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# Dylan Thomas's "After the Funeral": The Afterglow of His Early Phase

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## ABSTRACT

What Dylan Thomas sings in the transitional art song "After the Funeral" is showing to the pre-war poets the afterglow of his early phase emulating Yeats's organic process of life-in-death, his vision of vicarious impersonal art and persuading them to explore the possibility of what is objective and pragmatic, beneficent and benevolent to their poetic career and living. He vindicates the evolution of his progression as a poet and an artist offering hope to the lost political poets as victims of Auden's aesthetic amoral art song and moves them on to better things from the phenomenon of digression and regression in their dream of the afterlife. Thomas contra-distinguishes Yeatsian process of Grecian altruistic art song from the contemporary poets' ancestral ceremony of immortal art song, from Auden's Eliotian metaphysical process of eternal suffering and eternal art that diminishes his grand influence and his hope for immortality, the lost political poets' self-conflicting process of time-consciousness and timeless art that deprives them of their dream of immortal art and the war poets' romantic process of spontaneity and personal concerns that incurs them the loss of their identity as poet and their dream of immortality.

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## ABSTRACT

*What Dylan Thomas sings in the transitional art song "After the Funeral" is showing to the pre-war poets the afterglow of his early phase emulating Yeats's organic process of life-in-death, his vision of vicarious impersonal art and persuading them to explore the possibility of what is objective and pragmatic, beneficent and benevolent to their poetic career and living. He vindicates the evolution of his progression as a poet and an artist offering hope to the lost political poets as victims of Auden's aesthetic amoral art song and moves them on to better things from the phenomenon of digression and regression in their dream of the afterlife. Thomas contra-distinguishes Yeatsian process of Grecian altruistic art song from the contemporary poets' ancestral ceremony of immortal art song, from Auden's Eliotian metaphysical process of eternal suffering and eternal art that diminishes his grand influence and his hope for immortality, the lost political poets' self-conflicting process of time-consciousness and timeless art that deprives them of their dream of immortal art and the war poets' romantic process of spontaneity and personal concerns that incurs them the loss of their identity as poet and their dream of immortality.*

**Keywords:** afterglow, lament, predicament, regression, digression, individuation, amoral, reminiscent, altruistic, and extinction.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The poem *18 Poems* not merely portrays the wreck of time-conscious political poets, Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice, their wriggling in the depression of the socio-political upheaval and their final collapse in

their poetic career, "I see the boys of summer in their ruin ... man in his maggot's barren" (Dylan Thomas, *Poems* 72), but also the watchful gaze of the young Dylan Thomas defying the metaphysical process of intensity and emulating W.B. Yeats's pagan vision of transfigurative and transformative impersonal art, "and boys are full and foreign in the pouch ... I am the man your father was ... we are the sons of flint and pitch ... O see the poles are kissing as they cross" (*Poems*). In the later poem "The Tower," Yeats explains the introspective process of individuation and integration, the Grecian altruistic impersonal art vis-à-vis the metaphysical immortal vision of pure being and pure art and finds his self-image as a poet of individual myth more than a mere visual effect or a collective myth:

I mock Plotinus' thought  
And cry in Plato's teeth,  
Death and life were not  
Till man made up the whole,  
Made lock, stock and barrel  
Out of his bitter soul,  
Aye, sun and moon and star, all  
And further add to that  
That, being dead, we rise,  
Dream and so create  
Translunar paradise. (*Collected Poems* 167)

Yeats's poetic process of breath and death, his magnanimous impersonal art irradiates Thomas's early poem *18 Poems* even at the dying moment with W.H. Auden's metaphysical process of self-annihilation and immortal art. Thomas celebrates the later Yeats as his "hero," his godhead:

My hero bares my side and sees his heart  
Tread, like a naked Venus,

The beach of flesh, and wind her bloodred  
plait;  
Stripping my loin of promise,  
He promises a secret heat. (*Poems* 97)

Thomas repudiates Auden's Eliotian intellectual process of transgression and transmigration, his aesthetic ironic art, "he holds the wire from this box of nerves ... praising the mortal error ... of birth and death, the two sad knaves of thieves ... and the hunger's emperor" (*Poems*) and offers the lost political poets the Yeatsian way of poetic knowledge to the mystery of human predicament, a hope for a promising future.

In 25 *Poems*, the cluster of meanings becomes more intricate as the readers explore further the relationship between Yeats and Thomas. The political poets drowned in the wild love of Auden's grandeur are seen as the fallen and hopeless dreamers of immortal art song. Thomas, having transfigured the Yeatsian style of evolving his own image as a poet of success, "time upon time the towers of the skies," and the contemporary poets' antithetical images, Auden's metaphysical images of immortal vision of historical knowledge and historical suffering "a handbell through the corridors" and "the children's cry ... of echo's answer and the man of frost" and the political poets' disgraced public and private images, "the ghostly comets over the raised fists," projects the "double vision" of his paradoxical sensibility. He outlines the growth of his warm impersonal vision of poetry in contrast to Auden's cold metaphysical vision and the political poets' self-conflicting vision:

I, in my intricate image, stride on two levels,  
Forget in man's minerals, the brassy orator  
Laying my ghost in metal,  
The scales of this twin world tread on the  
double,  
My half ghost in armour hold hard in death's  
corridor,  
To my man-iron sidle. (*Poems* 73)

In the sequence of sonnets "Altarwise by Owl-light," Thomas explains the Yeatsian Grecian altruistic vision of art song, the paradoxical

"double vision" of reconciliation and regeneration, the process of self-discovery and self-development:

A grief ago,  
She who was who I hold, the fats and the  
flower,  
Or, water-lammed, from the scythe-sided  
thorn,  
Hell wind and sea,  
A stem cementing, wrestled up the tower,  
Rose maid and male  
Or, master Venus, through the paddler's bowl  
Sailed up the sun. (*Poems* 14)

Thomas's early art song articulates the modest and moderate language of artistic process, the Yeatsian laboring process of soundless art song identical to his language of moral disinterestedness in the early poem, his Yeatsian mythopoeic functioning as an artist of disinterested goodness and action in contrast to Auden's abstract language of humility and silence, his metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness, his functioning as an artist of Eliotian musical avant-gardism, modernism and ironic immortal vision of double immortality.

Auden has been conscious of his "double" immortality of his poetry, his communion with his contemporary poets and his immortal ancestors since the beginning of his poetic career. In *Poems* (1928), while "following" Walter de la Mare, "a line with left and right ... an altered gradient at another rate" (*Poems* 28), he "learns" the metaphysical functioning of the poet-priest as "the key" to immortality:

All pasts  
Are single old past now, although some posts  
Are forwarded, held looking on a new view;  
The future shall fulfil a surer vow  
Nor smiling at queen over the glass rim  
Nor making gunpowder in the top room,  
Not swooping at the surface still like gulls  
But with prolonged drowning shall develop  
gills. (*Poems* 29)

Auden's *Poems* (1930) is suggestive of his aspiration for immortality, "a neutralizing peace ... and an average disgrace ... are honour to discover ... for later or other" (42). In *Look Stranger!* his Eliotian historical sense, while adhering to "its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain," reinforces his hope for immortality, "the Pillars passed ... and into the undared ocean swung north their prow ... drives through the night and star-concealing dawn ... for the virgin roadsteads of our hearts an unwavering keel" (12).

Yeats, commenting on the metaphysical and the romantic poets' dream of eternal art, their vision of immortality antithetical to mortal life as "blind, stupefied hearts," suggests the "double vision" of his pagan humanistic art song, "and whisper it as though ... he were afraid the birds, who cry aloud ... their momentary cries before it is dawn ... would carry it away to blasphemous men," the process of transfiguration and transformation, the advancement of his own poetic career as an artist of poetic images,:

I call to these mysterious one who yet  
 Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the  
 stream  
 And look most like me, being indeed my  
 double,  
 And prove of all imaginable things  
 The most unlike, being my anti-self,  
 And, standing by these characters, disclose  
 All that I seek.... (YCP 134).

Thomas, while explaining the Yeatsian framework of his art song that keeps the image of Audenesque grand art and the images of afflicted lovers of Auden's song pattern in the background and the Yeatsian mortal vision of pagan philanthropic art as the theme in the foreground, elaborates on the structure and the substance, the appearance and reality, the metaphysical images and the human reality of his early art song identical to the motif of his early poem:

Beginning with doom in the bulb, the spring  
 unravels,  
 Image of images, my metal phantom  
 Forcing forth through the harebell,

My man of leaves and the bronze root, mortal,  
 unmortal,  
 I, in my fusion of rose and male motion,  
 Create this twin miracle. (*Poems*)

Thomas apparently regenerates the Yeatsian process of pagan humanistic art song and redeems the turbulent political poets in contrast to Auden's metaphysical aesthetic that really kills them, the metaphysical art song being only a symbol of his self-consuming passion, "compelling" them to be esoteric "till the wreck of body ... slow decay of blood ... testy delirium ... or dull decrepitude." Yeats explains the process of caring and sharing, the underlying leitmotif of his art song:

The death of friends, or death  
 Of every brilliant eye  
 That made a catch in the breath –  
 Seem but the clouds of the sky  
 When the horizon fades;  
 Or a bird's sleepy cry  
 Among the deepening shades. (YCP)

His functioning as an impersonal poet of vicariousness in defiance of the contemporary poets' metaphysical and the romantic functioning, "what if those things the greatest of mankind ... consider most to magnify, or to bless ... but take our greatness with our bitterness..." (169), as an artist of Grecian humanistic disinterestedness, "in something that all others understand or share" in contrast to the intellectual artist's immortal vision of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness symbolic of extreme hatred and idealism and the romantic artist's immortal vision of rapturous existence emblematic of extreme love and naturalism, "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" (174).

In the early art song, Thomas emulates the Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song, coherence and co-existence, "people's fusion ... light in zenith, the coupled bud ... and the flame in the flesh's vision" (*Poems* 26) as indicated in the last poem of *18 Poems* and extends the meaning of his vicarious impersonal art in the

poem 25 *Poems* and still further in the art song, “Altarwise by Owl-light” vis-à-vis Auden’s metaphysical meaning of the process of depersonalization, his Eliotian vision of perfect work of art. Auden’s early art song, *Poems* is a grand success as his abstract of depersonalization is exclusively death-centric and Word-centric, aesthetic and ascetic ignorant of human reality and human predicament. The political poets’ desire to be as great as Auden proves a miserable failure as they are ignorant of Auden’s metaphysical process of intensity, as they are world-centric in their modes of approach and operation according to Thomas:

Intricate manhood of ending, the invalid  
rivals,  
Voyaging clockwise off the symbolled harbor,  
Finding the water final,  
On the consumptives’ terrace taking their two  
farewells,  
Sail on the level, the departing adventure,  
To the sea-blown arrival. (*Poems*)

In the early art song, Thomas demonstrates the paradoxical sensibility as inclusive and incorporative of both pleasure and pain, as metaphorical and metamorphical as his very own early poem, as “the natural parallel” to Yeats’s *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* in contrast to Auden’s ironic metaphysical sensibility:

My images stalk the trees and the slant sap’s  
tunnel,  
No tread more perilous, the green steps and  
spire  
Mount on man’s footfall,  
I with the wooden insect in the tree of nettles,  
In the glass bed of grapes with snail and  
flower,  
Hearing the weather fall. (*Poems*)

Thomas, having found his identity as Yeatsian magnanimous impersonal poet in the early poem, grows and develops his self-image as Yeatsian pagan philanthropic artist in the early art song.

