CHAPTER VIII
Consent

The last volume of Thomas's Poems, In Country Sleep and Other Poems, A New Directions Book, was published in 1962. The contents of this volume were (1) Over Sir John's hill, (2) Poem on his Birthday, (3) Do not go gentle, (4) Lament, (5) In the White giant's thigh, (6) In country sleep. In the Collected Poems 1934-1962 London: J.M. Dent 1962, five poems of this volume were retained with a little change in their order of arrangement. 'In country sleep' came first. 'Paper and sticks', a poem from 'Deaths and Entrances', was dropped from the Collected Poems and 'Do not go gentle' took its place. Paul Ferris thinks that probably Thomas, with his father in mind, felt that 'Do not go gentle' would be less conspicuous in the middle of the book. 'Once below a time' (1940), a poem not previously published in book form, was also included in the Collected Poems.

In his broadcast of 25th September, 1960, Thomas spoke of a long 'poem in preparation'. Three sections of this had been completed with the titles: 'In Country Sleep', 'Over Sir John's Hill' and 'In the White Giant's Thigh'. He spoke about the 'grand and simple' plan of the long poem:

'The poem is to be called "In Country Heaven". The godhead, the author, the milky-way farmer, the first cause, architect, lamp-lighter, quintessence, the beginning word, the anthropomorphie bowler-out and blackballer, the stuff of all men, scapegoat, martyr, maker, woe-bearer — He, on top of a hill in heaven, weeps whenever, outside that state of being called his country, one of his worlds drops dead, vanishes screaming, shrivels, explodes, murders itself. And, when he weeps, Light and His tears glide down together, hand in hand. So, at the beginning of the projected poem, he weeps, and Country Heaven is suddenly dark. Bushes and owls blow out like candles. And the countrymen of heaven crouch all together under the hedges and, among themselves in the tear-salt darkness, surmise which world, which star, which
of their late, turning homes, in the skies has gone for ever. And this time, spreads the heavenly hedgerow rumour, it is the Earth. The Earth has killed itself. It is blank, petrified, wizened, poisoned, burst; insanity has blown it rotten; and no creatures at all, joyful, despairing, cruel, kind, dumb, afire, loving, dull, shortly and brutally hunt their days down like enemies on that corrupted face. And, one by one, those heavenly hedgerow-men who once were of the Earth call to one another, through the long night, light and His tears falling, what they remember, what they sense in the submerged wilderness and on the exposed hair's breadth of the mind, what they feel trembling on the nerves of a nerve, what they know in their Edenic hearts, of that self-called place. They remember places, fears, love, exultation, misery, animal joy, ignorance, and mysteries, all we know and do not know. The poem is made of these tellings. And the poem becomes, at last, an affirmation of the beautiful and terrible worth of the Earth. It grows into a praise of what is and what could be on this lump in the skies. It is a poem about happiness."

Four poems together were to have been 'In Country Heaven'. Three were written, but the fourth, the title poem, was not. 'In the White Giant's Thigh' was intended to be the opening section. In a letter to Oscar Williams on 28th May 1951, Thomas says, 'I'm afraid I'm sending you only one poem — and that only the first section of a poem.'

Thomas intends to write happy poems. But G. S. Fraser in the New Statesman said that "one's question about some of the later poems ('In Country Sleep', 'Over Sir John's Hill') is whether he is a little too deliberately suppressing the desperately sad and forcing the joyously assertive note."

In the final poems Thomas attains a unitive vision of life. In this vision he appears to have perceived a solution to the existential problem of sex—time—death and a resolution of the conflict between the self and the world. He perceives a unity in the whole of nature: "One voice then in that evening travelled the light and water waves,
one lineament took on the sliding moods, from where the gold green sea
santharis dyes the trail of the octopus one venom crawled through foam,
and from the four map corners one cherub in an inland shape puffed the
clouds to sea." The perception of unity in diversity is the poet's
emergence into light. To be in harmony with nature is to attain serenity in life. Thomas comes to terms with nature. There is "creation
sweating out of the pores of the trees." Life goes on "in the veins,
in the bones, the binding flesh, that had their seasons and their weathers even as they valley binding the house about with the flesh of the
green grass." Nature is holy. Death and sex are no enemies. Man are
alienated from nature by their superstitious faith and fear. These primiti
tive fears are fostered by dead formal religion and 'hobnail tales.'
Man's relationship with nature appears to be one of hostility. Primiti
tive fear and faith haunt the mind in dreams. Thomas arrives at a
deep reflection of life when he accepts nature as she is. Death is
not treated as an alien. It is incorporated into the scheme of nature
as an essential part of life. Thomas reconciles himself to nature of
which death is an integral part. To have faith in the constituted
order of nature is to find nature holy.

