

I. REMINISCENCES OF CHILDHOOD IN POETRY

One facet of human consciousness is the awareness of time. Humans feel the passage of time in their personal experience and observe it in their environment. They feel, think and act in the time flow.

Indeed, time is a constant flow that leaves changes behind as it moves forward. It is the general medium in which all events take place in succession. All specific and finite periods of time, whether present, past or future, constitute merely parts of the entire and single Time. So, it is a point or period when something occurs.

Actually, time appears to be more puzzling. It seems to flow or people seem to advance through it but the passage or advance seems to be unintelligible. It is because time, as experienced, is a one-way flow at a pace that is slow enough to be perceptible. But it is one of the major fascinations of poets. The poets, through their creative power, make intelligible what is unintelligible. In their work, they capture the fleeting moment through literary reminiscences or visions and defy the flow of time.

Reminiscences are the most typical products of human memory. They are primarily the recollections of past events or situations. Each and every individual holds such reminiscences. Without reminiscences, all our experiences would be lost as soon as they ended and each new situation would be totally unfamiliar. We would also lose the richness that reminiscences give to life – the pleasure of happy remembrances as well as the sorrows of unhappy ones.

Reminiscences, especially of childhood, are recollected and treasured by many poets in their poems. A particular incident, experience, object, music or landscape rich in childhood association inspire poets to explore the lost past again. Childhood differs from person to person. Childhood is generally considered to be blissful, innocent and joyous but this may not

be true to all. There are many poets who have presented childhood like that of Adam in the garden of Eden before the Fall. They obsessively try to recapture childhood again and regard maturity as a kind of fall. Some poets privilege adulthood in terms of advancement of knowledge and experience. Many poets recall their childhood experiences in their poems to contrast childhood with the world of adulthood and to project their perspective toward childhood. In this way, the purpose of the exploration of childhood differs from poet to poet. This depends upon the attitude of the poet towards childhood.

In the 17th century, religious poets like Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne showed their interest in childhood as a state of innocence and grace. Henry Vaughan has presented a feeling of distance from the original innocence of childhood and a desire to recapture the lost visionary moment of that time. In his poem "The Retreat", he says:

Happy those early dayes' when I

Shin'd in my Angell-infancy.

[.....]

Some men a forward motion love.

But I by backward steps would move.

And when this dust falls to the urn

In that state I came return. (1-4, 29-32)

Vaughan recalls and regrets the days of his childhood, and tells how the vision of celestial things had grown weaker with passing years. He suggests that he had the perception and privilege of the original Adam during his childhood. He doesn't hesitate to show his yearning for childhood. Rather, he obsessively attempts to recapture what is already lost.

During neoclassical period, the creative artists gave more emphasis to reason than imagination. They brought intellect rather than poetic imagination into play. Poetry in this period worked within relatively narrow limits. It reflected life. The neoclassical poets made their poetry more social than personal, more intellectual than imaginative, more rule based than spontaneous and more formal than familiar. So they did not value childhood reminiscence as poetic subject matter highly.

During the Romantic period, creative artists immensely emphasized on imagination, emotion and creativity of the individual artist. The romantic artists expressed the independence of the individual, the assertion of the self against creed and authority. In their art, they transport us to the land of heart's desire, where the stubborn facts of life are modified, fate falls away and men are as gods. This is the territory of imagination. They favoured innovation as against traditionalism in the materials, forms and styles of literature. They ventured upon the new territory for subject matter, eschewed the critical canons as received and devised for themselves principles. These poets put themselves into their art and expressed their personality, their longings and hopes. With these poets, the relation of the poem to the poet became more important than its relation with the reader. Reminiscences or memories of the poet also became highly important subject matter of poetry.

William Wordsworth has written beautiful poems on the basis of past experiences. He has even defined poetry as "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; that takes its origin from the emotion recollected in tranquility" (Adams, 436). His "Ode: Intimation of Immortality from Recollection of Early childhood" is a fine sample of 18th century meditative poetry. The poet meditates on the loss of the divine original vision that the child was born with, attempts to explain the nature and causes of loss; and, at last, deals with the compensating gain of philosophical vision by the grown up poet. The ode begins thus:

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,
 To me did seem
 Appareled in celestial light,
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.
 It is not now as it hath been of yore;
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,
 By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more. (Bowra, 84-85)

The poet presents two experiences: of childhood and of maturity and shows a fine contrast between these two.

D.H. Lawrence has written some fine poems on nostalgia. The keynote of his poem entitled "Piano" (qtd. from Abrams), is nostalgia for childhood. The speaker of the poem is overwhelmed in his adulthood by childhood memories when he hears the melody of a piano:

Safely, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me,
 Taking me back down the vistas of years, till I see
 A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
 And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.
 (Abrams, 2347)

In the evening, a woman is singing softly to the speaker. This gets him remember how his mother used to teach him to play the piano while he was a small child. He goes back to the days of his childhood and memory of those days comes to him vividly. As a small child, he used to sit by the lap of his mother and among the glorious burst of music, he would stay

there. His mother would give him caressing smile and play the piano. Today, he has achieved mastery over the art of playing the piano. But the nostalgic past troubles him again and again and he weeps to remember those lovely days of the past:

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour

With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour

Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast.

Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

(Abrams, 2347)

The theme of childhood reminiscence is more powerfully and beautifully expressed in the poems of Dylan Thomas, a creative genius of 20th century English Literature. Extreme dependence on the experiences of childhood and the desire to recapture it is a major characteristic of his poems. His poems recount the childhood experiences and also trace the development of the perspective and experience of the boy – his mental life – in the natural world of Swansea. Thomas's "Fern Hill" is a typical poem on this subject. In this poem, the poet laments the loss of childhood joys and innocence by recreating childhood spontaneity and implying both its transience and its contrast with the poet's adult existence. Though the poem has six stanzas, it can be divided into two parts in terms of subject matter accommodated within it. In the beginning of this poem, the poet presents joyous experiences of a child in the form of "Fern Hill". The boy is presented so happy that he was like that of Adam living in the heaven before the fall:

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs

About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,

The night above the dingle starry,

Time let me hail and climb

Golden in the heydays of his eyes,

And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns (1-6)

But in the second part of the poem, we are suddenly brought to a different reality. We see that the poet now realizes that the paradise has forever gone. The childhood mode of blissful existence has fled with the night of the adult consciousness :

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea. (50-54)

But, fortunately, the poet is able to sing (about the loss) within the constraints of adult existence and the grief of loss. That is the only silver lining in the dark clouds of adult life : art redeems. "Fern Hill" is however, at the end, Thomas's victory over what he laments. The green and golden joy of childhood and the shadowy sorrow of maturity become the joy of art.

Reminiscences are very important aspects of human existence. Especially childhood reminiscences have attracted many creative artists who have created beautiful works of art on this subject. Indeed, childhood is a very important and fascinating part of human life. But, it is true that no one can stay in the heaven of childhood for ever. As time passes or as man grows up, childhood also passes away. After that, only memories remain. Creative artists handle such memories productively. Memories adopted in works of art can not be regarded as purely factual accounts. They are rather literary works and must be interpreted as such.

II. CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF DYLAN THOMAS'S POETRY

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), a Welsh poet born in Swansea, is widely regarded as one of the Twentieth Century's most influential lyrical poets and possibly amongst the finest of all times. From the very beginning of his childhood, he was physically delicate and a dedicated devotee to the art of poetry. He was a voracious reader from his childhood. Due to recurrent illness, he spent many months in bed, which gave him time for reading. He began writing verses when he was eight years old, entered the Swansea Grammar School at the age of eleven, and by his early teens had chosen his vocation : he was to be a poet. Academically, he was not a success. He regularly appeared near the bottom of his class in terminal reports but he was very much interested in English.

Dylan Thomas's father, David Thomas, an English Literature teacher at Swansea Grammar School, was himself a lover of poetry. Dylan spent much of his time in his father's study, which was particularly rich in its collection of English poetry. Thomas left school at the age of seventeen, having passed no major examinations. Later, he became a reporter on *The South Wales Evening Post*, sometimes writing scathing reviews and critiques of local plays and concerts. It was a time of rapid development, for, as a reporter, his knowledge of life was greatly extended and, during this period, he started drinking. During this very productive writing period of Dylan's life, he also became known locally for the offbeat jokes, stories and obscene limericks he told in the pubs at night. Along with writing, Thomas was also involved with local theatre, both writing and acting.

Gradually, Thomas's eyes were now turned towards London. He had, by this time, written some of the poems that were to be included in *Eighteen Poems*, his first volume of poems, and was beginning to evolve into a distinctive and original style that characterizes his poetry. He felt it necessary now to live in London : he must make a name for himself as a poet; it was time to meet influential poets and to enjoy the company of other young writers.

In any case, he was beginning to find his bohemianism a little difficult to maintain in Wales with his reputation as a poet not yet established. So, he moved to London in the second half of 1933 when he was approaching his nineteenth birthday.

After moving to London in pursuit of better opportunities, Dylan's writing career continued to flourish. In London, he first became known as a poet by contributing poems to, and winning prizes from the poetry pages of *The Sunday Referee*, edited by Victor Neuberg. *The Sunday Referee* finally financed the publication of his first volume *Eighteen Poems* (1934), which marks the beginning of his literary career. In September 1936, his second volume *Twenty-Five Poems* appeared. These early volumes of poems received rave reviews. Commenting upon Thomas's early volumes, John Ackerman argues :

Thomas began publishing in the thirties but from the very beginning he was neither a political nor an intellectual poet. The first impact of *Eighteen poems* and, two years later, of *Twenty Five Poems*, lay in their originality: they were unlike any other poetry written in English at the time. Certainly there were few affinities with such poets as Auden, Spender and Empson. His poetry was the product of a strongly individual imagination fostered by ways of thought and feeling Welsh in origin. (2)

The above comment clearly shows the fact that the early poems of Thomas are marked for their originality and unique style. These early poems project the qualities particularly current among English writers of the thirties, which help Dylan Thomas to be different from others.

