

## The Traces of Post-Pastoral Possibilities in Dylan Thomas's poems: “F TG F D F” and “R M D F C L”

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### Abstract

*The target of this study addresses Dylan Thomas's “The Force That Through The Green Fuse Drives The Flower” and “A Refusal to Mourn The Death, by Fire, of a Child in London” in which two eco-centric outlooks known as the creative-destructive process and the interwoven echoes of culture as nature and nature as culture have origins in Terry Gifford's post-pastoral literature. Within an eco-poetic paradigm, Thomas's eco-critical orientation manifested in natural elements, portrays both possibilities of inspiring and soulless reflection. He believes the cognitive process of death and rebirth appeared in the confrontation of pastoral and anti-pastoral realities involves all minorities, whether human or non-human beings. In fact, the inherent roles of communities are needed to dominate an oriented path which not only does it show individual's complexities and awareness in each side, but also make a bridge to reconcile the created gap. Consequently, Thomas's apt imagination of both symbols and natural images ironically summons a prophetic mission entrenched in post-pastoral approach.*

**Keywords:** Post-pastoral, Creative-Destructive Process, Minorities, Eco-poetic Paradigm, prophetic mission

### 1. Introduction

Dylan Thomas, a biographer, and who is recently well-known as an eco-poet, was born on October 27, 1917, in Swansea, South Wales. Thomas's artistic virtuosity of complexities deepened in his manuscripts spatially in the terms of devastation and construction abides in the

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inspiration of Romanticism, and this is often conspicuous in many artworks of romantic poets like Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, etc. Thomas's selective poems, "F T G F D F" and "R M D F C L" are two of the critical sources of nature-thinking approach and environmental difficulties. His selected poems show Thomas as a defender of blamelessness, whether human, nature, or even species. For Thomas, both deforestation and denaturing are inherently paralleled with the death of humanity and civilization. Undeniably, Man's anthropocentric position within the universe accepts any disturbances which disorder the utopia's conventions or "what Arcadia promised" (Gifford, 1999, 149).

## **2. Methodology**

Thomas was a designer of artworks, and his poetic elements, such as imageries, rhythms, forms, diction, paradoxes, metaphors, symbols both in the repulsion and the attraction framework, born out of the need for a term which describes any kind of literature or pattern of the narrative "which escapes the closed circuit of pastoral and reactive anti-pastoral, and take[s] responsibility for our problematic, responsibility with our natural homeground, from slugs to our solar system, from genes to galaxies, or as Marvell puts it, all that can be encompassed by a green Thought in a green Shade" (Gifford 2006, p. 57). Consequently, in the following poems, Gifford's post-pastoral traces formed in eco-poetic components will be exhibited in Dylan Thomas's mainspring stimulation.

## **3. Discussion**

### *3.1 The Force in Dynamic Framework*

'The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower' (1934) is a brief lyric which invites the literary critics to the ceremony of complexities. Furthermore, the oversized arrays of repetitive themes, collection of syntaxes and concepts are considerably noticeable. It commences with an extended sentence, including four stanzas of five lines each:

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 into 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. (F T G F D F lines: 1-22)

Given the rhyme scheme, there is a pattern *a b a b a*, broken by 'lime' and roughly becomes *a a b a b* within the fourth stanza; however, its rhyme carries out some arrays of argumentative maneuvers. Thomas's dualistic voice in the first stanza accompanied by other stanzas addresses "the recognition of a creative-destructive universe in balance in a continuous momentum of birth and death, death and rebirth, growth and decay, ecstasy and dissolution" (Gifford, 1999, p.153). He immediately puts emphasis on 'the force' which conveys the superb burden of energy for the inevitable cycle.

This force in a polarized mode is possibly manifested in the boyhood of the poet before the Second World War. In fact, through the application of '*green age*', the poet's springtime is highlighted as an inspired process. As it is perceived, the employment of the word '*green*' is suggestive, stressing the identity of man or the natural environment. It elaborates "[...] an

Arcadia of a childhood of innocence and ease, where decency [is] the key value...” (ibid, p.43).

Below is a portrait of an Arcadian Utopia:



**Figure 1: An Arcadian Landscape**

Here, a convincing argument would be detectable as ‘the green fuse drives the flower’ is “a bold peasantry” (ibid, p.44), which might be a constitutional render for shedding boundless lights on a pastoral delightful where there’s an absolute quietness, thus all blissful cheerleaders dance in glee. The following quotation affirms an ample illustration of Arcadia:

It was a wondrous sight. The wood was green as mosses of the Icy Glen; trees stood high and haughty, feeling their living sap; the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver’s loom with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures. (Marx, 1964, p. 311)

Thomas’s proclamation of the ‘Green age’ could even be a tempestuous power of sexual vivacity which has been overlooked on account of the values of natural fertility “[thereupon]... the poem demonstrates one of the fundamental features of Thomas’s early poetry in the sense that the speaker is inspired by the immediate perception of his own body, as the center of a world which is felt as an extension of their functional processes” (Stephens, 1972, p.32).

