortal art song. Thomas outlines his original intention underlying the last art song:

No longer will the vibrations of the sun desire on
Her deepsea pillow where once she married alone,
Her heart all ears and eyes, lips catching the avalanche
Of the golden ghost who ringed with his streams her mercury bone,
Who under the lids her windows hoisted his golden luggage,
For a man sleeps where fire leapt down and she learns through his arm
That other sun, the jealous coursing of the unrivalled blood. (*Poems*)

The need to extricate himself from the deepening shadows of murderous designs in his dramatic songs, to nullify the political poets' speculations on the advance of Thomas's

philanthropic impersonal art towards Auden's metaphysical art, and to care for the forlorn and forsaken Auden in the last phase prompts a return to the Yeatsian Grecian altruistic art song "Over Sir John's Hill."

Reviews, Methods and Objectives

Thomas's poems especially his art songs are enriched with functional images, static and dynamic, chosen from nature, birds, flowers and beasts. John Press holds that "Thomas's achievement as a poet and his personality as a man were so inextricably linked that we can scarcely understand the one without understanding the other" (113). Robert Graves observes that "Thomas was drunk with melody ... he was eloquent, and what cause he was pleading, he cared not ... he kept musical control of the reader without troubling about the sense" (37).

To Karl Shapiro Thomas's poetry is "a holocaust, a sowing of the wind" (102). John Bayley finds that "the wholeness of" Thomas's poem "remains difficult to grasp" because of "his use of language ... a hit-or-miss method" (195-96). David Daiches perceives that Thomas's poetry is "magnificent, as well as original in tone and technique, and that he was growing in poetic stature to the last" (24). John Ackerman holds that the song "Over Sir John's Hill" is "a bestiary fable with direct reference to the human condition" (143). To Walford Davies the last song is allegorical of "the adult's full awareness of death" (81) and is associated with Thomas's "Christian belief" (83). However, the significant aspect of Thomas's last song, a representation of all his dramatic art songs of Yeatsian Grecian altruistic motif, self-sacrifice and redemption, is that the action is built up more on images of contrast than on conflict and it is interesting to note how this determines and activates the afflicted lovers of metaphysical art to hope for harmony and co-existence in sharp contrast to Auden's metaphysical and existential art that makes him and his lovers unhappy and discontented, malevolent and violent, war mongering and revengeful. The essence of dramatic action of Auden's songs lies in conflict, and the clash of opposites ensures both complications and development.

This paper, undertaking an objective metaphorical approach, as "a symbol or image which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and interpret our literary experience" (Frye, 99), discloses that the motif of Thomas's last art song is the Yeatsian vicarious impersonal art, the mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, the paradoxical sensibility and the cosmopolitan culture in consistent with his functioning in his early poem and his other dramatic songs rather than Auden's immortal vision of art song, his metaphysical process and his aesthetic amoral immortal art that proves inadequate to serve his own hope for double immortality, his power and pride and the contemporary poet's motif of ecstatic existence and establishes its originality hitherto unexplored in the existing critical studies.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In the last dramatic art song "Over Sir John's Hill" that dramatizes the story of the rise and fall of the metaphysical

artist Auden, Thomas contradistinguishes the shortcomings and limitations of Auden's metaphysical process of intensity, his aesthetic amoral art song, his ascetic aloofness and his war cry along with the Movement poets against him, "over the barbed and shooting sea assumed an army ... and swept into our wounds and houses" from his Yeatsian introspective process of reconciliation and regeneration, ignorance and innocence, equanimity and magnanimity, "that uncalm still it is sure alone to stand and sing ... alone in the husk of man's home" (*Poems* 63). In the opening stanza, Thomas introduces the war mongering motif of Auden and his new lover Larkin before he focuses on the theme of his anti-metaphysical art songs, his Yeatsian Grecian altruistic soundless art songs and his noble functioning that ignores the charges of warfare in his songs:

Over Sir John's Hill,
The hawk on fire hangs still;
In a hoisted cloud, at drop of dusk, he pulls to his claws
And gallows, up the rays of his eyes the small birds of
the bay
And the shrill child's play
Wars
Of the sparrows and such who swansing, dusk, in wran-
gling hedges,
And blithely they squawk
To fiery tyburn over the wrestle of elms until
The flash the noosed hawk
Crashes.... (*Poems* 113)

Leaving the opening stanza that points to several anticipatory passages in Auden's poetry pointing out his anger, hatred and scorn for Thomas's soft art song and his sceptic poetic tradition, the succeeding three stanzas bring out the killing energy of Auden's friends, the death-in-living experience of the wild lovers of Auden and Thomas, and the last stanza projects the Yeatsian motif of Thomas's last dramatic song identical with his early poem, his other art songs, his poised, serene functioning for the salvation of the discontented Auden and his ignorance of Auden's tilting charges levelled against him besides the working hypothesis of the young Hughes identical with the motif, the tragic happiness of Thomas's early poem *18 Poems*.

Auden's early poems *Poems* (1928) and *Poems* (1930) indicate mainly his search for wider horizons, but his mature poem *Look Stranger!* implicit of symptoms of his uneasiness and commotion, his loss of godhead in consequence of the spectacular success of Thomas's early poem *18 Poems* and the fallen political poets' celebration of his advent as Yeatsian impersonal poet revealing a more inclusiveness in range and depth. Auden's art song unfolds and embodies in itself his Eliotian historical process of universal existence, the births and deaths in eternal Time, telescoping the past, the present, and the future. He renders the drama of his agonizing convulsion and self-annihilation through which alone he can attain godhead:

We till shadowed days are done,
We must weep and sing
Duty's conscious wrong,
The Devil in the clock,
The Goodness carefully worn

For atonement or for luck;
 We must love our loves,
 On each beast and bird that moves
 Turn an envious look. (*Look Stranger!* 60)

It is true that Auden's admonition in *Look Stranger!* is mainly intended to show the lost poets how to confront and endure their grievous loss, but the mental state that Auden enjoins also defines the condition of divinity "who give us nearer insight to resist the expanding fear, the savage disaster... (66). Auden views the popular *18 Poems* blessing the distressed time-conscious poets with the paradox of life-in-death, the kind impersonal art as Thomas's initiative to overthrow his own pursuit of pure poetry "time's toppling wave" (*LS* 60).

The hopeless Auden in *Another Time* is doubtful whether it is possible for him to climb the height of sovereignty and anticipates more loss and grief in the light of Thomas's early dramatic song "Altarwise by Owl-light" which he describes as an indirect method of conspiracy for the very defeat of the Eliotian metaphysical process of crucifixion and resurrection, and his transitional song "After the Funeral" offering salvation to the Wordsworthian pre-war poets as an ironic device to motivate the war poets to work for the defeat of Auden and his existential art. Auden underlines:

Fresh loves betray him, every day
 Over his green horizon
 A fresh deserter rides away,
 And miles away birds mutter
 Of ambush and of treason;
 To fresh defeats he still must move,
 To further griefs and greater,
 And the defeat of grief. (16)

Thomas's art song "After the Funeral" directs the war poets Fuller, Rook and Rhys to Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation to write generous impersonal poetry that would make them as successful as his early poetry. But Auden perceives that Thomas's transitional art song indicts his language of metaphysical process of intensity and pure art, "language of moderation cannot hide ... my sea is empty and the waves are rough" and that he indirectly converts the war poets as haters of metaphysical art song that would land them as distressed and mournful as the political poets, "planting a pirate's flag, a generous boy" (26). In *Another Time*, Auden reaffirms that Thomas's early and transitional art songs are a play within a play and his functioning with the Yeatsian vision of an avenger of the Eliotian Auden's metaphysical process and immortal art song:

And ruled by dead men never met, by pious guess
 deluded,
 Upon the stool of madness set
 Or stool of desolation,
 Sits murderous and clear-headed;
 Enormous beauties round him move,
 For grandiose is his vision
 And grandiose his love. (*AT* 16)

In the poem of the last phase *Nones*, Auden reaffirms that Thomas's active interest in the avenger's role in the early

and the transitional art songs. In the song of review "Love Festival," he points out in a much larger degree Thomas's love of ironic language invoking appropriate actions and gestures of conspiracy plotting to take revenge on Auden for his critique on the early poem *18 Poems*:

In an upper room at midnight
 See us gathered on behalf
 Of love according to the gospel
 Of the radio-phonograph. (18)

In the early sonnets, Thomas must have been fascinated by these little dramas of art songs, complete in themselves within a drama, and what must have especially gripped him is the vividness of the process of making poets pragmatic, prosperous and influential, "discussing earnestly the view ... or fat-stock prices" (*DCP* 343), building up a subtly-balanced structure of the movement and motionlessness, explicit and implicit actions identical to the avenger of the tragic play in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* in which Hieronymo gathers a troupe of actors fit for the roles he wants to play them and performs the revenge play of blood to avenge his son's murder. Thomas's early song impacts the disgraced lovers of Auden to avenge on Auden's "unpardonable death," "O but the unloved have had power ... the weeping and striking" (*LS* 18). Auden perceives that the war poets like his erstwhile friends become friends and avengers of Thomas who challenges his greatness, "when gilt-edged hopes are selling short ... virtue's devalued, and swart ... avenger rises" (*DCP*). He records:

Promising to the sharp sword all the glittering prizes,
 The cars, the hotels, the service, the boisterous bed,
 Then power to silence outrage with a testament,
 The widow's tears forgotten,
 The fatherless unheard. (*AT* 22)

Auden's two poems of the middle phase emphasize the absolute distinction between the conditions of divinity and mortality, peace and war. In *New Year Letter*, Auden voices his concern as Thomas in the art song "After the Funeral" shapes the war poets as his instrument, "suspended hatred crystallize ... in visible hostilities" for fulfilling his nefarious design:

All formulas were tried to still
 To scratching on the window-sill,
 All bolts of custom made secure
 Against the pressure on the door,
 But up the staircase of events,
 Carrying his special instruments,
 To every bed-side all the same
 The dreadful figure swiftly came. (17-18)

Similarly in the poem *For the Time Being*, Auden's convulsion and deification prefigure his own metaphysical journey in the hostile environs:

Outside the civil garden
 Of every day of love there
 Crouches a wild passion
 To destroy and be destroyed.
 O who to boast their power
 Have challenged it to charge? Like
 Wheat our souls are sifted
 And cast into the void. (*ACP* 271-72)

In *Poems*, Prince as the dilemmatic lover of Auden's song pattern senses the atmosphere of hatred and fear, "the evil and armed draw near ... the weather smells of their hate ... and the houses smell of our fear" (272) in Thomas's early and the transitional art songs.