In Country sleep (CP 162-66) is thought to be addressed to
a child, presumably Aaron. "The critic William York Tindall told Thomas
he thought it was about "how it feels to be a father". Thomas is said
to have wept at this remark — "but whether from vexation, beer or
sentimental agreement I could not tell." The poet is reassuring some-
one and warning her at the same time. She is threatened by an uniden-
tified figure, the Thief, generally assumed to be Time or Death. Thomas
told a woman who admired the poem that it was not addressed to a child at all, but to his wife, and that the Thief was jealousy. A third explanation was given in New York to a reporter. Thomas said, "Alcohol is the thief to-day. But tomorrow he could be fame or success or exaggerated introspection or self-analysis. The thief is anything that robs you of your faith, of your reason for being." The idea that faith is being threatened runs through the poem.

The poet urges his daughter not to believe that "the wolf in a sheepwhite hood" shall leap "out of a lair in the flocked leaves" to "eat your heart in the house in the rosy wood." She need not "fear that the rustic shade or spell/Shall harrow and snaw the blood while you ride wide and near" (CP 162). Nor should she fear natural sexual urge, "the tusked prince, in the ruttish farm, at the rind/And mine of love" (CP 163). She will be shielded from her superstitions fears by her innocent faith in natural world, "by fern/And flower of country sleep and the greenwood keep" (CP 163).

Nothing is fearful in nature. "The country is holy" (CP 163). The poet establishes the holiness of nature through religious imagery: "a hill touches an angel", "saint's cell", "nummaries and dornes of leaves", "three Marys in the rays", "sanctum sanctorum the animal eye... telling its beads", "the owl at its knelling", "fox and holt kneel before blood", "Lord's table of the bowling grass", Buddhist "wheeling moon" (CP 163).

"O hide in that country kind, /Know the green good" (CP 163), Thomas tells his daughter. Yet in her blessed state, "cool in your vows", "out of the beaked, web dark and the pouting boughs" "the
Thief will seek a way sly and sure (CP 163) 'this night and each vast night' until she is told to sleep by the 'stern bell' (CP 164). The Thief may be taken to be either Time or Death, 'each equally a translator of life into new manifestations of being.' He comes like the Lord: 'But the Day of the Lord will come; it will come, unexpected as a thief' (2 Peter, 3:10). Death is not frightful. It is to be perceived as a co-operating agent and not as an enemy in the holy scheme of nature. The inevitability of death is expressed through the images of 'fall' found in nature. The Thief comes as surely 'as the snow falls', 'as the rain falls, hail on the fleece', 'as the dew falls on the wind-milled dust of the apple tree', 'as the star falls, as the winged/Apple seed glides,'And flowers in the yawning wound at our sides', 'as the world falls, silent as the cyclone of silence' (CP 164). Clark Maxwell observes that Thomas 'does, of course, relate his Thief to snow, rain, hail, mist, dew, falling star, apple seed, floating cloud, and earth's movement ("no death more natural"), but still the image that persists is of a house-breaker, masked and armed, an aberration from the natural course of events.'

The second part describes nature in her various activities. It affirms the miracle of life manifested in nature. Nature also preaches the sermon of death, since death plays a co-operative role in her manifold activities. The whole of nature is 'the leaping saga of prayer' (CP 164). The holy book of nature makes the prophesy of the coming Thief: 'the surpliced/Hill of cypressess', the 'ungiven ghost/Of the dingle' sing the tale of nature. 'The sermon of blood', 'the saga from seraphim/To seraphim', 'the gospel rocks' — all tell of the Thief 'who comes as red as the fox and sly as the healed wind' (CP 165). The
coming of death is in conformity with the design of nature. The poem ends with a declaration of faith in nature.

Ever and ever by all your vows believe and fear
My dear this night he comes and night without end my dear
Since you were born;
And you shall wake, from country sleep, this dawn and each first dawn,
Your faith as deathless as the outcry of the ruled sun.