Dylan Thomas married Caitlin Macnamera in 1937. Then he moved to Laugharne in Wales, a tiny, eccentric waterside town, with his wife in 1938 insisting that he could only write poetry in Wales. This reunited the poet with treasured boyhood memories. Thomas published *The Map of Love* (which contained sixteen poems together with seven short stories)

in 1939 and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (autobiographical stories) in 1940 but both of them were commercial failures due to flagging of the literary industry during the war years. During this period, people generally had more hunger for news than to spend what earnings they had on literature.

Dylan Thomas was found unfit for military service and spent most of the years of the Second World War in Wales, coming up to London from time to time to see friends and meet publishers. It was during this period in Wales, however, when Thomas produced many of the poems that were to establish his place among the ranks of great poets. They were the poems that often reflected on the fantasy days of lost childhood: "Poem in October," "The Conversations of Prayers," "Fern Hill" etc. When these poems and others were published in the 1946 under his collection *Deaths and Entrances*, Dylan's popularity exploded. He was hailed as a genius and a great poet. Regarding this volume, G.S. Fraser views:

Thomas's last English volume of new poems, *Death and Entrances*, came out in 1946. It increases the impression of variety, and of steady development, which the earlier volumes, read in the order of their appearance, give. It contains a remarkable number of successful poems of notably different kinds.

One kind, in particular, at once caught the fancy of wide public. (20)

The above comment highlights that *Deaths and Entrances* is a volume of Thomas's remarkable and successful poems of different kinds, which attract the attention of reading public. Indeed, so many poems related to the theme of childhood innocence and country peace are included in this volume.

Thomas's additional new poems were collected in the volume *In Country Sleep and Other Poems* (1952). His final choices from among his numerous small volumes of verse form the *Collected Poems* (1952), which is hailed as a major literary achievement. In addition

to all these, Thomas also wrote *Under Milk Wood* (published in 1954), a play for voices, which records life and love and introspection in a small Welsh town.

Dylan Thomas began his poetic career around 1930s. This was the period of economic depression. During this time, there were poets who were writing in a spirit of passionate anger against the inequality of social conditions. They wrote not of the truths and beauties of the natural world but of the lies and ugliness of the unnatural system of society under which they worked. But at this time Dylan Thomas found, in South Wales, a background of creative vitality and social ferment. He did not associate himself with Eliot and political poets of the thirties like Auden. As quoted by Ackerman, Stephen Spender, in his review of Thomas's collected poems, says :

Dylan Thomas represents a romantic revolt against this classicist tendency, which has crystallized around the theological view of Eliot and W. H. Auden. It is a revolt against more than this, against the oxford, Cambridge and Harvard intellectualism of much modern poetry in the English Language; against in the English Language; against the King's English of London and the south, which has become a correct idiom capable of refinements of beauty, but incapable of harsh effects, coarse textures and violent colours. (15).

The above commentary of Spender clearly states that the poems of Dylan Thomas are different from that of Eliot and Auden. As 18th Century romantic poets revolted against neoclassicism, so did Thomas against poets like Eliot and Auden. Almost all the poets of the 30s were writing whether in the line of Eliot or following Auden. But Dylan Thomas was a new voice among the crowd of poets and established his unique existence. Just opposite to Eliot's theory of depersonalization of an artist, Thomas expressed his personality — personal

feelings and emotions — in his poems. Unlike Auden's political consciousness in his poems, Thomas's poems were marked for subjectivity and introspective analysis.

Some critics have attempted to associate Dylan Thomas with the surrealist movement. One of them is David Holbrook who regards Thomas's poems as non-sensical verbal batter. He argues :

Poetry has its logic : and good poetry must first be good prose — Dylan Thomas and writers such as Edith Sitwall and Stephen Spender have achieved a method of defying these requirements in order to delude the reader into believing that he has before him some new form of poetry and that it would be stupid for him not to see that it is poetry. This is sometimes concealed by a great, deal of nonsensical surrealist theory about the 'autonomy of the symbol' and so forth. (90-91)

Holbrook points out that Thomas's poems are not good kinds of poems since they cannot be changed into prose and they are non-sensical. But this charge against him is groundless and superficial because understanding of his poems in depth does not lead the readers toward such blame.