In the Prologue to *The Age of Anxiety*, Auden provides a further hint at Thomas's original intention of organizing and preparing the war poets, "agree to be friends ... till our deaths differ; drink, strange future ... to your neighbor" against him and his aesthetic distance, "the marked man of romantic thrillers ... whose brow bears the brand of winter ... no priest can explain, the poet disguised ... thinking over things in thieves' kitchens" (ACP 347). In *Nones*, Auden as a dismembered artist intensifies his charge that Thomas's later art songs are ironic in motif that induces his celebrants of his generous art songs, the political and the romantic war poets to become murderous in design:

Nothing your strength, you skill, could do
Can alter their embrace
Or disperse the Furies who
At the appointed place
With claw and dreadful brow
Wait for them now. (*Nones* 17)

Thomas's later art songs and his loving concern for the inactive, the active and the passive war poets and their poetry of plays is equally indicative of his single minded vengeance similar to that of Hamlet in trapping the murderers by enacting a play within a play in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and is not to be confused with a dramatic critic's interest in characterization. Auden's cryptic last stanza is pertinent in this context:

But that Miss Number in the corner
Playing hard to get....
I am sorry I'm not sorry....
Make me chaste, Lord, but not yet. (*Nones*)

Auden underlines Thomas's language of "circumlocution" to attract the dilemmatic war poet Prince longing for personal romantic love and "for the pure joy," his language of wind, air and fire to activate the inactive romantic lovers of freedom and social comforts: "poems which make us cry direct us to ... ourselves at our least apt, least kind, least true ... where a blank I loves blankly a blank You" (*Nones* 14) and his phrases and epithets that he uses to provoke murderous actions in the active war poets, Lewis and Keyes, "no one of them was capable of lying ... there was not one which know that it was dying ... or could have with a rhythm or rhyme ... assumed responsibility for time."

In the last phase, the discontented Auden's emphasis is more on the art of free play and free love, and particularly on the pictorial and sculptural effects of Thomas's Yeatsian last art song "Over Sir John's Hill," the evocative language of death and judgement against the passive, the aesthetic amoral ironic poet, "let them leave language to their lonely betters ... who count some days and long for certain letters ... we, too, make noises when we laugh or weep ... words are for those with promises to keep" (15). Thomas's sensual sceptic approach, his language of nature and nomadic freedom, and his curses on Auden's metaphysical language of historical

knowledge and self-annihilation attract the wild poet Hughes greatly and he must have been impressed by the ambiguous design in his early poem *18 Poems* in which the three contraries – the mortal life, the mortal love and the mortal vision of impersonality – of historical consciousness, historical suffering and immortal vision of historical impersonality are counterpoised and held in unity according to Auden:

With or without a mind,
Chafant or outwardly calm,
Each thing has an axe to grind
And exclaims its matter-of-fact;
The child with careful charm
Or a sudden opprobrious act,
The tiger, the griping fern,
Extort the world's concern. (*Nones* 16)

Auden's final word on Thomas's warm art songs is that Thomas emulates the fortune-making motif of Yeats to predict hope for happy and comfortable living, "nothing is free, whatever you charge shall be paid ... that these days of exotic splendor may stand out ... in each lifetime like marble mileposts in an alluvial land" (23) to the hopeless political poets, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice and the ignorant romantic war poets, Fuller, Rook, Rhys and Prince and to wreck vengeance on him for his strictures on his early poem *18 Poems*:

All, all, have rights to declare'
Not one is man enough
To be, simply, publicly, there
With no private emphasis;
So my embodied love
Which, like most feeling, is
Half humbug and half true,
Asks neighbourhood of you. (16)

In all these art songs of the early, transitional and later phases, Auden perceives, Thomas has been playing with the contemporary poets' painful, ignorant situations and functioning as an inheritor of the pagan poetic tradition of Yeats whose role is suggestive of the paradoxical functioning of the fortune teller Madame Sosotris "with a wicked pack of cards" in Eliot's *The Waste Land* predicting false hope to the drowned Phoenician Sailor ... here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks ... the lady of situations." Eliot is sarcastic of Yeats's matter-of-fact functioning and his mortal vision of cyclical process and pagan art song:

Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see, I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water. (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 54)

However in the last dramatic song "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas, ignoring all these tilting and murderous charges levelled against him, continues to sing as a man of courteous caring for the afflicted contemporary poet Auden, "and slowly the fishing holy stalking heron ... in the river Towy bows his tilted headstone" (*Poems*). The emulation of Yeatsian pagan altruistic art song, "the river Towy" proves partly creative and partly restorative. Thomas has been as ignorant of

Auden's murderous charges as his scathing criticism on his early poem. His functioning as a poised and benign artist capitalizing on the contemporary poets' abysmal ignorance of human situations and human reality, their immortal vision of immortal art song and immortality in contrast to his Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, paradoxical sensibility and Grecian altruistic vision of art song that shares the suffering of the fellow-poet and cares for him since his early poem and his early art song. Thomas explains the leit-motif of his last art song:

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.
(*Poems*).

In the last phase, the functioning of the dying poet Thomas estranged and alienated from the contemporary friends whom he offered salvation, hope and happy life is, thus, clearly correlated with that of the dying poet Auden. As the last poem *In Country Sleep* is conceived even before the completion of his later poem *Deaths and Entrances*, the later poems "On the Marriage of a Virgin" and "Holy Spring" provide further indication of Thomas's original intention in the last art song, the leit-motif of offering the tumultuous Auden the process of salvation analogous to the leit-motif of his early, transitional and later dramatic songs.

The question that inevitably arises is whether and how far the germinating conception of Thomas's Yeatsian dramatic songs is modified and altered as a result of his inward cogitations about Auden's immortal art and the events of his estrangement and alienation from the political poets in the intervening period is explicitly answered in the last song. This takes the readers to the poems of the fallen political poets who actively discuss much the perplexing problem of conspiracy as the theme of Thomas's dramatic songs. In "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas questions the fundamental premise of war-mongering as the thesis of his art songs. The charges of tilting in Thomas's songs emanate from Auden himself as well as his political contemporaries and his celebrant Larkin, the Movement poet.

The second stanza of "Over Sir John's Hill" dramatizes the avenger's role that the young poet Larkin plays in his maiden volume *The North Ship* against Thomas, and he describes the political and the romantic war poets as "conscripts." Larkin notes in Thomas's early art song the poly-valent rhetoric of free play and free love, the gestures of intimacy and intimations of immortality shape the dejected political poets as his conscript army against Auden, and his transitional art song prepares the ignorant Wordsworthian war poets with his polysemous language of poetic license and poly-phonal gestures of freedom for the war against Auden's phono-centric Eliotian tradition. Thomas projects Larkin's interpretations:

...and again the gulled birds hare
To the hawk on fire, the halter height, over Towy's fins,
In a whack of wind.

There
Where the elegiac fisherbird stabs and paddles
In the pebbly dab-filled
Shallow and sedge, and 'dilly dilly,' calls the loft hawk,
'Come and be killed....' (*Poems*)

In the poem "Conscript," Larkin suggests forcefully the on-going second battle between the Eliotian metaphysical artist Auden "over Sir John's hill" and the Yeatsian paradoxical artist Thomas, "the heron" in "the river Towy." It is clear that Auden, the metaphysical Eliotian artist, is to be the hero of his projected poem *The North Ship*, and that the action will involve the conflict of two successive generations, the Eliotians and the Yeatsians:

The ascent he gave
Was founded on desire for self-effacement
In order not to lose his birthright; brave,
For nothing would be easier than his replacement,
Which would not give him time to follow further
The details of his defeat and murder. (*LCP* 262)

To Larkin, Thomas is not yet fallen "in the times of peace" and war, but during war Auden has already lost much of his power; and there are clear hints of his imminent fall in the last phase sensing a danger from Thomas and his secret conscript Hughes, "Time is the echo of an axe ... within a wood" (295). In this context, he offers himself as a volunteer to fight for Auden's free movement and immortality, "far, beyond every part ... of earth this running sky ... makes desolate" especially in these lines, "would you cross ... city and hill and sea ... if hands could set you free?" (*LCP* 294).

Finally, Larkin's telling comment is that Auden's deepening historical consciousness of song pattern corresponding to St. John's hymning of the Gospel, his artistry and intellectualism qualifying the ironic art of his mentors of pure art, de la Mare and Eliot would continue to be heard beyond the influence of the futuristic romantic and the uncertain lonely visionary contemporary poets:

Like the train's beat
Swift language flutters the lips
Of the Polish airgirl in the corner seat.
The swinging and narrowing sun
Lights her eyelashes shapes
Her sharp vivacity of bone:
And gestures like these English oaks
Flash past the windows of her foreign talk. (286)

Thomas perceives that the last stanza of Larkin's poem "Conscript" suggestive of dramatic songs of polysemous language recall the tilting and elusive attempts made by Lawrence and Yeats, "flash, and the plumes crack ... and a black cap of jack ... daws Sir John's just hill dons...." (*Poems*) against Eliot's greatness as an artist, "a trick or a trysting-place," "a sham or a sign," in the course of their playing with the Eliotian eternal art, "and in their blazing solitude ... the stars sang in their sockets through the night" (*LCP* 300). However, there is no reason to question Larkin's juvenile account of Auden as estranged and alienated by the contemporary poets for obvious discrepancies between dreams and destination, "home is so sad ... it stays as it was left ... shaped to the comfort of the last to go ... as if to win

them back. Instead, bereft ... of anyone to please, it withers so ... having no heart to put aside the theft." Moreover, Larkin perceives that Hughes's maiden volume *The Hawk in the Rain*, "a voice ... watering a stony place" (288) and his sinuous attempt to sow the seeds of separation, hatred to wreck the grand image of Auden would be proleptic of his own coming end as an anti-climax like the depressed and the desperate time-conscious poets of the thirties turning against Thomas for his diversion from impersonal art of human concerns to pure art, the Audenesque aesthetic beauty, "all humanity of interest before her angled beauty falls" (*LCP* 288).