(CP 166)

C. Emery points out, 'The primary emphasis throughout the poem is upon unity in variety. The "saga of prayer" ties past with future; the "saga from sermon to seraphim" links the highest with the lowest; the "saga of prayer", the "vein of birds", the "Pastoral beat of blood through the laced leaves", the "Music of elements" image the union of spiritual, animal, vegetable, and mineral; the four elements unite in a music as the seven spectral colors unite in whiteness; the gull and the foal are in harmony with their environments. And, finally, the wound in the girl's side — her sensitive, mortal life — of the sensality, goes round the sun, while the earth turns in her heart — and the Thief waits for its cessation, who teaches (Great universal Teacher!) "Himself in all, and all things in himself."'

Thomas settled at the Boat House at Laugharne in the spring of 1949. Over Sir John's hill (CP 167-69) was composed here.

"It is the most topographical of his poems, firmly framed in the view from the hut. Thomas used the scene — and especially a heron at the water's edge, the songbirds, and the hawk that will strike them — to write about mortality. The heron mourns as dusk falls; so does the poet, appearing, somewhat self-consciously, as "I young Aesop fableing to the near night." Birds had featured in Thomas's poems from the beginning; the heron seems to have taken on a special significance.
... With its elaborate elegiac statements, drawing heavily on natural surroundings, it is related to "Fern Hill" and "Poem in October", written when he last lived in Wales. But a feeling of divine or fateful judgment runs through the poem. God is invoked, but death is coming. Thomas had spoken often of dying young, as poets in fiction were supposed to do, even specially of dying before he reached forty. Death frightened him but perhaps it also appealed to him as a solution. Caitlin wrote that "he was never that keen on life."  

"Sir John's hill and the river Towy, at Laugharne, are parts of a landscape whose inscape is life and death." In country sleep Thomas has envisaged death as natural and inevitable in the pattern of activities going on in nature. Death finds its due place in his vision of life, but the rapacity of marauding animals disturbs the faith in the beneficent scheme of nature. The natural order must assimilate killing in its pattern. If the country is holy, some sort of judgment is necessary to attain a unified vision of life. This judgment is given in 'Over Sir John's hill'. Asery says, "The theme of this poem is justice, justice in the sense of conformity to natural law, not of punishment for a wrong doing."

"The hawk on fire hangs still" (CP 167) is a still image of the bird poised to swoop down upon its prey. Bright in the sun, the hawk is an executioner flaming, with fierce animality, and hovering in the air. "Hang's brings the metaphorically suggestion of hanging: 'hoisted cloud', 'drop of dusk', 'gallows', 'fiery ty-burn', 'noosed' (CP 167). The hawk, a symbol of rapacious nature, 'pulls to his claws/And gallows, up the rays of his days the small birds of the bay' (CP 167). The hawk calls, 'Come and be killed' (CP 167). In response 'green chickens of the bay and bushes cluck, 'dilly dilly,/Come let us die' (CP 168). In nature the slayer and the victim are in complete harmony. Thomas gives a vivid image of the hawk's swoop down on its prey in the lightning
flash with which 'the noosed hawk... crashes... in a whack of wind' (CP 167). The fishing holy heron is engaged in activities ordained by nature. The fisherbird 'stabs and paddles/in the pebbly dab-filled/Shallow and sedge' (CP 167). The bird 'bows his tilted headstone' (CP 167) for those who are going to be hanged. The 'noosed hawk' and the heron with his 'headstone' are equally under the silence of death.

'The hill, covered with jackdaws, is said to wear the black cap of a judge passing sentence of death, an image which operates both on the visual and allegorical level. The hill is therefore described as 'just'.

And a black cap of jack.

Days Sir John's just hill does... (CP 167)

'A black cap' and 'just' continue the metaphor of hanging. The poet, a detached observer, opens 'the leaves of the water at a passage/Of psalms' (CP 167) and reads 'in a shell,Death clear as a buoy's bell' (CP 167). The poet "finds the meaning of his fable about the sparrows' death". 'Water', one of Thomas's favourite symbols, is associated with birth and with the concept of existence as a state of flux. Life does not end, but changes its form. Water, in terms of New Testament theology, contains also the idea of abolution. The 'psalms' continue the devotional imagery. The act of killing that the poet witnesses is itself the way to a new form of existence."

The vision of life that the poet attains tells 'All praise of the hawk on fire in hawk-eyed dusk be sung' (CP 168). 'All praise'
is given to the hawk, for its action conforms to the law of nature. 'Green chickens' are blest in their death. "The hawk is praised because he continues the life process, and, although the sparrows must die (they have been led astray and are guilty because of the nature of life), they too are of infinite worth." The poet is reconciled to death.