There is no doubt that Thomas's poetry contains various images, which seem obscure and puzzling. But patience and critical attention toward such images really help to elucidate the theme of the poem. So it is not wise to associate Thomas with surrealism for being obscure. As quoted by John Ackerman, David Richards, one of Thomas's friends at Laugharne, recalls :

Thomas most emphatically disagrees with surrealist creed and spent at least ten minutes during one of our conversations denouncing it. His ideas come from his innermost mind but before they reach paper, he says, they must go

through the rational process of the intellect, unlike the surrealists who put their words down on paper exactly as they emerge from chaos, [. . .] (74-75).

The surrealists encouraged the break with rational control, the use of imagery from the subconscious mind, and the application to art of Freudian psychology. But Dylan Thomas is far away from surrealism. William York Tindall also mentions that Dylan Thomas is not a surrealist. He states, "The ideals of surrealism was deliberate, Thomas consciously controlled matters from the unconscious, or matter like them for planned effect" (18).

Undoubtedly, Thomas is difficult to understand, but it is also not true to say that he is a surrealist. Unlike surrealists, his attitude to experience was far from anarchic and he sought in his poetry to create values, by shaping the words or putting the words in order.

In an early statement about his poems, published in Mr. Geoffrey Grigson's poetry periodicals of 1930s, *New Verse*, no. 11, Thomas says, "Poetry, recording the stripping of the individual darkness, must inevitably cast light upon what has been hidden for too long, and by so doing, make clean the naked exposure" (9). He speaks of the process of writing a poem as one of stripping away of darkness, of struggling up to light. His view on the method of poetry writing which he expressed in a letter to Henry Terrace, quoted by William York Tindall, suggests that he was more concerned with the use of images in his poetry :

A poem by myself needs a host of images because its center is a host of images. I make one image [. . .] let it breed another, let that image contradict the first, make of the third image bred out of the other two together, a fourth contradictory image, and let them all, within my imposed formal limits conflict. Each image holds within it the seed the seed of its own destruction, and my dialectical method, as I understand it is a constant building up and

breaking down of the images that come out of the central seed, which is itself destructive and constructive at the same time. (26)

From these statements, it becomes clear that the juxtaposition of incompatible images is a method of Dylan Thomas and this very process is systematically dialectical. His images are constructed with enormous care and are related to the unfolding of meaning.

Later, in his prefatory notes to his *Collected Poems* (1952), Thomas says, "These poems, with all their crudities, doubts, and confusions, are written for the love of Man and in praise of God, and I'd be a damn fool if they weren't (iii)." On the basis of this statement, some critics regard him as a religious poet. Perhaps, it is only natural for critics to take this statement at its face value and read religion in his poetry. This is more so, because his poetry is full of references to the Bible — Genesis, The Garden of Eden, the Fall, Adam, Jacob, Sin and so on. But whether he is a religious poet or not depends on his conception of Man and God and the themes he deals with in his poems.

One of Thomas's major themes is the existential condition of man, who for him is man from seed to grave. A large number of his poems deal with life and death, creation and destruction, and man's condition and his fate. The poet constantly attempts to view the entire progression simultaneously. In a birthday poem entitled "Twenty-Four Years," he writes:

Twenty-four years remind the tears of my eyes

(Bury the dead for fear that they walk to the grave in labour)

In the groin of the natural doorway I crouched like a tailor

Sewing a shroud for a journey

By the light of the meat-eating sun.

Dressed to die, the sensual strut begun.

With my red veins full of money,

In the find direction of the elementary town

I advance for as long as forever is. (1-9)

The hero of the poem is the poet himself, looking back to the womb and forward to the grave from the vantage point of his twenty-fourth birthday. His piled-up years remind him of mortality — the embryo building out its cells until it reaches human form is like that of a tailor sewing his own funeral shroud. When it enters the outside world through the mother's natural doorway it is dressed to die. Thus, the poem states that the moment of conception is also the beginning of death.

In so far as Thomas sang about the human condition, it can be said that he has written his poems for the love of man. Thomas has also stated that his poems are written in praise of God. His God is cosmic energy and not the Old Testament God of Judgement. His God is immanent, all pervasive spirit, which is both creative and destructive. God is considered to be the spirit that permeates everything and not only creates but also destroys.

In one of his stories entitled *The Peaches*, taken from *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, Thomas makes a young man, Gwilym practice preaching and puts the following words into his mouth:

O God, Thou art everywhere all the time, in the dew of the morning, in the frost of the morning, in the frost of the evening, in the field and the town, in the preacher and the sinner, in the sparrow and the big buzzard. Thou canst see every thing, right down deep in our hearts, Thou. Canst see us when there aren't any stars, in the grave blackness, in the deep, deep, deep, deep pit; [. . .]; Thou can't see everything we do, in the night and the day, in the day and the night, everything, everything; Thou canst see all the time. (21-22)

This is a kind of pantheism, which holds that God and the world are not distinct and that everything in the world is part of God. The passage gives an indication of the poet's belief in the fact that God is all-pervading, in terms not strongly religious or Christian. This pantheistic notion is clearly dealt with in some of Dylan Thomas's poems. In the poem "The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," Thomas says:

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. (1-5)

The character speaking in this poem is a youth who discovers that life predicates that, and stands bewildered and inarticulate ("I am dumb") before man and nature informed by a paradoxical principle. He knows that the force driving through the stem ("green fuse") of the flower and the youth's body also blasts the tree and kills the man. The "force" mentioned in this poem is the natural vitality that both creates and destroys us. Human change is but a small part of the great cycle of natural change.