Larkin's contemporary poet Hughes, having bidden farewell to the personal poetry of Lawrence and the death-centred artistic process of the Eliotian Auden, "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), heeds to Thomas's paradoxical concern, his empathic impersonal art, his sceptic Yeatsian poetic tradition and his continuous pragmatic functioning for the freedom of the afflicted contemporaries throughout his poetic career, "two eyes serve a movement, that now ... and again now, and now ... sets neat prints into the snow ... between trees..." as a hope for his own poetic career in contrast to Auden's hoping against hope for immortality, "warily a lame ... shadow lags by stump and in hollow ... of a body that is bold to come" (Hughes), his "boredom" of being lost and betrayed by the time-conscious romantic lovers and disappointed by the war poet Prince:

In din of the crowded streets, going among the years, the faces

May I still meet my memory in so lonely a place

Between the streams and the red clouds, hearing curlews,
Hearing the horizons endure. (9)

Whatever may have been Larkin's original plan, Hughes does not have the idea of introducing an actual warfare or direct action when he starts composing the poem *The Hawk in the Rain* for, as he argues, he would not have spoilt the dramatic interest by anticipating the events. He acknowledges the Yeatsian Thomas as the shaper of his shape:

I climbed through woods in the hour-before-dawn dark

Evil air, a frost-making stillness,

Not a leaf, not a bird,--

A world cast in frost. I came out above the wood

Where my breath left tortuous statues in the iron light.
(Hughes 8)

Hughes's description of himself as the carrier of Yeatsian Thomas's introspective process of transfiguration and transformation, his Yeatsian pagan altruistic art indicates his inner predilection regarding the choice of subject matter, "while I am this muck of man in this ... muck of existence, I shall not seek more ... than a muck of a woman" (Hughes 21). Just as the Eliotian Auden's early poem *Poems* and his metaphysical process for pure art could provide appropriate framework for Larkin's early poem *The North Ship*, his leit-motif of aesthetic amoral art, the Yeatsian Thomas's early poem *18 Poems*, his Yeatsian modes of approach and operation offers Hughes the soft impersonal art to his early poem *The Hawk in the Rain*, "something is alive ... beside the clock's loneliness

... and this blank page where my fingers move" (Hughes). It is this leit-motif of inclusiveness, reconciliation of contrasts and contraries and regeneration of warm impersonal art that Hughes seeks and discovers in Thomas's Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song and its plays in contrast to Auden's juxtaposition, characterization, conflict and movement pertaining to his art song proper.

Moreover, Hughes does not seem to notice any war conscription in Thomas's art songs, "wit and lucky looks ... were a ring disabling this pig-snout ... a tin clasp on this diamond," which underline the functioning of an artist of moral disinterestedness, the disinterested goodwill and action, the characteristic martyrdom, redemption or fellow-feeling and contentment of a noble man rather than the murderous qualities of a warring discontented commander "and I, having what I have as a man ... got without choice, and what I have chosen ... City and neighbour and work, am poor enough ... to be more than bettered by a worst woman" (Hughes) in his character. Thomas recasts the self-evolving shape of the young Hughes, his self-discovering, self-dedicating, self-progressing movements in contrast to his counterpart Larkin adopting the gestures of praise and scorn, pride and power, and war and peace:

I open the leaves of the water at a passage

Of psalms and shadows among the pincer'd sandcrabs
prancing

And read, in a shell

Death clear as a bouy's bell:

All praise of the hawk on fire in hawk-eyed dusk be
sung.... (*Poems*)

Hughes perceives that Thomas's introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song in the last phase is in tune with his early poem *18 Poems* and his early dramatic song "Altarwise by Owl-light" which have alchemized the discontented and dejected life of the political poets into a life of hope, success and happiness.

In the third stanza of "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas recasts the Yeatsian process of transfiguration and transformation that alchemizes the political poets' tragic failure as wild lovers of Auden's art song into tragic happiness which is the motif of his early paradoxical song "Altarwise by Owl-light" in contrast to Auden's tragic vision of artistic process of death-like intensity and pure aesthetic:

When his viperish fuse hangs looped with flames under
the brand

Wing, and blest shall

Young

Green chickens of the bay and the bushes cluck, 'dilly
dilly,

Come let us die.'

We grieve as the blithe birds, never again, leave shingle
and elm.... (*Poems*)

The political poets' agony of predicament, the stormy blast of their ordeal of suffering imaged as "the glacier," "the fear of becoming stone" (*MCP* 80), "... my heart, like corn, was broken for ... a harvest I could not have" (*DCP* 204), "shapes of death haunt life,... Neurosis eclipsing each in

special shadow" (Spender, *Poems* 32), "the whole stream of traffic seems to crawl ... carrying its dead boulders down a glacier wall" (*MCP*) is equal to Dante's "sad hell" that drives on their "spirits with restless fury," their "rueful wailings" and their "shrieks ... lamentations, moans,... blasphemies against the good Power in Heaven" heard in the deep darkness (Dante 19).

Thomas finds that Day Lewis's imitation of the Audenesque mannerism and vocabulary spoils his song "A Time to Dance," "the bagpipe-breasted ladies in the deadweed ... blew out the blood gauze through the wound of manwax" (*TCP*). Spender's *Poems* conveys adequately a mood of fear and hesitancy, and offers glimpses through the effective use of certain key-symbols, "a rocking alphabet ... genesis in the root, the scarecrow word ... and one light's language in the book of trees," of the mysterious visions to which natural beauty and sensory perceptions may lead, "from bald pavilions and the house of bread ... time tracks the sound of shape on man and cloud ... on rose and icicle the ringing handprint" (*TCP* 36-37). In "Eclogues," MacNeice perceives that Auden's commandments to celebrate the beauty of his *Poems* as a symbol of pure poetry, "unsex the skeleton this mountain minute ... and by this blowcock witness of the sun ... suffer the heaven's children through my heartbeat" has at one level a specific historical relevance, indicating the direction of the contemporary literary movement initiated by Eliot, "this was the crucifixion on the mountain ... Time's nerve in vinegar, the gallow grave ... as tarred with blood as the bright thorns I wept" (*TCP*).

The time-conscious poets of pity, having witnessed the grand success of Thomas as an artist of altruistic art song and his inclusiveness, starts desecrating Auden, their erstwhile godhead, and glorifying Thomas as their new godhead. Day Lewis, contradistinguishing the Yeatsian Thomas's life-centric paradoxical art song from the Eliotian Auden's death-centric ironic song, the impersonal art of passion and compassion from the impersonal art of illusion and reality, interprets his early art song as a hope for poetry and bright future for the suffering fallen poets and an alternative tragi-comic muse of cyclical pattern to Auden's tragic muse of historical pattern:

Oh here and unlamenting
Her graceful ghost shall shine—
In the heart mature as fruited fields,
The singing words of pine. (*DCP*)

Spender loves Thomas's process of growth-oriented impersonal art and cyclical pattern "I grow towards the acceptance of that sun ... which hews the day from night... (*Still Centre* 78). MacNeice exalts that it is in the sonnet sequence "Altarwise by Owl-Light" that Thomas's Yeatsian tragi-comic vision of altruistic art song, process of individuation and integration, life and death in contrast to Auden's metaphysical process of self-annihilation and immortal art stands as a collateral evidence of his vicarious impersonal art in the early poem, *18 Poems*:

And now the searchlights
Play their firemen's hoses,
Evil their purport

Though their practice lovely,
Defence and death being always
Collateral, coeval. (*MCP* 111)

Thomas perceives that the allegorical poet Hughes, comparing the artistic failure of the weather-beaten political poets, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice to the painful experience of the romantic poet Lawrence trying to imitate the Eliotian musical structure, attributes their failure to their conflicting approaches, "I young Aesop fabling to the near night by the dingle ... of eels" (*Poems*). Hughes finds:

Bloodily grabbed dazed last moment-counting
Morsel in the earth's mouth, strain towards the master-
Fulcrum of violence where the hawk stands still.
That may be in his own time meets the weather....
(Hughes 3)

Lawrence himself acknowledges that his far-fetched ambition of Eliot's art song results in his bewilderment "fly off, big bird with a big black back ... fly slowly away, with a rust of fire in your tail ... dark as you are on your dark side, eagle of heaven" (Lawrence 66).

Further, Hughes finds that Thomas's paradox of life-in-death, his inclusiveness, his experiences of heart and mind assures him of unified sensibility in contrast to the political poets' dissociated romantic sensibility and their ignorance of Auden's metaphysical process of self-sacrifice and self-annihilation, the paradox of death-in-life:

Coming the wrong way, suffers the air, hurled upside
down,
Fall from his eye, the ponderous shires crash on him,
The horizon traps him; the round angelic eye
Smashed, mix his heart's blood with the mire of the land.
(Hughes)

Auden himself approves of the excellence of Thomas's Yeatsian merry-making rhythm in "Altarwise by Owl-light" that offers salvation to the distressed poets:

Cold, impossible, ahead
Lifts the mountains head
Whose white waterfall could bless
Travellers in their last distress. (*LS* 24)

Moreover, what Auden experiences in his art songs is the ecstasy of historical sorrow, "the image of our sorrow", "all our traditional sympathy with birth" (*LS*) and "it is the sorrow" (23), but the sonnets that Thomas wrote on the shattered dreams of Day Lewis, Spender, and MacNeice record not the torment of hell but a complex experience of joy and sorrow, the pagan altruistic soundless song. "Among the holly and the gifts I move, / the carols on the piano, the glowing hearth" (*LS* 25). Spears holds that "art songs are ... those written with the intention of being suitable for musical setting ... or those which produce the impression, or illusion, of special suitability for musical setting" (113).