The last stanza pictures a desolate world through the slow, leisurely movement of life and the suggestive images of death: 'tears of the Towy,' "Wear-willow," "Heron, mirrored, go." 'Snapt feathers snow' the Towy. The clums are 'looted,' and 'no green cocks or hens/Shout.' "The heron, ailing the scaly lowlands of the waves, makes all the music';

... and I who hear the tune of the slow,
Wear-willow river, grave;
Before the lunge of the night, the notes on this time-
shaken
Stone for the sake of the souls of the slain birdsailing.

(CP 169)

"Animal life plays an important part in Thomas's later verse. 'Over Sir John's hill' is a bestiary fable with direct reference to the human condition. ... The poet acknowledges himself no less vulnerable than the birds to 'the lunge of night.'"

Over Sir John's hill, and in the white giant's thigh were first published in Bottega Oscura in December 1943 and November 1950 respectively. 'Do not go gentle into that good night' and 'Lament' were published in November 1951 in the same journal. 'Poem on his birthday' was written in 1951 after Thomas's return from Morocco.
Persia, when he spent the summer in Lougharne. The particular significance of "Poem on his birthday" is that with it Thomas effectively signed off his career as a poet. Only the verse "Prologue" to his Collected Poems came after, and the unfinished "Elegy". Thomas, in 1951, can be seen as making one last attempt to find his way. In terms of output he wrote more verse than at any time since 1945; "Poem on his birthday" was preceded by "Lament" and "Do not go gentle". But whereas in the first two poems he struck out vigorously, casting a cold eye on man's (and Thomas's, and Thomas's father's) predicament, in the third poem he was waiting for death, passively hoping for the best, counting his blessings on trembling fingers. In July, when he was working on the poem, he told John Brinnin in the work-hut at Lougharne (as he had told others in America) that from now on he was determined to write only "happy" poems.20

At Bryn Mawr, the women's college in Pennsylvania, the College News for March 15, 1950, published an interview headed "Subjective Welshman Wants to Write of Happiness". "One's beliefs should be fluid, not dogmatic. Did he write for the eye or the ear? For the ear, said Thomas. ... The last question at Bryn Mawr was about Thomas's "future poetic plans". He replied, "I want to write poems of happiness. Not just poems about the little happiness one experiences in everyday life with other human beings, but the general state of universal happiness which people could attain — if they weren't so baray, and insane, and stupid." 21

Poem on his birthday celebrates his thirty-fifth birthday. The scene is set in Lougharne. The poem is a testament of the poet's acceptance of the universe. "Although it is a poem about death, yet it is one of the sunniest of all his poems. The hot 'mustardseed sun' blazes through its verses," observes A. Talfan Davies. The poet from his 'house on stilts' watches the animal world:

Under and round him go
Flounders, gulls, on their cold, dying trails,
Doing what they are told. (CP 170)
It is in the scheme of things that they should 'work at their ways to
death'.

... finches fly
In the claw tracks of hawks
On a seizing sky; small fishes glide
Through wynds and shells of drowned
Ship towns to pastures of otters. (CP 170)

The drowned ship towns brings a vision of past life which ended in
death. 'Heron walk in their shroud' (CP 170). Water, 'the livelong
river's robe', is their shroud. The herons wade in water and fish.
Their way of life will be their death. 'Dolphins dive in their turn-
turtle dust' and 'the rippled seals', engaged in their fishing trade,
'glide \[a,\] good in the slack mouth' (CP 171). The poet is simi-
larly ensnared in the 'hewn coils of his own trade'. 'He sings towards
anguish' (CP 170). 'What we live in is our tomb; and our work our
death'. In his 'long tongued room' the poet 'celebrates and spurns'
birth and death, while herons 'aspire and spayr' (CP 170). 'The herons
represent the world of nature in its correspondence with the world of
man.' The poet 'who tolls his birthday bell' toils towards the
'ambush of his wounds' (CP 170). 'The ambush of his wounds' 'refers
to the act of redemption that the poet, in his art, performs. He
redeems, it is implied, both himself and the world by his dedication!

The poet hears the tolling of his thirty-five years, tolling
'for the scars and disappointments, the wrecked loves of his life
"steered by the falling stars".