So, Thomas's profuse use of Biblical imagery cannot be and should not be interpreted to mean that he is trying to express Christian beliefs in verse images. His symbols are only aids to the creation of that personal myth, which is the real aim of his poetry. There is in his poem an effort to give expression to an individual vision, which approximates to pantheism than to Christian theology.

Dylan Thomas is basically concerned with himself, with his individual world of physical and mental sensation, which he tries to express emotionally with a minimum of detachment. Many of his poems are written in and concerning his childhood in Wales to

which he became deeply attached. Indeed, the calmest and happiest days of Thomas's life were those he spent in Wales. The chief part of his creative writing was done in the landscape and among the people with whom he was most deeply attached. Concerning his attachment with Wales landscape, Vernon Watkins, one of Thomas's close friends at Laugharne, writes:

Just before the war I stayed with Dylan frequently in Laugharne. The peace and beauty of this small sea-town beyond Carmarthen, a fishing village at the end of the world, represented for him the last refuge of life and sanity in a nightmare world, the last irregular protest against the regularity and symmetry of madness. (19)

Since his departure from Wales in 1933 in pursuit of better opportunities, Thomas stayed for short period in London, Cornwall and Ringwood. But he returned to Wales in 1938 because while writing poetry he needed increasingly to be in Wales. Sometimes he returned to his mother's home in Swansea, sometimes he stayed in Laugharne. The surroundings of these Wales towns impart very important role in imaginative recreation of Thomas's childhood. His childhood experiences in these towns became the source of inspiration for much of his poems. Concerning the characteristics of Dylan Thomas's poetry, John Ackerman says:

Thomas often similarly assumes the identity of Adam or Christ in his poetry and prose. Extreme dependence on the experience of childhood and the desire to recreate it is major characteristics of both Anglo- welsh poetry and prose. In such poems as *Fern Hill* and *Poem in October*, this theme finds perhaps, in our own day, its most intense and beautiful expression. (21)

As suggested by Ackerman, Childhood experience in Wales is one of the major sources of the creative expression for Dylan Thomas. In many of his poems, Dylan Thomas recaptures the lost past through imagination and celebrates it.

David Holbrook's, evaluation of Thomas's poems is quite different. He regards Thomas's nostalgia for childhood as "resistance to maturity and reality" (141). Holbrook is of the opinion that Thomas disregards mature reality and yearns for an impossible infantile relationship with the people and the world.

To some extent, Holbrook is right because yearning for what is already lost or attempt to capture what can never be captured is a way of disregarding the present reality. But Thomas's poems not only project obsessive nostalgia but also mature human awareness. So, Holbrook's blame is not holistic but partial.

Regarding Dylan Thomas's poems, M.L. Rosenthal, in his *Critical study of Modern Poets* says:

His best works in a gentle mode, however, show him in his essential character as modern romantic, entranced in his visions and his recollection. The nostalgic "Fern Hill" is such a poem, buoyant and vivid in its memories of childhood but at the same time weaving into its scheme an ever more piercing adult sadness. (211)

Rosenthal has seen Thomas as a modern romantic poet whose poems possess visionary quality and recollection of past. His poem entitled "Fern Hill" is one of the most celebrated poems on the theme of childhood. Though he creates an idyllic sketch of a Wales dairy farm in which he spent his joyous childhood days, he also introduces the theme of mortality and endless progression of time.

Indeed, Welsh landscape plays a very important role in imaginative recreation of Thomas's childhood. In his works Dylan increasingly makes direct use of particular Welsh landscapes. A loved and familiar scene becomes the object around which his ideas evolve. In "The Hunchback in the Park," Cwmdonkin park in Swansea is memory's center:

The Hunchback in the park

A solitary mister

[.]

Eating bread from a newspaper

Drinking water from the chained cup

That the children filled with gravel

In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship

Slept at night in a dog kennel

But nobody chained him up. (1-2, 7-12)

The poem is about the poet's compassion for the miserable life of the hunchback. But this compassion for the hunchback is linked to the reminiscences of the poet's own childhood in Cwmdonkin park where he used to sail his ship with his peers.

"Poem in October" is one of the fine poems of Dylan Thomas on the subject of childhood reminiscences. The poem is concerned with visionary experiences associated with childhood. The source of inspiration for this poem is Laugharne seascape. Early in the morning of his thirtieth birthday, the poet is walking on the hillside above the village and the harbour. He is very much rejoiced in this natural environment of Laugharne landscape. In this mood of exultation, the poet crosses the border of time and discovers all the green and golden lights of childhood:

Pail rain over the dwindling harbour

And over the sea wet Church the size of a snail

With its horns through mist and the castle

Brown as owls

But all the gardens

Of spring and summer were blooming in the fall tales

Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.

