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Nietzschean Elements in the Poetry of Dylan Thomas

Leslie C. Lavigne

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

March 1987

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ABSTRACT

Nietzschean Elements in the Poetry
of Dylan Thomas

Leslie C. Lavigne

An informed awareness of the affinities between the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche set forth in his major books, _The Birth of Tragedy_, _The Twilight of the Idols_, _The Anti-Christ_, _The Gay Science_, _Human, All-Too Human_, _Beyond Good and Evil_, _The Genealogy of Morals_, _The Will to Power_ and _Thus Spoke Zarathustra_, and the concepts articulated in and by the poetry of Dylan Thomas, is crucial to an appreciation of Thomas' achievement.

The author of this thesis has undertaken a study of the areas of coincidence between the two authors. The thesis focusses upon the main Nietzschean concepts regarding art, the _Uebermensch_ and Eternal Recurrence and Thomas' expression of similar elements in his poetry.

The study examines the nature and extent of the impact of Nietzsche's ideas upon British writers in the early part of the Twentieth Century, with special emphasis on W.B. Yeats, in whose work Thomas would have

come upon Nietzschean ideas. It then offers a summary of Thomas' intellectual and literary development, concentrating upon those elements through which Thomas would have gained his Nietzschean perspective and ideas on poetry. A recapitulation of the major criticism of Thomas' poetry in light of the cultural climate of the 1930's and 1940's precedes an examination of the critical work done on Thomas during the last thirty years. The background having been established, the Nietzschean concepts articulated in Thomas' poetry are discerned and discussed, with separate chapters being devoted to the nature of the poet and the role of poetry and Thomas' use of language. The final chapter provides a glimpse into possible future studies of Thomas based upon the recognition of the Nietzschean elements in his work.

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Preface

During the last decade, little critical and scholarly attention has been paid to the work of Dylan Thomas. Long viewed as a poet with no interest in ideas and no ideas to express, a poet devoted to sound at the expense of sense, Thomas was thoroughly analysed from a point of view of style, prosody, possible sources of influence, and religious imagery. Because his work was viewed as unrelated to its time and having no philosophy to express, it seemed that no further study of the poet's work was needed.

I have long had an interest in Dylan Thomas' poetry. My many readings of his poetry had, however, always left me with an uneasy feeling that there was something I was overlooking. Despite the excellent work of many scholars and critics that increased my knowledge and understanding of Thomas' poetry, I still could not help feeling that there was another aspect of his work which had not been addressed.

Several almost simultaneous occurences then revealed the nature of the missing aspect. During a graduate course on the Contemporary British Poets taught by Professor Wynne Francis, a discussion occurred concerning Ted Hughes and his affinities with those writers whom Eric Bentley has called "Heroic Vitalists." During this discussion, it became apparent that a number of British writers not mentioned by Bentley, including W.B. Yeats and Dylan Thomas, had absorbed and expressed what appeared

to be Nietzschean ideas. Concurrently, I was studying Modern British Literature, in a course taught by Professor Michael Brian, where the work of W.B. Yeats was once again brought to my attention. While researching a paper on Yeats, I discovered a recently published book (1982) entitled, Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of the Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats by Otto Bohlmann. The acknowledged influence of Nietzsche on Yeats was documented in this book. That Dylan Thomas had acknowledged a debt to W.B. Yeats is well known. These readings took me to Nietzsche's own works. The lineage was there, the areas of affinity were obvious. What I had missed in my previous work on Thomas had been the recognition of the Nietzschean elements.

Otto Bohlmann's book clearly and forcibly demonstrated the undeniable echoes of Nietzsche in Yeats and led me to recognize similar echoes in Thomas' poetry. The organization of the book also suggested that thematic progression was the best method of organizing a paper on the Nietzschean elements present in Thomas. I humbly and gratefully acknowledge Bohlmann's work as the instigation of this thesis. I hope to be able to do for Thomas what Bohlmann has done for Yeats, elucidate and present elements that, to my knowledge, have been only briefly acknowledged.

I would also like to acknowledge the comment made by William T. Moynihan in his book, The Craft and Art of Dylan Thomas, that "Thomas must have had some knowledge

of Nietzsche" (32). This comment and the paragraph which follows it confirmed my suspicions and gave me the starting point for the development of this thesis. I intend to further substantiate and enlarge upon Moynihan's statement.

I would like to thank Professor Wynne Francis for her agreement to supervise this thesis. Her extensive work on Nietzsche and Layton has been an invaluable source of guidance. Also, without her patience and encouragement, this thesis would have remained but an idea without form.

Finally, this work has benefitted immeasurably from the constructive criticisms and suggestions offered by Associate Professors Audrey Bruné and Robert K. Martin during the final stages of its preparation.

Introduction

Various efforts have been made to explain the work of Dylan Thomas and to discover exactly where he belongs in the context of Modern British Literature. The body of Thomas criticism is composed of a number of valuable studies. His prosody has been examined in light of the prosody of Welsh bardic poetry, the prosodic experiments of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and the influence of contemporary experiments in free verse. Critics seeking to explain Thomas by means of tradition have examined his Welsh background and regarded his work in the context of Welsh bardic poetry and Celtic mythology. Others, taking into consideration Thomas' lack of Welsh, have attempted to place him within the context of Anglo-Welsh literature. Studies of his family life have given rise to certain views of his art based on both Freudian and Gestalt psychology. While all of these approaches have yielded some important truths about Thomas' work, they have tended to create a misconception of Thomas as a poet of sound and no sense.

The critics who addressed themselves to Thomas' thought have noted his obsession with copulation, birth and death, his use of religious imagery and his affinities with the Romantic visionary tradition. Thomas' obvious affinities with Blake and with Yeats have been noted. But, the fact that the poetry of the mature Thomas bears no stylistic resemblance to the work of Blake and the later Yeats has contributed to the

obscuring of his intellectual and philosophical affinities with these poets. These affinities have thus not received sufficient attention.

The intellectual and philosophical tradition to which Blake and Yeats both belong historically, also embraces the work of Nietzsche.

> Yeats was quick to recognise these areas of coincidence, and we recall his remark that Nietzsche's thought flows always, though with an even more violent current, in the bed Blake's thought has worn . . . . But whatever the ways in which Blake and Nietzsche are reflected in specific terms by Yeats, their voices can always be heard in the background. And it is Nietzsche's voice, as the stormier, that informs more thoroughly the mood of Yeats' work, gaining throat with the passing years. (Bohlmann 15-16)

As early as 1907, Arthur Symons[1] had perceived the affinities between Blake and Nietzsche and had introduced his <u>William Blake</u> with a lengthy comparison of the two writers. Blake has been described as "that great English precursor of Nietzsche's" (Bohlmann 15). Bohlmann has pointed out the many regions of affinity between Blake and Nietzsche:

> Among these shared or similar views are their virtual inversion of conventional virtues and vices such as pity, sin and lust, and their condemnation of societal morality with its concepts of "good and evil." Both inveigh

against reason as the inventor of fictions and the restrainer of desires, which become perverted and dangerous when thwarted; both urge excess and enthrone joy. They prefer active "evil" to passive "good," regarding all action as truly virtuous, all restraint as vicious; they condemn asceticism and rage against society's infliction of "bad conscience" on man, calling for a harmonious - but active - embracing of all man's contrary qualities. For both, progression comes only with conflict. (1)

In the mid 1940's, Eric Bentley detected some little known parallels between the writings of Blake, Carlyle and Nietzsche, noting that all three writers had arrived at similar conclusions independently. In his book, The Cult of the Superman: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with Notes on Other Hero-Worshippers of Modern Times, Bentley extended his observations to writers such as George Bernard Shaw and D.H. Lawrence. The common denominator, or current of thought, which Bentley discovered, he christened "Heroic Vitalism." It has since become clear that Nietzsche is the exemplar and that his thought has continued to influence a number of other thinkers.

Shaw and Lawrence, along with Edwin Muir, John Davidson and W.B. Yeats, were among the first British writers to evince an interest in the ideas of Nietzsche. Havelock Ellis, Arthur Symons, A.R. Orage, Jack Lindsay

and Herbert Read were among the critics, editors and commentators who contributed to the dissemination of Nietzschean ideas in Britain and who created a body of Nietzsche criticism in English. These writers did not form a group or movement, although their similar visions, developed concurrently, can be attributed to a common source. Similar visions can also be seen in the writers who followed them. Among this second wave in whose work Nietzschean elements and echoes can be discerned were Roy Campbell, Dylan Thomas, Henry Treece and the Poets of the Apocalypse. Except for Treece and the Apocalyptics, these poets did not form a movement; their affinities reside in their works.

The first chapter of this thesis will review the nature of Nietzsche's impact upon British writers, with special emphasis on Yeats. It is known that Thomas became acquainted with Yeats' poetry and admired his work from a very early age and that Thomas suffered greatly from what Harold Bloom has called "the anxiety of influence" (Bloom 25) in regard to Yeats' poetry. The second chapter will concentrate on Thomas' intellectual development and the influences to which he was exposed from 1914 to 1931, by which time he has reached maturity as a poet. The scene having been set, the thesis will then move into a discussion of the critical reception of Thomas' work in light of the cultural climate of the 1930's and 1940's. It will then pursue the critical contexts in which Thomas' poetry has subsequently been

assessed and attempt to explain the generally unfavourable reception of his work. The fourth chapter will discuss the Nietzschean concepts presented in Thomas' poetry, with the fifth chapter being devoted to a discussion of Thomas' idea of the nature of the poet and his role. The sixth chapter will devote itself to a study of Thomas' use of language. The thesis will conclude with a glimpse into possible future studies of Thomas based upon the recognition of his affinities with Nietzsche.

Chapter I

The first English translations of Nietzsche appeared in 1886. They were Thomas Common's versions of The Case of Wagner and Nietzsche contra Wagner and Thus Spake Zarathustra, which also included Nietzsche contra Wagner, The Twilight of the Idols, and The Antichrist, edited by Alexander Tille. These works immediately caught the attention of two of Britain's avant-garde literary men, Havelock Ellis and George Bernard Shaw.

In 1896, the Savoy published Ellis' sympathetic articles on Nietzsche's life and works in three successive numbers. Ellis' essays generated debate in two other leading journals, The Academy and the Athenaeum.

In 1898, a periodical appeared whose inspirational force was Nietzsche. The Eagle and the Serpent published until 1903 and performed the useful function of bringing Nietzsche's work to the attention of many different classes of people. It attracted well-known critics and translators of Nietzsche's work and provided reviews of books and articles on Nietzsche.

George Bernard Shaw was among the subscribers who took an active interest in The Eagle and the Serpent and contributed letters to its editor. In 1901, Shaw introduced Common's Nietzsche as Critic, Philosopher, Poet and Prophet: Choice of Selections from His Works to the public. Shaw had read this book in manuscript and had recommended it for publication to the firm of Grant

Richards. In 1903, Shaw's Man and Superman and Wells' Mankind in the Making first brought Nietzsche's doctrine of the Uebermensch to public notice. Oscar Levy, coordinator of a group of scholars then working on Nietzsche, stated that Shaw's play showed an incomplete understanding of Nietzsche's doctrine. Other Nietzschean circles also gave the play a mixed reaction. As Bentley says, Shaw "was never at pains to discover what Nietzsche meant by the term. It was chiefly the life-worship, the hero-worship, and the devilry in Nietzsche that attracted Shaw" (168). Man and Superman did help to disseminate Nietzschean ideas through English society.

1903 also saw the publication of a series of pamphlets entitled Good European Point of View by Nietzsche's translator, Thomas Common. These pamphlets appeared sporadically until 1916.

In 1901, the first of the Oscar Levy translations of Nietzsche appeared. By 1911, all Nietzsche's major works had been translated into English and published in Britain. Once the Levy translations began to appear, the New Age, the English Review and other leading literary journals began to take Nietzsche seriously. Because of this and the reasonable price of the Levy translations, Nietzsche's work became widely accessible. By the spring of 1914, translations of Nietzsche were being sold at the rate of five hundred copies a month. The outbreak of World War I caused a further demand for Nietzsche's works.

By this time, the early controversy over Nietzsche had begun to subside. Nietzsche was now accepted by the intellectual establishment as being much more than just the "mad German." Even the philosophical journals had begun to publish scholarly discussions of Nietzsche's philosophy.

David Thatcher's book, Nietzsche in England 1880-1914: The Growth of a Reputation (1970) makes the point that those writers whose works reflect a reforming social conscience and consciousness (Ellis, Shaw and Orage) "sought to apply Nietzschean remedies to a sick culture and a sick society, to transvalue moribund values, to bring a heroic vision to an unheroic age" (275). Thatcher also notes that the interpretation of Nietzschean ideas underwent a change in the period between 1890 and 1914. The example he uses is that of the interpretation of the "superman" that:

> tended during these years to lose a purely personal applicability and become, like the image of the dance, a sort of cultural and political ideogram, charged with hopes for the realization of a new 'unity of being.' (275)

According to Thatcher, writers like Ellis, Shaw, Orage, Davidson and Yeats "found in Nietzsche a wealth of material with which to build, in Davidson's challenging words, 'a new habitation for the imagination of man" (275). Davidson's main contention was that Nietzsche was

a true Christian at heart, remaining "Christ-ridden and Christ-mastered" and that Nietzsche's spiritual contest was "a deliberate self-inflicted Crucifixion of the Christ in him" (Muir qtd. in Bridgwater, Nietzsche in Anglosaxony 110), in spite of the fact that Nietzsche had said that "in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the Cross" (The Anti-Christ 151).

During the early 1930's, Nietzsche's reputation was ruined. There was extreme anti-German feeling in Britain as a result of World War I, and the renewed threat did not lessen the prevailing distaste for things German. The Nazi Party, aided and abetted by the damage Nietzsche's sister had already done in corrupting and misinterpreting his works, took even further liberties with meaning and turned his philosophy into chauvinistic rally slogans and propaganda. Nietzsche, who detested anti-Semitism, was presented as an anti-Semite when some of his comments about Judaism were quoted with ellipsis and out of context. His "blond beast" was transformed into the German race, something Nietzsche clearly did not intend, and the Uebermensch became associated exclusively with fervent supporters of Nazism. There was no-one to refute these misinterpretations and Nietzsche's work fell into extreme disrepute in Britain. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's work was not completely forgotten or neglected. The Nietzschean magazine London Aphrodite, for example, was published throughout the 1920's. During that time, the work of D.H. Lawrence was being read and discussed by a small reading public in Britain.

Lawrence's works echo many Nietzschean ideas although he refused to acknowledge the philosopher's influence.

Despite his aristocratic leanings and his acknowledged debt to Nietzsche, Yeats escaped being labelled as a Fascist supporter. His Nobel prize, fame, age and position as Poet Laureate may have protected Yeats from such attacks. It may also be conjectured that Yeats' Nietzscheanism had become so cloaked in his own mystic system expounded in A Vision (1929) that it was no longer viewed as Nietzschean but Yeatsian.

But, Nietzsche's widespread influence was essentially at an end. As Bridgwater points out, the "prophet of the post-war world was to be not Nietzsche, but Karl Marx, although there were nonetheless those writers who viewed the crises of the 1918-39 world in Nietzschean terms. . . " (148).