In a cavernous, swung
Wave's silence, wept white angelus knells. (CP 171)
Tindall observes, "In Thomas' early poems there is a multitude of images in violent disagreement. Here so far, a multitude of images has been in general agreement -- an agreement that, like blood, 'Slides good in the sleek mouth'. Yet relics of old disagreements survive, along with old paradox and ambiguity. Context makes the 'cavernous' wave of stanza five the tomb. The 'angelus' is Gabriel's announcement of the womb. But the momentary disagreement of tomb and womb, of 'silence' and bell, of white tears and black, is quickly settled by 'angelus knells,' a synthesis of birth and death that agrees with everything said so far."

The poet's way to death will be dark and 'terror will rage' before he comes to light and is released from the chains of life, and 'love unbolts the dark'.

And freely he goes lost
In the unknown, famous light of great
And fabulous, dear God. (CP 171)

Heaven is non-existent, 'that never was/ Nor will be ever is always true'. Yet the place of light is Heaven which is a 'brambled void' where

Plenty as blackberries in the woods
The dead grow for his joy. (CP 171)

God has no existence, still the unbelieving poet believes that there will be a general resurrection. 'The roasting wind will blow/The bones' out of the grave. The sea will give up its dead, 'the last/ Rage shattered waters kick/Masts and fishes to the still quick stars'
(CP 172). All will be cast into light and love. This is suggestive more of future atomic wars than the Day of Judgment. "Whatever the agency of resurrection, it will bring the dead 'Faithlessly unto Him!'"

The poet's life is a 'voyage to ruin' like the 'druid herons'. 'But dark is a long way' (CP 172). "Thomas' dark way seems a faithless, hopeful approach to a light that never was nor will be," In the midst of his inexorable voyage to death the poet sings of the blessings of life. He counts his 'blessings aloud':

Four elements and five
Senses, and man a spirit in love. (CP 173)

His dark voyage is blessed by a faith in the power of love, by "a faith increasing as death comes nearer, a faith in the beneficent purposes of the cosmic scheme enhanced by a recognition of membership in an infinite community of souls." The whole of nature is transformed by the spirit of love. He hears

... the bouncing hills
Grew larked and greener at berry brown
Fall and the dew larks sing
Taller this thunderclap spring, ...

"With more triumphant faith" nature 'spins its morning of praise' (CP 173). In Thomas's final poems "not only does the poet claim an increasing faith as he approaches death, but the world, too, seems to sing its Creator's praises more joyously." "The symbol of this faith is the "mustardseed sun", which, as in the Biblical parable (Matthew 13:31-32), grows from the smallest of seeds to the greatest of
the closer I move
To death, one man through his sundered hulks,
The louder the sun blooms
And the tufted, ramshackling sea exults. 1

The poet who is 'alone/With all the living' in the eighth stanza is,
in the last stanza, no more alone 'As I sail out to die' (CP 173).

Bill Read visited the poet when he was composing the poem,
Thomas gave Bill Read a manuscript summary of what Poem on his birth-
day was to be about. The poet, it says,

celebrates, and spurns, his thirty-fifth birthday ....
Birds and fishes move under and around him on their
dying ways, & he, a craftsman in words, toils towards his
own wounds which are waiting in ambush for him .... Now
exactly half of his three score and ten years is gone ...
he looks back at his times: his loves, his hates, all he
has seen, and sees the logical progress of death in every-
thing he has seen & done. His death lurks for him, and
for all, in the next lunatic war, and still singing, still
praising the radiant earth, still loving, though remotely,
the animal creation also gladly pursuing their inevitable
& grievous ends, he goes towards his. Why should he praise
God, and the beauty of the world as he moves to horrible
death? He does not like the deep zero dark and the nearer
he gets to it, the louder he sings, the higher the salmon
leaps, the shriller the birds carol. 2

Why should he praise God? C. Emery gives the answer. He finds one
answer in the phrase "the logical progress of death" and its pictorial
equivalent "the higher the salmon leaps". To see the process of death
"as logical deprives it of its terror, invests it with an underlying
rationale which can be praised."
C. Smeri compares this poem with the other two birthday poems, *Twenty-Four Years* and *Poem in October*. In *Twenty-Four Years* "physiological death, not life, is emphasized; the protagonist is not in any way related to society or to nature — save in being born to die; and the poem's statement amounts to this: when my body lies a-mouldering in the grave, my thermodynamic energy will go marching on." *Poem in October* "discovers the beauty and spirituality of nature and places the poet joyfully in its heart of light; but it is a remembered child's world he emphasizes, the poem merely touching upon present and future. The two contrary views coalesce into a single vision in the present poem: he both sees the heats and hears the songs of the birds; sees that herons spire and spear; sees the ad infinitum Swifian world of lesser and bigger fleas (but not belittlingly); sees, as Aristotle would have it seen, that terror must rage before love (pity) can unbolt the dark."