Yeats’s definition of the process of self-awarding and self-rewarding Grecian altruistic art song

carries an altered empirical sense in the context of metaphysical parable of soul-making, the Eliotian process of self-annihilation and self-sacrifice, the art of depersonalization:

Thereon I made my moan,  
And after kissed a stone,  
And after that arranged it in a song  
Seeing that I, ignorant of for so long,  
Had been rewarded thus  
In Cormac’s ruined house. (*YCP* 145)

To Yeats “identity” does not mean a persisting, unchanging individuality; the attainment of self-awarding position presupposes a process of growth, of becoming. Secondly, the term is closely linked with his pagan vision of moral disinterestedness in contrast to the metaphysical vision of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness and the metempirical vision of ecstatic existence. He explains:

To such a pitch of folly I am brought  
Being caught between the pull  
Of the dark moon and the full,  
The commonness of thought and images  
That have the frenzy of our western seas.  
(*YCP*)

The mind realizing its potential through the knowledge of suffering cannot indulge in self-love or remain absorbed in itself, “forever it is a white child in the dark-skinned summer ... out of the font of bone and plants at that stone tocsin ... scales the blue wall of spirits.” The extended awareness lifts it out of narrow ego-centricity, and increases its obligations to the mortals whose minds are shrouded in ignorance. Thomas explains the Yeatsian process of Grecian altruistic art, the tragi-comic vision of art song:

I mean by time the cast and curfew rascal of  
our marriage,  
At nightbreak born in the fat side, from an  
animal bed  
In a holy room in a wave.... (*Poems* 85)

Thomas’s introspective process of Yeatsian empathic art song identical to his vicarious

impersonal art in the early poem *18 Poems* is treated more fully in the art song “After the Funeral” as included in the transitional poem *The Map of Love*.

In *The Map of Love*, the chief concern of Thomas is to understand the nature of reality -- the nature of the human situation in particular -- and to conquer this reality either by submitting to it or through transcendence. It is from this perspective that his prefatory poem “O Make Me a Mask” should be examined although its immediate bearing is on Yeats’s projection of “a mask,” the creation of antithetical identities of contemporary poets. Thomas discovers in Yeats that to comprehend the fellow-poets’ experience and to attain to freedom from their bondage of ignorance, what is necessary is moral disinterestedness and poetic licence rather than Auden’s depersonalization and poetic justice:

O make me a mask and a wall to shut from  
your spies  
Of the sharp, enameled eyes and the  
spectacled claws  
Rape and rebellion in the nurseries of my face,  
Gag of dumbstruck tree to block from bare  
enemies  
The bayonet tongue in this undefended prayer  
piece,  
The present mouth, and the sweetly blown  
trumpet of lies,  
Shaped in old armour and oak the  
countenance of a dunce  
To shield the glistening brain and blunt the  
examiners.... (*Poems* 103)

The passage points to Thomas’s development as a poet of self-revival and self-revitalization distinguished from Auden’s self-aversion and expressionism and the war poets’ self-attraction and impressionism. It should also be noted that Thomas’s inner life and his poetry are closely integrated that the separation between the human self and the creative self that is so amazingly illustrated in the intellectual Auden and the dreaming war poets does not, in the main, characterize his pragmatic functioning which is analogous to his performance as a poet of

Yeatsian moral disinterestedness in the early poem *18Poems* and his position as an artist of Yeatsian empathy in the early art song “Altarwise by Owl-light.” So in the transitional poem, Thomas justifies that the theory of depersonalization that Auden emulates from Eliot is fundamentally alien to his Yeatsian poetical genius and empathic character.

In the transitional poem *The Map of Love*, Thomas is not just as metaphysical as Auden or as hysterical as the romantic pre-war poets such as Roy Fuller, Alan Rook, Keidrych Rhys, F.T. Prince, Alun Lewis, and Sidney Keyes; he appears as the archetype of feminine beauty as empiric and empathic, “completeness of their passions won,” as dramatic and dynamic as paradoxical sensibility distinguished from the contemporary poet’s pursuit of metaphysical sensibility and immortal art song and the metempirical insensibility of romantic ecstasy and eternal art, “swears by those horsemen, by those women ... complexion and form prove superhuman ... that pale, long visage company that air in immortality” (*YCP* 301) and as cold and organic as the ageing Yeats who “cast a cold eye ... on life, on death” (304). Yeats’s introspective vision of pagan altruistic art song is analogous to that of Michael Angelo who “left a proof ... on the Sistine Chapel roof” of his humanistic impersonal painting, “proof that there’s a purpose set ... before the secret working mind ... profane perfection of mankind” (*YCP* 303) vis-a-vis the romantic process of self-expressive art, “though grave-diggers’ toil is long ... sharp their spades, their muscles strong ... they but thrust their buried men ... back in the human mind again” or the metaphysical process of self-extinguishing art, “what his forefathers did ...bring the soul of man to God ... make him fill the cradles right” (301), being completely dissociated from human reality, is suitable for funeral music, “whether man die in his bed ... or the rifle knocks him dead ... a brief parting from those dear ... is the worst man has to fear” (*YCP*).

In the transitional poem, Thomas contra distinguishes his Yeatsian theme of vicarious impersonal art identical to the motif of his early poem, “and there and here you must couch and

cry” from the sentimental theme of the indolent political poets, “O my lost love bounced from a good home,” the pleasure-centric focus of the impassive war poets, Fuller, Rook and Rhys, the heroic patriotic love of the active war poets Lewis and Keyes, “the grain that hurries this way from the rim of the grave ... has a voice and a house” and the self-contradicting passion of the passive war poet, Prince and the eternal suffering and eternal art, “anguish and carrion,” of the metaphysical Auden:

Rest beyond choice in the dust-appointed grain,  
At the breast stored with seas. No return  
Through the waves of the fat streets nor the skeleton’s thin ways.  
The grave and my calm body are shut to your coming as stone,  
And the endless beginning of prodigies suffers open. (*Poems* 78)

In *The Map of Love*, Thomas’s Yeatsian insight into the tragic mystery that the poets of pre-war time shares with the pilgrim-poet Auden, the nature worshipping poet Wordsworth and the patriotic poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon does not alienate him from the fellow-poets; it only deepens his human sympathies.

MacNeice perceives that Thomas’s transitional poem suggests a contra position between the choice of perfection of art and the choice of perfect life, between the process of death-in-life and the process of life-in-death, between the poetry of pleasure and immortal art and the poetry of life and death, joy and sorrow, individuation and integration, between the poetry of pity and immortal art and the poetry of empathy and the mortal vision of pagan altruistic art. He compares and contrasts Thomas’s Yeatsian skeptical process of munificent impersonal art and Auden’s Word-centric historical process of magnificent metaphysical immortal art, the lost political and the impassive war poets’ world-centric process of great poetry, the passive war poet Prince’s dilemmatic process of Auden’s immortal art and the active war poets’

pity-centric process of immortalizing the war poets Sassoon and Owen:

And if the world were black or white entirely  
And all the charts were plain  
Instead of a mad weir of tigerish waters,  
A prism of delight and pain,  
We might be surer where we wished to go  
Or again we might be merely  
Bored but in brute reality there is no  
Road that is right entirely. (*MCP* 181)

MacNeice focuses on the distinction between Thomas’s poetry that is black-and-white suggestive of the Yeatsian cyclical process of human reality and the mortal vision of empathic impersonal art and the contemporary poets who see things in black and white symbolic of the metaphysical and the romantic vision of sentimental reality and immortal art.

The transitional Auden who “condones his fever” and “weakness” chooses Rainer Maria Rilke’s landscape symbolism analogous to the metaphysical process of intensity to integrate thought and feeling, “Times and places where he was well; he believes in joy” (*ACP* 143) and structure the landscape of dying, “only the old, the hungry and the humbled ... keep at this temperature a sense of place ... and in their misery are all assembled ...the winter holds them like an Opera-House,” (146) to confront the environs of romanticism and the rising skepticism of Thomas, “determined on Time’s truthful shield ... the lamb must face the tigress” (142) and tide over his sorrowful declining position and influence:

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. (*ACP*)

During war time, Auden’s functioning as an artist of Rilkean technique has not regained his lost greatness and unrivalled supremacy among the

contemporary poets; hence he seeks de la Mare's technique of imagism analogous to sculptural art to revitalize his withering journey and continue his "voyage" of immortal art, the process of aesthetic amoral art song, "snake-haired, snow-shouldered, pure as flame and dew ... her strange gaze burning slumberous eyelids through ... rises the Goddess from the waves dark blue" (de la Mare 248). Auden explains his change of heart:

That, may be, his fever shall find a cure, the true journey an end

Where hearts meet and are really true, and crossed this ocean, that parts

Hearts which alter but is the same always, that goes

Everywhere, as truth and falsehood go, but cannot suffer. (ACP)

In the middle phase, the image of lamentation in Auden's funeral art song introduces a note of mutability in an otherwise exquisite art world, "white shouts and flickers through its green and red ... where children play at seven earnest sins ... and dogs believe their tall conditions dead" (181) evoking the identical critical situation in which de la Mare was placed, "peace not on earth have I found ... yet to earth am resigned" (de la Mare 250), confronting "the quiet enemy," "gradually the brave sun ... droops to a day's journey done" (249) and singing his "epitaph":

Last, Stone, a little yet;

And then this dust forget.

But thou, fair Rose, bloom on.

For she who is gone

Was lovely too; nor would she grieve to be

Sharing in solitude her dreams with thee. (258)

The next ambitious artistic project *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio*, the imagined height of de la Mare's aesthetic, "That *sotto voce* cons the song ... he'll sing when dark is spread ... and Night's vague hours are sweet and long ... and we are laid abed." (de la Mare 243) imaged as the song of Simeon, sets the perspective of Eliot for Auden's immortality, "the distresses of our choice are our chance to be blessed" (ACP 300).

Auden perceives that de la Mare's metaphysical technique, the model of his earlier poems, though adequate to sketch "a visible world to love or reject," is not enough to portray the contemporary world of alienation and estrangement, loneliness and anxiety, "that seemed ... the hell of childhood" and "he must try again" the existential art, the ironic mode of Eliot, "rummaging into his living, the poet fetches ... the images out that hurt and connect" in the architectural song *Four Quartets*, "a delight cascading ... the falls of the knee and the weirs of the spine ... our climate of silence and doubt invading" to move forward in his pursuit of immortal art during war time. He recognizes the necessity of Eliotian intellectual soul, modernism and musical avant-gardism for his movement:

From Life to Art by painstaking adaption,

Relying on us to cover the rift;

Only your notes are pure contraption,

Only your song is an absolute gift. (ACP 148)

Thus, "guided by tears he successfully reached his Regret." With Eliot's musical pattern, Auden hopes for aesthetic amoral songs and immortality vis-à-vis the contemporary poets' hope for poetry of comforts, pleasures and comic songs:

How prodigious the welcome was. Flowers took his hat

And bore him off to introduce him to the tongs;

The demon's false nose made the table laugh; a cat

Soon had him waltzing madly, let him squeeze her hand;

Words pushed him to the piano to sing comic songs;

And children swarmed to him like settlers. He became a land. (ACP 149)

Auden's belief in the metaphysical process of suffering culminating in Eliotian existential death-wish is typical of his Word-centric vision of transgression and transmigration, pure being and pure art, eternal suffering and immortal art, "on no work of words now for three lean months in the bloody ... belly of the rich year and the big

purse of my body ... I bitterly take to task my poverty and craft..." (*Poems* 105) in contrast to Thomas's process of birth and death, his mortal vision of pagan altruistic art song, success and happiness, and this is specially reminiscent of Eliot's poignancy:

Children's voices in the orchard  
Between the blossom-and the fruit-time:  
Golden head, crimson head,  
Between the green tip and the root.  
Black wing, brown wing, hover over.... (*The Waste Land* 69)

The sound-centric passive artist Auden who functions as a passionate lover of Eliotian artistic process, a critic of sceptic poetic process, paganism and romanticism in the early phase carries forward the Eliotian tragic vision of musical avant-gardism and historic sense of sorrow attending on human existence, "lift your eyes ... where the roads dip and where the roads rise ... seek only there ... where the grey light meets the green air" and hopes "to find ... the white hart behind the white well" and attain the highest grade of architectural song "the hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer" (*WL* 71). The dominant impression in the poems of Auden's middle phase is one of frightening elevation that he dreams in his earlier poems, "a rumour of that sea to which they are born ... they hear the ringing pole of summer days" according to Day Lewis, "for infants time is like a humming shell ... heard between sleep and sleep, wherein the shores ... foam-fringed, wind-fluted of the strange earth dwell ... and the sea's cavernous hunger faintly roars" (*DCP*).