In reviewing the period from 1918 to 1939 in his essay, "English Writers and Nietzsche," Patrick Bridgwater notes that it was Nietzsche's poetic ideas, or myths, such as Eternal Recurrence which had the greatest impact. English writers, says Bridgwater, "responded to Nietzsche as a poet, and were therefore happy to take his ideas in isolation, as stimuli" (222). The poet Edwin Muir, for example, was most impressed by Nietzsche's language, especially his use of metaphor and myth, as were most of the poets who show affinities with Nietzsche's writings. But, of all such poets, Yeats was most deeply affected by Nietzsche. Although Ellmann and

others have commented upon Nietzsche's influence on Yeats, it is Otto Bohlmann who has focussed at length on the Nietzschean elements in Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats (1982). The titles of Bohlmann's chapters, "Conflict, Will, Power," "The Tragic Disposition," "Reason, Aesthetics, Art," "The Hero," and "Cyclical History," read like an index of Nietzsche's main concerns.

According to Bohlmann, Yeats first encountered Nietzsche's work between 1896 and 1903. The earlier date is postulated because the Savoy had included the first of Havelock Ellis' "Friedrich Nietzsche" series alongside Yeats' "Rosa Alchemica" and "Two Poems Concerning Peasant Visionaries" in 1896. In mid-September 1902, Yeats would have received John Quinn's gift of Thus Spake Zarathustra, The Case of Wagner and A Genealogy of Morals as well as Common's Nietzsche as Critic, Philosopher, Poet and Prophet: Choice of Selections from His Works. Yeats himself openly acknowledged Nietzsche's influence. His letters to Lady Gregory, J.B. Yeats, and others, contain numerous references to Nietzsche, and his personal copy of Common is liberally annotated in his own hand.

Bohlmann introduces Yeats' encounter with Nietzsche's ideas as follows:

> His reading of Common's Nietzsche . . . clearly confirmed or stimulated Yeats' approach to rationality, to the attributes of morality of the hero, to the conflict of self and soul, to the

> cyclical nature of history. The scribbled notes he made also indicate . . . some points at which Yeats modified or went beyond Nietzsche. . . . With wider reading, Yeats would have come across Nietzsche's ideas on tragedy, and what constitutes aesthetic pleasure, on art as the sublimation of cruelty, on civilisation as the suppression, rather than the utilisation of dark instincts and thus destined for apocalypse. He would have absorbed his interpretation of the Dionysian and Apollinian myths, and his notions of objectivity and subjectivity. . . (2-3).

Three central concepts that Yeats adapted to his particular vision were Nietzsche's interpretation of the Dionysian and Apollinian myths, Eternal Recurrence, and the _Uebermensch_.

Stimulated by Nietzsche's interpretation of the Dionysian and Apollinian myths, Yeats went on to apply them to his poetic method and to his perception of the conflict of self and soul. As Bohlmann indicates, Yeats applied two of Nietzsche's ideas to his poetics. From _The Birth of Tragedy_, Yeats absorbed the conceptions of Dionysus as the force of uncontrolled passion and Apollo as the force which imposes form. From Nietzsche's illustration of the will's attaining the "child" phase, with its set of perceptions not derived from the prerequisite "camel" and "lion" phases (_Thus Spoke Zarathustra_ 54-6), Yeats absorbed the idea that one does

not ignore tradition but rather overcomes it (Bohlmann 38, 96). This may have predisposed Yeats to accept Pound's suggestion to adapt a traditional form, such as ottava rima, to approximate the cadence of speech rather than experimenting in free verse. This innovation, which is an assertion of the Dionysian impulse towards formlessness, is contained within convention, an assertion of the Apollinian impulse towards form. Yeats' concept of the unity of being "as a definite formulation of man's longing to combine his conflicting desires for the opposing circuits" (Bohlmann 82) is readily recognized as Nietzsche's concept of the Apollinian impulse for the assertion of the self and the Dionysian desire for self-oblivion (The Birth of Tragedy 33-8; sec. 1). According to Yeats, the conflict between man's desire for bodily experience and his soul's impulse towards spirituality and the denial of the physical, cannot be resolved in the corporeal world. According to Bohlmann, Yeats' central idea is that:

> "since all life would cease without this combat between Apollinian desire for assertion of the self and Dionysian longing for self-oblivion, their union in the coveted state of unity can occur only beyond the realm of this world" (85).

This "stasis of absolute harmony is stated in, amongst other of Yeats' poems, 'Solomon and the Witch' where the marriage bed is the symbol of 'solved

antinomy.' But yet the sleep that follows is the sleep of death" (Bohlmann 89).

By contrast, "Nietzsche's harmony is a kinetic one to be realized in the corporeal world" (Bohlmann 87) by the Uebermensch, the man who overcomes. Yeats did not fully embrace Nietzsche's theory of the Uebermensch but did depict his heroes as having the qualities necessary for the Uebermensch's predecessor, the Higher man. Cuchulain, Robert Gregory and others are Nietzschean heroes in that each one is a "Ja-sagender full of amor fati who is able to meet death by choice, not chance." Each is also possessed of the passionate, laughing affirmation of life and the "Nietzschean insistence on strength of will, passion, self-sufficiency, solitude and boundless self-overflowing" (Bohlmann 139-40). For Yeats, it is not possible to be such an individual and remain alive in the "real world." One can make the ultimate affirmation of life only by deliberately choosing an active, passionate life. Despite the fact that this choice may invite an early death, it is preferable to a passive existence. Obviously, this is close to Nietzsche's dictum, "Live dangerously!" (The Gay Science 228; bk. 4, sec. 283).

Yeats' conception of history is adapted from Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence. The first acknowledgement of this debt occurs in "The Phases of the Moon" in The Wild Swans at Coole (1919). Although a similar view of history is found in the work of many

other writers, including Yeats' contemporary, James Joyce, Yeats alone credits Nietzsche as a source. This theme of cyclical history first appears in "The Magi" from Responsibilities (1914) and recurs in Vision and many of the important poems from "The Second Coming" (1921) to "Under Ben Bulben" (September 1938). In this latter poem, Yeats summarizes his conviction:

> Though grave-diggers' toil is long,
> Sharp their spades, their muscle strong,
> They but thrust their buried men
> Back in the human mind again. (W.B. Yeats 97)

As has been seen, Yeats did not merely transmit Nietzsche's ideas; he adapted them. As Thatcher says:

> Although Yeats is never found following Nietzsche's thought to the letter, he is clearly very close to its predominant spirit, and it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say of him, as has been said of Rilke, that he is the poet of the world-view of which Nietzsche is the first philosopher. (173)

It is this "world-view" that places Yeats directly in the path of Blake and Nietzsche. It is this "world-view," expressed in his poetry, that forms part of Yeats' legacy to the poets who followed him. Dylan Thomas, a professed admirer of Yeats, who expressed Nietzschean ideas in his work, also saw himself as "in the path of Blake, but so far behind him that only the wings of his heels are in sight."[2] Although Thomas'

Blakean and Yeatsian similarities have been discussed by critics such as Tolley, what has not yet received more than a quick look is his debt to Nietzsche.

Chapter II

William T. Moynihan states:

> Whether from his own father, or from the circle of unorthodox intellectual friends of his middle and late teens, Thomas must have had some knowledge of Nietzsche. (Constantine Fitzgibbon, Thomas' authorized biographer, once told me that the elder Thomas was a Nietzschean). The "death of God," the Uebermensch (in the sense of the man who overcomes, the man of self-realization, of higher states of consciousness), and recurrence: these Nietzschean commonplaces are clearly evident in Thomas' writings. At the age of fifteen Thomas was already tending toward the Uebermensch. Man, he wrote in his 1930 Notebook, will be aware of his divinity when the right moment in history arrives. (32)

Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea, Wales, on October 27, 1914. His mother, Florence, was from a Welsh-speaking working class family. She was a simple woman with no intellectual interests whatsoever whose main preoccupation was catering to the needs and whims of her family. She had no real part in the education of her son and his development as a poet. That part of Dylan's early life was the exclusive domain of his father.

D.J. Thomas' main passions in life were the English language and English literature. He had wanted to be a successful poet but his own lack of talent and the

necessity of earning a living had precluded his pursuing this career. He had become a teacher and was an English Master at the Swansea Grammar School. Not only was he well-versed in all the classics of English literature, but he was also very interested in the work of his contemporaries and prided himself on being ultra-modern and emancipated in his literary taste. For example, he was reading and admiring the work of D.H. Lawrence in the early 1920's.

The nephew of a Welsh bard famous in Wales and unheard of anywhere else, D.J. Thomas recognized that the only audience available to poets writing in the Welsh language was a then-dwindling number of people who could read Welsh. The work of these poets remained inaccessible to and unrecognized by the literary world at large. Although he was from a Welsh-speaking family, he spoke Welsh only when absolutely necessary and wrote exclusively in English.

Having decided that his son would be the poet he could not be, D.J. encouraged the love of English literature and the English language in him. In the "Poetic Manifesto" of 1951, Dylan Thomas admitted that his love of words started with a fascination with their sounds. This fascination predated his comprehension of the meanings of these words ("The Poetic Manifesto" rpt. in Sinclair 227) and probably resulted from D.J.'s having read Shakespeare to the infant Dylan as bedtime stories. It would thus appear that Dylan Thomas' first perception

of language was of words as entities of shape and sound, unburdened by any other significance. Meaning was added later on but the child's first perception was never completely abandoned, as will be seen later on.

D.J. also decided that Dylan would not learn Welsh. Whatever his reasons, the result of D.J.'s decision was that Dylan's poetry was written in English and his interests were focussed on works of English literature.

It appears that Dylan had an aural appreciation of the Welsh language. He heard it spoken in Swansea and in the homes of his maternal relatives such as Ann Jones of Fern Hill farm. He also heard the Bible read in Welsh. His mother, Florence, attended the Non-Conformist Chapel where services and Sunday School were conducted in Welsh only. When Dylan was a pre-schooler, Florence took him with her to service. As he was to recall, when questioned about the influence of the Bible on his work, "the great rhythmns had rolled over me from the Welsh pulpits" ("Poetic Manifesto" 231). The child Dylan had some exposure to the "great stories of Noah, Jonah, Lot, Moses, Jacob, David, Solomon and a thousand more" and read for himself from Job, Ecclesiastes and the New Testament ("Poetic Manifesto" 231).

D.J. Thomas was an avowed atheist. His attitude has been categorized as being a "particularly violent type of post-Nietzschean atheism . . . which toppled over backwards into what can only be described as God-hatred" (Fitzgibbon, <u>The Life of Dylan Thomas</u> 13). This attitude

manifested itself in an antagonism to religion and D.J.'s forbidding Dylan's having formal Christian instruction in either religion or the study of the Bible. Thus, Dylan appeared to regard the Bible as nothing more than a book which has been a source of many subjects and symbols found in English literature and in the rhythmns which delighted his sensitive ear. Thomas' later use of Biblical imagery in a personal way which is not based on traditional Christian interpretation is probably the result of his lack of theological education.

According to Florence Thomas, Dylan started to write poems when he was around eight or nine (Fitzgibbon, Life 14). There are copies of his early poems in an adult hand-writing similar to his own. Moynihan has speculated that it was D.J. who acted as his son's amanuensis (25). Father and son spent a lot of time together discussing various works of English literature, especially poetry, and D.J. Thomas' influence continued throughout Dylan's youth.

At the age of ten, Dylan entered Swansea Grammar School. He was always at the top of his class in English and at the bottom in all the other subjects. Even at so early an age, Thomas had a single-minded devotion to literature and was preparing himself to be a poet. "The study of English, the writing of poems and . . . the editing of the school magazine were his only interests in the school" (Fitzgibbon, Life 39).

These interests Thomas shared with his closest

friend, Daniel Jones. At the Jones', Thomas "found the most modern literature of the day, Joyce, Stein, Eliot, Pound, the Sitwells, as well as those rediscovered writers of the past who were then exerting a strong influence on young poets, Blake, Gerard Manley Hopkins, the minor Elizabethans" (Fitzgibbon, Life 53). This exposure augmented what Thomas was absorbing from his father and his classes resulting in his acquiring an extraordinary knowledge of poetry at a very early age.

In an article published in his school magazine in November 1929, the fifteen-year old Thomas "shows at least an acquaintance, and often more than just that, with almost all the modern and indeed the most modern poets of the day" (Fitzgibbon, Life 52). The many poets Thomas mentioned in his article included D.H. Lawrence, Wilfred Owen, T.S.Eliot, the Sitwells, Ezra Pound, Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, Robert Nichols, Robert Graves, Julian Grenfell, and the 1899 W.B. Yeats of The Wind Among the Reeds. In his article, Thomas saw Yeats simply as the poet of the Celtic Twilight and tended to dismiss him. Yet, four of the poems Thomas wrote between May and November 1929, "3 Trees," "The Pine," "To the Spring-Spirit," and "Triolet," exhibit a strong influence of the work of the pre-Nietzschean Yeats, both stylistically and thematically. Also, in April 1930, Thomas wrote a serious poem, "Osiris, Come to Isis" in an "early Yeatsian manner" (Maud, The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas 13) and a parody of the early Yeats called "In

Borrowed Plumes." This latter poem appeared in Thomas' school magazine. Given the amount of time Thomas spent in this somewhat private apprenticeship, it is obvious that he found something of great value to his development as a poet in Yeats' work. The poems of this period clearly indicate that Thomas had the potential to become another poet of the Celtic Twilight. But, as Maud notes, Thomas then "left the Oisin style forever as an apprentice task accomplished, and pushed on into free verse and a new stage of self-expression" (Notebooks 13). This might suggest that Thomas stopped reading Yeats; however, on the contrary, his late 1932/early 1933 letter to Trevor Hughes (Letters 10) indicates that he continued to read Yeats' poetry and to be interested in his development.[3] By the end of 1933, Yeats' Collected Poems was among the volumes Thomas admitted were in his library, a library that contained only the works of poets he felt were worth reading well. As this volume had just been published, Thomas must have acquired it "hot off the press." In the "Introduction" to The Colour of Saying, a collection of verse spoken by Thomas, Aneirin Talfan Davies notes that a large number of poems by Yeats were included in Thomas' repertoire. He comments that this is not particularly surprising as Thomas' admiration for Yeats was fairly well known (xxxiii). This profound and lasting interest in Yeats is a strong indication that Thomas would have become familiar almost immediately with the poems contained in The Tower (1928). While Thomas'

attitude to Yeats may appear to be a contradictory one, it is readily recognized as the various stages through which the young poet passes to reach _apophrades_ in the pattern of the anxiety of influence (_The Anxiety of Influence_).

Yeats, too, had pushed into a new stage of self-expression. The first discernible Nietzschean echoes appeared in the poems published in _Responsibilities_ in 1914. Nietzsche's name is mentioned in "The Phases of the Moon," in _The Wild Swans at Coole_ (1919). In 1921 with the publication of _Michael Robartes and the Dancer_, Yeats publicly and poetically revealed himself to be a Nietzschean. With _The Tower_ in 1928, it became apparent that Nietzschean ideas had become central to Yeats' philosophy and poetry. Given D.J. Thomas' Nietzschean propensities, this new aspect of Yeats must have been of particular interest to him. It is also most probable that this new Nietzschean aspect of Yeats would have been discussed at the Jones'. Yeats had been Poet Laureate since 1923. For his philosophy to have undergone such a change under the admitted influence of Nietzsche would have certainly piqued Dylan Thomas' curiosity. Even at such an early age, therefore, Thomas would have become aware of the importance of such a change; and the fact that one of his favourite poets, Yeats, had become so involved with the work of the German philosopher must have held great interest for him.