On the flip side, such a sexual provocation would even be deleterious and might ‘blasts the roots of trees’ which symbolically construed as man's suppressing moments, for that reason, the poet moans: ‘[I am] dump to tell the crooked rose’. The much-discussed factor stems from Freud’s argumentative theory considering if a person is deviated from what’s normal from infantile sexuality function or “the state of libidinal dysfunction” (Ellis, 2008, p.115), then, the result can be psychological pressures such as addiction or neurosis, which might be emerged in men's adulthood. As it is obvious from Freudian psychology, in circulation, there have been various genres of neurosis including actual neurosis, psychoneurosis, transference neurosis,

narcissistic neurosis, but what specifically stands out is traumatic neuroses, generated by the primary and then the terror of the Second World War, which shows how olden times articulate the roots of human history. Thomas's sexual urge portrayed in 'the same wintry fever' might also be as a consequence of traumatic neurosis emanated from the poverty-stricken situation of the War. It's relevant that the force that 'blasts the roots of trees' could also be the loss of innocence of Thomas's boyhood, since he abandoned school at the age of 16 and had been involved as a reporter for approximately fifteenth months. In fact, stepping into adulthood in his youthfulness approves a massive alteration: "Loss of innocence is a kind of transfiguration, which suggests the outburst of the loss of happiness for those children who lost their world of childhood due to the influx of industrialization" which presents "unsafe working conditions" as an unwelcomed gift for "the hapless children" (Zohrab Baigy, 2014, p.35). Attributing to the second stanza, a further example is also cited for the creative and destructive cycles. The poet bestows a destructive authority to 'the force' which 'dries the mouthing streams' and turns them to 'wax', However, he was dumped to narrate such a tragedy. It should be stressed that, the poet perhaps addresses those people who are repressed by the sterility of affection and involved with a traumatic neurosis. Consequently, the unleashed hands of the Second World War chronically revealed humankind's physical and mental disabilities:

We would stop to visit with physically crippled men who navigated their wheelchairs along the sidewalks, but there were also clusters of shell-shocked men who simply gazed out at the water. Their bodies were sound but they had no minds. The most severely shocked men were kept in a large building with barred windows. Dr. McCann said that when they became violent, they were calmed down with electric shock or alternating hot and cold baths. These mentally crippled veterans both frightened and shamed me. (Standifer, 1998, p.30-1)

There is a possibility that how the minds of soldiers were altered by the mass destruction of war. Apparently, this massive suffering simulates Thomas's hard times in which "[those] traumatized by twentieth-century wars speak of their problem as an inability to forget, as an uncomfortable consciousness of being possessed [and] 'haunted' by a past. They cannot put behind them, and which continually intrudes in their present lives, waking and sleeping" (Leed, 2000, p.86).

The speculative term ‘Dump’ is also noteworthy. ‘Dump’ means silent, speechless, and incapable of generating any discourses. The poet’s technique of utilizing dumps monitors the dark side of the war, which encompasses the innocent spirits of folk, soldiers, and even nature. On the other hand, the inability to inform reality ironically accuses both sorrow and the agents of the War. It is pertinent to incorporate that such a profound silence also refers to ecological crises such as soil contamination, and deforestation as consequences of bombardments; thus, ‘the mountain spring [is] the same mouth sucks’. Thomas meticulously employs the natural elements to depict whether the walls of silence or the obscuring of the universe, proclaiming the loss of nature, species, civilization, and in brief, what values are lost on top of the conventional illusions. More explicitly, an inarticulate tongue not only displays an opportunity in which Thomas could be a war-all-knowing, but also a war-wounded soul. Leed argues, “silence is an essentially social act, not in nature. It presumes a non-response from another, a failure of communication. The tacit non-communication about the war after it was over created the gap between combatants and non-combatants noticeable to everyone after the war” (ibid, p.90). Thomas’s silence molded within the pattern of interrelatedness and earth-centered approach brings up a meticulous awareness of activism against any anti-pastoral realities. Such as awareness “[awakes] the sense of being beyond the traps of the pastoral, of being aware of some of the problematic of the pastoral, of pushing into the complexities of celebration and responsibility, of being a part of nature and yet uneasy with relationship of ownership and exploitation” (Gifford, 2012, p.74).