In "After the Funeral," Thomas persuades the insensitive pre-war Wordsworthian poets "you see yourself spilling across the border ... of nice convention" to avoid making "private notes, thumbing and doubling," to bid goodbye to the romantic process of self-expression, the metaphysical rhetoric of Auden and the pity of Sassoon and Owen, "a small boy twined in bracken and sprance ... like any goatfoot faun

to propagate disorder” and try the Yeatsian metaphorical and metamorphical process of magnanimous impersonal art that he has emulated in his early poem and his early dramatic art song and secured success and popularity, “here at student’s dance ... pinching a girl’s behind” (*MCP* 269). The ameliorative function of his transitional art song, “After the funeral” is also implied towards the end, “this monumental ... argument of the hewn voice, gesture and psalm ... storm me forever over her grave until ... the stuffed lung of the fox twitch and cry love ... and the strutting fern lay seeds on the black sill” (*Poems* 25) in harmony with Yeats’s mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, “stumbling upon the blood-dark track once more ... then stumbling to the kill beside the shore ... then cleaning out and bandaging of wounds ... and chants of victory amid the encircling hounds” (*YCP* 290). Day Lewis brings out Thomas’s distinctive inclusive mind and his empathic poetical character reminiscent of his early phase and his functioning for the liberation of the helpless contemporary poets, “now a revenant slips between ... the fine-meshed minutes of the clock ... to weep the time we lost and mock ... all that my desperate ditties mean” (*DCP* 235).

Spender observes that the contrasts worked out in the art song “After the Funeral” carry the theme of Yeatsian theme of tragi-comic art song, the tragic joy of the early poem and art song beyond the limits of the subjective experience of the romantic war poets and give it a wide implications – the purity and beauty of art song in an otherwise mortal world of suffering:

And then the heart in its white sailing pride
Launches among the swans and the stretched lights
Laid on the water, as on your cheek
The other kiss. (*SC* 86)

MacNeice perceives that Thomas shows commendable skill in the delineation of subject, conflicting situations and characters in the paradoxical song “After the Funeral” written for the Wordsworthian pre-war poets’ individuation and integration, for their promising future and prosperous living. Thomas’s direction to the Yeatsian introspective process of Grecian altruistic impersonal art of his early poem and early art song is analogous to that of God of fertility, Lupercus in contrast to Auden’s Word-centric metaphysical process and pure art song:

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)

Thomas’s early and transitional art songs are significant for their structural coherence according to Auden. In *Nones*, Auden perceives that it is quite understandable that Thomas should compose most at the early age songs like “Altarwise by Owl-light” and “After the Funeral.” Thomas is surprisingly mature, but still he is very young and Auden could appreciate his delight in sonnet and song pattern. And in *Nones*, Auden recalls Thomas’s enthusiastic response to Yeats and his pagan warm impersonal art:

Deftly, admiral, cast your fly
Into the slow deep hover,
Till the wise old trout mistake and die;
Salt are the deeps that cover
The glittering fleets you led,
White is your head. (*Nones* 17)

Yeats is Thomas’s early devotion, and he delights in the individual myths, the descriptive passages in the later poem *The Tower* and the atmospheric effects of *Last Poems*. Auden notes in Thomas’s response to the songs of Yeats a similar exultation over beautiful epithets and images, over the passages steeped in light, colour and music. Thomas recasts Auden’s perception: “The heron and I ... saint heron hymning in the shell hung distant / Crystal harbor vale / Where the sea cobbles sail / And wharves of water where the walls dance and the white cranes stilt” (*Poems*). For Thomas, however, an experience is not a mere sensation, it includes thought. In *18 Poems*, one of his axioms is that poetry should strike the reader as the wording of his own highest thoughts, and for him thought is meaningful only when it is emotionally realized and is transformed into a sensation. “by the sea’s side, hearing the noise of birds ... hearing the raven cough in winter sticks ... my busy heart who shudders as she talks ... sheds the syllabic blood and drains words” (*Poems* 53). This is how Thomas maintains his position and functioning during war time as a paradoxical artist of empathy, disinterested goodness and action, sobriety and sagacity, “it is the heron and I” in the later dramatic songs which whirls a conflict between Thomas and the contemporary poets of war time, the romantic war poets, the depressed political poets of pity and the desperate metaphysical Auden, “violence upon the roads, violence of horses” (*YCP*).

In the fourth stanza of “Over Sir John’s Hill,” Thomas traces the backdrop of the political poets’ conflicting interpretations of Thomas’s early poem, his later and last dramatic songs:

It is heron and I, under judging Sir John’s elmed
Hill, tell-tale the knelled
Guilt
Of the led-astray birds whom God, for their breast of
whistles,
Have Mercy on,
God in his whirlwind silence save, who marks the sparrows hail,
For their soul’s song.
Now the heron grieves in the weeded verge. Through windows
Of dust and water I see the tilting whispering... (*Poems*)

What the later dramatic art song “A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London” suggests is the mysterious effect of Thomas’s refusal, his persistent commitment to the Yeatsian empathic functioning, “a good home” that permeates his early poem *18 Poems* and his early song “Altarwise by Owl-light” in contrast to the poets of war time, the ironic functioning of the metaphysical Auden, the ambition of the time-conscious political poets Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice and the romantic war poets, Fuller, Rook, Rhys and Prince for the perpetuity of their love, pity and peace. The political poets who celebrate Thomas’s early

poem *18 Poems* and early art song "Altarwise by Owl-light" for the merciful impersonal art and glorify him as their god-head interpret his later song as a song sans *merci*, a deviation from Thomas's early poem and his early song of pity and a move towards Auden's metaphysical art and immortality, "God in his whirlwind silence save, who marks the sparrows hail ... for their souls' song" (*Poems*).

Day Lewis perceives that unlike Thomas's early poem that offers relief and promising future to the hopeless political poets, the later dramatic song "A Refusal..." stands devoid of pity and elegiac mourning for the death of the child and reminds him of his suffering for having fallen in love with *la belle sans merci*, Auden's early poem *Poems* and his elegant aesthetic beauty and metaphysical structure. He is doubtful about the authorship of the life-centric early poem as Thomas has changed his vicarious impersonal art to aesthetic amoral beauty of Auden:

Dear sheltering child, if again misgivings grieve me
That love is only a respite, an opal bloom
Upon our snow-set fields, come back to revive me
Cradling your spark through blizzard, drift and tomb.
(*DCP* 298)

Unlike Day Lewis MacNeice observes that Thomas's process of self-exploration discovers himself in the early poem as a paradoxical poet of "lyrical surprise" and "integrity of differences" and advances himself in the later poem *Deaths and Entrances* as a poet of outstanding craftsmanship and lyric impulse, "one last integration ... a Form ... out of formlessness" in contrast to Auden's metaphysical Eliotian grand musical pattern, "the Atlantic." But in the later art song he changes his leit-motif as he aspires for Auden's pure art and pure being. Hence, on behalf of the time-conscious poets, MacNeice heaves a sigh of relief as they lose their love of Thomas who sounds like another Auden of metaphysical tradition and whose Audenesque art song tolls the knell of his poetic career. MacNeice, supplanting his note of tribute, strikes an elegiac note of loss and death when he comments on Thomas's song "A Refusal," his vicarious impersonal art becoming Audenesque pitiless immortal art:

Whether you did or not, the fact remains
(Which I, for all your doubts, could have no doubt of)
That your whole life till then showed an endeavour
Towards a discovery – and if your pains
Were lost the loss is ours as well; for you are out of
This life and cannot start any more hares foe ever. (270)

Spender's elegy "Seascape" conveys the impression that the resurrection of the fallen political poets takes place through Thomas's sympathetic poem *18 Poems* and the destruction of community through the pitiless song "A Refusal...":

Their coins and eyes,
Twisted by the timeless waves' desires,
Are, through the muscular water, scarcely scanned
While, above them, the harp assumes their sighs. (*Poems of Dedication* 53)

Day Lewis, commenting on Thomas's later art song "Poem in October," exalts the heroic war poets, Lewis and Keyes for their deathful sensitivity, their distinctive identity as poets of pity in contrast to the deathlike insensitivity of

the romantic war poets and the poets of the thirties and the indifferent pitiless loneliness of Thomas identical with the existential loneliness of Auden:

The sea rolled up like a blind, oh pitiless light
Revealing, shrivelling all! Lacklustre weeds
My hours, my truth a salt-lick. Love recedes
From rippled flesh bared without appetite (*DCP* 291)

The disinterested functioning of the lyrical love of Fuller, Rook and Rhys, the ambiguous play of Prince, the ironic amoral functioning of Auden and the melodramatic non-functioning of the socio-political poets are not so surprising as the perfunctory passive functioning of Thomas whose *18 Poems* symbolic of God's Mercy has liberated the fallen political poets and offered life and hope for poetry according to Day Lewis. Spender perceives that a poet, being devoid of sympathy and pity, fails to establish a sense of community with fellow-beings and this kills the joy of his life. It is the overwhelming communal sense and shadow of death of Lewis and Keyes, "each is involved in the tears and blood of all" that heightens the sense of immortality rather than the self-indulgent and the self-seeking ambition and aspiration, "human islands under their seas have roots ... spread through the multitude's blood ... and to passionate childhoods" (*Edge* 28).