The 1930 Notebook entry to which Moynihan refers is

actually a Thomas poem, "We Will Be Conscious of Our Sanctity," dated June 6, 1930. This poem marks a departure from the poems of 1929. Thomas is no longer imitating other poets but is beginning to discover his own style and to express his own thoughts. Throughout 1930, his voice and thought developed. Then on November 3, 1930, a few short weeks after his sixteenth birthday, Thomas finished the first of his mature poems, "I Know This Vicious Minute's Hour." During the next two years, Thomas' poems revealed his search for the right poetic form and language in which to express his ideas. These early poems show how Thomas worked through the cadenced patterns of free verse, equivalence and sprung rhythmn to settle upon subtle and elaborate patterns of slant rhyme, assonance and alliteration in 1933. He was concurrently developing his concept of poetic language. However, by the end of 1931, "Dylan's mould as a poet had been made. Although his style broadened and deepened, essentially it scarcely changed for fifteen years and reveals only small evidence of any new influences" (Fitzgibbon, Life 46).

Chapter III

Dylan Thomas first appeared on the London literary scene in 1933 when he sent two poems to A.R. Orage, editor of the New English Weekly. Orage praised the poems extravagantly and asked for more. The New English Weekly published "And Death Shall Have No Dominion" on May 18, 1933. The magazine later published "Out of the Pit" on January 25, 1934 and the stories "After the Fair" (March 15, 1934) and "The End of the River" (November 22, 1934). Other Thomas poems appeared in three issues in the summer of 1936. The story, "A Visit to Grandpa's" appeared in March 1938. Some of Thomas' reviews of recent fiction were published in seven issues in 1938 and three issues in 1939.

In early September 1933, the Sunday Referee published "That sanity be kept." In April 1934, Thomas won the magazine's Book Prize for poetry. In November, he moved to London and 18 Poems was published in December.

Thomas' slim volume might have been totally ignored except that critics felt a power and an importance in his work that they could not explain. They felt compelled to comment, even if unfavourably. But even Thomas' most favourable critics admitted that his poetry was difficult and, at times, obscure. 18 Poems received complimentary reviews from Trevor Hughes, Rayner Heppenstall (poet and novelist, 1911-1981), Desmond Hawkins (in Time and Tide) and Edwin Muir. Muir's review appeared in The Listener in February 1935 and, in part, stated:

> . . . the first thing that strikes one about Mr. Dylan Thomas' poetry is its purely poetic force:
>
> there is nothing in it that could be taken for prose: his thought seems to transmute itself naturally and continuously into imagery. (Muir qtd. in Bridgwater, <u>Nietzsche</u> 95)

H.G. Porteous, Louis MacNiece and Stephen Spender shared the opinion that Thomas' work was an undisciplined and unintelligible poetic outpouring. Edith Sitwell savagely attacked Thomas' poem "Our Eunuch Dreams" which Geoffrey Grigson's <u>New Verse</u> had published in April 1934 in her book <u>Aspects of Modern Poetry</u> (<u>Letters</u> 180, n). By the end of 1935, however, she had changed her mind and reviewed <u>18 Poems</u> and the poem "A grief ago" favourably in the <u>London Mercury</u> in February 1936 (Ferris 137). In subsequent reprints of <u>Aspects of Modern Poetry</u>, the unfavourable remarks have been cut out. Even though Sitwell's 1936 review was complimentary, Thomas expressed the opinion that she did not understand his work. Ferris has conjectured that Sitwell's early antagonism to Thomas was motivated by her desire for vengeance on <u>New Verse</u> for its attack on Sacheverell Sitwell's work (Ferris 103).

It is interesting to note that the Nietzscheans (Orage, Muir and Herbert Read) were among the first to encourage Thomas and to focus upon the tremendous force and vitality of his work. Nietzschean critical circles

shared Muir's view and Read himself appears to have been most impressed by the force and the vision of language in Thomas' work.

Herbert Read himself was a "mixture of anarchism and formal discipline and the tension between the two. And both came from Nietzsche." For Read, the quintessence of Nietzsche's philosophy was that "art (and everything else that matters in life) is above all else a matter of discipline and self-discipline." The effect that Nietzsche's philosophy had on Read was to give "him the basis of his philosophy of art . . . and - above all, perhaps - confirmed him in his own basic individualism" (Bridgwater, Nietzsche 95). It was Read who imparted the distinctive Nietzschean flavour to the movement called Apocalypse.

While Thomas was first impressed with Read and absorbed from him much that sharpened his own focus, he soon became disenchanted with Read's penchant for literary movements. Thomas never wished to be confined within any movement. He had arrived at his own conclusions by his own route and intended to maintain this individuality. The ideas propounded by the Poets of the Apocalypse and the Personalists to which Thomas was sympathetic were, curiously enough, just those ideas that these two groups had derived from Nietzsche.

In 1938, the Poets of the Apocalypse, who were attempting to liberate poetry from the influence of Eliot and Auden, dethroned these two leaders and substituted an

eclectic group of leaders that included James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Pablo Picasso and Dylan Thomas. The movement's real founder was Herbert Read, but it was the poets Hendry, Treece, Goodland and Cooke who drafted and published the movement's declaration of independence from Eliot and Auden. Their Manifesto included a refutation of mechanistic thinking and a rejection of current political systems. Henry Treece was a friend of Thomas' and a fellow Welshman. He asked Thomas to sign the Manifesto. Although Thomas approved of some of the Manifesto, he felt that the rest of it was "manifestly absurd." He therefore refused to sign it. Thomas told Treece that he was unable to sympathize wholly with the Apocalypse's "statement of belief" because of his own "dogma of Arrogant Acceptance" (Letters 348). What Thomas meant by this dogma is his philosophy, derived from ideas similar to Nietzsche's that will be explored later in this paper. Thomas no doubt agreed with the Poets of the Apocalypse's statement that modern mass culture used language to "inculcate the collectivist objectives of the dominant culture" (Salmon 88). The Poets of the Apocalypse also "thought that they could cure the fragmentation of the self into warring entities" (Salmon 88). As will be seen, Thomas accepted the Nietzschean insistence on the necessity for conflict and recognized that there can be no true creativity or forward movement without it. Consequently, Thomas did not seek a universally applicable cure. For him,

individual peace came not from a resolution of conflicts but from an embracing and joyous acceptance of the necessity for warring elements in life, nature, man, society, and art. For Thomas, self overcoming was the result of a balanced, aware self-containment of these warring elements. Eternal Recurrence and the Uebermensch are, in themselves, the expression of perfect containment of the warring elements.

When the last Apocalypse anthology, The Crown and the Sickle was published in 1944, Treece and Read had already founded the literary movement called Personalism which succeeded the Poets of the Apocalypse. Both Treece and Read contributed to the four Personalist anthologies entitled Transformation.

Personalism was based upon Read's distinction between character and personality. Read defined the personality as that which is distinguished by immediacy and which has the ability or the capacity to change without loss of integrity.[4] Salmon indicates that Nietzsche's distinction between "static character structure and the personality of the creative intellectual, whom society attempts to repress" (8) expressed in The Gay Science may be the influence behind Read's thought. Read, like Nietzsche and Blake, argued that the personality must be capable of independent and autonomous existence and must be open to the full range of sense impressions and experience. This concept clearly derives from Nietzsche's Uebermensch and

anticipates much of the consciousness-raising movements of the 1960's and the human-potential movements of the 1970's and 1980's. Again, Thomas shared this vision but was not interested in promoting a philosophy.

During Thomas' lifetime, critics attempted to trace the influence of Surrealism on his work. In 1935, Richard Church commented unfavourably on what he felt to be the "pernicious effect" of Surrealism on Thomas' work (Letters 204). In his letter of December 9, 1935 replying to Church, Thomas vehemently denied that he was influenced by Surrealism (Letters 204-5), and stated on several occasions that poetic inspiration must be subjected to all the processes of the intellect before poetry can be written. A close examination of Thomas' work reveals that any surrealistic effects present were deliberately used and, therefore, by definition, cannot be surrealistic. These effects are, for the most part, confined to Thomas' short stories.

It is true that:

> . . . much early criticism of Thomas centred upon the ideas that these images were indeed impenetrable; that Thomas' poems, like music, are nondiscursive, but that also, like music, they produce an undefinable emotional effect. But the ingenuity of critics soon revealed that Thomas' images are not pure, not unadulterated by prose meaning, but rather, far from being nonsensical, are extraordinarily complex constructs that carry very definite meanings. (Ray 277)

Thomas' conception of the poem as a construct puts him at variance with poets such as C. Day Lewis, W.H. Auden, Louis MacNiece and the early Stephen Spender who viewed poetry as a means of communicating with as wide an audience as possible, and were not averse to its being didactic. Many poets writing in the 1930's, chiefly Day Lewis, Auden and Spender, felt that poetry should concern itself with the political and social issues of the day. Because to them the message was of prime importance, these poets tended to use regular syntax and to eschew experimentation. Thomas deliberately exploited a distortion of normal syntax in his work and it appears obscure when an underlying unity, such as the Nietzschean elements, is not recognized.

In the early 1930's, the prevailing political current in Britain was Left, and most of the major poets tended to be oriented in that direction. The memories of World War I were still strong and the horror of war was to be avoided at all costs. The appeasement policies of Neville Chamberlain indeed reflected the liberal and intellectual thought of the day. The intellectuals of the period were also very anti-Fascist and many, including Auden, went to Spain in 1936 to fight against Franco. In Germany, the rise of Nazism culminated in Hitler's becoming dictator in 1933. The signing of non-agression pacts led many to believe that war could be avoided. Finally, after the Nazi invasion of Poland, even the most pacifist realized that only war could stop

the Fascists. In the 1930's, Communism was viewed not just as a doctrine but as a bulwark against Fascism.

Thomas did declare himself to have Leftist sympathies, but they were not strong. If anything, they relate to his Welsh origin. In Wales, popular support of the Labour Party and socialism had taken root because of bad economic conditions. It must not be forgotten that this was the era of the Depression and Welsh coal miners, who had never been too well-treated by their employers, now found themselves unemployed and totally impoverished. Thomas, although sympathetic to the plight of such people, refused to involve himself with politics.

Thomas' work is apolitical. It has no didactic purpose and no political or social cause to plead. In comparison to the work of his contemporaries, it seemed to be almost old-fashioned and out of touch with the world.

Like most of his contemporaries, Thomas was aware of the collapse of old, traditional values. The Leftist-oriented poets of the Thirties seemed to have felt that new values could be successfully derived from Marxism. However, they became disillusioned with the advent of World War II and many of them, like Spender, stopped writing entirely or withdrew into personal poetry. Thomas, however, whose poetry had never reflected such sentiments, continued to create a body of work independent of current events.

Because Thomas' poetry did not address any

particular contemporary social or political issues and had no apparent "message," the critics felt that there was nothing behind the sound and the experimentalism.

Thomas' Leftist leanings and a Marxist interpretation of his statement in 1934 in "The Answers to New Verse" that:

> I take my stand with any revolutionary body that asserts it to be the right of all men to share, equally and impartially, every production of man from man and from the sources of production at man's disposal for it is only through such an essentially revolutionary body can there be the possibility of a communal art. (rpt. in Sinclair 220)

may have blinded critics and readers to the similarity between some of the statements in his poetry and some of Nietzsche's ideas. People like Grigson regarded Thomas as unsophisticated and slightly old-fashioned in his literary taste (Tolley 252-3). This opinion may have contributed to a view of Thomas as being incapable of understanding philosophy. He was also very young and may have seemed to be too immature to have developed any philosophy. That the Leftist David Archer had published 18 Poems in 1934 for Thomas' Book Prize may have also encouraged critics to think of Thomas as a Leftist.

His first book, 18 Poems (1934), was not widely reviewed, but it did attract the attention of Richard Church, who was editing a poetry series for Dent. Dent

published Thomas' second book, 25 Poems, in 1936. Edith Sitwell praised the book in The Sunday Times, and 3,000 copies of it were sold in four impressions (Tolley 264). But, in general, Thomas' work did not belong to the contemporary aesthetic scene and thus, in the 1930's, did not attract as much public attention as did the work of Auden and Lewis.

In the 1940's, the revolt against the poets of the 1930's was manifested by a revival of interest in experimentation in poetry. As a result, the work of Dylan Thomas became widely acclaimed by the public. Thomas' poetry readings broadcast by the B.B.C. were extremely popular, and he was much in demand for public readings. His fame was such that John Malcolm Brinnin had trouble trying to limit the length of Thomas' first tour of the U.S.A. Despite his drinking and sometimes disgraceful behaviour, people clamoured for Thomas' return. This resulted in two further tours. Thomas' death in 1953 ended the plans for yet another tour and the proposed collaboration with Igor Stravinsky.

In contrast to the enthusiastic public reception of Thomas' work, critical response lagged behind. Dylan Thomas: "Dog Among the Fairies" by Henry Treece was the first book of literary criticism devoted to Thomas and was published in 1949. Thomas was extremely annoyed by this book, and his copy of it which he gave to Daniel Jones is full of angry annotations.[5] These notes are not available for examination so one may only surmise

what so upset Thomas. The indirect references in Thomas' letters indicate that Treece's attempt to link him with Surrealism and his misunderstanding of the purpose and meaning of Thomas' work were the main objections. Treece chose to ignore Thomas' objections and re-issued the book in 1954 with only the new introduction necessitated by Thomas' death.

Since Thomas' death in 1953, critics have continued to try to find a place for him. The poetry of the Seventeenth Century English Metaphysicals, Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Blake and Wilfred Owen was examined to discern possible sources of influence. Thomas' penchant for conceits was seen as an influence of the Metaphysicals. It was agreed that Thomas had probably discovered the possibilities for fresh expression inherent in wrenched syntax and the use of compound words from Hopkins. It was also agreed that Thomas might have absorbed some of his ideas on poetic language and the necessity to celebrate bodily experience from Blake. Owen's work was seen as having contributed to the sharpening of Thomas' awareness of death-in-life and life-in-death.

When the critics could not place Thomas in English literary tradition, they sought to view him within the context of one or both of Wales' literatures. Cymric literature is written in Welsh. Thomas' only appreciation of Cymric literature would have been its use of sound to enhance its dramatic effects and the bardic

celebration of heroic qualities which he might have gleaned through reading translations. The other stream of Welsh literature is the Anglo-Welsh. Anglo-Welsh is defined as "creative work in the English language by Welsh writers" (Garlick 15). Glyn Jones dates the emergence of a clearly definable Anglo-Welsh literature as the publication of Dylan Thomas' 18 Poems (123). Although Thomas did contribute a story to the first issue of Keidrych Rys' literary quarterly, Wales, in 1937 and supported various efforts made to provide more outlets for Welsh and Anglo-Welsh writers to publish their works in Wales, his own concern was to produce poetry that transcended provincial boundaries and nationalistic concerns. In general, Anglo-Welsh writers have a common interest in the social, political and environmental impact of the modern world on the Welsh people and landscape. These are issues which Thomas never addresses in his poetry.