There could I marvel

My birthday

Away but the weather turned around. (31-40)

The poet turns from the dwindling harbour, the Church, Laugharne castle, which is as brown as owls, to see the visionary landscapes of childhood, those earlier gardens of spring and summer. The poet presents two actual weathers and times, one present and one past, both simultaneous. Present weather turning to evoke the past allows a 'time shift', a 'privileged moment'. But at the end of the poem, the poet says:

It was my thirtieth

Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon

Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.

O may my heart's truth

Still be sung

On this high hill in a year's turning. (65-70)

The poet is very much aware of human existence. It is impossible, the poet tells us, to remain in the heaven of childhood forever. The poet is aware of the town below, 'leaved with October blood', but still he sings the song of childhood through literary reminiscences.

Thus, childhood reminiscence is one of the major aspects of Dylan Thomas's poems. He has created many fine poems on this subject. In many of his poems, Thomas descends imaginatively into the quest of childhood state of innocence and grace where all things were spotless, pure and glorious and contrasts it with the world of adulthood. Indeed, Thomas's attitude toward childhood is idealized. Thomas glorifies his childhood in Wales so he explores his lost past through such literary reminiscences. Thomas's poems also state the adult human awareness. He is very much aware of the flow of time and mortality of individual life. Still, Thomas is able to cherish his childhood in Wales.

III. ANALYSIS OF POEMS

FERN HILL

"Fern Hill" is one of the typical poems of Dylan Thomas on the theme of childhood reminiscences. Here, the poet draws upon his childhood experiences at the farm of his aunt Ann Jones in Swansea, Wales, where he had spent his joyous summer holidays. Absent from the Fern Hill is the adult poet who presents keen recollection of his past experiences in this farm. The poet views the past with nostalgia but along with this he is very much aware of the passage of time and the mortality of individual life.

In the first stanza of the poem, the poet presents the magical landscape as perceived by the child. The scene of the landscape is undoubtedly Ann Jone's farm where, in his childhood, the poet was like that of prince, lordly in his happiness and freedom. Though the boy thinks himself lordly, it is time that allows him to be young and easy under the apple boughs. The poet meditates that human beings cannot enjoy anything if time does not allow. Time is personified and considered to be kind and permissive. The child's lilting vision makes the farm house full of musical cadence. He sees everywhere green and golden. Once below a time the poet was lordly figure. So many beautiful trees and leaves, daises and barley were there on the farm and time allowed him to pass through that beautiful place. The images like apple boughs, 'apple towns', 'windfall light', 'lilting house' suggest the beauty and richness of the magical landscape as perceived by the child. The colour images 'green' and 'golden' also suggest the beauty of the same farm. The purity and light of childhood can be seen as golden. Green appears as grass and trees as a symbol for his innocence and a metaphor for the great life force he perceives around him.

In the second stanza, the poet again presents keen recollection of past and continues the idea of timeless existence. The child is presented as green and carefree and famous among

the barns. He thinks farm as his home and sings happily. The notion of time as benevolent force is again presented here. Time is personified and supposed to be all permissive. And now, the speaker emphasizes on the harmony, basically the harmony of the boy with animals and the nature:

And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman,
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
And the Sabbath rang slowly
In the pebbles of holy streams. (15-18)

The colour images green and golden are carried in this stanza to intensify the effects of pure, innocent and easy going days of childhood. The child is huntsman and herdsman, totally carefree. He chases the calves blowing the whistles. At the very moment the speaker clearly hears the bark of the fox. As he passes through the stream, the child feels the sound of stream holy and sabbatical. The streams are holy because the whole farm as perceived by the child is holy. Everyday of his holiday in this farm is sabbatical. The holy stream suggests the holiness of place.

The third stanza again invokes the poet's childhood on a farm. The child's delights of the day on the farm still continue to the night. In the eyes of the child, the hay fields are as high as the house. Then the poet gives beautiful description of the farm house. He realizes the sweet tunes of chimneys caused by the air. The wind is coming out of the chimneys with a musical sound. Now, the landscape becomes a fiery vision to convey the boy's excitement. Then the impression of the child as he falls asleep can be realized:

And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,

All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the night jars

Flying with the ricks, and the horses

Flashing into the dark (24-27)

The stars of the night are as simple as their observer. The boy rides to sleep and dreams of the farm that the owls seem to carry it away, the nightjars flying with the ricks and the horses flashing into the dark. Sun and moon serve as temporal reference.