The lost political poets of pity, while glorifying Thomas's Yeatsian mortal vision of pagan altruistic art song, remain dilemmatic, "the tall imposing tower ... imposing, yes, but locked" (*ACP*) and the romantic war poets are preoccupied with their fear and comforts rather than Auden's process of Eliotian pure art or Thomas's process of Yeatsian altruistic art song, "erect about a skeleton ... stands the expressive lover ... stands the deliberate man" (*ACP*). The war poets' earlier verses imitate the Wordsworthian process of recollection that "takes

its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" ("Preface" 180) as the beauty of the war poetry of pity of Owen and Sassoon and the modernism of Auden and Thomas lead inexorably to destruction of their comforts, their personal interests and their lives. Auden, comparing the functioning of the poets of pre-war time to "*Gare du Midi*," "a nondescript express in from the South ... crowds round the ticket barrier," explains their diffused sensibility:

Something about the mouth  
Distracts the stray look with alarm and pity.  
Snow is falling. Clutching a little case,  
He walks out briskly to infect a city  
Whose terrible future may have just arrived.  
(*ACP* 147)

While the inactive war poets, Fuller, Rook and Rhys continue as lovers of romanticism, the passive lover Prince stands dilemmatic between the romantic process of Wordsworth and the artistic process of Auden, the active war poet Lewis stands divided between the beauty of Wordsworth and Sassoon and Keyes between the un pity of Wordsworth and the pity of Owen. On the whole, Thomas's Yeatsian moral disinterestedness, his modest and merciful functioning contrasts with that of the poets of pre-war time analogous to the "emblems of" their insensibility, their refusal to be sensitive to the disastrous reality of the War II evokes the objective correlative images of "the circus animals' desertion" in Yeats's poem:

A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,  
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,  
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut  
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the ladders start  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.  
(*YCP* 296)

The adolescent Wordsworthian war poets lament that the contemporary poet no longer seeks inspiration in nature; but this wistfulness is also tempered with recognition, however faint, of actuality, of the need to bring poetry to more vital

experiences of war. Auden brings out their lament:

Wandering through cold streets tangled like  
old string,  
Coming on fountains rigid in the frost, its  
formula escapes you; it has lost  
The certainty that constitutes a thing. (*ACP*)

He is also sarcastic of Thomas's celebration of Yeatsian cyclical process of life and death, his introspective process of individuation and integration, his comic vision of art song, "enormous beauties round him move ... for grandiose is his vision ... and grandiose his love" (*ACP*).

In the art song "After the Funeral," Thomas underscores that it is Auden's Eliotian metaphysical process of immortal song, his seeking of the afterlife, "to surrender now is to pay the expensive ogre twice ... ancient woods of my blood, dash down to the nut of the seas ... if I take to burn or return this world which is each man's work," the lost political and the impassive war poets' dream of the process of immortal greatness, the heroic war poets' worshipping of the process of poetry of pity as a way to commune with the immortal poets of pity, the passive war poet's love of metaphysical process of immortal art and personal romance, "on no work of words now for three lean months in the bloody ... belly of the rich year and the big purse of my body ... I bitterly take to task my poverty and craft" (*Poems* 105) that sound the death knell of their poetic career, the funeral of their living. In contrast, it is Thomas's Yeatsian organic process of kind impersonal art, the workmanship of his Grecian altruistic art song, the Yeatsian *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* with which he works miracles in his early poem and his early art song outshining the political poets' bleak beauty and even Auden's blazing beauty and assuring him of the afterglow of his early phase that he offers in the transitional art song to revivify the pre-war romantic poets, "to lift to leave from treasures of man is pleasing death ... that will rake all currencies of the marked breath ... and count the taken, forsaken mysteries in a bad dark" (*Poems*).

In "After the Funeral," Thomas's androgynous mode of operation is as paradoxical as Yeats's sensibility in the art song "A Bronze Head," "human, superhuman, a bird's round eye ... everything else withered and mummy dead," as anti-intellectual and anti-romantic as he is in the early poem, "no dark tomb-haunter once; her form all full ... as though with magnanimity of light ... yet a most gentle woman," as sober and sagacious, as composed and "composite" as his early art song, "a mouthful held the extreme of life and death" (*YCP* 289). His craftsmanship, his myth of moral disinterestedness corresponds to that of Yeats who praises, "sobriety is a jewel ... that I do much adore ... and therefore keep me dancing ... though drunkards lie and snore" for "a drunkard is a dead man ... and all dead men are drunk" (*YCP* 268). While deploring the contemporary poets' tendency to seek in the art song a profundity of thought, Yeats demonstrates the integration of thought and sensation particularly in the soundless art song which throws light on the inner stresses and the uncertainties that enrich the texture of the poems:

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 silence. (287)

Thomas's transitional art song renders a common theme that runs through the painful contrast of flux and stability, and a partial restatement of the motif or motifs are implicit or elaborated in the early poem and the early art song. But the argumentations are complicated because of the increase in the contemporary poets' self-awareness that results in an intensification of doubts; and the doubts are incorporated in an inclusive structure in which alternative approaches of the metaphysical Auden, the lost political poets and the romantic war poets conflict and cohere, "my one and noble heart has witnesses ... in all love's countries, that will grope awake ... and when blind sleep drops on the spying senses ... the heart is sensual, though five eyes break" (*Poems* 146).

Thomas's functioning as an artist of self-assertion and self-reservation, prudence and benevolence, his progression through the process of evolution strikes stark contrast to the contemporary poets' metaphysical and metempirical functioning, their dream of freedom and immortal art, their phenomenon of digression and regression:

Forever it is a white child in the dark-skinned  
summer  
Out of the font of bone and plants at that stone  
tocsin  
Scales the blue walls of spirits;  
From blank and leaking winter sails the child  
in colour,  
Shakes, in crabbed burial shawl, by sorcerer's  
insect woken,  
Ding dong from the mute turrets. (*Poems* 89)

In the pre-war time, the leit-motif of Thomas's transitional poem is caring and sharing his Yeatsian introspective process of his memory, his Yeatsian vision of Grecian altruistic art song with the ignorant, helpless war poets, and his vicarious concern is analogous to the motif of his early poem and art song while the inactive war poets' motif is the immortality of Wordsworthian greatness, the heroic war poets' theme of nationalism and patriotism is perpetuation of the pity and truth of the First World War poets, the passive war poet's half-sound intention is immortalization of Auden's immortal art and Auden's sound-centric immortal vision is communion with Eliot's immortal art song and the immortal ancestors, "and dedicate eyes bent upon the ground ... back turned upon the brightness of the sun ... and all the sensuality of the shade ... a moment's memory to that laurelled head" (*YCP* 205).

Day Lewis celebrates Thomas's Yeatsian tragi-comic vision of pagan philanthropic art song, his free play and free love, commends it to the Wordsworthian war poets for their prospective success and happiness, "this clay that binds the roots of man ... and firmly foots his flying span ... only this clay can voice, invest ... measure and frame our mortal best" and persuades them to bid farewell to Auden's

immortal vision of pure being and pure art, his metaphysical concept of human destiny and poetic justice, "no longer let predestined need ... cramp our design, or hunger breed ... its windy dreams, or life distil ... rare personal good from common ill" (*DCP* 183). Spender perceives that Auden's art song is the denial of love and life and life-deniers get easily drawn into it, and he revels in the forgetfulness of Auden's hate and remembers Thomas's love of cyclic reality and art, "in the larger hate which destroys the world ... that time is redeemed and I am content" (*Trial* 49).

MacNeice who endorses his contemporaries' estimation of Thomas's early art song "where life is a choice of instruments and none ... is debarred his natural music ... where the waters of life are free are free of the ice-blocked of hunger ... and thought is free as the sun" directs the pre-war poets to heed to his Yeatsian mortal vision of pragmatic art song for a prospective future:

If it is something feasible, obtainable,  
Let us dream of it now,  
And pray for a possible land  
Not of sleep-walkers, not of angry puppets,  
But where both heart and brain can  
understand  
The movements of our fellows .... (*MCP* 174)

The transitional art song "After the Funeral" testifies that Thomas has been a success as a popular and influential poet and an artist in the early phase indicating his Yeatsian introspective process of art song, his distinctive evolutionary growth and development, envious position and unrivalled progress as god-head like Auden in the early phase, "where the individual, no longer squandered ... in self-assertion, works with the rest, endowed ... with the split vision of a juggler and the quick lock of a taxi ... where the people are more than a crowd" (174-75) in contrast to Auden's transitional phase becoming the funeral of his grandeur and influence, pride and power among the self-complacent, self-centred and self-contradictory contemporary political and the war poets, "where the altars of sheer power and mere profit ... have fallen to disuse ... where

nobody sees the use ... of buying money and blood at the cost of blood and money" (*MCP*).

## II. REVIEWS, METHODS AND OBJECTIVES

Thomas's transitional poem *The Map of Love*, Henry Treece estimates, marks "another step in the poet's development" (102) and the poems in the third volume "are perhaps more varied in matter and conception than those in Dylan's first book; and more powerful in manner than those of *25 Poems*." His art song "After the Funeral" written "in memory of" his aunt Anne Jones deals with his grief at the death of an old lady" (103). John Ackerman, analyzing Thomas's life and work, observes that "an important theme developed in *The Map of Love*, and one that had long troubled Thomas's questioning mind, was the theme of art as illusion, of religion as illusion. Allied to this religious nature was an unwavering honesty he always questioned the validity of his experience, probing what were for him the fundamental truths of art and religion" (84). To him, "After the Funeral" is a formal elegy: its protagonists are the poet, the mourners, and Ann Jones, whose body is asleep in death. The mourners themselves are spiritually asleep, as also the poet until the terrible reality of death wakens him" (81-82). In the song "After the Funeral," Ackerman writes that "for the first time in his poetry, Thomas's emotional range was extended beyond his own subjective world" (76). Walford Davies holds that *The Map of Love* widens "to include love poems, the birth of his first child on the eve of war time, the events of war itself, and other occasional subjects" (63) and "for the first time" responds "to the independent reality of other people" (62). The transitional art song explores "via Ann Jones, the poet's relationship to a particular culture" (89). However, an objective estimation of the art song uncovers the abounding images of Thomas's early poem and the early art song written under the influence of Yeats's poetic process of life-in-death, his vision of moral disinterestedness and the antithetical images of the poets of pre-war time, the romantic war poets' Wordsworthian process of expression of personal experiences and the intellectual artist Auden's metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral art song. So this paper, adopting

intertextual approach, aims at unfolding Thomas's Yeatsian introspective process of self-discovery and self-advancement, his Yeatsian vision of Grecian altruistic art song and his self-delighting buoyant tone of success and influence in the afterglow of his early phase vis-a-vis the contemporary poets' ancestral process of immortality, Auden's metaphysical process of self-annihilation and immortal art, the lost political poets' reflective process of life and immanent art and the pre-war poets' romantic process of self-expression and ecstatic eternal art, the elegiac tone of their descent in appeal and literary reputation, the funeral music in the aftermath of debacle in their heart's desire for the afterlife, the catastrophic results of their having gone after the *modus operandi* of the famous ancestors, "ceremony's a name for the rich horn ... and custom for the spreading laurel tree" (*YCP* 160).

## III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In the art song "After the Funeral," Thomas perceives that the pre-war poets adopt the romantic process of subjectivism as an ideal way to immortality. Fuller, Rook, Rhys, Prince, Lewis, and Keyes worship the Wordsworthian poetic process of expression of personality, "poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (*Preface*), love the chaste and pious nature poetry, "it is a beauteous evening, calm and free ... the holy time is quiet as a Nun ... breathless with admiration; the broad sun ... is sinking down in its tranquility" and yearn for Wordsworthian immortality, "the gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea" ("It is a Beauteous Evening" 602). The transitional Auden believes in the metaphysical process of life after death, in the Eliotian process, "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" ("Tradition" 296) identical to de la Mare's metaphysical process of intensity and aspires to pure art and immortality and the political poets' glorify Thomas's Yeatsian process of art song, his Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song that inspires their transitional art songs to dream of their immortality. Thomas explains the leitmotif of his transitional art song, the afterglow of his warm impersonal art in the

early poem and the art song, his introspective process of memory in contrast to the afterlife motif of Auden and the war poets and the after effects motif of the political poets:

My one and noble heart has witnesses  
In all love's countries, that will grope awake;  
And when blind sleep drops on the spying  
senses,  
The heart is sensual, though five senses break.  
(*Poems* 146)

The juvenile verses of the pre-war poets celebrate the Wordsworthian mind's release from the oppressive thoughts associated with the war, and they also hail the advent of poetry of pity of Sassoon and Owen, "morning smack of the spade that wakes up sleep ... shakes a desolate boy who slits his throat ... in the dark of the coffin and sheds dry leaves..." (*Poems* 25).