Critics such as Rosenthal and Holbrook have tried a Freudian approach to Thomas' work. Thomas himself stated that, like most writers of his day, he had gleaned a second-hand knowledge of Freud's discoveries and theories from sources that had probably vulgarised them. Thomas was also aware of the use of Freud's terminology by a few modern poets including Auden. In essence, however, "Thomas was influenced by modern psychology (as who is not), affirmed its ends insofar as they coincided with his own, and made use of some of its findings" (Emery 9).

Between 1953 and 1970, an extensive amount of attention was paid to Thomas. In 1954, Elder Olson published The Poetry of Dylan Thomas. This study won the Poetry Society Award for the best book of poetic criticism in 1954. Olson approached Thomas' work through what he saw to be the religious and mythological sources and through an examination of the poetic devices and techniques Thomas used to structure his poems. Olson offered the first close readings of the "Altarwise by Owl-Light" sonnets and the "Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait" and he was the first to make any sense at all of these poems.[6] Olson summed up Thomas' contribution as follows:

> Thomas dealt justly with his poetry in writing it, and it is the business of the future to deal as justly with it in judging it; but, whatever the fate of his reputation, this much we who have the first word may say: that he seemed to us one of the great artists of our time, and that, in his struggle from darkness to light, he uncovered darknesses in us that we should otherwise not have known, and brought us to a light we should not otherwise have seen. (80)

Elder Olson was a member of the prestigious and respected Chicago school. That someone of his stature considered Thomas' work as worthy of such lengthy consideration seemed to indicate that Thomas had at last become a respectable subject for sensible, reasoned literary study.

Unfortunately, Dylan Thomas in America: An Intimate Journal, the sensationalist biography of Thomas' last years published by John Malcolm Brinnin in 1955, caused bitterness and public feuding between Brinnin and Caitlin Thomas. This resulted in Mrs. Thomas' refusal to cooperate with other researchers and to withold material which could have been of value. Mrs. Thomas' own Leftover Life to Kill (1957) was an extremely personal look at the man who had been her husband rather than a biography or literary study.

In 1960 Brinnin published A Casebook on Dylan Thomas. Among the critics who contributed to this book were G.S. Fraser, John Wain, Robert Graves and Louis MacNeice. The Casebook also includes some topics for research and library exercises and research and interpretation. It is obviously meant to be a textbook, and this indicates that Thomas' poetry was then being taught in university literature classes. The publication of the book also indicates that there was a solid audience for works on Thomas. In the same year as the Casebook appeared Tedlock attempted to separate the poet from his legend in Dylan Thomas: The Legend and the Poet. In 1962, Tyndall published A Reader's Guide to Dylan Thomas, an overview of Thomas' work which, while not going into any of the individual works in depth, did serve as a useful outline of the poet's development. In the same year, Holbrook published Llareggub Revisted: Dylan Thomas and the State of Modern Poetry, the first of

his three books on Thomas. These books portray Thomas as a psychological aberrant and the criticisms of the poetry are in the tradition which views it as the creation of a madman. Holbrook's other two books on Thomas, Dylan Thomas and Poetic Dissociation (1964) and Dylan Thomas: The Code of Night (1972) are apparently attempts to bolster his original theory since challenged by the findings of other critics and researchers.

Ralph Maud's Entrances to Dylan Thomas' Poetry (1962) opened an era of truly serious and well-reasoned criticism of Thomas. Kleinman published The Religious Sonnets of Dylan Thomas: A Study in Imagery and Meaning (1963), a study of the imagery and meaning of Thomas' religious sonnets and inadvertently found a clue to Thomas' work when he stated that if Thomas' "poems suggest the chaos of the unconscious, it is because Thomas knew - as Nietzsche did - that 'one must have chaos to give birth to a dancing star" (3). Such insight was unfortunately not pursued. In 1963, The Colour of Saying, an anthology of the poetry spoken by Thomas, compiled and edited by Ralph Maud and Aneirin Talfan Davies, was published and provided researchers with a knowledge of those poets with whose work Thomas was most familiar.

In 1964, three studies of Thomas were published. Aneirin Talfan Davies tried to claim him for the Welsh in Dylan: Druid of the Broken Body, Bill Read wrote The Days of Dylan Thomas, a biographical sketch of the Thomas

he knew and Derek Stanford published Dylan Thomas: A Literary Study, a thorough and reasoned study from his critical view of Thomas. In 1965, The Life of Dylan Thomas, the authorized biography of Thomas by Constantine Fitzgibbon appeared. It helped to dispel some of the critical misconceptions that had been inspired by the legend of Thomas the Bohemian. Fitzgibbon's book devotes considerable attention to Thomas' early years, his early literary education and poetic development, and it reveals the effort that Thomas put into creating his poetry.

A major breakthrough occurred in 1966 when Maud published The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas. Critics and scholars not permitted access to the original notebooks were finally able to see exactly how Thomas crafted his poems. Maud's own comments are extremely useful to readers interested in the craft and art of Thomas. In The Craft and Art of Dylan Thomas (1966), a superb analysis of Thomas' work with careful attention paid to the interaction of form and content, Moynihan observed a Nietzschean element to be present from the early poems on.

According to David Lodge, in the mid-fifties, the poets of the Movement, like Larkin with his matter-of-fact tone and themes drawn from the daily routine, regarded "literature as the communication of a reality that exists prior to and independent of the act of communication" (6). These poets saw Thomas' poetry as

the exemplar of everything, especially verbal obscurity, against which they were revolting (Lodge 9). By 1970, Thomas' poetry was again in disfavour and generally neglected.

After 1970, interest in Thomas died out, and only a few books, including Sinclair's biography, Dylan Thomas: No Man More Magical (1975), and a small, privately printed monograph, Welsh Poetic Syntax and the Poetry of Dylan Thomas (1979), appeared. Thomas' work was discussed in a few pages or chapters of various surveys of the state of modern poetry. In Lost Bearings in English Poetry (1977), David Holbrook reiterated his unfavourable opinion of Thomas' work. In British Poetry Since 1960: A Critical Study (1972), Glyn Jones' essay "Second Flowering: Poetry in Wales," made a strong claim for Thomas' important place in Anglo-Welsh literature. In 1974, Sam Adams' "Introduction" to Ten Anglo-Welsh Poets dismissed Thomas from the tradition of Anglo-Welsh literature. Paul Ray pointed out that Dylan Thomas' poetry was not Surrealistic in The Surrealist Movement in England (1971). Tolley noted in The Poetry of the Thirties (1975) that Thomas' symbolism may have been derived to a certain extent from Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," especially these particular passages:

> 1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.

> 2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
> 3. Energy is Eternal Delight.
>
> Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. (257)

Again, this observation has not been developed. In view of the revival of interest in the work of Blake and Nietzsche, it is possible that Thomas' work could be profitably reviewed in this light.

There have been no major studies of Thomas' work published since the mid-Seventies. The silence has recently been broken by Paul Ferris' edition of <u>Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters</u> (1985). These letters are the prose expression of much of what Thomas was simultaneously saying in his poetry. It is unfortunate that the reviews of this important book have centred upon the Thomas legend and not upon the literary theory, ideas and philosophy expressed by Thomas in the letters. That the scandalous behaviour of Thomas continues to be a stumbling block to a serious appreciation of his poetry is demonstrated by two books on the man published in 1986. Rob Gittins' <u>The Last Days of Dylan Thomas</u> describes the last six months of Thomas' life, drawing from the notes of the private detective hired by

Time-Life Inc. to gather information for its defense in the libel suit Thomas had brought against the company. The book is essentially a filling in of the facts not available to John Malcolm Brinnin when he wrote Dylan Thomas in America. Caitlin: Life With Dylan Thomas by Caitlin Thomas with George Tremlett is essentially a rewriting of Mrs. Thomas' two previous books on life with her husband. In her review published in The Gazette of December 20, 1986, Marion McCormick makes a statement concerning the obsession with Thomas' lifestyle manifested by researchers. It is a statement with which this writer concurs.

> The scandalous tidbits are endless and so are the books that exploit them. Dylan Thomas has been dead for more than 30 years. Nothing needs to be added to the over-written record except R.I.P. (B-8)

There is, however, much more critical work that remains to be done. Moynihan and Kleinman both hinted at the presence of Nietzschean elements in Thomas' work. Other critics have discussed aspects of his work that reveal Nietzschean propensities and a Nietzschean philosophy without naming Nietzsche as a source. In the following chapters, it is precisely these elements that will be discerned and discussed.

Chapter IV

The Will to Power is the urge to become, the driving force that impels, propels, compels towards the next step, the highest, the best and aspires to totality. It is fundamental to Nietzsche's philosophy and the concepts of Eternal Recurrence and the Uebermensch are based on the Will to Power.

The doctrine of Eternal Recurrence is based upon the idea that all that exists is the here and now; there is no afterlife any different from the life now being lived. Therefore, man has the duty to live to the maximum, to live his life as if forced to live with it forever. One of Nietzsche's most quoted statements is that God is dead. As Eliade discusses in his book, primitive or traditional man saw the cyclical movement of the stars as an indication of "eternal return." But the modern adherent of an historicistic philosophy and its linear time must either have a God to replace this belief in "eternal return" or be a victim of despair (Eliade 161-2).

The Uebermensch is one who lives life to the maximum, continually striving, becoming and "aspiring to totality."

Nietzsche's use of the term "Dionysian" is important to his concepts of the Uebermensch and Eternal Recurrence. Some misunderstanding and confusion exist concerning exactly what Nietzsche means by "Dionysian," and it must be clarified in order to proceed with this

discussion. In The Birth of Tragedy, Dionysus represents unchecked emotional forces and is contrasted with the form-giving force of Apollo. After Nietzsche's formulation of the concept of the will to power expressed in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, his conception of Dionysus evolved. In Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche described Goethe as Dionysian in these terms:

> What he aspired to was totality; he strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will . . . he disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself . . . Goethe conceived of a strong, highly cultured human being, skilled in all physical accomplishments, who, keeping himself in check and having reverence for himself, dares to allow himself the whole compass and wealth of naturalness, who is strong enough for this freedom; a man of tolerance, not out of weakness, but out of strength, because he knows how to employ to his advantage what would destroy an average nature; a man to whom nothing is forbidden, except it be *weakness*, whether that weakness be called vice or virtue . . . A spirit thus *emancipated* stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* that only what is separate and individual may be rejected, that in the totality everything is redeemed and affirmed - he no longer *denies* . . . But such a faith is the highest of all

possible faiths: I have baptised it with the name Dionysus - (102-3; sec, 9, 49)

The man described is a Dionysian. He is also a Uebermensch.

"The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower" (October 12, 1933) has long been regarded as typical of Thomas' poetry. It is also an exemplar of the Nietzschean concept of the will to power as the driving force of becoming and its corollary that the apparently ever-contradictory forces of life and death are ever-complementary halves of this one force. In his poem, Thomas expresses this kinetic harmony Nietzsche viewed as inherent in reality.

> The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer.
> And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
> My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.
>
> The force that drives the water through the rocks
> Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams
> Turns mine to wax.
> And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
> How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.
>
> The hand that whirls the water in the pool
> Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
> Hauls my shroud sail.

And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood
Shall calm her sores.
And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm. (80-1)

The formal conventions of the poem are obvious, four five line stanzas and a couplet, a slant rhyme scheme (ababa for stanzas one and two, abaab for stanza three and aabab for stanza four and a rhyming couplet), and syllabic metre (ten, ten, four, ten and ten syllables). The present tense reflects an ever present reality. The technical reinforcement of content by the poem's form assists the reader in making the connection of ideas.

Thomas connects "force" and "fuse" alliteratively to indicate that the force is explosive and simultaneously creative and destructive. In the second line, "blasts" is used as a verb simultaneously meaning "explodes" and "withers." Each of these denotes a means of death, the first connoting speed and violence and the second the slower natural death of flowers, both of which are equal, there is no "good" death or "bad" death, just death.

Flowers are nourished by water drawn from the

reservoir of their roots and this nourishment occurs at the expense of shrivelling the root. The rhyme of "flower" and "destroyer" reinforces this meaning. The flower as the plant's means of reproduction adds a sexual connotation to the "fuse," because it is connected to the poet's "green age."

The rose is a traditional symbol of beauty and innocence and traditionally linked to red, the colour of blood and symbolic colour of passion. Thomas not only uses these connotations but also invokes Blake's "sick rose." In "The Sick Rose" the rose is an earthy image. Blake's rose is attacked by a worm, time, which invisibly destroys it. Yeats' use of the rose as a symbol of the beauty which suffers with man is also implied. Man suffers destruction at the passage of time. Thomas' rose is crooked," and this suggests that it is bent by blasts or the force for reproduction or by approaching old age, building on the previous images. The poet's "youth is bent," too as it is fevered by reproductive urges and subject to time and aging. The phrase "wintry fever" pairs obvious antinomies, cold and hot, age and youth. A closer examination reveals that this phrase is not just an oxymoron. Fever is not only the fervour of youthful passions but a pathological disease which burns up tissue. Winter is not only old age but the season for feverous diseases. "Fever" and "wintry" therefore connect to "blasts" and to the shrivelling of roots. The "force" is therefore the metaphor for all life in its

complete cycle of birth, reproduction and death. The drive is upwards, up the stems, forward to the next stage. This force is a manifestation of the Will to Power.

"Dumb to tell" is a form of transferred epithet as flowers are unable to speak. They are also unable to hear. "Dumb" not only means unable to speak whether applied to an abnormal human condition or a normal floral condition, but confounded or silenced by an inability to express one's thoughts. Thomas uses this word in all of its meanings to express the universal analogy of man's kinship to all of nature. "Dumb to mouth" reiterates this idea and the poet's own inability to express the connection fully is implied.

Stanza two repeats the theme of stanza one. Water is an archetypal fertility symbol to which Thomas fuses the image of destruction. "Red blood" parallels "green age." "Mouthing streams" are the fountain heads which are the roots of rivers. "Mouthing" also implies ranting and raving, actions connected with feverous conditions. "Wax" has at least three meanings. As a noun, it is a substance which is destroyed as it gives light. As a verb, it means to turn into a specified condition and also to increase. As an adjective "waxy" modifying flesh, the word had been used in previous Thomas poems as a symbol of death, death that is actually a transformation of potential energy into energy. The final two lines of the stanza contain the image of a

child breast-feeding, growing stronger at its mother's expense. This image of death containing the seeds of life parallels the relationship of the flower and root in stanza one.

"The hand that whirls the water" is an image of healing whose source is the description of the Pool of Bethseda in the New Testament. Quicksand is a symbol of death by drowning. The image of life by water and death by water is amplified in the image of sailing. There is a play on words in the word "shroud." The most commonly used definition is the shroud as a winding garment for the dead. The "shrouds" is the set of ropes which forms part of a ship's standing rigging and supports the mast. Given Thomas' having lived in a sea town, it is entirely possible that a sight pun on "wind" is also intended. This would amplify the double image contained in shroud. The roping of the wind is the willed act of channelling energy for the specific purpose of steering a ship, just as discipline is essential for one who would direct his own will to power towards a higher state of self-realization and imposing form upon thought is necessary for the specific purpose of creating poetry. The image of the hanging man follows ropes and shroud by association. As the symbol of a god who is born, dies and regenerates, the hanging man is Dionysus, or Osiris, or Mithras, or Christ, and this places man in the cycle of recurrence. "Hanging man" and "hangman" are connected by their sounds, making the executioned and the

executioner two interdependent aspects of the reality of existence. "Lime" is a caustic clay thrown on corpses of criminals to make the body decompose and turn into clay more rapidly. Clay is synonymous with flesh. Thus the poet is connected to both the hanging man and the hangman. "Lime" is therefore another symbol of the cyclical nature of existence and an agent of both creation and destruction.