The boy then awakens the next day, cock-heralding day, as fresh as the first day in the Garden of Eden. The farm, as perceived by the child, is compared with a dynamic wanderer who is whitened with dew. It is morning and the farm is as beautiful as heaven. It is all shining like that of the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve. As the morning proceeds, the sky gathers to spin the sun into a ball. The horses are also spellbound by the sunlight and walk out of the stable to the farm. The field of praise refers to the meadow of the fern hill. The farm is perceived by the child as undefined state of Adam and Eve. The sky is bright and beautiful as the first light of the creation. The stable is lively and full of charm. The stable is both 'whinnying' and 'green' which to become in real situation is completely impossible. This is only possible in child's imagination.

Indeed, the poet has idealized the days of his childhood and the farm of the fern hill very much in this stanza. Dylan has personified the farm as wanderer: "... the farm like a wanderer white/with the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder. (28-29). The farm is presented as the garden of Eden before the fall and maiden..." (29-30). The colour image 'white' is used to project the pristine glory of the farm.

As the poem moves towards the fifth stanza, the lilted house becomes as gay as its visitor. The child is honored among foxes and pheasants. The clouds of his Eden are 'new made' everyday. The child is still happier. He is as happy as the heart was long. Here the

longness of the heart is suggestive of joy that the child realizes in the fern hill. He is totally carefree. The land is like that of running ground and the child is runner. In the child's vision the things get changed everyday and so he finds himself under the new made clouds and in the sun born over and over. The poet then realizes that time goes on changing and it allows very few things to do in its tuneful turning:

I ran my heedless ways,
 My wishes raced through the house high hay
 And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
 In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
 Before the children green and golden
 Follow him out of grace. (39-44)

The poet in these lines is very much aware of the shifting of time and few things like morning songs that time allows to individuals. He also projects his idealized attitude towards childhood by comparing it with morning songs. The poet then realizes omnipotence of time – time that throws dust on every individuals in its due course.

In the last stanza, the poet says that the childhood mode of blissful existence has fled away with the night of the adult consciousness. Here, the poet recalls his childhood consciousness:

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
 Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
 In the moon that is always rising,
 Nor that riding to sleep (46-49)

Childhood in these lines is considered to be as elevated state when the poet had no sense of time and death but only the sense of joy and happiness. But, all of a sudden, the poet realizes that his childhood mode of blissful existence is over and he is under the grip of time:

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land,

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea. (51-54)

The poet realizes the mighty power of time. Time holds him green and dying. Adult consciousness in him brings the loss of fantasy freedom still, the poet sings in his chains as sea does in the rhythmic control of the tides.

It is no doubt true that the poem is about the world as perceived by the child and by the adult man. Thomas recreates his childhood state of innocence and grace and contrasts it with the world of adulthood. The poem presents the transience of childhood joys and innocence and its contrast with the poet's adult existence. Though the poet privileges childhood over adulthood, he also knows that no one can stay in the heaven of childhood forever. He accepts the flow of time and passing away of childhood still, he cherishes his childhood in welsh farm. His childhood remains as elevated memory.

THE HUNCHBACK IN THE PARK

The speaker of the poem is an adult poet who depicts the pathetic life of the hunchback and at the same time recaptures his treasured childhood memories. The park mentioned in the poem is Cwmdonkin Park of Swansea where Dylan had spent his joyous childhood days.

As the poem begins, the poet gives a vivid picture of the park along with pathetic depiction of the hunchback. The solitary hunchback comes to the park quite early with its opening and stays there seeking to enjoy the beauty in the park till it gets locked. The hunchback experiences melancholic calmness in the park where he feels at one with the elements of nature until the taunts and mimicry of the town boys interrupt his musings. He is insulted, teased and chased by the truant boys. The town boys, leaving the hunchback alone, enjoy themselves having played differently. On the other hand, the hunchback being alone without any disturbances takes advantage of the boys' going away; he begins to have day dreams. He creates a fantasy image of a young woman who is tall and straight as elm tree. The perfectly formed woman is, however, only a vision, an ideal counter part for the man's crooked body. But the reality begins as the park shuts the hunchback out and the boys chase him to his kennel abode.

Cwmdonkin park in Swansea is memory's centre here. The poem is written in the memory of a hunchback in that very park where the poet spent many of his happiest childhood days. The poet having spent much of his childhood at the park has at this moment special childhood memories:

Eating bread from a newspaper

Drinking water from the chained cups

That the children filled with gravel

In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship. (7-10)

The poet in these lines depicts the activities done by the hunchback — eating bread from a newspaper and drinking water from the chained cups. All of a sudden, there is dramatic shift in the narration of the poem — objective description of the hunchback shifts to the first

person narrator. While describing the activities of the hunchback, the poet happens to recall his own childhood days when he used to sail the ship in the fountain basin.