The serene, sober beauty of nature, the sound of animals and the silence of water, the sensations produced by the unexpected and refreshing change in weather are conveyed by the spitting image: "the spittled eyes" and "the salt ponds in the sleeve." Closing their ears to Thomas's metaphorical process of magnanimous impersonal art, his animating warm beauty after human experience and to Auden's metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral art, his cold dead beauty, they have ear of Wordsworth. Thoughts of autobiographical poetry lead to thoughts of process of spontaneity and recollection, and summer thoughts, again, bring back memories of Wordsworthian immortality. Thomas recasts the obsequious, gloomy, dismal and mournful obsequies, the romantic process of the afterlife in the opening lines of the song "After the Funeral":

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

The passage underlines the generative process in nature, the cycle of birth, growth, and fruition.

Images of life and love show the operation of the same vital force in the human scene of the war poets. Day Lewis explains:

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

Unlike the poets of the World War I concerned with the truth and pity of war, the poets of the World War II over-concerned with their personal needs, pleasure and freedom are totally free from the concerns of time-conscience and the funest war according to Day Lewis:

So conscience, need, imagination pierce  
An arbitrary point between two years:  
The fabric tears; but in truth  
It is we, not time, who bleed. (*DCP*)

In the opening section of the art song, Thomas projects two images of darkness and light, metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral art and cyclical process of Grecian altruistic art, poetic justice and poetic licence to imply the matter of separation between Auden and the political poets, friendship between Thomas and the political poets, to adjudge the impact of Auden's art song and Thomas's early art song on the time-conscious political poets, "that breaks one bone to light with a judgement clout" (*Poems*). As a matter of fact, Thomas's early poem *18 Poems* has offered the depressed incommunicative political poets, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice, the process of soft impersonal art as salvation and his early art song "Altarwise by Owl-light" has enlightened them with the Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian humanistic art song as an alternative to Auden's metaphysical immortal vision of aesthetic amoral art song. Consequently, the political poets, apart from making a break from their erstwhile godhead Auden, start worshipping Thomas as their godhead. Day Lewis underlines their freedom of communication and Auden's problem of communication:

From the ignoramus of desolation  
Our life-blood springs to liberty,  
And in the callous eyes we see  
The landscape of dissolution. (*DCP* 175)

Spender resolves to reject the laws of poetic justice, the denial of love, life and life-deniers and accepts the creative process of poetic licence, the process of life and death:

... from the impregnable centre  
Of what we are, we answer  
Their injustice with justice, their running  
Terroristic lie with fixed truth. (*Trial of a Judge* 103)

MacNeice laments the setting of Auden as “God or whatever the means the Good” and celebrates the rising of Thomas as the means of love, life and peace:

Time was away and she was here  
And life no longer what it was,  
The bell was silent in the air  
And all the room a glow because  
Time was away and she was here. (*MCP* 190)

Moreover, the fallen political poets’ dream of art song get realized in their transitional phase under the influence of Thomas’s Yeatsian tragi-comic vision of pagan altruistic art song, “crumbling between the fingers, under the feet ... crumbling behind the eyes ... their world gives way and dies ... and something twangs and breaks at the end of the street” (*MCP* 199).

In the narrative song “The Nabarra,” Day Lewis, being free from Auden’s metaphysical immortal vision of pure art song, sings of his mortal vision of Grecian philanthropic art song emulating the soft impersonal art of Yeatsian Thomas:

Freedom is more than a word, more than the  
base coinage  
Of statesmen, the tyrant’s dishonoured  
cheque, or the dreamer’s mad  
Inflated currency. She is mortal, we know, and  
made  
In the image of simple men who have no taste  
for carnage  
But sooner kill and are killed than see that  
image betrayed.  
Mortal she is, yet rising always refreshed from  
her ashes... (*DCP* 191)

In the drama, *Trial of Judge*, Spender revels in the expansion of hate, “in the larger hate which destroys the world ... the time is redeemed and I am content” (*Trial* 50) and emulates Thomas’s Yeatsian process of life and death. In *Autumn Journal*, MacNeice crosses the Rubicon, “sleep, the past and wake, the future” and sings of Thomas’s introspective process of reconciliation and reformation as a matter of confidence:

Sleep to the noise of running water  
To-morrow to be crossed, however deep;  
This is no river of the dead or Lethe,  
To-night we sleep  
On the banks of Rubicon – the die is cast...  
(175)

Day Lewis, commenting on their imitation of Auden’s tragic vision of art song, their problem of communication as portato, explains their emulation of Thomas’s tragi-comic vision of art song as “thin air above the clouds” as salvation, freedom from ignorance and dreams:

Vain divination of the sunless stream  
Our birthright, and the shadowplay concludes.  
Ah, not in dreams, but when our souls engage  
With the common mesh and moil, we come of  
age. (219)

In the pre-war time, the defeated lovers of Auden’s art song demonstrate their triumph and love of Thomas’s introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation in contrast to Auden, the lover of metaphysical process of transgression and transmigration, pure being and pure art more concerned about his future and unconcerned about the war-threatening time, “good-bye, Winter, the days are getting longer ... the tea-leaf in the teacup ... is herald of a stranger” (*MCP* 179).

During the transitional phase Auden, having confronted the adverse climate of hate and fear, mutability and immutability, chooses de la Mare’s aesthetic amoral process of perfection and immortality, “now, galloping through Africa, he dreamed ... of a new self, a new son, an engineer ... his truth acceptable to lying men” (*ACP*) to make his poetry of metaphysical truth appeal to the war

poets and perpetuate his grandeur that he has enjoyed in the early phase, especially among the political poets. Thomas's images of the burial of the dead and the cold feast suggest the death of Auden's influence, his silent and ceaseless flow of historical knowledge and his metaphysical process of ironic art song:

After the feast of tear-stuffed time and thistles  
 In a room with a stuffed fox and a stale fern,  
 I stand, for this memorial's sake, alone  
 In the sniveling hours with dead, humped Ann  
 Whose hooded, fountain heart once fell in  
 puddles  
 Round the parched worlds of Wales and  
 drowned each sun.... (*Poems*)

In *Look Stranger!* written in glorification of the Eliotian historical consciousness Auden, having critiqued Thomas's rising influence, his Yeatsian appeal for the process of life and death and pagan altruistic art, "pointing to the moon," the poetry of free play, "the leisured drives through a land of farms ... are good to the newcomer," his free play and free love, "this point in time and place ... is chosen as my working place ... where the sexy airs of summer ... the bathing hours and the bare arms" (*LS* 13), laments his diminishing appeal and decreasing popularity among the contemporary poets, "the little pianos are closed, and a clock strikes ... and all sway forward on the dangerous flood ... of history, that never sleeps or dies ... and, held one moment, burnt the hand" (*LS* 66) and intensifies his artistic process of intensity, "tough in his patience to surpass ...the tigress her swift motions" (*LS* 16) to work his way to the top. In the transitional poems written between 1937 and 1938 and included later in *Another Time*, he emulates the landscape symbolism of Rilke, "slowly our Western culture in full pomp progresses ... over the barren plains of the sea; somewhere ahead ... a sceptic East, odd fowl and flowers, odder dresses." The thought of passage of time attended by thoughts of transience concludes with a cryptic line, "no one guesses ... who will be most ashamed, who richer, who dead" (*ACP*). Then, he turns to the metaphysical imagism of de la Mare who was his ideal of endurance and sustenance in the earlier phase, "for , to achieve his lightest

wish, he must ... become the whole of boredom, subject to ... vulgar complaints like love, among the Just ... be just, among the Filthy filthy too" (147).

Thoughts of mutability haunt Auden in the works of transitional phase, but such thoughts seldom disturb the metaphysical verses of his earlier phase. The misery and transience of human life and the eternity of metaphysical art are contrasted in the earlier verses: in "The Carter's Funeral," "little enough stays musing upon ... the passing of one of the masters of things ... only a bird looks peak-faced on ... looks and sings," in "Allendale," "so under it stand we, all swept by the rain and the wind there" (*New Verse* 5) and in *Poems* (1928), "consider if you will how lovers stand ... in brief adherence, straining to preserve ... too long the suction of good-bye..." (6). In harmony with de la Mare's theological principle that runs through these poems, the emphasis is on happiness of the afterlife rather than on earthly miseries. But in the transitional "Sonnets from China," especially towards the end there is a sudden premonition of Auden passing through the process of dying, but this is more a rhetorical flourish than a genuine concern. It is also clearly implied that de la Mare's metaphysical voice is restorative, and being part of a purposive and Word-centric design in contrast to the world-centric pattern of the poets of war time, his process of death and life loses its horror, "while they breathed, the air ... all breathe took on a virtue; in our blood ... if we allow them, they can breathe again ... happy their wish and mild to flower and flood" (*ACP* 157).

Again, in the time of World War II, Auden goes back to the architectural song pattern of Eliot whom he has emulated in the early phase and become a grand artist, "only the old, the hungry and the humbled ... keep at this temperature a sense of place ... and in their misery are all assembled ... the winter holds them like an Opera-House" (*ACP*). The process of crucifixion of the poet's personality and resurrection, the process of historical perception and self-annihilation represents, as Auden pertinently remarks, the link between de la Mare's metaphysical vision of immortal art and Eliot's existential vision of eternal art. In *The Waste*

*Land*, Eliot while distinguishing his metaphysical sensibility from D.H. Lawrence's romantic and Yeats's dramatic sensibility, "and I will show you something different from either ... your shadow at morning striding behind you ... or your shadow at evening rising to meet you ... I will show you fear in a handful of dust" (*WL* 27-28), gets the hump on the way to his *magnum opus*:

Yet when we came back, late, from the  
hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.  
(28)

Auden's Eliotian process of the poet's death or the process of intensity carries further meaning of existentialism in Day Lewis's poem "New Year's Eve":

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

Moreover, Auden changes his love as de la Mare's ideal process is not adequate to focus on his existential suffering, his alienation and estrangement, his loneliness and anxiety, "religious clocks will strike, the childish vices ... will safeguard the low virtues of the child ... and nothing serious can happen here" (*ACP*). Identically during the World War I, de la Mare is over the hump and he has to work hard to announce the Incarnation of Jesus Christ:

The drumming will be drumming; the fiddles  
at their thrumming;  
Nuns at their beads, the mummers at their  
mumming,  
Heaven's solemn Seraph stoops weary o'er his  
summing;  
The palsied fingers plucking, the way-worn  
feet numbing—  
And the end of things coming. (de la Mare  
238)

Auden responds most keenly to the varied beauty of nature passing through myriad changes, and symbolizes the most active metaphysical principle of pure being and pure art, but he, too, fails to quicken and regain the grounding in the ironic art of survival and success, "wandering through cold streets tangled like old string ... coming on fountains rigid in the frost ... its formula escapes you; it has lost ... the certainty that constitutes a thing" (*ACP* 146). Hence, he changes over to Eliot's existential influence for his betterment during the time of war, "through this pinprick, like life-blood ... the ghosts of time we killed ... spill out – an age course custom has buried alive ... and sightless hours, and pallor of weeks unquicken" (*DCP*).