In the third stanza, ‘[the] hand that whirls the water in the pool’ has an ample capacity to encounter alternative complications. In this stanza, the poet’s fright echoes a mysterious dirge of death and mortality. To be more precise, by employing the sailor’s bewilderment of both the sharp edge of the dead and the life, he tries to donate power to nature. Hence, the vivid portrait of ‘the blowing wind’ summons the breaking trumpet of death upon the groans of all creatures. Moreover, it is an outstanding personification of Thomas’s virtuosity, which implies the power of nature symbolically is the voice of nature. As a result, making a shield to protect its species against denaturing is not a far-fetched metaphor. During this stanza, ‘the hanging man’ is both “[an] embryo, banging from the navel string in the womb and also [an] executed criminal, or Christ on the cross, maybe” (Afrougheh, et al., 2013, p.256). An eco-centric argument might be presumed that evoking ‘the hangman’s lime’ in a sense of the mysterious duality of nature unveils death as an inevitable destination, even though, neither decay nor growth is dominant.

In the fourth stanza, the poet alters his frustrated tone. Thomas holistically presents some rays of secretive transcendental outbursts like ‘Love drips’ and ‘heaven round the stars’ to claim that there is an “awareness of both nature as culture and of culture as nature” (Gifford 1999, p. 161). By depicting of ‘heaven’, under the pressure of ‘time’, “consciousness [not only] comes with conscience” (ibid, 163), but also an everlasting sublimity has been heightened. It should be pointed out that the heavenly images welcome the attendance of all blessings of nature or “inimitable softness” (Marx,1974, 215), within human’s awe of the natural force. By employing these natural symbols and myths, he circuitously divulges that “awe is transformed into humility” (Gifford,1999, p.163), Consequently, human heart beats for nature in all dimensions. The last section of the poem, presumably packed with lots of ambiguous meanings, demonstrates a weird sense of the creative and destructive process. However, the poet is also incapable of pointing out the transparency of ‘lover’s tomb’. Moreover, by giving the ‘crooked worm’, maybe the poet flashes back to his springtime reversely.

### *3.2 The Death in Honourable Framework*

“A refusal to mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London”, shaped into a romantic skeleton, was written and published in 1945, in his *Death and Entrances*. Unquestionably, this poem presents a song of grief; however, the poet enlarges that it is often the death of glorious for children. It begins with an extended sentence, including four stanzas of six lines each:

Never until the mankind making

Bird beast and flower

Fathering and all humbling darkness

Tells with silence the last light breaking

And the still hour

Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round

Zion of the water bead

And the Synagogue of the ear of corn  
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound  
Or sow my salt seed  
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

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

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,  
Robed in the long friends,  
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,  
Secret by the unmourning water  
Of the riding Thomas,  
After the first death, there is no other. (RMDFCL lines: 1-24)

In this poem, not only does Thomas employ the unification of both life and death, but he also awakes all societies. "The exploitation of the planet is of the same mindset as the exploitation of women and minorities" (Gifford, 1999, p.164). By commencing mechanization and also the onset of the Second World War, which both have a great deal of industrialization, the vulnerable paradigms have always been overlooked. As a result, minorities, including innocent



boys or girls, are crucial subjects. Thomas implicitly highlights the role of experience, which originated in war hazards and ecological considerations.

In the first stanza, both ambiguous juxtaposition of ‘bird beast’ and ‘flower’, simultaneously, take Thomas's critics to the dark-side of life resulted in the long-term impact of the war namely air pollution, malnutrition, disease, lack of sanitation, and even the death of innocent children. Substantially, the massive amounts of radioactive, toxins and waste generated by man’s experience of using weapons not only encompass the pastoral life, but also leads youngsters to fatal illnesses such as asthma, hysteria, pestilence, and skin and internal infection. In keeping with Goldson, “During 2942, 18.6% of the infants dies in the neonatal period; 7.3% of term infants and 39% of preterm infants succumbed. These deaths were related to scleroderma, pneumonia, intracranial, hemorrhage, prematurity, and congenital debility” (1996, p.810). In follow up with this stanza, the word 'silence', exposes the frightening nightmare upon the heads of innocent blossoms as their sanctuaries were sentenced to lose, their dynasties were deserted, and all both beating and effective sexual force were ineffectual. Below is an image which portrays the children who were massively fraught by war consequences:



**Figure2: The Trauma of Family Separation**

The picture definitely reveals that, owing to a myriad of causes, many of them were forced to abandon their houses since the main pillars of their families were irrevocably destroyed. It is pertinent to include that “children were killed- in the bombing and fighting- whilst defending their countries. Children worked for underground movements and, if caught, suffered fates similar to those of adults” (qtd. In shields, et al., page, 89).