MacNeice maintains that in sharp contrast to Keyes's heroic functioning, his poetry of Owen's pity, Thomas's escapism and indifference in "Poem in October" to the pity of war is as identical as Auden's, and his "merger" with Auden's artistic process and his aspiration for immortal art would incur the loss of his identity and his popularity as a poet of sympathetic impersonal art:

Sun is too bright and brittle, wheat is too quick,
She turns from them to the wood where the slow thick
Shade is becalmed and chill and as a glacial stream
Meeting the sea inlays and weaves a milky gleam
Through the dark waste, so here the bluebells flow
Athwart the undergrowth, a merger of blue snow.
(*MCP* 242)

The scope for immortality for the artistic poets Auden and Thomas is as bleak and uncertain as for the inartistic romantic war poets for want of Owen's pity of war, "gentle coldness" in them. There is a marked contrast between the total commitment of heroic poets, Lewis and Keyes, to the pity of war, their "luckless" death for the eternity of pity of Sassoon and Owen respectively, "as each soul burns ... the best it may, in foul or blustering hair," according to MacNeice, and the "helpless" and "hopeless" refusal of the impassive war poets, Fuller, Rook and Rhys to the pity of war, the "almost bloodless" refusal of the passive war poet Prince to the truth of war, the "rudderless, powerless" refusal of the lost political poets, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice to Owen's pity, the "mindless," "heartless" and "timeless" refusal of the historical Auden whose aesthetic amoral functioning is as "selfless" as the megalomaniac aesthetic minded Eliot, "the albinists are timeless ... in gear with timeless star" (*MCP* 259). The mature melanistic Thomas's ironic refusal to mourn the suffering of war, to function as the poet of pity, his deviation from his own early poem of pity, his love of the aesthetic amoral sensibility in his art song is as albinistic as Auden.

Thomas's art song "Fern Hill" is not a dream vision but an implicit declaration of his faith in Christianity and his prayer in Christian church as he seeks blessing for his racked heart and retribution for all his crimes and iconoclastic actions according to Day Lewis:

But year after year in another's eyes
I have caught the look that I missed today
Of the church, the knoll, the cedars – a ray
Of the faith, too, they stood for,
The hope they were food for,
The love they prayed for, facts beyond price –
And turned my eyes away. (295)

The spirit of the song stands against the sensational, sceptic, anti-metaphysical atmosphere of the early poem *18 Poems* "all the way down the valley, that knoll was not there ... nor the church, nor the trees it mounted" (*DCP* 294). Spender observes that "Fern Hill" is Thomas's vision of ruins and deaths that provides opportunity for transcending the temporal scene, for communion with the dead, "revealing ... the dancer, his despair, at which we look ... his blood behind the white mask of his book" (*Edge* 17). MacNeice estimates that Thomas's song is symbolic of metaphysical artistic intensity, architectural art, timeless historical sense and the Eliotian Auden's aesthetic amoral disinterestedness in contrast to his early poem *18 Poems* and its organic process of life-in-death and his Yeatsian moral disinterestedness:

In a cold church
It flickers in the draught, then burns erect;
In a loud mob
It bulges, merges, feels with a start alone;
In a bright beam
It waltzes dust to dust with its chance loves. (*MCP* 259)

MacNeice who has been paying glowing tribute to Thomas's *18 Poems* and his pity for the afflicted poets of the thirties sneers at Thomas's later art song "Fern Hill" for his moving out of his Yeatsian pagan altruistic tradition, his Yeatsian articulation of magnanimous impersonal art in the early poem, for his moving along the aesthetic amoral Eliotian Auden's avant-gardism and modernism and his aspiring for Auden's immortality, "conscious of sunlight, conscious of death's inveigling touch ... not completely conscious but partly—and that is much" (*MCP* 266).

Apart from the charges of deviation in Thomas's later art songs from the original leit-motif of his early poem, his early and transitional art songs, the lost realistic poets becoming romantic poets in the last phase perceive that Thomas in the last song "Over Sir John's Hill" exploits ironic method to tilt Auden's waves of influence among the Movement poets, "through windows ... of dusk and water I see the tilting whispering" (*Poems*). Day Lewis records the incomprehensible as well as the unintelligible ironic meaning of Thomas's last art song, "the swart ... avenger rises ... we know there'll always be those two ... strolling away without a clue" and "magic's credentials" that "look rather at the oafish Dread ... the Cloud-man come to strike it dead ... armed with a sword and gorgon's head" (*DCP*) that presents the reality of his original intention and his instigation, the leit-motif of his last art song as a final war against Auden:

To either hand the crisis throws
Its human quirks and gestures. Those
Are not essential. (*DCP*)

Spender projects the difficult choice between two ways of life, one represented by the Magi, and the other by Herod who was out to murder the Divine Child:

Her clear gaze divides
The world into two worlds:
Of kings who bring myrrh
To worship this birth:
Of heroes whose rays
Murder in the womb
Prenatal generations
Of reincarnate earth. (*Edge* 46)

MacNeice also endorses his contemporary poets' perception of Thomas's altered leit-motif and explains that his last art song enriched with the Word-centric Roman tradition of metaphysical imagery, cadence, immortal art, timelessness and pitilessness turns away from the "mottoes" of his early poem, his early and transitional songs as a poet and an artist of paradoxical sensibility and Yeatsian Grecian altruistic art song:

Eclectic always, now extravagant,
Sighting his matter through a timeless prism
He ranged his classical bric-a-brac in grottos
Where knights of Ancient Greece had Latin mottoes
And fishermen their flapjacks – none should want
Colour for lack of an anachronism. (*MCP* 255-56)

To MacNeice it looks ironic that Thomas evolved and developed as an impersonal poet of love and pity, modesty and fellow-feeling, anti-Eliotian intellectualism in the early poem as well as the early and transitional art songs ends his last phase as an Eliotian metaphysical artist of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness besides being pre-occupied with anger and hatred, violence and vengeance in the last song against the fellow-artist Auden:

Of which high humble were you,
Outside the cliques, unbothered with the fashion,
And self-apprenticed to the grinding trade
Of thinking things anew, stropping the blade
You never used, your multicoloured passion
Having been merged by death in universal Blue.
(*MCP* 268)

Auden, while describing Thomas's last song "Over Sir John's Hill" as a repeat of his performance in the early poem *18 Poems*, comments as "a somewhat shapeless figure ... of indeterminate age ... in an undistinguished hat" (*Nones* 27). Thomas's last art song stands as chaotic and indiscriminate, immature and incoherent, formless and florid as his early poem according to Auden. He attributes this incoherent structure to the skeptical, wild influence of Yeats:

A rather scruffy-looking god
Descends in a machine
And, gabbling off his rustic rhymes,
Misplacing one or two,
Commands the prisoners to walk,
The enemies to screw. (29)

Auden's overall conclusion is that Thomas's last art song is as formless and flamboyant as his early poem and

as unskilled and untidy as the poems of the political poets of the thirties, the war poets of the forties and the wild poet of the fifties as they are steeped in "pleasure land" (24) or "in Schrafft's" land. Auden's estimate of the last phase of his contemporary poets' functioning and their "whimpering end" recalls Eliot's lines, "shape without form, shade without colour ... paralysed force, gesture without motion" (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 79).

In *Nones* Auden, having underlined the designs of conspiracy in Thomas's art songs from the early phase to the last phase, feels reinforced by the political poets' offensive criticism of Thomas's later and last art songs and the romantic war poets turning against Thomas's influence, points out loudly the defensive-cum-offensive final war against Thomas and his supporter Hughes for their anti-Eliotian metaphysical tradition, their love of Yeatsian pagan altruistic art song that diminishes his grandeur. Thomas recalls Auden's underestimation of his last song and his charges of murderous designs against him:

Heron, mirrored, go,
As the snapt feathers snow,
Fishing in the tear of the Towy. Only a hoot owl
Hollows, a grassblade blown in cupped hands, in the
looted elms
And no green cocks or hens
Shout
Now on Sir John's hill. (*Poems*)

Thomas's explanation of the leit-motif of his dramatic art songs as a whole, "the heron ankling the scaly ... lowlands of the waves... makes all the music..." (*Poems*) is an indirect way of rebutting the tilting charges of Auden and the other contemporary poets. The main intention of his last art song is to help Auden overcome his predicament and the secondary and the auxiliary purpose is to demonstrate how his Yeatsian tragi-comic vision of art song and his Yeatsian process of transmutation changed the tragic failures of Auden's victims into tragic joy, "that fancied goodness might be gay," to indicate how his balanced and benign functioning makes him self-contented and happy in the midst of his contemporary poets' "scowl" and "howl" and prevents the family feud from becoming an intellectual war of hatred and anger among the contemporary poets "for arrogance and hatred are the wares ... peddled in thoroughfares" (*YCP*). In this regard, he is in tune with the Yeatsian motif, "cast a cold eye ... on life, on death" (304).