The word "time" is introduced in stanza four. Time is described as draining strength in the image of leeching that refers back to stanza two. But "leech to" is also an image of healing by blood letting. Love is a form of the will to power which appears:

> "among the strongest, richest, most independent most courageous . . . as overpowering, bearing away with oneself . . . as instinctive self-involvement with a great quantum of power to which one is able to give direction" (Nietzsche, <u>The Will To Power</u> 407; bk. 3, sec. 776).

"Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood / Shall calm her sores" repeats the statements of the first three stanzas, for love's outflowing and overflowing is both a draining and a healing. A tick is both a blood-sucking insect and the sound of a clock's hands moving around the dial. The image of time ticking "a heaven round the stars" is an image of the universe as subject to the same processes of birth and decay as man.

The microcosm of the clock is connected to the macrocosm of the universe as the movement of the stars is a way to tell time. The sky was once believed to be circular and the stars moved endlessly around it, just as the hands of a clock move endlessly around its circular dial. It follows from Eliade's statement (quoted above) that modern man's perception of time creates the necessity for a heaven that is not just an "unminding sky." Thomas does not express this need because he views heaven as just sky.

The "lover's tomb" is Thomas' application of the Metaphysical conceit in which death is a metaphor for the sex act and the grave for the bed. "Sheet" is another word for sail and for shroud as well as being an item of bed linen. "Sheet" links the images of birth, copulation and death and unites them in one word. The "crooked worm" is like lime, an agent which turns the body into earth. It is also a phallic symbol performing the same function as the flower stalk and subject to the same forces.

"The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower" is an expression of Thomas' perception of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Nietzsche considered his doctrine to be the opposite of the Christian concentration on the afterlife. In The Gay Science, Nietzsche contrasts him "that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man" whose desires are "an expression of an over-flowing energy that is pregnant

with future" with the Christian who requires "above all mildness, peacefulness, and . . . a god would be truly a god for the sick, a healer and savior" (328-9; bk. 5, sec. 370). In his works, Nietzsche carefully distinguishes between the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and Christianity. Nietzsche holds Paul responsible for perverting Christ's teachings and for the fact that the Christian religion bears no resemblance to what was lived and taught by Christ. In the following passage, Nietzsche shows why Paul perverted Christ's teachings:

> Paul starts from the need for a mystery felt by the broad, religiously excited masses: he seeks a sacrifice, a bloody phantasmagoria which will stand up in competition with the images of the mystery cults: God on the cross, blood-drinking, the _unio mystica_ with the "sacrifice."
>
> He seeks to bring the afterlife (the blissful, atoned afterlife of the individual soul) as resurrectiion into a causal relationship with that sacrifice (after the type of Dionysus, Mithras, Osiris).
>
> He needs to bring the concept guilt and atonement into the foreground, not a new way of life (as Jesus himself had demonstrated and lived) but a new cult, a new faith, a faith in a miraculous transformation ("redemption" through faith).

> He understood what the pagan world had the greatest need of, and from the facts of Christ's life and death made a quite arbitrary selection, giving everything a new accentuation, shifting the emphasis everywhere - he annulled primitive Christianity as a matter of principle - (The Will to Power, 101; bk. 2, sec. 167)

The results, according to Nietzsche, were that Christianity "transformed the symbolic into crudities:

1. the antithesis "real life" and "false" life: misunderstood as "this life" and "the life to come";
2. the concept "eternal life," the antithesis to transient personal life, as "personal immortality";
3. brotherhood on the basis of sharing food and drink together after the Hebrew-Arabic custom, as "the miracle of transsubstantiation";
4. "resurrection" - understood as entry into "real life," as a state of "rebirth"; this is made into a historical eventuality which takes place some time or another after death;
5. the teaching that the son of man is the "Son of God," the living relationship between God and man; this is made into the

filial relationship to God of every man, even the lowliest, is abolished;

6. salvation through faith (namely that there is no means of becoming a son of God except by following the way of life taught by Christ) reversed into the faith that one is to believe in some sort of miraculous subtraction of sins, accomplished not through man but through Christ's deed:

With that, "Christ on the cross" had to be interpreted anew. (The Will to Power 102-3; bk. 2, sec. 170)

As a result of Paul's misinterpretations of Christ's teaching, the end of Christianity became, for Nietzsche, "the poisoning, slandering, denying of life, contempt for the body, the denigration and self-violation of man through the concept sin . . . ." (Anti-Christ 175). The Christian God then became the legislator, arbitrator and enforcer of these negative values. Nietzsche cannot believe in such a God who is "a declaration of hostility towards life, nature, the will to life!" (Anti-Christ 128). For Nietzsche, a god should be the "transfiguration and eternal Yes" to life (Anti-Christ 128). Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the teacher of the Uebermensch and of Eternal Recurrence states: "I should believe only in a God who understood how to dance" (Thus Spoke Zarathustra 68).

Thomas' perception of the Christian God is very

similar to Nietzsche's. As Thomas had had no formal instruction in Christianity and had never been trained to believe in the Christian God, he was free to create his own concept of God and his own perception of Christ and Christ's teachings. In "I Have Longed to Move Away," Thomas describes the practices and tenets of Christianity as "the hissing of the spent lie / And the old terrors' continual cry / Growing more terrible . . ." (Poems 45). He says: "By these I would not care to die, / Half convention and half-lie" (46). In "Incarnate Devil," the Judeo-Christian God who walked in Eden is described as "a fiddling warden" who "played down pardon from the heaven's hill" (Poems 125).

In "Through These Lashed Rings," (1933), the idea that divinity is within man, originally expressed by Thomas in 1930 (see page 20 of the present work), is reiterated:

> And through these eyes God marks myself revolving,
> And from these tongue-plucked senses draws His tune;
> Inside this mouth I feel his message moving
> Acquainting me with my divinity;
> And through these ears He harks my fire burn
> His awkward heart into some symmetry. (Poems 80)

Christ is a symbol of the cyclical nature of existence because he was born, died and resurrected. It is thus that Thomas in "Too Long, Skeleton" (1932), expresses divinity in the resurrected or recurring man rather than in merely dead symbols:

> New man best whose blood runs thick

Rather than charnel-house as symbol

Of the moment and the dead hour. (Poems 30)

Also in 1932, in "Walking in Gardens," Thomas speaks of:

A new divinity, a god of wheels

Destroying souls and laying waste

Trampling to dust the bits and pieces

Of faulty man and their diseases, (Poems 35)

The image is of the Juggernaut, merciless, ruthless, divine instrument of chaotic, ecstatic death. But, surrounded by images of human creation, the "ordered garden," the marble statues and the garden ponds, Thomas comes to the realization that there "was no need of a new divinity." It is inherent in these symbols of man's creation, therefore it is man himself who bestows his own divinity.

As for the figure of Christ, in a 1933 letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson, Thomas states: "I care not a damn for Christ, but only for his symbol, the symbol of death" (Letters 82). Although he does not elaborate further in the letter, his meaning becomes clearer in his poem written at the same time (September 1933), "No Man Believes:"

And this is true, no man can live

Who does not bury God in a deep grave

And then raise up the skeleton again,

No man who does not break and make,

Who in the bones finds not new faith,

Lends not flesh to ribs and neck,

Who does not break and make his final faith.

(<u>Poems</u> 57)

Christian otherworldliness has the effect of denigrating existing life and this world. Eternal Recurrence celebrates and focusses upon this life and this world. Essentially, the concept of Eternal Recurrence ontologically functions as a challenge to Christianity by transforming its "beyond" into an eternal "now," shifting man's focus from another world to a concentration on this world. It is a doctrine that insists upon the individual's own complete responsibility for himself and for the way in which he lives his own life. He alone is responsible for creating himself. The individual no longer leans on the supernatural sanctions known as "god" to deliver him from responsibility.

In "This Side of the Truth," Thomas expresses the idea of Eternal Recurrence. "Unminding skies" implies that supernatural sanctions are both non-existent and unnecessary. It also implies that nature is not possessed of the human ability to reflect upon itself. Thomas also says that perceptions of "good" and "evil," "innocence" and "guilt" are imposed by man, that there is no judgment, just love and everything is encompassed in love. Youth cannot see this. It is a vision given only in retrospect, as Thomas had said in "Fern Hill" when he remembered that "Time held me green and dying / Though I sang in my chains like the sea" (<u>Poems</u> 201). Eternal Recurrence is expressed in "This Side of Truth" as "all is undone . . . / Before you move to make / One gesture

of the heart or head" (Poems 197). Thomas is instructing his son to understand the reality behind and beyond the narrow vision of perceptions of reality.

Thomas' poetry demonstrates the cyclical nature of existence and reveals the creativity which he finds inherent in death. The image "seeds on the black sill" which closes "After the Funeral" (February 1933) is an example of Thomas' expression. The joyous acceptance and celebration of the cyclical nature of this life is also a liberation from the fear of death and the fear of "after death." It is merely man's interpretation that makes death something to be feared. As Nietzsche states in The Will to Power: "the lying interpretation of the words, gestures and conditions of the dying: fear of death is systematically confused with fear of the 'after death - " (113; bk. 2, sec. 189). The believer in Eternal Recurrence not only does not depend on supernatural sanctions but also does not fear "after death" for he perceives death as a new beginning and thus accepts it with joy.

In "I Dreamed My Genesis" (November or December 1934), Thomas makes an even clearer statement of the power released by death:

> And power was contagious in my birth, second
> Rise of the skeleton and
> Rerobing of the naked ghost. Manhood
> Spat up from the resuffered pain.

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 106)

Yet man must still rebel against death as the ending of a particular chapter in which much was left unsaid or undone. Thomas' first poetic statement of that rebellion is found in a 1931 poem, "There's Plenty in the World:"

> And yet, mad with young blood or stained with age,
> We still are loth to part with what remains,
> Feeling the wind about our heads that does not cool,
> And on our lips the dry mouth of the rain.
>
> (Poems 27)

In April 1933, Thomas wrote "And Death Shall Have No Dominion." This poem expresses the indestructibility of man and the cyclical nature of existence. Death is repeatedly defied in the six-fold repetition of the poem's title. The first stanza is a description of heaven and the second of hell. But Thomas parallels the two stanzas and ends both with "And death shall have no dominion" thereby negating any "afterlife." Thomas ends the third and final stanza with a statement on the indestructibility of the life force. As Rosenthal says:

> Granting the worst death can do, the poem proclaims life will reassert itself. In some manner the physical limits of the universe will be turned to advantage by the innermost will of

life. (211)

> Though they be mad and dead as nails,
> Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;
> Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,
> And death shall have no dominion. (Poems 52)

"Among Those Killed In The Dawn Raid Was A Man Aged A Hundred" (August 1941), "Ceremony After A Fire Raid" (May 1944), and "A Refusal to Mourn" (March 1945) are other poems in which Thomas speaks of death. The poet refuses to pity any of these deaths for in each one of them was "majesty" which the poet will not "murder" with "a grave truth / Nor blaspheme . . . / With any further elegy" ("A Refusal To Mourn The Death, By Fire, Of a Child In London" in Poems 197). The one hundred year old man lived dangerously for he "stepped out and he died" despite the fact that there must have been some air raid warning sounded. The man's death is expressed as "he stopped a sun" and "He dropped where he loved," both images of defiance. The joy that is evident in this poem is what Yeats called "tragic joy." The elements present in the figure of the old man are passion and richness. The manner of his death is enough to justify the poet's request:

> O keep his bones away from that common cart,
> The morning is flying on the wings of his age
> And a hundred storks perch on the sun's right hand.

(Poems 178)

"Ceremony After A Fire Raid" begins with grief, then moves to singing, to forgiveness for the "Seed of sons in the loin of the black husk left." Forgiveness is required, not for the baby's death, but for the loss of potential life, for the seeds which would have perpetuated her in the form of her children. The final stanza reaffirms the indestructibility of the life force, ending thus:

> The masses of the infant-bearing sea
> Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter for ever
> Glory glory glory
> The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis'
> thunder. (Poems 180)

Rosenthal notes that in "A Refusal To Mourn," "Thomas speaks of how, eventually,

> I must enter again the round
> Zion of the water bead
> And the synagogue of the ear of corn. . . .

and that these images "bring out . . . the religious aspect of Thomas's somewhat desperate and fatalistic 'philosophy" (205). What Rosenthal calls the religious aspect is indicated not, as may appear, by Zion and synagogue but, according to this writer, by the image of entering again the round of nature. This is an expression of Eternal Recurrence.

Thomas does not pass judgment nor draw attention to the fact that the old man and the new-born baby were the victims of war. It is not his intention to use these

deaths to make statements about war. As Nietzsche stated, "moral value judgments are ways of passing sentence, negations; morality is a way of turning one's back on the will to existence" (The Will to Power 11; bk. 1, sec. 11).

"Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" is the most succinct expression of Thomas' belief that death should be accepted, but accepted with defiance. The second, third, fourth and fifth stanzas express the idea that the best of men, the wise, the good, the wild (Dionysian) and the grave, had done the very best in the one particular aspect they chose but could not do it all. Despite their achievements, the "aspiration to totality" persists. They strive against death so that they may continue becoming in this life that will recur:

> Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
> Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
>
> (Poems 213)

Thomas calls death "that good night." But why is it a good night? There are several reasons. Firstly, the expression "good night" is one which people use as a friendly farewell implying "until we meet again" and not "farewell forever." The adherent to the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence would use just such a light-hearted phrase to express his feelings of loss at the parting. It is also a good night for death is not a fearsome movement into the unknown but a re-entry into the cycle.

Thomas' philosophy that "old age should burn and rave at close of day" is similar to that expressed by Yeats in "A Prayer for Old Age" and "The Spur." It should be remembered that Thomas wrote his poem for his father, a Nietzschean and an admirer of Yeats. In the last stanza of the poem, Thomas exhorts his father to be an Uebermensch.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(Poems 213)

Thomas views the Uebermensch in the same way as Nietzsche did, as having "a solitude within him that is inaccessible to praise or blame, his own justice that is beyond appeal" (The Will to Power 505, bk. 4, sec. 962). The concept of the Uebermensch is expressed in Thomas' work more by the example of certain unique individuals and by symbols such as birds of prey than by direct description. The "hawk on fire" of "Over Sir John's Hill" is a solitary, swift, daring, ruthless, stern, fierce bird, symbol of nobility and the destruction of lesser, baser forces. The praise in the poem is reserved for the hawk while pity and mercy are reserved for the lesser birds who are busy happily wrangling in their "shrill child's play / Wars" heedless of the death that hangs in the sky above them. These lesser birds are content to blindly and passionlessly accept their fate

"dilly dilly, / Come let us die." They do not rage or hate. But, as Thomas said, "there is no room in the country of the spirit for the man who accepts, or does not accept, without hate or love" (Letters 86). The hawk is the symbol of the noble man, the Uebermensch, and the lesser birds are symbols of the mass of mankind. Thomas had never been sympathetic to the ordinary masses.