*In the white giant's thigh* (CP 176-78)

is the last poem of the *Collected Poems 1934-52* London: J. M. Dent 1962. Editions after June 1956 include the posthumous 'Illusy' built up by Vernon Watkins. An introductory note was written as well as 'Author's Prologue' to preface the *Collected Poems*. *In the white giant's thigh* is a "conventionally romantic poem," says Thomas.

"The White Giant is supposed to confer fertility, Thomas told me that he had never seen the white giant and had no idea of its location, if any .... but an immemorial, fertility — promoting icon, whether real or imaginary, offered another occasion for the thoughts of life and death that obsessed him. When the barren girls came
hopefully to the Giant, Thomas told me, they expected boys to jump from the bushes, where they had lain in wait, to serve the Giant’s promise. Boys and girls did what they could to foster life, but their efforts, amid the scenery of Fern Hill, Milk Wood, and Llareggub, are the joy of this poem, which praises life in death’s despite."

The long dead barren women, the poet imagines, still long ‘to labour and love’ (CP 176). Their yearning for creativity is the cry of the whole of nature. The women are immersed in the process of nature through death. The women pray through the voices of nature now. After being reduced to dust these women fed the different forms of life in nature with their ‘long desires’. The multitudinous voices of nature raise the same cry of the women for procreation. The desire to procreate does not end in death. The women ‘yearn with tongues of curlew for the uncoaxed/And immemorial songs of the cudgeiling, hacked/mill’ (CP 176).

Through throats where many rivers meet, the women pray, Fleeting in the waded bay for the seed to flow. (CP 176).

The poet has a unitive vision of life in which all nature — animal, vegetable, and human — is engaged in creative activity. To perceive the unitive vision of life is a poet’s emergence into light. In life, the women enjoyed love uninhibitedly like the animals in the forest. "The women’s love-making is described in terms of animal and vegetable life, suggesting that even in life the human creative urge is the same as that of nature." The women were ‘a hedgerow of joys’ (CP 176). Once their dust was flesh ‘rooted’ by al
swineherd, 'spreadeagle to the dunghill sky' of the 'wiving sky' (CP 177). 'Butter fat goosegirls' were 'trounced' by the wings of the 'gander king' in a 'gasbo bed' (CP 177). The women in life enjoyed unrestricted sexual sex in summer and winter: 'in gooseshin winter loved all ice leaved/In the courtars' lanes, or twined in the ox roasting sun/In the wains' (CP 176).

Or rippling soft in the spinney moon as the silk
And ducned and draked white lake that harps to a hail stone. (CP 177)

"These two lines describe the quivering of human flesh in the act of love. The flesh ripples as the surface of a lake — a lake dotted with ducks and drakes — vibrates to a hailstone. There is a contrast here between the smooth flesh and the jagged hailstone. Thomas, with his concept of intercourse as the starting point of death, tried to get both life and death, love and destruction, into these lines."

'The lewde, wood field flow to the coming frost' (CP 177) gives the same impression of love and destruction.

The sexual act in which the women indulged is in harmony with the same act pursued by all animals in nature. The religious imagery makes nature holy, so the sexual act cannot be unholy. 'The scurrying, furred small friars squel' in the 'thistle sikes' till the 'white owl crossed/their breast'. 'The horned bucks climb/Quick in the wood of love.' The 'tow of foxes foams' and 'the mole snout blunt under his pilgrimage of dunes' (CP 177).

The poet hears the call of nature to participate in the same creative act in which all creatures are engaged:
Now clasp me to their grains in the gigantic glade
(CP 176)

Now curl me cry me down to kiss the mouths of their dust.
(CP 178)

In death even he will have the same elemental sexual desire. The poet asks, 'Teach me the love that is evergreen' (CP 178), love that will persist even after death. The answer is that the women's love for the 'dead and deathless' lovers is evergreen. Their love 'for ever meridian' shoots 'through the courters' trees' (CP 178). 'Long desires' persist in the love-making of new lovers in the 'fox cubbed streets', 'the crumbled wood' (CP 178), and in the courters' lanes where the long dead woman once made their love. Deathless love goes on burning eternally like 'Fawkes fires' (CP 178).