Hughes finds that in all the dramatic art songs, Thomas has been offering an antidote to human predicament and human reality, "I who hear 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" (*Poems*), to "the casualty" of Auden's grandeur, functioning as a paradoxical artist offering occupational therapy to the fallen poets while Auden revealing himself as a depressed and unpopular metaphysical artist of aesthetic amoral functioning for the cause of pure being and pure art, historical knowledge and immortal art:

Arrange his limbs in order, open his eye,
Then stand, helpless as ghosts. In a scene

Melting in the August noon, the burned man
Bulks closer greater flesh and blood than their own,
As suddenly the heart's beat shakes his body and the eye.
(Hughes 43)

Thomas's last dramatic song reveals the "heart's truth" (*Poems* 116) underlying his art songs, his paradoxical sensibility, his mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, and his cosmopolitan functioning that evokes the memory of Yeats's art songs. Yeats sings of the leit-motif of his art song:

I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart's
Fullness and of the coming Emptiness
I climb to the tower-top and lean upon broken stone,
A mist that is like blown snow is sweeping over all,
Valley, river, and elms, under the light of moon
That seems unlike itself, that seems unchangeable,
A glittering sword out of the east. (*YCP* 174)

In the poem "Adolescents in the Dusk," the war poet Iain Fletcher, commenting on Auden's immortal vision of art song and the political and the war poets' dream of ecstatic existence as adolescent, explores the evolutionary growth of Thomas's noble disinterested comprehensive mind in the art songs. It appears that each succeeding artistic generation is more refined than its predecessor which it is predestined to replace and excel, and that Thomas's refinement of consciousness is a natural inheritance from the Yeatsian arcadian altruistic poetic tradition and that Auden's metaphysical Eliotian concept of art is deterministic; the implication is that the destiny of Auden is conditioned by the historical knowledge, and that it is not possible for him to cross the barrier and attain to a higher form of life, the noble form of immortality. Fletcher contradistinguishes:

The daily evening descends then
And the air about them seems now
Crumpled with the great winged lover,
That absent lover whom their drifting gaze
Can never quite encounter.... (*MV* 418)

In the poem "Isis Wanderer," Kathleen Raine suggests that the broad pattern of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* may be discerned in the art song "Over Sir John's Hill," that Thomas journeying through hell and purgatory reaches finally his destined heaven:

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 day may rise on the last day. (*MV* 376)

In the last lines of "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas's reaffirms, while blissfully ignoring everything about "tilting whispering" of Auden and his wild lovers, his faith in the Yeatsian leit-motif, *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*, the introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, the mortal vision of Grecian magnanimous art song, the paradoxical sensibility and cosmopolitan culture that persuades the young Movement poets, the lovers of Auden's immortal vision of metaphysical immortal art song to adhere to the Yeatsian paradox of life-in-death to compose noble art song to work pragmatically

and prudently as an artist of disinterested goodness and action to secure perfect work of art and perfect life. As Yeats sings that “all that we did, all that we said or sang ... must come from contact with the soil, from that ... contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong” (*YCP* 277).

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The last song “Over Sir John’s Hill” conveys poignantly the dread of the void, and the apparently impersonal statement of Thomas carries the stress of contemporary poets’ personal anxiety. In the last phase, Auden’s memory of Eliot’s historical sense, the securer haven of his popular early poetry quickens the pace of recovery, “blessed be hail and upheaval” and in the poems of the last phase he retraces his steps from the verge of conflict and chaos, “and the mother and toppling house of the holy spring ... if only for a last time” (*Poems*). His introspective process for the convergence of the immortal-mortal towards a point of coalescence in which the mind is liberated from the mutable world and enjoys immortal joy which is a repetition on the spiritual, historical plane of the happiness enjoyed in his early phase:

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.... (*Poems*)

Auden perceives that he would fully realize his creative urge for immortality only when he finds his successor who could complete the ascent from earthly to metaphysical beauty, “no one is born there, no one stays or dies ... for it is a timeless land, it lies ... between the act and the attrition...” (*Poems*). Lawrence Durrell perceives that in “Over Sir John’s Hill” Thomas renders the persistence of his own disinterested goodness and action, “to all that has said before ... you can add nothing,” and the intensity of the inner convulsions of lovers of Auden’s art song against the background of Auden’s lost battle and his intense merciless metaphysical art song, “only here ... thick as a brushstroke sleep has laid ... its fleecy unconcern on every visage ... at the bottom of every soul a spoonful of sleep” (*MV* 385).

In the last phase, the frustrated political poets Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice find their freedom in the Wordsworthian romanticism and individualism while carrying a sense of disappointment with their expected immortality, “in that land all is, and nothing’s Ought ... no owners or notices, only the birds.” The romantic war poets, Fuller, Rook and Rhys regard Thomas’s process of transfiguration and transformation as an aberration, as a retreat from reason and return to the Wordsworthian ecstatic existence, “the morning grows joyful ... out of the woebegone pyre.” The passive war poet Prince no longer prays for the prolongation of the trance and returns to existential romanticism, the original source of inspiration of his early phase, “my arising prodigal ... sun the father his quiver full of the infants of pure fire.” The heroic war poets Lewis and Keyes commingle with all souls’ night and peace with which they begin their career, “the multitude’s sultry tear turns cool on the weeping wall.” The Movement poets move cautiously between love and fear “no ... praise that the spring time is

all ... Gabriel and radiant shrubbery” (*Poems*). In the case of Thomas’s last phase the context becomes increasingly Yeatsian, private and altruistic. The modern poet Raine perceives that in “Over Sir John’s Hill,” Thomas tries to uphold his Yeatsian pagan altruistic leit-motif as his mortal vision of art song and salvation that alchemizes the tragic suffering of the contemporary poets into tragic joy:

Lying for the last time down on the green ground
In farewell gesture of self-love, softly he curved
To rest the delicate foot that is in my hand,
Empty as a moth’s discarded chrysalis. (*MV* 374)

G.S. Graham observes that Thomas, having evolved and advanced himself as a paradoxical artist of moral disinterestedness identical to that of his in the early poem as well as the early dramatic art song, reveals himself as an artist of ignorance and innocence, prudence and benevolence in the last art song that incorporates the antithetical images of his contemporary poets, their functioning amid hatred and vengeance, jealousy and ill-will and violence and war cry:

Our branching veins remember us and flower
The morning’s first bright resins burning over
Our two kissed lives. Our present morning ever
Handing us back to forgiveness lands us back
To under a stiller sky. The daybreak cock
Fixed in the calyx east crows seven bright heavens
awake. (409)

For Thomas the poetic practice of inclusiveness is integrated with the practice of living offering harmonious co-existence to the afflicted Auden and his system of salvation, transgression and transmigration, pure art and pure being that is the elaboration of the aesthetic distance, the metaphysical process of self-annihilation or crucifixion and co-inherence into a way of life. Both the leit-motif and the introspective process of Thomas’s art song is “humanized” by life-centric Grecian tradition of Yeats, “buried its right ... before it opened eyes to be emulous” unlike Auden’s metaphysical process and the aesthetic which are de-humanized by death-centric metaphysical tradition of Eliot, “barbarously you might ... have made beast-death of the one a sacrifice ... to the god-head of the other” (Hughes 25) according to Hughes.

Hughes finds that Thomas’s last phase, though concerned with issues that have a more immediate bearing, his empathy for the suffering of the depressed Auden, the focus is shifted to his Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, the mortal vision of Grecian magnanimous art song and his transmutation of the contemporary poets’ tragic failure as lovers of immortal vision of art song into tragic joy that corresponds to the central focus of his early poem and his previous art songs in contrast to Auden’s last phase anxiously playing with designs of vengeance and perpetuation of the immortal art of the metaphysical poet de la Mare and the existential artist Eliot:

But now that your twins wail, are wide-eyed –
(Tugging between them some frivolous heirloom)
You must cold murder the one and force-feed
With your remorse the other and protect him from

The vengeful voluble ghost of the twin dead. (Hughes)

Hughes perceives that his "fair choice" of the Yeatsian Thomas's early poem *18 Poems* for his "fairness" of the process of breath and death and empathic impersonal art, "the split blood be your own" that rears up his poem *The Hawk in the Rain* stands in sharp contrast to his contemporary poet Larkin's poem *The North Ship* that inherits Auden's Eliotian existential characteristics of pure art and pure being, self-sacrifice and self-annihilation, aesthetic amoral impersonal art and violence and murder of the fellow-poet without any fellow-feeling, "your every glance shall see one of your twins ... an Abel to the other's bloody Cain" (Hughes). Keith Douglas explains Hughes's creative process of breath-in-death and kind impersonal art, "the logical fish ... converge and nip the flesh ... imagining I am one of the dead" (410) in sheer contrast to Larkin's aesthetic distance and cold heartedness, "I see my feet like stones ... underwater," the paradox of living-in-death in Larkin:

Ravenous Time has flowers for his food
in Autumn, yet can cleverly make good:
each petal: devours animals and men
but for ten dead he can create ten. (MV 417)

Identically, Fraser focusing on Thomas's *18 Poems* and his sceptic impersonal art dissimilar to Auden's *Poems* and his metaphysical beauty, "a memory of Beauty" and on Auden's trenchant criticism of it, "beauty but for a moment shone ... the likeness of a cloud or wave ... whose momentary aspect, gone, ... the sieve of memory cannot save," perceives rightly that what Thomas conceives as the motif of his dramatic song "Altarwise by Owl-light" is analogous to that of his early poem *18 Poems*, his Yeatsian tragi-comic vision of art song as salvation to the fallen political poets, "incredible wild things ... struggle like swans half-blind with snow ... and the dying swan sings" (403). Auden's poem "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" drives home the truth, "time that is intolerant ... of the brave and innocent ... and indifferent in a week ... to a beautiful physique..." (AT 109). Durrell, confirming the impact of the Yeatsian cyclical process of breath and death, Grecian altruistic vision of art song on Thomas's early dramatic art song, explains the sceptic pragmatic functioning of Thomas. "re-shaping here a theory out of Darwin ... they cup their yellow mandibles to shape ... their nuts, tilt them in drinking poses ... to drain them slowly from the very nape" (MV 384). The political and the war poets' attempt at Auden's art song ends as futility due to their ignorance and carelessness in adhering to the metaphysical process of self-annihilation. Thomas's Yeatsian metaphorical and metamorphical process, introspective process of individuation and integration and tragi-comic vision of art song in contrast to Auden's metaphysical process of crucifixion and resurrection, his Eliotian immortal vision of immortal art song lands him in success and popularity. In the early dramatic song, Thomas's paradoxical functioning is as self-exploratory and self-regenerative as Gonzalo in Shakespeare's drama *The Tempest* who interprets the misadventures of Alonso and others as "all of us ourselves when no man was his own" (Act III, Scene ii) and as independent and resolute as Yeats, "there's more enterprise ... in walking naked" (YCP 104).