The "Sir John" referred to in "Over Sir John's Hill" was the local magistrate. Thomas plays on this fact: "And a black cap of jack- / Daws Sir John's just hill dons." "Under judging Sir John's elmed / Hill," the heron and the poet tell, as if on a rosary, the guilt of the "led-astray birds" upon whom God should have mercy. Sir John, the symbol of secular judgment, and God are equated by this image. The God who sees the sparrow fall and has mercy upon it is thus another humanly created judge dealing out humanly perceived justice. But, in this poem, in a transvaluation of values, the guilt belong to the lesser birds, not to the hawk. That Thomas had never been sympathetic to "herd" values is indicated by his previous criticism of Spender's Vienna as reflecting only the reaction to "incidents of mass emotion" (Thomas, Early Prose Writings 170).

The poet hears the voice of the "loft hawk" from heaven and thus commanded, opens "the leaves of water at a passage." With its echoes of "one like a son of man . . . and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev. I, 13-15), these lines indicate that the poet is a

man of revelation of the "new heaven," in this case, the revelation of reality and new values. Thomas, as "young Aesop fabling" is interpreting his vision in terms of the events which take place around him in nature and is reading the lesson of the reality of existence as he perceives it. According to Thomas, this "hymning" and singing of praise and joy, the "psalms" are true responses to the reality of the world. That is why these words are applied to the poet and to the heron, symbol of the poet as detached yet involved in the scene. The responses of bard and bird are identical. At the end of the poem, the heron provides the music to which the human poet gives permanence by setting it down on "this time-shaken stone" ("Over Sir John's Hill" in Poems 207-8).

The "dogma of Arrogant Acceptance" expressed in Thomas' poetry is formed of the concepts of Eternal Recurrence and the Uebermensch. According to Thus Spoke Zarathustra and other works, the Uebermensch is a noble Dionysian who accepts the idea of Eternal Recurrence and thus doing affirms the here and now with joy. He is a disciplined individual and this discipline which keeps in check, allows and employs is an imposition of form. The fact that a Uebermensch is self-created implies an imposition of form, a selection out of what Thomas might have called an "amorphous mass" of what he could be. In terms of his poetic self, Thomas is a Uebermensch.

Chapter V

"Poet 1935" expresses Thomas' perception of the nature and purpose of a true poet, to contain all life within himself and to interpret it to those not vouchsafed this vision. He is therefore the "gods' man," an heroic figure, a Uebermensch, a Dionysian, in Nietzsche's terminology:

> O lonely among many, the gods' man
> Knowing exceeding grief and the gods' sorrow
> That, like a razor, skims, cuts, and turns,
> Aches till the metal meets the marrow,
> You, too, know the exceeding joy
> And the triumphant crow of laughter.
>
> Out of a bird's wing writing on a cloud
> You capture more than man or woman guesses;
> Rarer delight shoots in the blood
> At the deft movements of the irises
> Growing in public places than man knows.
> (Poems 49-50)

The poet is a solitary individual set apart from the common herd by his perception, his character and the intensity with which he lives.

But the ideal poet not only has this philosophy but is also compelled to express it. Thomas does so in the formal pattern of "Author's Prologue" to The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas. The last line of the poem rhymes with the first, the penultimate line with the second and so forth until the rhymes meet in the centre in a

couplet, one of the rhyming words being "arms." The poem thus embraces the poet, his fellow man and animals, fish and fowl. The poet becomes Noah and his poem Noah's Ark, symbol of the containment and the continuation of life and of the antinomies necessary for creation.

At the beginning of The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche states that "the continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollinian and Dionysian duality -. . . involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations" (33; sec. 1). That Thomas shared this view of art, is indicated in his letter to Henry Treece:

> Out of the inevitable conflict of images - inevitable, because of the creative, recreative, destructive and contradictory nature of the motivating centre, the womb of war - I try to make that momentary peace which is a poem." (Letters 281-2)

In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche views the creation of art as possible only when an Apollinian will to power imposes its shaping force upon the Dionysian impulse towards chaos. After his formulation of the concept of the Will to Power, Nietzsche viewed the Dionysian as one who experiences chaos and who then overcomes it by imposing discipline and st.iving towards totality. As reality itself is essentially chaotic, only a structuring power such as art can interpret it so that humanity can make some sense of it and thus cope. This

concept refers to the necessity of structuring and ordering perception. Thomas, whose art was restricted to poetry, expresses a similar concept when he states:

> 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 . . . . (Quite Early One Morning 169)

For Thomas, the artist should acknowledge only one limitation and "that is the widest of all" the limitation of form" ("Letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson, October 15, 1933," in Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters 25). Form is the manifestation of the organization of perception which is the basis of art. Nietzsche articulated this requirement for form in The Will to Power stating that "convention is the condition of great art, not an obstacle ." (428; bk. 3, sec. 809). The importance that many major poets attach to the necessity of imposing form upon the raw materials of inspiration is widely acknowledged. Hopkins and Yeats are both examples, and Thomas was familiar with their work.

Critics such as Henry Treece and Thomas Henry Jones have remarked upon Dylan Thomas' concern, sometimes even obsession, with the imposition of formal limits upon his poems. This concern is expressed not only in the poems themselves but in his letters and other writings dealing with his poetry. It is this obvious concern bordering on

obsession which Thomas shares with Nietzsche, whose own concern with form in art is expressed at length in The Birth of Tragedy, The Will to Power, and The Gay Science. According to Thomas, "the real causes and forces of the creative brain and body . . . are always there, and always need a concrete expression" ("The Answers to New Verse (1934)" rpt. in Sinclair 219). What Thomas appears to be stating is that data is transmitted continuously through the physical being and perceptions constantly arise from this sensory data. For Thomas the processing of sensory data is not fully realized until and unless expressed in some way which gives form and the appearance of solidity. The creation of a poem or any form of art is just such an expression. In "The Poetic Manifesto," Thomas himself articulated his concept as follows:

> I do not mind from where the images of a poem are dragged up: Drag them up, if you like, from the nethermost seas of the hidden self; but, before they reach paper, they must go through all the rational processes of the intellect. . . . One of the arts of the poet is to make comprehensible and articulate what might emerge from subconscious sources; one of the great main uses of the intellect is to select, from the amorphous mass of subconscious images, those that will best further his imaginative purpose, which is to write the best poem he can. (rpt. in Sinclair 232-3)

Thomas' concern with imposing form and creating an intelligible world out of reality by means of his art is evidenced in a number of his poems. The earliest of these is "I Know This Vicious Minute's Hour," dated November 3, 1930 in The Buffalo Notebook and selected by Daniel Jones as being the first of Thomas' poems incorporating the elements which characterize his mature poetry:

I know this vicious minute's hour;
It is a sour motion in the blood,
That, like a tree, has roots in you,
And buds in you.
Each silver moment chimes
in steps of sound,
And I, caught in mid-air perhaps,
Hear and am still the little bird.
You have offended, periodic heart;
You I shall drown unreasonably,
Leave you in me to be found
Darker than ever,
Too full with blood to let my love flow in.
Stop is unreal;
I want reality to hold
within my palm,
Not, as a symbol, stone
speaking or no,
But it, reality, whose voice I know
To be the circle not the stair of sound.
Go is my wish;

Then I shall go,

But in the light of going

Minutes are mine

I could devote to other things.

Stop has no minutes,

but I go or die. (9)

In the virtual centre of the poem (lines fifteen to nineteen), Thomas states that he wants to be able to grasp reality, to know it and to understand it, and to express this grasp, his perception, in his poetry. He also states that he will not be content to use symbols which have become cliched, regardless of the fact that they may appear to be perfectly representational. "Stone speaking" is a play on the idiomatic expressions "stone-deaf" and "stone-blind" in which stone means "completely" or "perfectly" and would therefore symbolize perfect expression. This play on a trite idiomatic expression is a technique Thomas will use throughout his career in his attempt to revitalize language. The Thomas technique of saying "two things at once in one word, four in two words" ("Letter to Charles Fisher, early 1935," in Letters 182) is also evidenced in this poem. Thomas' use of the phrase "periodic heart" is an example.

"Periodic" means happening or recurring intermittently; repeating exactly after a given interval; characterized by a sentence that leaves the completion of its main clause to the end. A period is the proper end

punctuation of a sentence. The heart is the pump at the centre of the body's circulatory system and is therefore the centre of physical life. When the heart starts beating, life begins; when it ceases beating, life ends. The motion of the heart contains a paradox; it is periodic whether it beats rhythmically and alternation of the systolic and diastolic stages recurs at precise intervals or arythmically with the alternation of the two stages recurring intermittently. The heart is also seen as the seat of emotion and inspiration. For the poet struggling to find his own poetics, the heart offends by having the ability to work either in traditional (regular) or innovative (irregular) metre, although normally more efficiently in the former. It also offends because inspiration does not come regularly and because the main thought, life, is not completed until the end and its completion is usually regarded as being followed by a full stop. The multiple meanings of the word "periodic" are all intended by Thomas for the image only works if all the meanings are taken simultaneously. One cannot merely select one level of meaning and interpret the image fully. As Tolley has remarked, "Thomas's choice of words was often dictated by the need to get the word that was as literally right as possible at the particular point in the poem" (276). He uses words at a level which is even "more fundamental than that at which the conventional notion of 'meaning' applies" (Tolley 273). The conventional notion of "meaning" usually

indicates that one denotational meaning of the word is selected. Thomas understands that words' having multiple meanings indicates a certain mobility and instability of language as a means of communication. Where he can use this to intensify his work, he does so consciously.

But multiple meanings do not ensure truth. As Thomas states, the heart also lies because, for him, "stop is unreal." He has begun to realize that the voice of reality is a circle, not a stair. If "stop is unreal," then its antithesis, "go" must be real and so, "Go is my wish." Thomas wants to ensure that the reader's attention is drawn to this opposition so he creates a parallel by means of prosody and grammar. This is part of what Moynihan calls Thomas' "auditory correlative" in The Craft and Art of Dylan Thomas. The two lines have four syllables each, the first and fourth being stressed. The clauses contained in these lines have the same syntactic placement within their respective sentences.

This early poem prepares the reader for Thomas' later work. The statements made in it concerning his art and perception of reality are the basis of a philosophy and a poetics that will be developed further. The use of techniques such as the pun and the equivoque[7] is indicative of his concern with language. The poem also expresses Thomas' awakening perception of the cyclical nature of life.

In "Cool, Oh No Cool," (November 1930), Thomas again speaks of his art:

But you shall not go from me, creation,
Oh no, my mind is your panopticon;
You shall not go unless I will it
And my thoughts flow so uneasily
There is no measured sea for them,
No place in which, wave perched on wave,
Such energy may gain
The sense it is to have. (10)

Thomas will not permit his creation to merely spill out. It must have a form and meaning derived from the imposition of form. Thomas seeks a metrical form capable of containing this energy without fettering it. The image of "wave perched on wave" is an image of the will to form overcoming the will to chaos. It is only harnessed inspiration which can be used and communicated. "The Spire Cranes" (1931) emphasizes that a poem must be shaped by structure and theme (purpose). If not, it will be a wasted, useless effort, having nothing significant to impart and the poem would merely "travel down dumb wind like prodigals" (16).

"Out of a War of Wits" (February 1933) expresses the idea that the poet must be a full participant in life and that poetry is therefore not the private possession or exclusive domain of the intellect.

According to Rosenthal, Thomas "shows us the character of his thought and aims in the poem 'In My Craft or Sullen Art" (1945) (Rosenthal 203).

In my craft or sullen art
Exercised in the still night

When only the moon rages
And the lovers lie abed
With all their griefs in their arms,
I labour by singing light
Not for ambition or bread
Or the strut and trade of charms
On the ivory stages
But for the common wages
Of their most secret heart.

Not for the proud man apart
From the raging moon I write
On these spindrift pages
Nor for the towering dead
With their nightingales and psalms
But for the lovers, their arms
Round the griefs of the ages,
Who pay no praise or wages
Nor need my craft or art. (Poems 202)

Rosenthal states that:

> The poet sees himself the instrument of that same life force which makes both moon and lovers "rage" with their separate yet implicitly related ecstasies. He writes by the moon's "singing light"; and the lovers, like his poetry, carry all human meaning into what they do.. They lie, he says "with all their griefs in their arms" - griefs because implicit in their embrace is the whole cycle of

> begetting, bringing to birth, growth, suffering, and death. The tragic character of that cycle is also the poet's own theme, and it is what makes the moon, that symbol of cyclical change and mortality, "rage" in the sky. (204)

In Sound and Sense in Dylan Thomas's Poetry, Louise Murdy states: "Both his [Thomas'] art and the lovers' actions reflect the essential experiences of life" (83).

Rosenthal goes on the state that:

> An additionally painful aspect of this strange relationship is that only the poet is aware of it. He cannot communicate his knowledge - either to the inhuman moon or to the lovers who, he says, do not "heed my craft or art." If one allows oneself to be possessed by this poem, with its chanting intensity and its deeply solemn "magic" interlacing of rhyme, the incommunicability of the essential kinship of all things (the universal analogy implied in the paralleling of the moon and human beings) becomes unbearable to contemplate.
>
> Both the "universal analogy" and its incommunicability are themes Thomas immerses himself in again and again. . . . (204)

Rosenthal is on the right track. Unfortunately, he does not pursue his thought further. After being "possessed" by the poem, the reader's mind should free itself to examine the reason why Thomas himself does not

find the "universal analogy" "unbearable to contemplate." It is this writer's opinion that the reason lies in Thomas' Nietzscheanism and his own "dogma of Arrogant Acceptance" discussed in the previous chapter of this present work. That he insists upon communicating the "universal analogy" is implicit in his having been able to write the poem and in his having published it. The poet as Uebermensch must keep on striving for totality, to know and to communicate. As Thomas says in "If I Were Tickled By The Rub Of Love" (April 1934), "Man be my metaphor" (Poems 99).

Thomas expresses his philosophy of art throughout his career, as the dates ranging from 1930 to 1951 indicate. A reading of one of Thomas' last completed poems will not only serve to further illustrate this point but will also demonstrate how Thomas relates the role of ideas and formal matters in poetry. He viewed the two as inseparable parts of a poem. In his rejection of Surrealism, Thomas reiterated his point that the raw material of inspiration must be processed. For him, this processing is the creation of a poem. He appears to select a certain aspect of reality. This aspect transmutes itself into an image upon which he begins to build the poem. Thomas' letters to Watkins and others and his notebooks, indicate that he knew in advance how long a poem would be and would allocate the number of lines to be devoted to each section of its development. Thus compression and the maximum use of each word, a word

"as literally right as possible at the particular point in the poem" (Tolley 276), was essential to Thomas. Another essential was the internal reinforcement and elucidation of the poem by means of its structure to create a whole. The means by which Thomas created this structure is found in Thomas' prosody, which is geared towards balance, symmetry and parallelism by means of syllabic verse and rhyme. The poem discussed below is a superb example of this prosodic reinforcement that creates meaning in total, in form and in content. Ideas are connected by rhyme and by syntactic parallelism and/or sound.