However, the war poets do not warrant Auden's reading though he assures them that his metaphysical process leads them to eternal art. The impassive war poets' picture of love and fear, pleasure and pain, mortality and immortality, defiance and hatred is inspired by their firm faith in the Wordsworthian process of great poetry, "quarter of pleasures where the rich are always waiting ... waiting expensively for miracles to happen." The passive war poet Prince creates "fortuitous shapes" of Auden's process of impersonal art as he stands dilemmatic between his personal love and immortal art, "you with your charm and your apparatus have abolished ... the strictness of winter and the spring's compulsion ... far from your lights the outraged punitive father ... the dullness of mere obedience here is apparent." The active war poets Lewis and Keyes have been simmering with heroic patriotism and immortal poets of pity, "in unlighted streets you hide away the appalling" and the poets of pity, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice falter to be active as they are reminded of their labours of lost love, "the innocent ... unobservant offender falls in a moment ... victim to his heart's invisible furies" (*ACP* 146). Auden's sonnets are unlike anything he has written before; he notes an early anticipation of the immortality motif in the poems of the war and the lost political poets, "but the sky you illumine, your glow is visible far ... into the dark countryside, enormous and frozen ... where, hinting at the forbidden like a wicked uncle ...

night after night to the farmer's children you beckon" (*ACP*). In contrast to Auden's sarcasm, Thomas brings out his objective observation underlining the war poets' dreaming of immortality that turns away from Auden's metaphysical process and the climate of war, "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).

Moreover, Auden's peroration on the brevity of things may not sound pompous to the political poets, but conveys little inward agony; and the sentiment is immediately counterbalanced by vivid images suggesting the vitality of life-force after death, "that, may be his fever shall find a cure, the true journey an end ... where hearts meet and are really true, and crossed this ocean, that parts ... hearts which alter but is the same always, that goes ... everywhere, as truth and falsehood go, but cannot suffer" (*ACP* 143). His stress is on the healing power of the Eliotian process of death and life, "he condones the fever; he is weaker than he thought; his weakness is real" (*ACP*). In parenthesis, Thomas refers to the political poets' belief in the cyclical process of life and death, the Yeatsian process of intensity in contrast to Auden's significant belief in metaphysical process of intensity, the end of Eliotian pilgrimage of eternal suffering and eternal art:

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

Auden's achievement in the early phase, his historical consciousness and skilled craftsmanship, his musical patterns and aesthetic amoral disinterestedness symbolic of his laws of poetic justice. will-power and endurance, "God or whatever means the Good ... be praised that time can stop like this" could not assure him of constancy amid Thomas's Yeatsian process of

generous impersonal art, his Yeatsian vision of Grecian altruistic art song that could give the fallen political poets a ray of hopeful future, "that what the heart has understood ... can verify in the body's peace ... God or whatever means the Good" (*MCP*) according to MacNeice. In the art song, Auden reaches a more immortal vision of historical consciousness, historical suffering and historical song in contrast to Thomas's voice in the Yeatsian altruistic art song that is deathless and immemorial, and its majestic, elemental sea has also spells of calm when it will not displace even the minor influences in the past. MacNeice observes:

The courage of eyes, the craft of hands,  
The gay feet, the pulse of hope,  
The will that flings a rope --- though hard --  
To catch the future off its guard --  
This is on me and these are yours. (*MCP* 191)

The experience is both terrifying and assuring, "all the lost interpretations ... all the unconsummated consummations ... all the birds that flew and left the big empty sky ... comeback throwing shadows on our patience" (*MCP* 211).

Day Lewis brings out the contradistinction between Auden's metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral art song and Thomas's mortal process of tragi-comic art song, "others will journey over ... our hill up along the lane like a rift ... loaded with moon-gold, many a lover ... sleepwalking through the moon's white drift" (*DCP* 243). Spender rejects Auden's laws of poetic justice and accepts Thomas's organic process of life and death as a source of redemption, "from the impregnable centre ... of what we are, we answer ... their injustice, their running ... terroristic lie with fixed truth" (*Trial* 103). The active war poet Keyes perceives that Auden's recognition of the necessity of the Eliotian process of historical consciousness and self-crucifixion that assures him of Eliotian freedom and immortality has not convinced the political poets. But the disgraced political poets' wild love of Auden's beauty in their early phase is accompanied by their knowledge of its transience, of its ultimate decay, "out of clamour ... moulding your vision to such harmony ... that drunken

heroes cannot choose but honour ... your stubborn blinded pride, your inward winter.” Keyes underlines that the political poets’ could not find any purpose or meaning of existence in the metaphysical process of historical beauty of Auden to whom all other beauty fades and impermanence is the condition of all sensory experience, “quick hands in darkness groping ... pluck the sad harp; sad heart forever hoping ... Valhalla may be songless, enter ... the moment of your glory” (*Contemporary Verse* 320). The predicament of the transitional Auden is painful, but the metaphysical order envisaged in the art song of lamentation assures a continuity of life. He invokes the law of poetic justice and senses the imminent death of his poetry, “time and fevers burn away ... individual beauty from thoughtful children, and the grave ... proves the child ephemeral” (*ACP* 131).

However, in contrast to Auden’s process of pilgrimage resulting in regression and declining appeal Thomas’s poetic process is warm and richly sensuous in human experience, the possibilities of immanence are limited despite his forward journey of progress and success according to the active war poet Keyes’s estimation:

O it is such long learning, loneliness  
And dark despite to master  
The bard’s blind craft; in bitterness  
Of heart to strike the strings and muster  
The shards of pain to harmony, not sharp  
With anger to insult the merry guest  
O it is glory for the old man singing  
Dead valour and his own days coldly cursed.  
(CV)

The impassive war poets’ poetry of nature and Wordsworthian greatness, “now it is time to remember the winter festivals ... of the old world, and see their rafted halls ... hung with hard holly,” the active war poets’ love of Owen and Sassoon and human life have moments of beauty and the passive war poet Prince is elegiac about Auden’s situation and also skeptical about his contemporary poets’ salvation which is possible only through realization of their wholeness, “voices dying when the blind bard rises ... robed in

his servitude, and the high harp ... of sorrow sounding, stills those upturned faces” (CV).

The active war poet Lewis perceives, while projecting the landscape of diffusion in the romantic war poets, that their moments of life, seen in isolation, are fleeting; but their wild love of Wordsworthian order is eternal, presenting a spectacle of fixity in the midst of change:

But no! She cannot move. Each arid patch  
Owns the lean folk who plough and scythe and  
thatch  
Its grudging yield and scratch its stubborn  
stones,  
The small gods suck the marrow from their  
bones. (CV 294)

During the transitional phase, Auden presents the picture of progressive historical development as distinct from cyclic movement, of ceaseless evolution of historical sense reaching forward to successively higher forms of life, each form containing in itself the seeds of destruction and new birth. Lewis explains the change-over:

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

In Thomas’s early poem and the art song, the emphasis is more on the Yeatsian process than on change and mutability, and the mortal vision of a continually repeating cycle of birth, growth, and death leads to a discovery of order in flux according to the active war poet Lewis:

High on the ghat the new turned soil is red,  
The sun has ground it to the finest red,  
It lies like gold within each horny hand.  
Siva has spilt his seed upon this land. (CV)

Thomas transposes the estimation of the active war poets, Keyes and Lewis, their comment on the war poets in general and their disinterested remarks on the contradistinction between Auden's Eliotian metaphysical vision of immortal art, his passionate aesthetic amoral impersonal art, his ascetic profile that leads him to a downward trend and his own Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, his modest and moderate vision of Grecian altruistic art song, his down-to-earth approach since his early poem and his art song that assure him of continuous popularity and happiness, "her flesh was meek as milk, but this skyward statue ... with the wild breast and blessed and giant skull ... is carved from her in a room with a wet window ... in a fiercely mourning house in a crooked year" (*Poems*).

The war poet Gascoyne estimates that in the earlier phase, Auden is not merely overwhelmed with a sense of his own mortality, "dulled by the slow glare of the yellow bulb ... as far from sleep still as at any hour ... since distant midnight." He is even more disturbed by the decayed condition of the historical impersonal art, "with a hollow skull ... in which vapours seem to reel ... among limp muddles of old thought; till eyes ... collapse into themselves like clams in mud..." (CV 296). In the early phase, his art songs written in conjunction with the Eliotian image represent an unfathomable, changeless reality of which only fitful glimpses are available to the political poets of mortal concerns opposing the metaphysical concerns, "now head sinks into pillows in retreat ... before this morning's hovering advance." Auden approaches Eliot's art song with due reverence; he too shares Eliot's grace and contemporaneous concerns and combats the skepticism of philistine time-conscious political poets of the thirties, "while early guns on Norway's bitter coast ... where faceless troops are landing, renew fire ... and one more day of War starts everywhere" (297). The landscape symbolism of Rilke and the imagism of de la Mare's as echoed in "Sonnets from China" is changed as Eliotian songs and imagism in *For the Time Being*, and Auden attempts at fuller

comprehension of human destiny, his faith in religion. Auden takes up one symbol after another in his unwearied quest for truth, and the resolution achieved in each poem is tentative. Besides, Gascoyne notes Auden's conflict in attitude with the contemporary poets:

*Lie still ...* Limbs twitch;  
Relapse to immobility's faint ache. And time  
A while relaxes; space turns wholly black. (CV)

Auden's thought of mutability reminds Gascoyne of the sestet of Shakespeare's sonnet 64:

When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded to decay;  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,--  
That Time will come and take my love away.  
This thought is as a death, which cannot  
choose  
But weep to have which it fears to lose.  
(*Sonnets* 34)

Auden's despair expressed in the transitional poems is thus replaced in the succeeding middle phase in contrast to the war poets' ecstasy born of partial realization of a vision, "hand paws the wall to reach the chilly switch ... then nerve-shot darkness gradually shakes throughout the room." It is significant that several transitional sonnets foreshadow Auden's unwearied quest for faith in the sonnets of *New Year Letter* and in the songs of *For the Time Being*. Thomas reworks Gascoyne's observation on the transitional Auden:

I know her scrubbed and sour humble hands  
Lie with religion in their cramp, her  
threadbare  
Whisper in a damp word, her wits drilled  
hollow,  
Her fist of a face died clenched on a round  
pain;  
And sculptured Ann is seventy years of stone.  
(*Poems*)

Auden's metaphysical process of aesthetic amoral art, his historical sense of perfect work of art, his immortal vision of historical suffering and immortal art, his status as Eliotian artist of great stature among the contemporary poets and his

declining state spills over into the early poems of his spell-bound lover Prince according to Gascoyne.

In the collection of shorter lyrics *Poems*, Prince as an ardent worshipper of Auden's art song contrasts the grandeur of Auden's pure art and the feebleness of the contemporary poet's powers of perception, "call out, celebrate the beam ... imprisoning and expressing him" and carries forward the contemporary political and the war poets' dilemmatic process of immortal art and mortal concerns, their doubtful image of greatness, "fix the mature flash for the end but in advance ... fix in the glow of the sense what shall pass" (*MV* 388). The romantic war poets indifferent to Auden's articulate canons and process of impersonalization write poems of Wordsworthian spontaneity and personal experiences, "give him a pale skin, a long hand ... a grey eye with deep eyelids, with deep lids" (*MV*) and the political poets ignorant of Auden's metaphysical process stand divided between time-consciousness and timeless art, temporal and Time concerns, "illiterate illuminations run to seed ... irreconcilables and abominables ... of all kinds swallowed, neither good nor bad ... either remembered or forgotten" prove themselves as fanciful, dilemmatic and tragic as Prince. He sees the political poets' imitation of Auden's immortal art song as "amid the impunities of the polluted city ... I see him in the stale glare of those follies." Prince compares:

In the dusk  
There appears the full pallor of his looks  
Desiring and desiring to desire.  
And in fine he proceeds, fanned by this  
dubious flush  
In the way I know. (389-90)

He looks to Shakespeare for adequate equivalents of the political poets' jealousy and their babbling of time-conscious art song, "that thou among the wastes of time must go ... since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake ... and die as fast as they see others grow" (*Sonnets* 8), their abysmal failure and uncertain poetic career, "since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea ... but sad mortality o'ersways their power ...

how with this rage shall beauty hold a plea ... whose action is no stronger than a flower?" (35) and in contrast to Auden's enviable position as an artist of bright and miraculous beauty, immortal art song that has the power of forbidding the wreckage of relentless death from which nothing can escape, "and nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence ... save breed to brave him, when he takes thee hence" (*Sonnets*).