By crossing Thomas’s death orientation established in the former stanza, it might be expected that a blissful rain would fade all the causes of pains. The poet portrays death as a renewal of life and the child as a tender bud “[is] returning to the ‘Zion of the water bead’ or

‘Synagogue of the ear of corn’ [which] are considered [as] the holy city of Israel, the place God lives and His people” (Cabral, 2005, p.10). Undoubtedly, this regeneration confirms that “[...] all destruction [is] really creation” (Gifford,1999, p.155). By proclaiming this regenerative approach, the poet authorizes the syllogistic vision of this process. Syllogism is an interlinked tender that introduces three sectors counting a serious premise, a premise, and a conclusion, which are well-manifested in a cosmic process. As history serves, this is an innovative concept from the philosopher Aristotle, which had been employed by Plato. The subsequent syllogistic reasoning of Plato elicited from Novak might also be outstanding:

"What do we call something which is not able to receive in itself death?

"Non-mortal"

"The soul is not able to receive in itself death? "

"No."

The soul then is a non-mortal thing?

"A thin non-mortal". (Novak, 2003, p. 2-3)

To brief, such a compelling argument could prove that “[if] anything that is not able to receive into itself death is non-marital, the soul is not able to receive into itself death. THEREFORE, the soul is non-mortal” (Novak, 2003, p.5). Thomas’s unification of sacred images seems to cancel out the inevitable death for a tranquilized journey where they will be turned to non-human, such as ‘sand’, ‘seed’, and ‘water’, or the microcosm combined with the macrocosm, which summons the source of life:

[T]he body is equated in pagan terms with the images of death \_\_ the earth, plants, birds, and darkness \_\_ and is regenerated only through the cycle of nature. The soul is associated with the images of water, light, Zion, Synagogue, and fecundity, images which, in the Judeo Christian context, symbolize eternal life. (Qtd. In Cabral, 2005, p.13)

The third stanza also sustains Thomas’s promise of a supreme gift for vulnerable children. By applying ‘The majesty and burning of the child’s death’, the poet tries to convince both himself

and his readers that the child, who died so heroically, is converted to the majestic company of spotless macrocosms. Such a claim has conveyed both fruitful and generative outgrowths:

Although the child dies, as will all mankind itself someday, and returns to the natural elements, once her body disintegrates, she will experience a paganistic regeneration because her decayed body will furnish rich soil and minerals to nourish the plants which spring from the earth... This paradoxical linking of death and creation does not only form the central analogy upon which the poem is based; also, to anticipate a little, we will see that in the linking sub-analogies in the next stanzas of the poem, the religious images suggest, by extrapolation, correspondences to the metaliterary world or the cultural matrix of the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions that Thomas is employing. (Sunderman, p.25)

This controversial quotation has eased the pain of death's sheering horror, since the poet claims an 'Elegy of innocence and youth'. In fact, he ironically refutes any sense of anti-pastoral life or hierarchical rationalization between man's experience and nature's innocence when the minorities are unchained fragments of an eco-centric entity.

The poet ends the last stanza up by juxtaposing an interestingly ambiguous proclamation: 'the first dead lies London's daughter' and [...] after the first death, there is no other'. He confirms that nothing is larger than nature. Notwithstanding the primary impression of death breaks the children's trembling knees down, the poet strongly holds the idea that the second demising is the rebirth of nature.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Whether the massive transfiguration of the earth or people's disconnection from Nature's voice resulted from the augmentation of modernization and Industrialization would have controversially been a significant consideration of Thomas Dylan's poetry. Furthermore, the alteration of human's mind for new experience has applied the extinction danger for both pastureland and humanity. Not only does Thomas try to reconcile the gap between urbanization and conventional idealization, but also to search out any ways of responsibility oriented in the imperative concept of post-pastoral literature. Having taken the first poem 'F T G F D F' into account, Thomas presents humanity that the life-force brings both generative activities and destruction, which the second is hungry to suck life in all of its manifestations. While, in the

second poem 'R M D F C L', he puts emphasis on the glorification of death, which has roots in the Christian tradition. Therefore, all creatures, whether birds, flowers, or even children, are saints united in their death.

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of Innocence in William Blake's The Little Boy Lost and The Little Boy Found'.  
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### **Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used in the manuscript and any other citations are based on the APA principle.

**F T G F D F**..... The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives  
the Flower

**R M D F C L**..... A refusal to mourn the Death, by Fire, of a  
Child in London

### **Figures:**

<https://www.classicalpoet.org/essay-pastoral-poetry-arcadia-through-the-ages/> : Figure 1

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/06/19> Figure 2