"Poem On His Birthday" (written in the summer of 1951 and published that October), is the penultimate complete poem of Thomas' career and it is a summation of his perception of art and life. All the major themes of his work are brought together in one great joyous statement of affirmation.

In the mustardseed sun,
By full tilt river and switchback sea
Where the cormorants scud,
In his house on stilts high among beaks
And palavers of birds
This sandgrain day in the bent bay's grave
He celebrates and spurns
His driftwood thirty-fifth wind turned age;
Herons spire and spear.

Under and round him go

Flounders, gulls, on their cold, dying trails
    Doing what they are told,
Curlews aloud in the congered waves
    Work at their ways to death,
And the rhymer in the long-tongued room,
    Who tolls his birthday bell,
Toils towards the ambush of his wounds;
    Herons, steeple stemmed, bless.

    In the thistledown fall,
He sings towards anguish; finches fly
    In the claw track of hawks
On a seizing sky; small fishes glide
    Through wynds and shells of drowned
Ship towns to pasture of otters. He
    In his slant, racking house
And the hewn coils of his trade perceives
    Herons walk in their shroud,

    The livelong river's robe
Of minnows wreathing around their prayer;
    And far at sea he knows,
Who slaves to his crouched, eternal end
    Under a serpent cloud,
Dolphins dive in their turnturtle dust,
    The rippled seals streak down
To kill and their own tide daubing blood
    Slides good in the sleek mouth.

In a cavernous, swung
Wave's silence, wept white angelus knells.
Thirty-five bells sing struck
On skull and scar where his loves lie wrecked,
Steered by the falling stars.
And to-morrow weeps in a blind cage
Terror will rage apart
Before chains break to a hammer flame
And love unbolts the dark

And freely he goes lost
In the unknown, famous light of great
And fabulous, dear God.
Dark is a way and light is a place,
Heaven that never was
Nor will ever be is always true,
And, in that brambled void,
Plenty as blackberries in the woods,
The dead grow for His joy.

There he might wander bare
With the spirits of the horseshoe bay
Or the stars' seashore dead,
Marrow of eagles, the roots of whales
And wishbones of wild geese,
With blessed, unborn God and His Ghost,
And every soul his priest,
Gulled and chanter in young Heaven's fold
Be at cloud quaking peace.

But dark is a long way.

He, on the earth of the night, alone

With all the living, prays,

Who knows the rocketing wind will blow

The bones out of the hills,

And the scythed boulders bleed, and the last

Rage shattered waters kick

Masts and fishes to the still quick stars,

Faithlessly unto Him

Who is the light of old

And air-shaped Heaven where souls grow wild

As horses in the foam:

Oh, let me midlife mourn by the shrined

And druid herons' vows

The voyage to ruin I must run,

Dawn ships clouted aground,

Yet, though I cry with tumbledown tongue,

Count my blessings aloud:

Four elements and five

Senses, and man a spirit in love

Tangling through this spun slime

To his nimbus bell cool kingdom come

And the lost, moonshine domes,

And the sea that hides his secret selves

Deep in its black, base bones,

Lulling of spheres in the sea shell flesh,

And this last blessing most,

That the closer I move
To death, one man through his sundered hulks,
The louder the sun blooms
And the tusked, ramshackling sea exults;
And every wave of the way
And gale I tackle, the whole world then,
With ever more triumphant faith
That ever was since the world was said,
Spins its morning of praise,

I hear the bouncing hills
Grow larked and greener at berry brown
Fall and the dew larks sing
Taller this thunderclap spring, and how
More spanned with angels ride
The mansouled fiery islands! Oh,
Holier then their eyes,
And my shining men no more alone
As I sail out to die. (Poems 214-7).

This poem is written in rhymed syllabic verse. Each stanza is composed of four sets of alternate six syllable and nine syllable lines and one six syllable line. The rhyme scheme is ababcdcdc, with the "b" rhyme having consonantal or assonantal connections with the "c" rhyme, thus connecting all the six syllable lines. The prosody creates of the poem a tightly knit, highly structured expression of Thomas' philosophy and his poetics.

The "mustardseed sun" is a symbol of power and energy with the capability for great development, a manifestation of the Will to Power. The sea is another symbol of this energy, power and life. The poet, in the centre of all this energy is also in the centre of his life span. "Thirty-fifth" is centred in the line and is modified by "driftwood" and "wind turned." Both these adjectives mean driven by a moving force and water and wind are used in the same sense as in "The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower." The "house on stilts" is literally the shack which Thomas used as his study. It is also, like the image of the tower, Thomas' symbol of the body and of poetry. The poet himself, in his poetry, celebrates what has past and what is to come. He spurns the idea that middle-age is a time to start consciously dying. The "spire and spear" of the herons is syntactically parallel to the poet's "celebrate and spurn," indicating that the heron is again being used as Thomas' symbol of the poet as recorder of reality,

The "cold, dying trails" of the fish and the other birds are described as circular paths of instinctive behaviour, "under and round him . . . / Doing what they are told." The curlews who "work at their ways to death" in the writhing, "congered," waves of the sea are the links between the life of the poet and the natural scene. This line is paralleled by "Who tolls his birthday bell" and indicates that man, too, is subject to death. "Toils towards the ambush of his wounds" echoes the preceding

line and, as toil is a synonym for work, further links the poet and the natural scene. However, while the curlews' "work at" implies no awareness of the purpose, the poet's toiling towards implies both his own awareness of his goal and the poem's own striving to become. "The ambush of his wounds" is both death and the completed poem. Death is an ambush of pain because the physical nerves are dead. The "ambush of his wounds" also refers to making poetry out of the pain. The joy of writing the poem is an overcoming of the painful chaos of the initial inspiration. It is the "rhymer" who toils, that is, gives out long, measured strokes and thus creates art by imposing a form upon his inspiration. "Sings towards anguish" parallels "toils towards the ambush" and indicates a deliberate decision to rejoice and to embrace all of life, including sorrow and death. As hawks feed upon finches and otters upon fish and the victims "fly" and "glide" towards death in nature, the poet understands that death is a natural, necessary and inevitable part of the cycle and therefore must be accepted. The herons, "steeple stemmed," "bless" both poet and nature. The image of the steeple is also a tower image and an indicator of height, more fully describing the heron as the symbol of the poet.

The "slant, racking" house refers to Thomas' poem. It appears to be on the verge of tumbling down but is actually aligned by means of slant rhyme. The "hewn coils of his trade" refers to the craft of poetry.

"Coils" implies that the poet is imprisoned by the fact that the creation of art requires a lot of draining effort. This is an image recalling those of the fuse, the mouth and love in "The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower." "Hewn" implies an act of will as opposed to merely instinctive action which occurs but is not processed by the intellect and then expressed. The herons' "shroud of minnows" is wreathing. This connects bird and bard with wreath's connotation of the crowning of the poet with laurel. "Wreathing" also appears to be a pun on writhing. This connects bird and snake in a reference back to the image of the "congered waves" and bard and snake in a reference back to the "hewn coils of his trade." The pairing of bird and snake as a symbol of the union of two apparently opposing forces is an image used by other writers, such as Lawrence's use of Quetzalcoatl in The Plumed Serpent, the union of earth and sky. Nietzsche uses it as a symbol of the union of pride and wisdom in Thus Spoke Zarathustra (52-3; Prologue, sec. 10). This balanced and harmonious combination of apparently opposing forces is the summary of the qualities of a complete person, a Uebermensch, to use Nietzsche's term.

The poet knows that what he cannot actually see, life out at sea, is subject to the same forces as what he does see. There is no Platonic ideal plane or hereafter which is any different from observable reality. The image of "slaves to his crouched, eternal end" recalls a

line in another of Thomas' birthday poems, "Twenty-Four Years" (October 1938): "I crouched like a tailor / Sewing a shroud for a journey" (Poems 146). The image of the crouched, eternal end does refer to death but crouched is the usual position of a foetus and not a corpse. "Eternal end" is ambiguous. The end can be the eternity of the cycle or it can be the end that eternally recurs. Death is therefore the continuation of life, the ever present reality. "Serpent cloud" also is an image of the cyclical nature of existence.

The "wept white angelus" metaphorically refers to the bell buoy white with sea salt. The actual angelus is a bell signalling the beginning of a religious exercise repeated morning, noon and night which commemorates the Incarnation. Thomas is conducting a devotional exercise at the noon of his life and the tolling of the birthday bell is a celebration of the past and everything it contained, including sorrow and pain. The bells "sing."

The poet's future is described as being chained in a prison from which there is no exit until a concept combining joy and tragedy unlocks the exit for "dark is a way," and he goes freely in God's place, for "light is a place." "Heaven that never was / Nor will ever be is always true," is Thomas' statement that belief in the Christian God and Heaven is available to him and might offer him union with a great power. He would then "Be at cloud quaking peace." Thomas recognizes that such a perception of the afterlife does indeed offer some

comfort to those who need it. He does not need that comfort and rejects it: "But dark is a long way. / He, on the earth of the night, alone / With all the living . . . ." The here and now is all that is or can be known. The poet is part of the here and now of reality; he must and can only deal with what he perceives. The image of apocalypse follows, describing the chaos out of which Nietzsche sees the emergence of the dancing star and the apocalypse Yeats expressed in, among other of his poems, "The Second Coming." Then, after the breaking apart and the chaos, life continues.

"Faithlessly unto Him" is the completion of the clause whose verb is "prays." This prayer is made with no faith for faith implies a request to a Being, such as the Christian God, who is capable of suspending the course of natural law. Thomas does not need this belief for he knows that natural law will be fulfilled, regardless of whether or not there exists a "Him / Who is the light of old / And air shaped Heaven." Thomas merely asserts that the cycle will be completed as it will. He asks of himself that his spirit of joy will increase as he moves towards the completion of this phase. He is thankful for his perception and for the means by which he can perceive. The druid heron is the poet and a symbol drawn from a nature-based religion. The prayer is both for the poet and for his poetry, that it may continue to be the expression of his beliefs and perceptions. The blessings are the elements of which the world is created

and of which he is created; the senses that permit him to experience it all; the spirit of love in man which is the capacity to experience everything with celebration and to project this capacity which is the overcoming of self. This is a much more triumphant belief than has ever before occured to man, this belief of the Uebermensch. The power of divinity shines forth from such individuals. Thomas realizes that he is one of these individuals whose ability to express his perception in his poetry has given him eternal life. He is therefore not alone. Confident and unafraid, he "sails out to die." As in "The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower," sailing implies will, purpose and a chosen direction. Thomas has chosen the Uebermensch and in doing so has chosen to affirm the totality of life. Such an affirmation means that death is accepted as part of the ever-recurring cycle and the entrance to the next stage. Thomas does so with overwhelming joy in the confident, measured tones of the poem's closing lines.

Chapter VI

In his poetry, Dylan Thomas sought to revitalize and recreate language by every means at his disposal. These means included the rearrangement of syntax ("wrenched syntax"), the reassignment of the functions of parts of speech, transferrence of epithets, the use of words which have several denotative meanings, as defined in dictionaries, and connotative meanings created by traditional usage, puns and equivoques, etymology, the creation of compound words, the use of the materiality of words, metaphor and conceit. The use of these techniques indicates Thomas' awareness that language has the power to shape thought, that the character of language is as complex, multi-faceted and multi-levelled as life itself, that traditional context and grammar enforce traditional meanings and lull man into an unthinking assumption and acceptance of these meanings, and that the characteristics of words-as-things influence meaning and create context. Thomas was also aware that the new concepts articulated in his poetry required a new mode of expression in order to be recognized and understood.

All great poets recognize the need to find a new mode of expression and are concerned with the fluid nature of language. One thinks especially of Hopkins, Eliot and Joyce in the Modern Era. Nietzsche, while not a great poet, articulated similar concerns. In _Thus Spoke Zarathustra_, Nietzsche has the teacher of the _Uebermensch_ and of Eternal Recurrence state: "I go new

ways, a new speech has come to me; like all creators, I have grown weary of the old tongues. My spirit no longer wants to walk on worn-out soles" (108; pt. 2, sec. 1).

In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche states that "thought and word save us from the uninhibited effusion of the unconscious will" (128; sec. 21). Thus "linguistic means of expression . . . accords with our inevitable need to preserve ourselves to posit a crude world of stability, of 'things,' etc." (The Will to Power, 380; bk. 3, sec. 715). It follows from this that "interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something" (The Will to Power, 342; bk. 3, sec. 643). As a means whereby man can impose some order on the universe so as to make it intelligible, language is indispensable for man cannot think without it.[8] The individual, one who is of a higher rank than a member of the herd (The Will to Power, 403; bk. 3, sec. 766):

> "has to interpret in a quite individual way even the words he has inherited. His interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if he does not create a formula; as an interpreter he is still creative" (The Will to Power, 403; bk. 3, sec. 767).

Dylan Thomas believed that one of the functions of the poet is to interpret the world in such a way as to make experience intelligible. The poet must then communicate his unique, and therefore new, perceptions

and interpretation to others in a suitable fashion. Having recognized that paradoxes underlie all significant situations in human existence and that the world is composed of apparent contradictions and conflicting opposites, Thomas felt that conflict was essential to a poem. His use of wrenched syntax, "the salt person and blasted place / I furnish with the meat of a fable" ("Because The Pleasure-Bird Whistles," Poems 148), the reassignment of parts of speech, inversion of cliches, "my camel's eye will needle through the shroud" ("Altarwise by Owl-Light," Poems 121), and creation of compound words, "altarwise," all contribute to the creation of tensions between Thomas' innovative relationships between words and their traditional and expected relationships.

The equivoque and the pun are two of Thomas' favourite devices for the expression of his interpretation of the world and his understanding of the character of language. When normal or traditional syntax is unable to accomodate the equivoque, Thomas rearranges the syntax to achieve the best compromise with intelligibility. The use of "grave" as a noun meaning a tomb, an adjective meaning sombre, serious and gray and as a verb meaning to inscribe in "Over Sir John's Hill" is an example: "and I who hear the tune of the slow, / Wear-willow river, grave, / Before the lunge of night, the notes on this time-shaken / Stone. . ." (Poems 208). Syntactically, "grave" modifies "I," "river," and "tune"

and is the verb whose subject is "I" and whose object is "notes."

In the first chapter of Genesis, "and God said" precedes each act of creation. The Gospel according to John states: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (I, 1). To a reader of the Bible unaware of the fact that Genesis and The Gospel according to John are from totally different sources, the first Hebrew and the second Greek, several centuries apart, it would seem that John had the statement from Genesis in mind when he wrote his sentences. Even a reader aware of the sources of both books might regard the two statements as expressing a similar view of the creating ability of language. Thomas does connect these statements and uses them as a basis for his thesis that concepts are created from words created from images:

> In the beginning was the word, the word
> That from the solid bases of the light
> Abstracted all the letters of the void;
> And from the cloudy bases of the breath
> The word flowed up, translating to the heart
> First characters of birth and death. (<u>Poems</u> 97)

"Translating" implies the transmutation of ideas from one language to another. It is a means of interpretation, a means of understanding and making some

sense out of the highly significant experience of creation. The abstraction of letters also implies interpretation and organization. The poem also contains the philosophic contention, expressed by Nietzsche among other philosophers, that the concept of God is no different from any other concept, a [illegible] of man's attempt to find some rationale behind [illegible]lity.