Then, Prince gathers up his conflicting emotions of awe, bafflement, despair and uncertainty in his hope for Auden's art song, "it glimmers ... it glimmers from the question of how, how shall it fall ... the moment of the simple sight," as he stands divided between pure art and personal love, "the simple sorrow" and the "green land." He is afraid of facing the after effects in the event of his failure that reminds him of the political poets' fall in the desire of immortal art and the aftermath in their poetic career, "a falling together of many gleams ... neither remembered nor forgotten and neither ... undesiring nor desiring the moment of despair?" With the result, he hangs back and resolves to hang purely on the process of romantic existential art practiced by the contemporary poet, "the process ... of confrontation, reflection, resolution ... that follows, it is this that will ascend ... to the last fitted and related clarity" (*MV* 390). In the last part of the longer poem, "The Tears of a Muse in America," Prince focuses on Thomas's Yeatsian process of transfiguration and transformation in the early phase defying Auden's Eliotian metaphysical process and defacing his Eliotian image and reputation in the transitional phase:

Caught in that leisurely and transparent train  
Of the soft ostensibility of story  
His motions and his thoughts are their own  
net  
And while the beam folds on itself I'll not  
Deny it is indefensibly too fine. (*MV*)

Thomas's ostensible motif of his Grecian altruistic art song in the early phase is to offer a promising future, a hope to the hopeless political poets of the thirties, but the real intention of his polysemous language is to tarnish Auden's grand image,

influence and popularity among the contemporaries according to Prince.

However, Prince perceives that Thomas is only a shadow of its original glory, a further reference to Yeats's cyclic process of the sun, his tragi-comic vision of pagan humanistic art song, his paradoxical sensibility that accommodates everyone and defaces also Auden's transcendent beauty, his ironic sensibility, his tragic vision of aesthetic amoral art song:

But at least  
 Since I have seen him clear,  
 Whether he fondle a golden mare  
 Which he has ridden through wet woods  
 Or in the sunlight by the water  
 Stand silent as a tree, this verse no longer  
 weeps. (*MV* 391)

Prince's pathetic projection of Auden's transitional poems of Rilkean symbolism and musical pattern and de la Mare's imagism and pure aesthetic, their inadequacies to overcome the pragmatic, skeptical influences of Thomas among the contemporary poets is analogous to the world-centric romantic existential art's wanton destruction of the Word-centric immortal art as presented in Shakespeare's sonnet 65:

O fearful meditation! Where, alack,  
 Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?  
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot  
 back?  
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?  
 (*Sonnets*)

Thomas transposes Prince's discriminating mind that compares and contrasts the Eliotian process of aesthetic amoral ironic art song and the Yeatsian process of pagan humanistic paradoxical art song and implies the storm clouds of war between Auden and Prince looming over the longer poem of *Poems* written and published in the pre-war time:

These cloud-sopped, marble hands, 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*)

Prince, having experienced that Auden's intellectual process of historical consciousness and self-annihilation has tossed stormy scenes between romantic love and metaphysical art in his early poems of pre-war time, changes his love of Auden's metaphysical process of intensity and moves towards the romantic existential process of intensity in the poem written after the outbreak of war.

The intensity of Thomas's early poem and art song is chiefly due to his Yeatsian perception of the dissonance inherent in the finite nature of man who is also a creative being. From the early poem *18 Poems* onwards he becomes increasingly aware of the fundamental dichotomy in time-ridden existence, "there grows the hours' ladder to the sun ... each rung a love or losing to the last ... the inches monkeyed by the blood of man," of the gap between the infinity of the metaphysical perception and the finite nature of man, "an old, mad man still climbing in his ghost ... my fathers' ghost is climbing in the rain" (*Poems* 67).). His Yeatsian poetic process of birth-in-death, "turns in the earth that turns the ashen ... towns around on a wheel of fire," through which man can merge himself into a new world implicit in the mortal vision of pagan altruistic impersonal art, "how now my flesh, my naked fellow ... dug of the sea, the glanded morrow" (*Poems* 26). His poems that follow are in a sense explorations of possible modes of salvation or transcendence. In *25 Poems*, deliverance is sought in a state of moral disinterestedness, in the Yeatsian process of birth-in-death in contrast to Auden's Eliotian process of death-in-life, "this flesh you break, this blood you let ... make desolation in the vein ... were oat and grape ... born of the sensual root and sap" (136). In the sequence of sonnets "Altarwise by Owl-light," Thomas's recognition of the

disgraced political poets' human misery is asserted as the first step to the Yeatsian knowledge of the mortal process of art song, and it is implicit that this knowledge of the meaning of suffering can lead to realization of the Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian humanistic art song structured with Audenesque images. His early art song is a song of reconciliation and reformation, Audenesque technique and Yeatsian motif analogous to the mortal vision of Grecian altruistic impersonal art in the early poem *18 Poems* written in defiance of Auden's metaphysical intellectualism and Word-centric tradition, "bound by a sovereign strip, we lie ... watch yellow, wish for wind to blow away ... the strata of the shore and drown red rock" (*Poems*). The intensity of Auden's early poetry and art song is chiefly due to his perception of the dissonance inherent in the finite nature of man who is also an artist of historical significance, posits eternal, immutable metaphysical symbols such as "the dry worlds lever ... stage of the ice, the solid ocean ... all from the oil, the pound of lava ... city of spring, the governed flower" and the intellectual world of "the corpse's lover ... skinny as sin, the foaming marrow ... the dry worlds lever" suggesting that the way to release from human suffering lies in self-dissolution "and craving the sensation but ignoring the cause... we look round for something, no matter what, to inhibit ... our self-reflection, and the obvious thing for that purpose ... would be some great suffering" (*ACP*).

Thomas's Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song is given an elaborate poetic framework in the transitional art song "After the Funeral" in accordance with the motif of his early poem and art song, the Yeatsian paradoxical process of life-in-death, "behind my head a square of sky sags over ... the circular smile tossed from lover to lover ... and the golden ball spins out of the skies," in contrast to the heroic war poets of pity, the inactive war poets of Wordsworthian personality, the passive war poet's glorification of Auden's immortal art and Auden's Eliotian metaphysical process of impersonality, "not from this anger after ... refusal struck like a bell under water ... shall her smile breed that mouth, behind the mirror ... that burns along my eyes" (*Poems*

100). Thomas appeals to the war poets to choose the Yeatsian vision of gentle impersonal art, the Yeatsian mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song with which he makes his early phase the *anni mirabilis* and discovers himself a poet of great success and an artist of tremendous popularity as an alternative to the Wordsworthian process of spontaneity or Auden's Eliotian process of metaphysical intensity and directs them to be pragmatic and moderate in their response to war instead of being evasive and ironic like Auden or prodigal and adventurous like the political and the heroic war poets. He persuades:

But I, Ann's bard on a raised hearth, call all  
The seas to service that her wood-tongued  
virtue  
Babble like a bellbuoy over the hymning  
heads,  
Bow down the walls of the ferned and foxy  
woods  
That her love sing and swing through a brown  
chapel,  
Bless her bent spirit with four, crossing birds.  
(*Poems*)

Thomas's poetic image of Homeric bard Yeats recalls the immense sea. His sea-image in several early poems represents Yeats's realm of poetry, his mortal vision of identity and self-advancement, metaphorical and metamorphic process, "I dreamed my genesis in sweat of death fallen ... twice in the feeding sea, grown ... stale of Adam's brine until, vision "" of new man strength, I seek the sun" (*Poems* 66). In *18 Poems*, the turbulent ocean is seen as an instrument of wreckage, "my clay unsuckled and my salt unborn ... the secret child, I sift about the sea ... dry in the half-tracked thigh" (*Poems*). In the next two poems, *25 Poems* and *The Map of Love*, Thomas uses the sea-image in two different senses. In the early art song, the sea implies the double vision, the process of life and death of his early poem, the paradoxical artist Yeatsian Thomas gaining advantage over the ironic Auden and offering alternative mode of kind art song and hope for prospective future to the affected political poets:

My sea hermaphrodite,

Snail of man in His ship of fires  
That burn the bitten decks,  
Knew all His horrible desires  
The climber of water sex  
Calls the green rock of light. (*Poems*)

In the transitional art song, the sea is implicit of Yeatsian process of pagan warm impersonal art to which Thomas directs the ignorant war poets to emulate and achieve success and popularity that he has enjoyed in his early poem and art song. He recalls:

We lying by seasand, watching yellow  
And the grave sea, mock who deride  
Who follow the red rivers, hollow  
Alcove of words out of cicada shade,  
For in this yellow grave of sand sea  
A calling for colour calls with the wind  
That's grave and gay as grave and sea  
Sleeping on either hand. (*Poems*)

Thomas's elevation is from the process of self-discovery to self-development, from bondage to freedom, from the state of obscure poet to the level of godhead and boundless influence and popularity in contrast to Auden who is as much as subject to "sad mortality" as brass or stone or earth. His double vision of his own rising image and of the metathetical Auden's declining image reminds the octave of Shakespeare's sonnet 64:

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defac'd  
The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age;  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-raz'd,  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;  
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the watery main,  
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store.  
(*Sonnets* 34)

The fall of Auden's grand image of power and pride, "miraculous ... tortuous glory" (*MV*) recalls the crumbling statue of Ozymandias, "king of kings ... ye Mighty, and despair," the "two vast and trunkless legs of stone ... in the desert" salvaged by "a traveller from an antique land" present a

strange paradox: "nothing beside remains" the splendor of the sculptures on "a shattered visage ... wrinkled lip," "the hand ... the heart" has defied time, but the carved figures have also been disfigured by time, "round the decay ... of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare ... the lone and level sands stretch far away" (Shelley 290).

Dissimilar to Auden's Eliotian process of immortal pride and power, his metaphysical and ironic existential sensibility and the political and the war poets' metempirical process of love and pity, pleasure and pain, nationalism and patriotism and their romantic lyrical sensibility, "whose life is a bluff, professing ... to follow the laws of Nature ... in fact a revolt, a mad conspiracy and usurpation," Thomas's metaphoric and metamorphic process of Grecian altruistic art song and his paradoxical sensibility as illustrated in "After the Funeral" is similar to his early poem, his early art song and to Yeats's process of Grecian humanistic art song, his Homeric paradoxical sensibility actively engaged in modest and moderate, prudent and pragmatic functioning as a poet and an artist of moral disinterestedness and a cosmopolitan human being as well, "smuggling over the frontier ... of fact a sense of value ... metabolism of death ... re-orchestration of world" (*MCP* 182). In contrast to the *modus operandi* and the *modus vivendi* of the contemporary poets, Eliot's esoteric process, pure being and pure art, historical knowledge and self-annihilation, "beloved books that famous hands have bound ... old marble heads, old pictures everywhere" and Lawrence's poetry of primitivism and individualism, "a last inheritor ... where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame ... or out of folly into folly came," Yeats focuses on the Homeric process and theme of his poetry and art song, the introspective process of reconciliation and reformation:

We were the last romantics -- chose for theme  
Traditional sanctity and loveliness;  
Whatever's written in what poet's name  
The book of the people; whatever most can  
bless  
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;  
But all is changed, that high horse riderless,

Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode  
Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.  
(YCP 206)

In the transitional poem *The Map of Love* and the art song “After the Funeral,” Thomas’s portrayal of his contra position as the redeemer of the afflicted and the affective contemporary poets stands symbolic of Yeats’s role as the patriarch Noah and his Ark, “great rooms where travelled men and children found ... content or joy” (YCP).

#### IV. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In Thomas’s transitional art song “After the Funeral,” existence is viewed in three aspects: the livingness of individual objects, the life-cycle ripening slowly towards fruition, and the final decay and death of all objects as individual entities. In tracing the varying moments of the War poets’ responsiveness to the poetic process of Wordsworth, Auden and Owen, Auden to the artistic process of Rilke, de la Mare and Eliot and Thomas to Yeats, he recognizes the separateness of each mood:

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* 37)

MacNeice perceives the modesty and nobility of Thomas’s paradoxical functioning and the candour of the contemporary poets of war time:

Where the altars sheer power and mere profit  
Have fallen to disuse,  
Where nobody sees the use  
Of buying money and blood at the cost of  
blood and money,  
Where the individual, no longer squandered  
In self-assertion, works with rest, endowed  
With the split vision of a juggler and the quick  
lock of a taxi,  
Where the people are more than a crowd.  
(174-75)

The contrariness is not dissolved, and the thought-process resembles a flow rather than a cluster. To reconcile the comic vision with the

frightening spectre of the shrunken mood of the fellow-beings would involve the telescoping of two different perspectives. This Auden seldom achieves; what is noted chiefly is a juxtaposition of contraries. In the early poems, the early art song and in the transitional poem, however -- particularly in the art song “After the Funeral” -- Thomas comes close to an inclusive vision, the Yeatsian process of paradoxical art song.