In the transitional art song "After the Funeral," Thomas upholds the Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, vicarious impersonal art in contrast to Auden's metaphysical process of purgation and co-inherence, intensity and indifference according to Durrell, "here sense dissolves, coheres to print only ... these bitten choirs of stone on water ... to the rumble of old cloth bells ... the cadging of confetti pigeons ... a boatman singing from his long black coffin..." (MV 385). The chief point of interest, according to Vernon Watkins, in Thomas's transitional dramatic song is its atmospheric quality and its speculation on the future of the fragmented war poets that is analogous to his major concern for the unpopular political poets and his own active magnanimous disinterested functioning in the early song and the early poem born of his own "enterprise" in contrast to Auden's historical memory, "a christening remembered," "the self-born mockers of man's enterprise" (YCP). Watkins underlines:

The font in your awakening is waylaid,
Where fell that christening moment from the vine.
If I look deeply there, I see time fade
And light grow perfect, dark; and darkness shine.
Again I see the curve her body made,
Bearing you like a pitcher doomed to wine. (MV 369)

Edwin Muir holds that Thomas's transitional art song is an offshoot of his early poem and his early art song, and it has the characteristic features of Yeatsian pagan altruistic vision of art song, careful pagan art written for the Wordsworthian pre-war poets, the hollow men's dream of great art song:

There 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).

Michael Roberts observes that Thomas's transitional art song evokes the Yeatsian poetic images of transfiguration and transformation, reconciliation and regeneration, polygonal sensibility and the antithetical Eliotian images of metaphysical process and eternal art, crucifixion and resurrection, historical consciousness and self-annihilation, metaphysical ironic sensibility and the polyphonic half-sound pattern and polymorphous unsound pattern of the romantic sensibility, "branches bend over like a terror ... the sun is darkened ... the white wind and the sun and the curling wave cradle the coral shore and the tall forest" (363). In the transitional song, Thomas paradoxical functioning is as self-awarding, self-guarding, self-rewarding and pragmatic as Viola in contrast to the self-deceiving and sentimental characters in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and as mortal and magnanimous as Yeats, "the labourer's hire ... the strength that gives our blood and state magnanimity of its own desire ... everything that is not God consumed with intellectual fire" (YCP 200).

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. However, Thomas's leit-motif, his Yeatsian introspective process of reconciliation and regeneration, transfiguration and transformation, Grecian altruistic vision of art song, paradoxical sensibility has been the unifying characteristics of his later art songs analogous to his early poem, his early and transitional art songs. 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.... (MV 372)

Although Auden shows admirable deftness in delineating and arranging situations and gives the impression of uninterrupted progression, his art 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).

In the later dramatic art song "A Refusal..." Thomas uses the expressive phrase "a refusal" to repudiate the retrospective, retrogressive and metaphysical functioning of the poets of war time, their longing for immortality and their scorning of the fellow-poets, and to affirm his Yeatsian mortal vision of art song, his disinterested goodwill and action, his vicarious impersonal 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 W.R. Rodgers:

Us on that happy day
This fierce sea will release,
On our rough face of clay;
The final glaze of peace.
Our oars we will lay
Down, and desire will cease. (MV 380)

Roberts maintains that Thomas's paradoxical poem "A Refusal..." is symbolic of "tenacity" of his poetical character as seen in the early poem *18 Poems* and this has become very obvious as Auden who has been harshly critical of his contemporaries's poetry could not tarnish Thomas's image and his Yeatsian poem *18 Poems* enjoying continuous popularity among the contemporary poets finds identical leit-motif between the early poem, "that the world lives by labour and barter ... and all things, in the long run, end up shabby" and the later poem, "A Refusal..." "and we remember tracer-bullets and the white flares ... and a general atmosphere of form and colour ... with possible extinction giving flavour to the stewed pears." He commends:

Silent, invisible, the bombs exploded,
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. (364)

Thomas's dramatic art song "Poem in October" 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 art song "A Refusal..." in exclusive categories. But even the possibilities of a bare opposition on the physical plane are avoided. Rodgers brings out Thomas's life-centric pragmatism, his asocial, apolitical and ahistorical functioning and vicarious impersonal art in the song in contrast to the contemporary poets' social, political and historical functioning and their "yearning" and "scorning":

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 381)

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, refuse to function as 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. In "Poem in October," Thomas contradistinguishes his ahistorical, asocial and apolitical functioning similar to his functioning in the early poem *18 Poems* and dissimilar to romantic, political and historical contemporary poets. Norman Nicholson perceives that the poem "Poem in October" reiterates what Thomas sees himself as "a poet" of cyclical pattern and warm impersonal art and a "heretic" of social love, political pity and historical peace as witnessed in the early poem *18 Poems*:

He knew beneath mutation of year and season
Flood and drought, frost and fire and thunder,
The frothy blossom on the rowan and the reddening of
the berries,
The silt, the sand, the slagbanks and the shingle,
And the wild catastrophes of the breaking mountains,
There stands the base and root of the living rock,
Thirty thousand feet of solid Cumberland. (398)

Thomas's dramatic art song "Fern Hill" projects the emergence of the young war poet Prince as the new worshipper of Auden's artistic process of intensity, his paradox of death-in-life and immortal art and as a perpetuator of Auden's poetry of historical consciousness. Prince, describing the evolution of Auden's metaphysical art from chaos and the deification of Auden, gives the story of success and advancement after a phase of agonized ignorance a seemingly appropriate framework of his early poem, *Poems*. Graham, while estimating Prince's maiden poem, his suffering speculative mind for the sake of Auden's suffers and his declining popularity among the contemporary Wordsworthian war poets and their love of personal poetry, "work of the deaths I find ... on the robbed land breathing air and ... the friendly thief sea wealthy with the drowned," sees him as a dilemmatic lover of his own personal love and Auden's impersonal art:

Sheltered in soon all of us to be
That memory against the scuppering rocks,
The spilling aprons of the sea.
Grief fills the voice with water, building

Ruin on the ruining land. Sheltering
In sea he breathes dry land, dry grave and dwelling.
(*MV* 410)

Thomas focuses chiefly on the inward states of his own functioning as a pagan altruistic artist like Yeats committed to cyclical process and paradoxical sensibility identical to his early poem and early art song, 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 to their romantic, historical and political tradition and their dreams of immortality.

Thomas envisions that a paradoxical dramatic art 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 analogous to Auden's craftsmanship. However, his Yeatsian disinterested goodwill and action is reminiscent of the noble character Hector in Homer's *Iliad*. Scovell maintains that in the later art songs Thomas is neither ambitious like the survival conscious political and the war poets dreaming of climbing on Auden's hill of aesthetic distance nor the aspiring Auden for the hill of grand music and immortality, but more and more he is as altruistic and disinterested as Yeats and life-oriented in his magnanimous soundless art songs analogous to the leit-motif of individuation and integration in his early poem *18 Poems* and his early dramatic art song "Altarwise by Owl-light":

He is not moved by winds in air
Like the vain boats on the lake.
Lest you think him too a flower of parchment,
Scentless magnolia,
See his living feet under the water fanning.
In the leaves' self blows the efficient wind
That opens and bends closed those leaves. (*MV* 371-72)

In the last dramatic song "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas's main focus is on the process of alchemizing the tragic failure of Auden into his tragic rejoice in contrast to Auden's concern for metaphysical process of intensity and immortal art and poetic justice symbolic of the metaphysical pilgrimage of Eliot and his war cry and the political and the Movement poets' hysterical shriek and cries of revenge upon Thomas. Bernard Spencer contradistinguishes the external invasion of Auden's furies and murderous ironic designs and the political and the Movement poets' tactical moves of violence against Thomas, their dramatic conflict and cold war "but the salt Aegean ... rolled waves of killing" from Thomas's ignorance of "quarrels of aliens," his poised concentration on altruistic warmth and co-existence:

In the boulevards of these dead you will think of violence,
Holiness and violence, violence of sea that is bluer
Than blue eyes are; violence of sun and its worship;
Of money and its worship. And it was here by the breakers
That strangers asked for the truth. (*MV* 377)

Spencer regards Thomas's Grecian philanthropic art song as Yeatsian cosmopolitan culture and polygonal sensibility, "the warm is that they are ... first promise of the South to waking travelers ... of the peacock sea, and the islands and their boulder-lumbered spurs" in contrast to Auden's art songs of cold aesthetic and immortal art, conflict and violence, envy and hatred, indignation and grave-digging for the fellow-poet as mortal or metropolitan culture, "the cold thing is ... one grey look surveyed ... the builder imagining the city, the historian with his spade" (378).

In the last phase, Auden's functioning that marks his uncertain future, his discontented and dismembered being and however, actively engaged in war mongering with his friends against Thomas, "the nerves of a leaf on a puddle of ice ... and the terrible nearness of distance" and "where the round year had taken its curtain call ... as if the whole world were a theatre" strikes stark contrast to Thomas's functioning in the last song in a lonely manner as an artist of contentment and utmost happiness, innocence and prudence, co-existence and amelioration, though his erstwhile friends have turned into his enemies and detractors of his later and last art songs, and shares the suffering of Auden and cares for his hopeful future which is the noble task that he has been performing since his early poem as well as his early dramatic art song "a perspective other than retrospect ... that hurts and holds the eye" (*MV* 402). Roberts also perceives that the anxious Auden in the last phase and the early Movement poets unleash a war against the enterprising Thomas and his human impersonal art songs, "trees crash at midnight unpredicted ... voices cry out ... naked he walks, and with no fear ... in the strange isle, the wise and gentle" (*MV* 363).