Thomas advises his readers to pay particular attention to the fifth and sixth stanzas of "From Love's First Fever To Her Plague" by having them break the pattern of alternating stanzas of nine and six lines:

> And from the first declension of the flesh
> I learnt man's tongue, to twist the shapes of thoughts
> Into the stony idiom of the brain,
> To shade and knit anew the patch of words
> Left by the dead who, in their moonless acre,
> Need no word's warmth.
> The root of tongues ends in a spentout cancer,
> That but a name, where maggots have their X.
>
> I learnt the verbs of will, and had my secret;
> The code of night tapped on my tongue;
> What had been one was many sounding minded. (Poems 82)

"Declension" is not only a downward slope and a deterioration but a grammatical term denoting the inflection of nouns, pronouns and adjectives to indicate

case, number and gender. The "first declension of the flesh" is the deterioration that sets in at the moment of creation as well as that completion of the downward movement out of the womb which is birth. The inflection of nouns is a splitting up of the oneness of a word. For example, being is split into eight - I, thou, he, she, it, we, you and they. "What had been one was many sounding minded." "The first declension of the flesh" separates what had been one into two separate beings. It is the first step away from unity. As Thomas says in the poem's concluding stanza, "From the divorcing sky I learnt the double, / The two-framed globe that spun into a score" (Poems 82). The image is similarly split into words in order to be expressed.

"Idiom" is language characteristic of a group as well as a specific character, form or style in literature. The use of "stony" in relation to the brain connotes its being bone-bound, unable to cross set boundaries as the brain cannot physically expand because of the limitation of the skull and thought cannot expand ad infinitum because of the limitations of language. In a previous poem, "Conceive These Images in Air," Thomas referred to the fact that once an experience is expressed in words, it is no longer the experience itself with the same flowing, changeable qualities as water, air and fire. An irreversible transformation occurs and the experience becomes set like rock. But, the image of "learning to twist the shapes of thoughts / Into the

stony idiom of the brain" suggests that expression requires a deliberate action on the part of the expressor to decide to create some measure of understanding. Thomas is saying that it is unfortunate that one cannot have the thing-in-itself, but that there is no alternative to creating some measure of understanding but expression. "Knit anew the patch of words" is Thomas' expression of the Nietzschean idea that the individual must interpret the words he has inherited for himself. "Patch of words" is a pun on patch-work, fabric made of bits and pieces having no apparent relationship or cohesiveness until stitched together. This is the symbol of interpretation imposing order and intelligibility on the chaos of the universe. Twenty years later, in his final completed poem, "Prologue" to The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas, the poet reconfirmed his purpose when he called his poetry "patch / Work art" (Poems 5).

The theme of "Especially When The October Wind" is the poet's perception of the world as associated in some way with words. It demonstrates Thomas' use of the techniques discussed above.

> Especially when the October wind
> With frosty fingers punishes my hair,
> Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire
> And cast a shadow crab upon the land,
> By the sea's side, hearing the noise of birds,
> Hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,
> My busy heart who shudders as she talks
> Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words.

Shut, too, in a tower of words, I mark
On the horizon walking like the trees
The wordy shapes of women, and the rows
Of the star-gestured children in the park.
Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches,
Some of the oaken voices, from the roots
Of many a thorny shire tell you notes,
Some let me make you of the water's speeches.

Behind a pot of ferns the wagging clock
Tells me the hour's word, the neural meaning
Flies on the shafted disk, declaims the morning
And tells the windy weather in the cock.
Some let me make you of the meadow's signs;
The signal grass that tells me all I know
Breaks with the wormy winter through the eye.
Some let me tell you of the raven's sins.

Especially when the October wind
(Some let me make you of autumnal spells,
The spider-tongued, and the loud hill of Wales)
With fists of turnips punishes the land,
Some let me make you of the heartless words.
The heart is drained that, spelling in the
scurry
Of chemic blood, warned of the coming fury.
By the seas's side hear the dark-vowelled
birds.

(Poems 101-2)

Thomas creates a thematically-related sound motif with the initial letter of the word "word." There are twenty-nine "w" sounds in the poem, including "tower of words," "wordy shapes of women," and "dark-vowelled birds." Rhyme, the connection of words by means of similarities in sound, is used to organize the poem and to create of it an enclosed, free-standing entity and concept. The rhyme scheme is abbacddc. The "a" and "c" rhyme words of stanza four are the same as those of stanza one but in inverted order to create closure. The seemingly unrelated "birds" and "words" are connected by their rhyme as are "speeches" and "beeches." In other poems, Thomas uses a bird as the symbol of the poet. The poet is a man of words. Speeches and beeches are connected not only by the fact that paper is manufactured from wood but also by the druidic connection between bards and trees. The physical characteristic of sound thus parallels and enforces the conceptual characteristic of the word as symbol.

"Crabbing" and "crab" are examples of the use of words in their multiple meanings. "Crabbing" means complaining, cramping and catching crabs; "crab" is a noun meaning a crustacean and a person with a peevish disposition. The sun's light is lessening as it moves south, it is catching crabs on the beach with its light and casting a shadow smaller than the being that makes it. It is also catching the poet with its light, and as

he is a small man, his shadow is very cramped. Thomas himself may be feeling out of sorts from the constant battle with his "sullen art" and cramped by the necessity of communicating his thoughts in words which cramp and dimish them. This latter meaning is reinforced by the first line of stanza two, "Shut, too, in a tower of words." Nietzsche articulated this problem inherent in language in The Gay Science. "Even one's thoughts one cannot reproduce entirely in words" (215; bk. 3, sec. 244). The pain of realizing that the setting down of an insight in words often kills it rather than communicates it (Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 239; bk. 4, sec. 298) can be intense for a poet. Words are indeed "heartless." They are also heartless because their reality is only that of sound and shape. Their meanings are imposed by man's definitions and man's arrangements. Meaning is therefore an imposition of perception. The "heartless words" is also a transferred epithet for the heart, having been drained by the shedding of its "syllabic blood" is now empty of words. It cannot state anything more, the poem is complete.

The poet feels the cold wind and "shudders" means to tremble with cold. However, shuddering as an action of the heart shedding and draining has the sexual connotation associated with the sending forth of seed to create, recalling Yeats' "A shudder in the loins engenders there" ("Leda and the Swan," in Yeats 214). "The heart is drained that, spelling in the scurry / Of

chemic blood, warned of the coming fury" in the last stanza of Thomas' poem refers back to this association of impending destruction resulting from creation.

In Thomas' poetic vocabulary, the tower is a symbol of man. The "tower of words" is therefore the body. The poet as a user of words is fated to be bound in his flesh tower and still try to make the world meaningful in words. The Bible story of the Tower of Babel tells how disaster and madness resulted from its builders being rendered incapable of communicating with and understanding each other. The tower is thus also a symbol of the divisive power of words and the origin of the many meanings of individual words. Words dominate the poet's vision of his environment as the structure of a tower dominates its landscape. "Shut, too, in a tower of words" also refers to the fact that man is forcibly confined by the necessity of using words to think and to create concepts and an immediate and complete access to experience is impossible. This is a crucial concept in Nietzsche's philosophy expressed in Sections 16 and 17 of Part One of Beyond Good and Evil. There may appear to be a contradiction between the view of words Thomas articulates in this poem and his penchant for linguistic play. However, as it is possible to be locked in a room and still play with the objects in that room, the poet locked in his tower of words can still play with those words, rearrange them, build things such as poems with them. What he cannot escape is the necessity of words

themselves. The poet is also aware of the bounds of intelligibility. While no law exists that says poetry must not be obscure to readers, Thomas wants his work to be an intelligible expression. There is no escape, one requires words in order to think.

The key verbs in Thomas' poem are "make," "tell," and "spell." Make is repeated five times, always within the clause "some let me make you of." "Tell" is repeated four times, once in the clause "some let me tell you of" which parallels "some let me make you of" and creates synonyms of "make" and "tell." These clauses are also an example of Thomas' technique of syntactical inversion. "To make" is to create and to compose a poem. "To tell" is to make known in words. Making and telling are indeed synonymous terms for the poet who is an interpreter and creator. "Spell" is repeated twice in the last stanza, in "spells" and in "spelling." As a noun it not only means a continuing type of weather and a short period of time, both of which meanings lie on the surface of the poem's literal description of the scene; but also a magical formula, a state of enchantment and a short illness or faint. The noun derives from the Old English, "spel" meaning a story (OED). The transitive verb "spell" means to form or be the letters of a word and to signify. The verb derives from the Old English "gespelia" - substitute (OED). In the context of this poem, "spell" has all of its nominal and verbal definitions, including its definitions in both the

nominal and verbal etymologies. In its very form of "to form", "spell" is synonymous with make and tell. It is indeed a spell that the poet as word magician puts the world under, the formula which makes the world intelligible, puts it into a state of enchantment where reality is ordered and perception forms the world. But it is not an enduring situation for the words themselves are flexible as shown by the existence of multiple meanings. They have developed from their original source and have been interpreted anew by successive definitions, alterations and substitutions. Thus it is that all of these meanings and the meaning of meaning as plurality, are intended by Thomas' use of the word.

The poem is achieved by Thomas' use of linguistic techniques that integrate his Nietzschean concept that what one calls "the world" is a personal interpretation, containment and thus mastery of the perpetual change and flux of what is actually occuring, the process of becoming.

Chapter VII

The purpose of this thesis has been to point out and discuss the affinities between the work of Thomas and the concepts expressed by Nietzsche, in an attempt to extend the range of previous studies of Thomas' poetry. In his expression of the Nietzschean concepts of Eternal Recurrence and the *Uebermensch*, Thomas followed in the path of Yeats, a path which bears many similarities to that of Blake. In his use of language and syntax, Thomas bears a resemblance to certain other Modern and Contemporary poets, both British and American. To my knowledge, none of these relationships has been examined in depth.

In *Working With Structuralism*, David Lodge makes the following statement :

> . . . modernist literature . . . intuitively accepted or anticipated Saussure's view of the relationship between signs and reality. Modernism turned its back on the traditional idea of art as imitation and substituted the idea of art as an autonomous activity. One of its most characteristic slogans was Walter Pater's assertion, "All art constantly aspires to the condition of music" - music being, of all the arts, the most purely formal, the least referential, a system of signifiers without signifieds, one might say. The fundamental principle of aesthetics before the modern era was that art imitates life, and is therefore in

> the last analysis answerable to it: art must tell the truth about life, and contribute to making it better, or at least more bearable. . . . "Life imitates art", declared Oscar Wilde, meaning that we compose the reality we perceive by mental structures that are cultural, not natural in origin, and that it is art which is most likely to change and renew those structures when they become inadequate or unsatisfying. (5)

The modernist assertions that all art aspires to the condition of music and that life imitates art are two to which Nietzsche himself devoted much thought. Both Structuralism and Deconstruction evolved from Saussure's theories and both have acknowledged their indebtedness to Nietzsche's philosophy and his perception of language and its role. The common denominator of Nietzsche's work may thus first appear to provide some basis for an application of the methods of Structuralism and Deconstruction to the works of Modernist poets like Thomas whose affinities with Nietzsche are strong and who were exposed to Nietzschean concepts in the course of their lives and careers as poets. The temptation is made even greater by Thomas' kinship, expressed in such poems as "In The Beginning" and "From Love's First Fever To Her Plague" to Culler's definition of Derrida's "metaphysics of presence" as that:

> which longs for a truth behind every sign: a moment of original plenitude when form and

> meaning were simultaneously present to
> consciousness and not to be distinguished.

However, as Lodge points out:

> Postmodernism continues the modernist critique of traditional realism, but it tries to go beyond or around or underneath modernism, which for all its formal experiment and complexity held out to the reader the promise of meaning, if not of a meaning. (12)

As has been seen in preceding chapters, Thomas did express a modernist theory of poetry by means of his poetic works. He worked from a central core of meaning and insisted that his poems must have meaning. He used phonetics and rhythm to stress a particular phrase or concept, and metric and sound patterns such as assonance, alliteration and rhyme to produce a correlative to parallel the meaning. He used form to impose a definite order upon his poems. The promise of meaning implies that the world can be interpreted in some way. Postmodernism views the world as resistant to meaning.

It is this different approach to meaning that makes it impossible to apply a theory such as Deconstruction to Thomas' work, despite the shared debt to Nietzsche. The truth of Lodge's statement that "each mode operates according to different and identifiable formal principles . . . (15)," is apparent in this case.

But Nietzsche's influence was not only felt by the developers and expounders of literary theory. Of more

relevance to the study of Thomas and his place in British literature, is Nietzsche's direct or indirect influence on other British poets. With the recognition of the Nietzschean elements in Thomas' work, it is possible to discern links between him and the poets who succeeded him. There is also scope for investigation of the affinities between Thomas and the Heroic Vitalists, as well as contemporary poets who bear affinities with the Heroic Vitalists, who can clearly be seen in the path of Nietzsche, a path running alongside that of Blake.

This much work remains to be done in light of the recognition of the Nietzschean elements in Thomas' work. If a little light can be shed on what still remains in darkness, then the wish for Thomas' work made by Elder Olsen will be fulfilled.

Notes

[1] Arthur Symons (1865-1945) was a close friend of W.B. Yeats (who also edited a volume of Blake) which confirms his awareness of these connections. In 1899, Symons dedicated his Symbolist Movement in Literature to Yeats and began the work with a quotation from Carlyle. Symons also edited the Savoy, a magazine that attracted the most brilliant and advanced minds of the time.

[2] Dylan Thomas, "Letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson" in Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters, ed. Paul Ferris (Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., 1985), p. 25. (hereinafter cited as Letters). Pamela Hansford Johnson (1912-81), later Lady Snow, was a poet and budding novelist. She and Thomas shared a literary friendship by correspondence started when she wrote to him in September 1933. This friendship became a love affair in early 1934 but subsided soon after Thomas moved to London.

[3] Although Thomas never acknowledged it, the long poem, "Poet: 1935" is redolent of Yeatsian imagery, swans and lakes. The poem also contains a phrase "fresh images" from Yeats' "Byzantium," and Thomas' final stanza describes the poet looking down from a window. This latter image recalls Yeats' tower poems. This long poem also uses the image of the tower which frequently occurs in Thomas' work a symbol of man and a symbol of poetry.

[4] Herbert Read, Annals of Innocence and Experience, as quoted by Salmon, p. 88.

[5] Daniel Jones, "Note to Poem No. 117" in Poems, p. 273.

[6] The publication of Dylan Thomas' letters has subsequently shown that Olson's assumptions about the sources of the images of these poems are generally unfounded, as it seems most unlikely that Thomas had had any exposure to these mythologies. This does not undermine the importance of Olson's achievement in showing that Thomas' poems have discoverable meanings.

[7] "The equivoque is a special type of pun. It is the use of a single word or phrase which has two disparate meanings, in a context which makes both meanings equally relevant" (Abrams, Glossary 149).

[8] A lengthy discussion takes place in Sections 521 and 522 of Book 3 of The Will to Power, pp. 282-3, the salient points of which are summarized here.

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