Apparently, the short poem “The Spire Cranes,” representing the *locus classicus* of Thomas’s art song “After the Funeral” offers a comparative and contrastive estimate of the immortality conscious Auden, “its statue is an aviary,” the mortality conscious political poets, Day Lewis, Spender, and MacNeice, “chimes cheat the prison spire” and the immortal existence conscious war poets, Fuller, Rook, and Rhys, the immortal love conscious Prince and the immortal pity conscious Lewis and Keyes, “time for swimmers’ hands, music for silver lock ... and mouth.” The issues involved are wider and cover the whole range of aesthetic amoral disinterestedness of Auden, “the spire cranes” and the moral disinterestedness of Thomas as witnessed in the anti-metaphysical early poem and the anti-Eliotian early art song, “pelter ... in time like outlaw rains on that priest, water.” (*Poems*). Thomas seeks to correlate two apparently divergent areas of experience:

Both note and plume plunge from the spire’s  
hook.

Those craning birds are choice for you, songs  
that jump back

To the built voice, or fly with winter to the  
bells,

But do not travel down dumb wind like  
prodigals. (*TCP* 105)

MacNeice perceives that the song “After the Funeral” proposes “a toast” to the ignorant young war poets, the way to success and happiness, the status symbol both in career and life in contrast to Auden’s metaphysical process of self-extinction and immortal art:

The luck and pluck and plunge of blood,  
The wealth and spilth and sport of breath,  
And sleep come down like death above

The fever and the peace of love –  
This is on me and these are yours. (*MCP* 191)

In the transitional phase, Auden's insight into the beauty of things existing in process is attended by the knowledge that all that is living is destined to perish. Towards the end, while the continuity of the process of suffering is assuring, the knowledge of mortality is agonizing, and the poems convey a consoling but sad wisdom, "about suffering they were never wrong ... the Old Masters" (*ACP*). The problem receives a new focus in the art song "Musée des Beaux Art." Auden was partly equipped for the new experience when visited the Museum of the fine arts in Brussels to see the paintings of Brueghel. But his immediate sensation to the first painting "The Numbering at Bethlehem" as recorded in the poem is one of bafflement that recalls his response to the metaphysical artistic process of de la Mare in the earlier phase of his poetic career. The young Auden's love of de la Mare's metaphysical process of historical sense and the incarnation of Christ stirs him to his depths in the juvenile verses and the earlier poems in contrast to the influence of Thomas Hardy's sceptic mortal vision of impersonal art and his Oxford contemporary poets' love of romantic process, how, "when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting ... for the miraculous birth, there always must be ... children who did not specially want it to happen, skating ... on the pond at the edge of the wood" (*ACP* 146-47).

In the second painting "The Massacre of Innocents" Auden's description does not dwell on the uniqueness and formal perfection of the painting in which energy and repose cohere, "how it takes place ... while someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along". But the grandeur recalls Eliot's artistic process of historical sense and self-crucifixion that he emulates in his early *Poems* (1930) and *Look Stranger!*, that fills him with a sense of awe, "how well they understood ... its human position." He brings out the Eliotian ironic sensibility while contrasting with his time-conscious contemporaries and their mortal concerns:

They never forget

That even the dreadful martyrdom must run  
its course

Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and  
the torturer's horse

Scratches its innocent behind on a tree. (*ACP*  
147)

Auden's mockery deepens the poignancy of the situation and not just serves as a relief. His short poem "Epitaph on a Tyrant" concludes with the cryptic sense of impersonal sensibility, and serves to unite the two sets of images of Eliot and de la Mare, the hieroglyphics of nature and the process of transgression and transmigration and the metaphysical process of crucifixion and resurrection, the statutory laws of humility and peace:

Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after,  
And the poetry he invented was easy to  
understand;

He knew human folly like the back of his  
hand,

And was greatly interested in armies and  
fleets,

When he laughed, respectable senators burst  
with laughter,

And when he cried the little children died in  
the streets. (*ACP*)

MacNeice observes that Auden's making the equation between the influences of Eliot in the past and the future is his hope for immortality, "there will be time to audit ... the accounts later, there will be sunlight later ... and the equation will come out at last" (*MCP*).

Auden's experience with the third painting "Icarus" reminds him of the time-conscious political poets comparing his falling position to that of the visionary Icarus, "pierced by a shaft of light are you ... the huntress, white and smiling, laid" (*DCP* 212). The distance between the two worlds – the world of art and the world of man, the immortal and the mortal – between the metaphysical and existential process and the metaphorical and metamorphic process makes communication difficult for the helpless Auden:

How everything turns away  
 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the  
 ploughman may  
 Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
 But for him it was not an important failure;  
 the sun shone  
 As it had to on the whitelegs disappearing into  
 the green  
 Water; and the expensive delicate ship that  
 must have seen  
 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the  
 sky,  
 Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.  
 (ACP)

On the whole, the art song “Musée des Beaux Arts” is a tribute to de la Mare and Eliot; the analogy of the wise men following a star to greet the infant Jesus shows the nature of de la Mare’s commitment, and brings in Eliot’s devotional, near religious tone, “grief with drenched book and candle christens the cherub time ... from the emerald, still bell; and from the pacing weather-cock ... the voice of bird on coral prays” (*Poems*). The magus-image representing de la Mare carries additional significance. The Western star Eliot serves as a link between the infant Jesus embodying the eternal mystery and the mortal magi; the gulf between the two worlds is at least momentarily bridged. Auden’s patient search for the metaphysical image of vast idea of eternal suffering and eternal art finds a fitting image in Shelley’s description of the wandering moon in the expanse of the sky suggesting both infinity and eternity:

Art thou pale for weariness  
 Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,  
 Wandering companionless  
 Among the stars that have a different birth, --  
 And ever changing, like a joyless eye  
 That finds no object worth its constancy? (“To  
 the Moon” 299)

In confronting the heroic image of Thomas being worshipped as godhead by his erstwhile friends, Auden feels oppressed by the knowledge of his own mortality and the political poets’ comparing

him to the falling Icarus looking at the sky. The falling experience benumbs his senses and engenders self-pity and self-doubt, “the air on his face ... unkind as the touch of sweating metal” (*DCP* 213). Day Lewis brings out Auden’s loneliness and anxiety, alienation and estrangement:

Simple goodbyes to the children or friends  
 A felon’s numb  
 Farewell, and love that was a warm, a meeting  
 place –  
 Love is the suicide’s grave under the nettles.  
 (214)

Spender’s sense of shock gets intensified when he compares and contrasts Auden’s glorious image and his poverty-stricken face powerfully communicating the anguish in his heart. He fuses the story of incarnation, the story of crucifixion, the sacrifice of innocent human lives holding the promise of resurrection and the martyrdom of the judge and his associates as the martyrdom of truth and justice:

Civilization which was sweet  
 With love and words, after great wars  
 Terrifies; architraves  
 Of flowering leaf of the Corinthian capital  
 Momentarily shaken; then fall  
 In marble waves on life. (*Trial* 56)

MacNeice perceives that Auden’s achievement in the early phase is god-like suggesting the immortal vision of his aesthetic amoral art that makes the time-conscious poets painfully realize their inadequacy. But the transitional Auden will die like Icarus leaving his mission unfulfilled and without achieving anything significant according to MacNeice:

Which being so, it is not surprising that  
 Some in their impatience jump the rails,  
 Refusing to wait the communal failure,  
 preferring  
 The way the madman or the meteor fails,  
 Deceiving themselves to think their death  
 uncommon,  
 And mad to possess the unpossessable sea

As a man in spring desires to die in woman.  
(*MCP* 205)

However in the poem “The Tears of a Muse in America,” the passive war poet Prince sees Auden as a pure poet since his early poem, “being in these eyes seen aright ... as he questionlessly is ... in the white air under dawn ... if he lives if he dies” (*MV*) and gives another, a slightly altered meaning to Auden’s changed position. He prays for Auden’s rejuvenation, his spiritual recovery:

So if all else be but conceivably yet  
Of a lucidity that lives, himself  
Mirrored may be the same,  
Antecedents and foils will palliate. (*MV*)

Prince feels that Auden’s will and intellectual mind are paralysed, that he must die and be born again so that he may be able to grasp the full significance of his pilgrimage of immortal art and ascend the steep grand hill already climbed by the great ancestors of the past. The implication of the next lines possibly means that Prince considers it little waste to lament the absence of vigorous impulses, the withering of his creative powers: it is indeed futile to think that he would have been able to respond to the metaphysical artistic intensity of Auden, to the beauty of his early poem, even if his creative mind had been active and integrated. He sings of his self-criticism and answer:

For  
How idly miraculous  
Or of what tortuous glory  
In fact this creature was  
How should my mere ingenuity relate?  
In the great sweetness of which light  
I ask if may be I have made  
Though in an ecstasy of loss  
At the last too little of it? (*MV*)

Day Lewis’s suggestion is that Prince’s mental faculties, even if in their full vigour and maturity, are not adequate to comprehend Auden’s consummate artistic achievement. He rebukes Prince’s dreaming of renewal of life of Auden, “heroic words sound all untrue ... as love lies in a

dream,” his wild passion for grand art, “that pandemonium of the heart ... that sensual arrogance that impart ... a kind of truth, a kindling truth” and “the sparks at random sown ... the spendthrift fire, the holy fire” (*DCP* 294). MacNeice observes that Prince’s dreaming of Auden’s artistic pattern and immortality reminds him of the political poets’ dreaming in the fallen thirties:

The bland and sculpted and urgent beasts,  
The here and there and nowhere birds,  
The tongues of fire, the words of foam,  
The curdling stars in the night’s dome –  
This is me and these are yours. (*MCP* 191)

In the poem “A War Time Dawn,” the war poet Gascoyne reiterates the sense of bafflement and the failure of Prince’s creative powers to reach the height of vision of immortal art, “but deep in the velvet crater of the ear ... a chip of sound abruptly irritates.” The pilgrim, no longer sick, represents the mind’s aspiration and visionary potential as yet unrealized, “notes ... from all directions round pluck at the strings ... of hearing with frail finely-sharpened claws” as the political poets of pity, “its throat’s incessantly replenished store ... of tuneless singsong, timeless, aimless, blind.” The active war poets’ divided pursuit of Wordsworthian love and poetry of pity and their response to the truth of war becomes more positive after the initial stupor, “draw now with pricking hand the curtains back ... unpin the blackout cloth.” In the early poems of the active war poet Lewis, the unchanging Wordsworthian order is symbolized by elemental nature, and the contraries are reconciled in the new satirical wisdom of Sassoon, “nearest within the window’s sight, ash-pale ... against a cinder coloured wall, the white ... pearblossom hovers like a stare.” The immediate inspiration for the heroic poet Keyes is his direct experience of the Wordsworthian passive pity enriched by his reading of Owen’s poetry of pity of war, and the truth of Owen’s pity always carries a symbolic significance for him. “all’s yet half sunk in Yesterday’s stale death ... obscurely still beneath a moist-tinged blank ... sky like the inside of a deaf mute’s mouth...” (*CV*). Gascoyne, commenting on the overall functioning

of pleasure-centric inactive war poets dreaming of eternity, perceives that there is almost a touch of familiarity in their poems, “while the brooding green ... of nearby garden’s grass and trees, and quiet flat ... blue leaves, the distant lilac mirages, are made ... clear by increasing daylight and, and intensified” (CV). The overall motif of the war poets is immortality according to Thomas, “these once-blind eyes have breathed a wind of visions ... the cauldron’s root through this once-rindless hand ... fumed like a tree, and tossed a burning bird” (*Poems* 70).