Author's Prologue was specially written to preface the Collected Poems. 1962. Tindall says, "Prologue" stands by itself as an affirmation of nature and art ... Here ... time and death prove the triumph of life. Here, again, the glory of art proclaims nature's glory. ... is a poem about writing poems".

Old Testament imagery of flood which is both destructive and creative dominates the poem. Flood brings the hope of new life. At the end of the poem the poet says,

And the flood flowers now. (CP xii)

The flood is the flood of hate. Atomic war threatens the destruction of the world. The poet builds his ark of love and invites all creatures of Wales into its safety.
As the flood begins,
Out of the fountainhead
Of fear, rage red, man alive,
Molten and mountainous to stream
Over the wound asleep
Sheep white hollow farms
To Wales in my arms. (CP x-xi)

Emery observes that the 'poem is not a mere declaration of love for created things; underlying this is the urgency of his fear for their survival. The early epithets 'speeded', 'torrent', 'sea-shaken', and 'breakneck' evidence his feeling of the immediacy of the danger.' The threat of war haunts the poet:

And barnroof's cockcrow war! (CP xi)

The poet is one with the created universe. He, a 'spinning man', glories in the world which is 'bird'roared, sea born, man torn, blood blest' (CP x). As a poet it is his joy to 'trumpet the place/From fish to jumping hill' (CP x). Thomas's love encompasses man and animal. His 'beasthood' like God's has made him one with the 'finned felled and quilled' (CP xi). The poet builds his ark of poetry which is a symbol of love. The ark is built by the wood-worker out of the tree of words.

The world's turning wood,
For my sawn, splay sounds. (CP x)

"The world's turning wood", not only its 'winding down', seasonal
change, and diurnal rotation, suggests turning wood on a lathe —
turning arks or pooms out." Poems are "a burning and crested act!
that destroys 'the cities of nine Days' night' in the religious wind'
(CP ix). According to Smiley, one might take 'religious' as meaning no
more than conscientious. Olson says, "The Flood is a terror in the
early work; in the later, there is refuge from it in the Ark." As
metaphorically Noah the poet "calls the birds and the beasts to his patch-
work ark, but as in his other poems, what really concerns him is man
— Tom and Dai (Tom tit and Dai mouse), his fellow countrymen — represen-
tative of the common denominator of humanity. There is only one
answer to fear, and the hate which it engenders, and that is love.
Every man must be an ark, manned with love, riding the flood. It is a
call for building the ark of love."

We will ride out alone, and then,
Under the stars of Wales;
Cry, Multitudes of arks! Across
The water lidded lands,
Manned with their loves they'll move,
Like wooden islands, hill to hill. (CP xii)

In the midst of fear and hate the poet hears his 'flood's ship'.

My ark sings in the sun
Ah God speeded summer's end
And the flood flowers now. (CP xii)

The poet redeems himself and hopes to redeem the world with
his poetry. "Author's Prologue" is Thomas's "final declaration of the
relevance of his art to the human condition. It is also an affirmation of all that he claims in his note — an affirmation of his love for man, and his duty to praise God."

What Thomas said of poetry may be taken to be true of his own poetic creation:

"A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape and significance of the universe, helps to extend everyone’s knowledge of himself and the world around him."

REFERENCES.

6. Ibid., p. 39.
7. Ibid., p. 36.
10. Ibid., p. 94.
11. Ibid., p. 94.


17. Ackerman, op.cit., pp. 141-42.


19. Ackerman, op.cit., pp. 143-44.


25. Ackerman, op.cit., p. 167.


28. Ibid., p. 299.

29. Ibid., p. 299.


32. Paul Ferris, op.cit., p. 263.


34. Ibid., p. 37.

35. Ibid., p. 37.

36. Ibid., p. 37.


38. Tindall, op.cit., pp. 304-305.

40. Ibid., p. 140.


42. Emery, op.cit., p. 132.

43. Tindall, op.cit., p. 33.

44. Emery, op.cit., p. 133.


46. Amorin Talfan Davies, op.cit., pp. 73-74.

47. Ibid., p. 70.

48. Quire Early One Morning, p. 169.