In the early and the middle phases, Auden designs of covert violence against his antagonist and in the last phase he intensifies his ironic war cry and violence to avenge his downfall on the death of his enemy Thomas, "and on all sides its skies fall ... as if the whole world were a theatre ... where the round year had taken its curtain call" (*MV*). The fallen realistic poets Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice being upset by Thomas's later art songs of unpiety intensify their noises of hatred, violence and death against Thomas and the early Movement poets volunteer their service to take vengeance upon Thomas for having downgraded the grand image of Auden. Unlike the frustrated mortal lovers and disappointed dreamers of immortal art and immortality, Thomas functions as sober and magnanimous as the dying old man according to Fraser:

And Winter has no analogy to war
Except the view of it the dying may have,
But is not unlike an unhappy love.... (*MV* 403)

Fraser contends that Thomas's defiance of the metaphysical, tragic vision of pure art, his emulation of Yeatsian process of mortal vision of gentle art song in contrast to Auden's Eliotian immortal vision of immortal art song cannot be construed as war against Auden. So, it is the increasing popularity of Thomas, his success, appeal and his being worshipped as godhead and his paradoxical sensibility, his disinterested goodwill and action, his poetic career of contentment and happiness till his last phase that provokes jealousy, ill-will and war mongering in the desperate Auden to sing of his

malevolence and violence with his new friend Larkin and the old friends, the pity-conscious broken-hearted political poets unleashing an ironic violent attack on Thomas to see that his career is unmade and undone.

However in the last song, Thomas maintains his balanced and benign functioning and vindicates his leit-motif of offering to the discomfited Auden the Yeatsian process of salvation that he has offered to the victims of Auden's art song and his impersonal art in the early poem *18 Poems* and the other art songs. Thematically, Thomas's last dramatic song is analogous to Yeats's song "Her Vision in the Wood":

That thing all blood and mire, that beast-torn wreck,
Half-turned and fixed a glazing eye on mine,
And, though love's bitter-sweet had all come back,
Those bodies from a picture or a coin
Nor saw my body fall nor heard it shriek,
Nor knew, drunken with singing as with wine,
That they had brought no fabulous symbol there
But my heart's victim and its torturer. (*YCP* 233)

In the poem "The Hawk in the Rain," Hughes perceives that Auden, having witnessed the suffering of the lost lovers of his grand art, should have foreseen the failure of his own immortal art, the loss of his pride, power and appeal in contrast to the grand success of Thomas's art songs and his grand popularity among the contemporary poets. While attributing Auden's tragic failure to his Eliotian process of death-in-life, his merciless inhuman pattern, his aesthetic amoral disinterestedness and his scorning of the contemporary poets ignorant of his metaphysical process of intensity and their interests in the personal comforts, "that maybe in his own time meets the weather ... coming the wrong way, suffers the air, hurled upside down ... fall from his eye, the ponderous shires crash on him," Hughes traces the success of Thomas to his Yeatsian motif of Grecian altruistic art song, his Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, his transfiguration and transformation:

The horizon traps him; the round angelic eye
Smashed, mix his heart's blood with the mire of the land.
(Hughes)

Hughes observes that Thomas's tragi-comic vision of work of art and his functioning as paradoxical artist has been the root cause of his success and appeal in contrast to Auden's metaphysical, existential process of art, his aesthetic amoral distance from the suffering contemporary poets, his scorns on the unfinished and unrealized artistic ambition of his worldly-wise contemporaries as the causes of his downfall and his loss of influence.

Moreover, Hughes finds that Auden's complaints of tilting and war-mongering emanate from his own moral indignation and his historic sense of poetic justice, his own discontentment and uncertainty, from the setback to his own dream of immortality. The Movement poets' cries of vengeance and violence against Thomas are all due to their divination of Auden to ensure their own immortality and the political poets' virulent criticism of Thomas's later and his last art songs is due to their continuous failure to fructify their ambition for eternal art song. In contrast, the leit-motif of Thomas's occasional art songs is in no way associated with ambition

for immortal greatness but for the resuscitation and rehabilitation of the afflicted and the affected contemporary poets, for the transformation of tragic failures of the fellow-poets into tragic joy. "He spins from the bars, but there's no cage to him ... more than to the visionary his cell ... his stride is wildernesses of freedom" (Hughes). Moreover, Thomas's mocking of Auden's metaphysical vision of pure art song and its structure in his art songs is to show to the lost lovers of Auden's art song that Yeats's mortal vision of pagan altruistic art song, his motif, his *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* as a viable alternative to Auden's immortal vision of art song, his historical motif, his metaphysical process and reality and to vindicate his position as a paradoxical artist of birth and death, success and influence, popularity and greatness, "the world rolls under the long thrust of his heel ... over the cage floor the horizons come" (Hughes).

In Thomas's poetic career his occasional play with dramatic art songs, there is an added implication that his disinterested goodwill and action, his paradoxical sensibility has been suggestive of his Yeatsian voice of love for everything, everyone and every place in the living world although this voice has to be rendered in human speech, "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*). Yeats attributes his contented and successful career to his leit-motif of pagan altruism, his introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, his measureless cosmopolitan comprehensive love of everything and everyone in the life of birth and death and his polygonal sensibility in contrast to his contemporary poets' metaphysical love and dreams of immortality and romantic love and dreams of immortality:

I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot;
Forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest. (*YCP* 199)

Yeats's leit-motif of his art songs, his tragi-comic vision of art song, his pagan altruistic art song and his paradoxical sensibility and functioning as "citizen of the world," "the good-natured traveler" evokes the image of the "world-besotted traveller" Oliver Goldsmith who "served humanity" (208). Goldsmith sings that his "duty" prompts "to relieve the wretched was his pride" in the poem "The Deserted Village":

He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way. (339)

In the last art song, Thomas leaves his poetic truth that the ultimate end of all the poets desirous of immortal beauty or artistic beauty, whether it is realized or unrealized, success or failure, good or evil, is death. However, he continues to

function as a poet as well as an artist of soft impersonal art, life and love, birth and death, human predicament and human reality. Raine brings out:

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)

In "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas vindicates that it is the Yeatsian motif of his last dramatic art song analogous to that of his other art songs, the Yeatsian introspective process of life and death, reconciliation and regeneration, transfiguration and transformation, mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, paradoxical sensibility that has made him success and popular, great and influential, self-fulfilled and self-contented poet as well as an artist in contrast to Auden's metaphysical leit-motif of historical suffering and eternal art, self-annihilation and self-resurrection, his immortal vision of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness and immortality, his ironic sensibility that deprives him of his grandeur and supremacy, his power and pride which, in turn, makes him a victim of discontent and dejection, violence and vengeance against Thomas, "to these ... hale dead and deathless do the women of the hill ... love for ever meridian through the courters' trees ... and the daughters of darkness flame like Fawkes fires still" (*Poems* 85). Thomas's last art song also testifies to his faith in Yeats's matter-of-fact functioning, his wise and smiling cosmopolitan culture especially when he confronts an atmosphere of "scowl" and "howl," envy and ill-will, and hatred and violence "for arrogance and hatred are the wares ... peddled in the thoroughfares" (*YCP*) and his moral disinterestedness that brings him laurels vis-à-vis Auden's aesthetic amoral disinterestedness that brings him down from the position of grandeur, "ceremony's a name for the rich horn ... and custom for the spreading laurel tree" (*YCP*).

CONCLUSION

In the last art song "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas's central motif in offering the Yeatsian process of magnanimous impersonal art, the Yeatsian *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*, "I am no more with life and death ... my heart upon his warm heart lies ... his breath mixes with his breath" (*YCP* 48) to the "discarded" Eliotian Auden has been running through the whole of his art songs and his early poem as the mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art as salvation to the affected and the afflicted, the ignorant and helpless contemporary poets, "the folly that man does ... or must suffer, if he woos ... a proud woman not kindred of his soul" (*YCP*). As a matter of fact, Thomas's last art song explores how far the evolutionary growth of his Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, the Yeatsian self-awarding, self-guarding, self-rewarding motif of his polygonal sensibility, his *Weltansicht* allows of individual volition or will in the early poem and the early art song, "strange how those yearning airs could sweeten ... and still enlighten ... the hours when solitude gave me her breast," in the transitional art song, "strange they could tell a mere child how hearts may beat

in ... the self-same tune for the once-possessed ... and the unpossessed" (*DCP* 216), in the later art songs, "over the graveyard in the water ... mountains and galleries beneath ... nightingale and hyena ... rejoicing for that drifting death" (*Poems* 36) and in the last art song, "sing and howl through sand and anemone ... valley and sahara in a shell ... Oh all the wanting flesh his enemy ... thrown to the sea in the shell of a girl" (*Poems* 35) in contradistinction to Auden's metaphysical motif of perfect work of art, his tragic vision of immortal art song, his *Weltanschauung*, "from salt-lipped beak to the kick of the stern ... sing how the seal has kissed her dead ... the long, laid minute's bride drifts on ... old in her cruel bed" (*Poems* 35) and the political and the war poets' motif of ecstatic existence and freedom, their apathy and pessimism, their *Weltschmerz*, "but the hungry kings of the tides ... sin who had a woman's shape ... sleeps till Silence blows on a cloud ... and all the lifted waters walk and leap" (*Poems*) as they are romantic and as ignorant of the process of metaphysical art song "old as water and plain as an eel ... always good-bye to the long-legged bread ... scattered in the paths of his heels ... for the salty birds fluttered and fed" (*Poems*) as the Movement poets merely worshipping and playing bandwagon to Auden's songs of scorn and war cry to revive his immortal art, "and the tall grains foamed in their bills ... always good-bye to the fires of the face ... for the crab-backed dead on the sea-bed rose ... and scuttled over her eyes" (*Poems*). On the whole, Thomas's motif of "perfection of the life," his cosmopolitan sensibility in the art songs helps the readers to understand better why Auden has suffered a setback in his metaphysical pursuit of aesthetic amoral impersonal art song, "the blind, clawed stare is cold as sleet ... the tempter under the eyelid who shows to the selves asleep ... mast-high moon-white women naked" and the dilemmatic contemporary poets of the thirties, the forties and the fifties leave their ambition for Auden's art song unfinished and unrealized, "walking in wishes and lovely for shame ... is dumb and gone with his flame of brides ... Susannah's drowned in the bearded stream and none stirs at Sheba's side" (*Poems*). Blake throws more light on the motif behind the situation of tragic sorrow and tragic happiness, "excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps ... the roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man" (126).

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