MacNeice underlines that the passive and the impassive war poets’ wild dreams of pleasure and pathos, immortal poetry of personality and impersonality recall the wild goose chase of the time conscious political poets:

The face and grace and muscle of man  
The balance of his body and mind,  
Who keeps a trump behind his brain  
Till instinct flicks it out again –  
This is on me and these are yours. (*MCP*)

The serenity of pity-conscious active war poets is soon disturbed like the indolent political poets as they become aware of the magnitude of their task and of their own limitations. The crystal vision of poetry and nature in the early poems of Wordsworth is associated with perfect calm and corresponds to the mind in contemplative repose. Their Wordsworthian poems of self-expression and personality, dreams of serenity and sentiment, mortal pleasures and immortality becomes a destructive power wrecking the political poets’ poetry of pity according to MacNeice:

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

Thomas understands that the poems of the active and the passive war poets carry the sense of otherness, immensity and distance from the reality of human situations, “because the pleasure-bird whistles after the hot wires ... shall

the blind horse sing sweeter? ... convenient bird and beast lie lodged to suffer ... the supper and knives of a mood” (*Poems* 40).

In the art song “After the Funeral,” the spectacle of change and changelessness, of alternating motion and stillness, of turbulence and calm implies the presence of an underlying order in flux, the mortal vision of magnanimous art song, and helps to achieve a reconciliation of the contradictions on the temporal plane. Thomas contra distinguishes the dissociated sensibility of the contemporary poets of pre-war time “in a warring absence” from his own Yeatsian unified sensibility “in a forgiving presence,” disinterested goodwill and action, mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song:

Now in the cloud’s big breast lie quiet countries,  
Delivered seas my love from her proud place  
Walks with no wound, nor lightning in her face,  
A calm wind blows that raised the trees like hair  
Once where the soft snow’s blood was turned to ice.  
And though my love pulls the pale, nipped air,  
Prides of to-morrow suckling in her eyes,  
Yet this I make in a forgiving presence.  
(*Poems*)

The phrase “pride of to-morrow suckling in her eyes” recall, as Thomas suggests, the war poets’ blindness; the lost political poets’ misery culminating in death-wish is typical of humanity’s general predicament, and the Yeatsian introspective process of transfiguration and transformation gives a special poignancy to the line “once where the soft snow’s blood was turned to ice.” The phrase “the pale, nipped air” and the line “a calm wind blows that raised the trees like hair” carry forward the sense of weariness attendant on human existence

In contradistinction to the contemporary poets’ problem of communication, their “appetite for wholeness” as they “prize half-loaves, half-truths – enough for the half-hearted ... the gleam

snatched from corruption satisfies” (*DCP*), Thomas’s early and transitional art songs, his Yeatsian image of sea is both particular and universal, remote and near, majestically indifferent to the metaphysical reality of human destiny and yet, in a very special sense, a warm friend to the poets of war time. Day Lewis explains that Thomas has been maintaining the *status quo* on a par with Yeats’s functioning:

Each is our wish. Alas, the bird flies blind,  
Hooded by a dark sense of destination:  
Her weight on the glass calm leaves no  
impression,  
Her home is soon a basketful of wind.  
Travellers, we’re fabric of the road we go,  
We settle, but like feathers on time’s flow.  
(220)

Yeats, while underlining the contra position of the contemporary poets running their “course” between romanticism and existentialism, “between extremities ... a brand, or flaming breath,” dead “body” and remorseful “heart” destroying “all those antinomies ... of day and night,” defines art song as a hope for freedom, a prospective future of success and happiness, self-fulfillment and self-contentment:

A tree there is that from its topmost bough  
Is half all glittering frame and half all green  
Abounding foliage moistened with the dew;  
And half is half and yet is all the scene;  
And half and half consume what they renew,  
And he that Attis’ image hangs between  
That staring fury and the blind lush  
May know not what he knows, but knows not  
grief. (*YCP* 212)

What Thomas does in the art song “After the Funeral” is showing the road that is much trodden and the road that is not taken to the war poets and persuading them to explore the possibility of what is real and pragmatic, good and beneficial to their poetic career and living according to MacNeice:

If it is something feasible, obtainable,  
Let us dream it now,  
And pray for a possible land

Not of sleep-walkers, not of angry puppets,  
But where both heart and brain can  
understand

The movements of our fellows.... (*MCP* 174)

Day Lewis, while contra distinguishing the falling of the ruling Auden, the image of terrors and the metaphysical aesthetic amoral disinterestedness becoming “a monument to fear,” an image of gloom and despair, “from far, she seemed to lie like a stone on the sick horizon ... too soon that face, intolerably near ... writhed like a furious ant-hill” from Thomas’s rising as a poet and an artist of cause-and-effect emulating the image of Yeatsian introspective process of reconciliation and regeneration, pagan humanistic art song, “the Cause shales off, the Humankind stands forth ... a mightier presence ... flooded by dawn’s pale courage, rapt in eve’s ... rich acquiescence,” celebrates him as Perseus, the liberating, purgatorial image of “the shield”:

But Perseus, lifting his shield, beheld as in a  
view-finder

A miniature monster, darkly illustrious.

Absorbed, pitying perhaps, he struck. And the  
sky behind her

Woke with a healthier colour, purified thus.  
(222)

Spender perceives that the art song “After the Funeral” creates a setting of sharp contrast; “the quay where the river suggests the dirt of all streets ... and the rotting feet of factories is set against the beauty of swans and boats, the far shore and day-green spaces.” The contrasting background is compared to the proud launching of a boat among swans and lights:

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. (*The Still Centre* 86)

MacNeice observes that the art song “After the Funeral” brings in a sudden stir of energy and fruitfulness through Yeatsian introspective process of individuation and integration, transfiguration and transformation, mortal vision

of Grecian warm art to the creative process of the romantic war poets in contrast to Auden's mourning for metaphysical order and stylistics:

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)

MacNeice contra distinguishes Auden's regression and his pilgrimage of eternal suffering from the technique of symbolism through imagism to existentialism that is a continuous immortal process of dying for immortality, "the sign ... of the cross between his eyes, his mouth drawn down ... he passed the flower-sellers and all ... the roses reeked of an abattoir, the gardenias ... became the décor of a funeral" from Thomas's progression and his Yeatsian introspective process of self-discovery and self-sacrifice, "his hands were always clenched, an eagle ... riveted on a world of vice ... going upstairs he built, block upon block ... an Aztec pyramid of sacrifice" (*MCP* 198). Thomas's transitional art song looks forward, in certain respects, to the later art songs especially the dramatic art song "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London," "vision and sinew made it of light and stone ... not grateful nor enchanted ... their heirs took it for granted ... having a world – a world that was all their own" (*MCP* 199).

William Empson perceives that Auden's intellectual capacity to separate joy from sorrow points to his fundamental unreality, and his vision of art song, which is essentially tragic, is the reward of his Eliotian insight into metaphysical experience of historical knowledge and self-annihilation:

Imagine, then, by miracle, with me,  
(Ambiguous gifts, as what gods give must be)  
What could not possibly there,  
And learn a style from a despair. (*MV* 266)

In contrast, Thomas's vision of human reality, as envisaged in the early art song "Altarwise by Owl-light," shows the extension of his awareness of human misery, his introspective process of individuation and integration, his role in the early poem as rehabilitator and as redeemer in the early art song, his tragi-comic vision of Grecian altruistic art song, his progress from simplicity to paradoxical sensibility, his anti-intellectualism which makes the political poets worship him as their godhead, as a hope for poetry, prosperity and happiness according to Empson:

Thorns burn to a consistent ash, like man;  
A splendid cleanser for the frying-pan;  
And those who leap from pan to fire  
Should this brave opposite admire. (*MV*)

In effect, Thomas reminds the pre-war poets of their responsibility and of the price that they will have to pay for gaining a keener understanding of human reality vis-à-vis their dreaming of Wordsworthian immortality. Empson maintains:

All those large dreams by which men long live well  
Are magic-lanterned on the smoke of hell;  
This then is real, I have implied,  
A painted, small, transparent slide. (*MV*)

And it is something of a puzzle that Auden, who incarnates the tragic mystery of creation in the transitional poem *Another Time*, almost ridicules Thomas's transitional art song "After the Funeral," his comprehension of things in which each experience is many-dimensional, "a phrase goes packed with meaning like a van ... a look contains the history of man ... and fifty francs will earn the stranger right ... to warm the heartless city in his arms" (*AT* 30). However, Norman MacCaig holds that Thomas's transitional art song acquires coherence when seen not as indictment but as an exhortation to the pre-war romantic poets to Yeatsian introspective process of self-identity and empathic identification:

Light perches, preening, on the handle of a  
pram  
And gaps on paths and runs along a rail  
And whitely, brightly in a soft diffusion

Veils and unveils the naked figure, pale  
As marble in her stone and stilled confusion.  
(CV 236)

Treece perceives that the transitional art song makes Thomas a “legend” whom the political poets accord divination in the place of Auden:

One day at dawn  
Upon their nags  
Twelve tinkers came and their hearts were free,  
For they cut twelve whistles from the knuckles  
of the dogs,  
To hear the black cock company. (CV)

The chief point of interest, according to Vernon Watkins, in Thomas’s transitional dramatic art 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). He 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 maintains that Thomas’s transitional art song is an offshoot of his early poem and his early art song, and that it has the characteristic features of Yeatsian pagan altruistic vision of art song, careful impersonal 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)

In contrast to Auden’s Eliotian smooth legato phrasing in the art songs, “Grace notes of a profound, legato dream,” Thomas’s Yeatsian introspective process of life and death, pagan altruistic impersonal art, his staccato voice in the transitional art song is not just therapeutic as Day Lewis finds, “it is the humming pole of summer lanes ... whose sound quivers like heat-haze endlessly ... over the corn, over the popped plains ... an emanation from the earth or sky.” Its immensity and its mysterious natural rhythms do not merely have a healing effect; it reveals a different plane of human reality as demonstrated in his early poem and his early art song, “to lift to leave from treasures of man is pleasing death ... that will rake at last all currencies of the marked breath ... and count the taken, forsaken mysteries in a bad dark.” The resonant hollows convey to the suffering man the knowledge of this reality, and establish a communion between fragile mortals and an impersonal, primeval innocent soundless power, “they are the lispings rushes in a stream” (DCP). In “After the Funeral,” Thomas directs the romantic war poets to the Yeatsian process of art song, the mortal vision of Grecian vicarious impersonal art that has made his early poem *18 Poems* and his early art song “Altarwise by Owl-light” as grand and popular as Auden’s early metaphysical art song, *Poems* in contradistinction to the Wordsworthian process of expression of personality or Auden’s Eliotian process of impersonality. Yeats sings of his tragi-comic vision of art song in contrast to the contemporary poets’ romantic or tragic vision of immortal art song, “at all these death-beds women heard ... a visionary white sea-bird ... lamenting that a man should die ... and with that cry I raised my cry” (YCP 131).

## V. CONCLUSION

Thomas’s art song “After the Funeral,” thus, is a typical exercise in the Yeatsian manner, and the undiscerning enthusiasm of his contemporary poets over his performance as an artist shows how much freedom from ignorance they have enjoyed in his free love and free play, how his

Yeatsian process of gentle impersonal art, his Yeatsian process of mortal vision of Grecian altruistic art song that has liberated them from the climate of depression and disgrace, “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). He sings of man’s instinctive nature, places reliance on man’s inward strength and affirms his faith in the potential divinity of each individual human being, “in the groin of the natural doorway I crouched like a tailor ... sewing a shroud for a journey ... by the light of the meat-eating sun” in contrast to the declining Auden’s singing of further exposition of his parable of making historical immortal art song, his belief that man can be redeemed from his miserable existence only through divine grace, “twenty-four years remind the tears of my eyes ... bury the dead for fear that they walk to the grave in labour.” He also suggests to the war poet the possibility of discovering his identity as an individuated and integrated poet or artist attaining to noble heights of development and advancement only through the trials of experience and suffering, “dressed to die, the sensual strut begun ... with my red veins full of money ... in the final direction of the elementary town ... I advance as long as forever is” (*Poems* 140). On the whole in the transitional art song, Thomas’s process of life-in- death, his self-awarding, self-guarding, self-rewarding paradoxical and pragmatic functioning is as introspective and impersonal as his early poem, as mortal and magnanimous as his early art song, as pagan and altruistic as Yeats’s, “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).

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