The hunchback that the poet describes is simply a nameless person. He is lonely and looked down by others. Even the truant boys disrespect him. The hunchback is an adult person living with many anxieties of life as contrasted to the happy-go-lucky children in the poem:

And the old dog sleeper
 Along between nurses and swans
 While the boys among willows
 Made the tigers jump out of their eyes
 To roar on the rockery stones
 And the groves were blue with sailors. (25-30)

The poet here depicts the pathetic condition of the hunchback. He is 'the old dog sleeper' who is alone in the midst of the beauty of the park. The young boys on the other hand enjoy by doing different activities. They make the tigers jump on the rockery stones. Along with the depiction of pathetic condition of the hunchback and playful activities of the boys, the poet happens to recall memory of Cwmdonkin Park. The chained cups in the fountain basin, the rockery and willow groves are still to be seen there. The willow groves, recaptured are still blue with sailors.

BEING BUT MEN

The poem "Being But Men" is very much enriched by childhood reminiscences. In this poem Thomas recalls his childhood experiences and contrasts them with shabby realism of adulthood to project a massive shift between the past and the present world. The poet's

childhood as mentioned in the poem was full of joys and loveliness, blissful and out of chaos. There was no sense of lack in his childhood. It was all happy and innocent. Happy and contented life of childhood is contrasted with piercing adult sadness.

As the poem begins, the poet talks about adult human existence. The adult person is guided by experience and rationality and cannot do anything on the basis of his free will. He is full of fears and anxieties and is compelled to pass through the dreary desert of jungle which snatches all the charms of childhood:

Being but men, we walked into the trees

Afraid, letting our syllables be soft

For fear of waking the rooks,

For fear of coming

Noiselessly into a world of wings and cries. (1-5)

The poet in these lines presents the world experienced by adults. Adults, being conscious, cannot lead carefree life. Even their voice causes harm so they are compelled to make their voice soft and control their desires. Adulthood, as mentioned in the poem, is the world of wings and cries where green and golden childhood ceases to exist.

But the world as perceived by the child is quite different. It is totally innocent and carefree. There is no sense of time, change and anxieties. Maturity breaks the innocent and carefree life of childhood and substitutes it with a dark, cold and imprisoning fear. Trees of knowledge which are fashioned by man's reason just take away the blissful mode of life. The poet presents remembrances of his childhood experiences thus:

If we were children we might climb,

Catch the rooks sleeping, and break no twig,

And, after the soft ascent,
 Thrust out our heads above the branches
 To wonder at the unfailing stars. (6-10)

Here, the poet presents the keen recollection of activities done in his childhood. In his childhood he could climb the trees without breaking the twig and catch the rooks. It means he had no problem with his childhood. He was totally carefree. The act of climbing trees, catching the rooks and thrusting out above the branches would provide him extreme pleasure. In his childhood, he had ability to live with the sense of wonder. But with his maturity, the poet has lost all these things. He is no more able to climb the trees without breaking the branches. Vigor and enthusiasm of childhood is lost with maturity. The poet had ability to wonder by looking at the stars from the twigs of the trees. Watching the stars in the sky was his aim and end in his childhood. But all the charms of the childhood are lost with the emergence of adulthood.

In short, in this poem, Thomas presents a fine contrast between childhood and adulthood and this contrast reveals his own old age. As mentioned in the poem, childhood spontaneity and enthusiasm come to an end as a person enters into the world of maturity. Dark and sinister world of adulthood swallows joyous and harmonious world of childhood. With maturity a person loses all the vigors and charms and total desolation remains at hand.

PAPER AND STICKS

"Paper and Sticks" is one of the typical poems of Dylan Thomas which shows how he is idealizing his childhood through literary reminiscences. In this poem, the poet presents internal dialogue between his matured and childish self and displays how absence didn't ever touch him in his childhood.

As the poem begins, the poet presents a moment of setting the fire with fire imageries such as paper, sticks, shovel and match. These are the objects which the children play with and use to set fire. This fact clearly shows that the poet is referring to the particular moment of his childhood which used to excite him. The moment of setting the fire used to excite the poet in the past but at present the very situation has lost its charm and the poet expresses his disappointment thus:

Paper and sticks and shovel and match

Why won't the news of the old world catch

And the fire in a temper start. (1-3)

The central problem stated in these lines is that the fiery vision of the past doesn't excite the poet any more at present. The poet finds massive shift between the past and the present. The situation which used to provide extreme pleasure has lost its charm. So the fire in temper starts and the poet feels disappointed.

As the poem moves forward, the poet presents keen recollection of his childhood. The poet recalls his Edenic state of childhood when every little thing used to give him joy that the wealth could provide:

Once I had a rich boy for myself

I loved his body and his navy blue wealth

And I lived in his purse and his heart

When in our bed I was tossing and turning

All I could see were his brown eyes burning

By the green of a one pound note. (4-9)

These lines state that he was a charming and attractive boy in his childhood, when there was lack of nothing. If he got some money, he would feel excited. Little money could fulfill his needs and his heart would be elated. The poet creates a persona of the child over here whose pursuit of joy was outcome of the content of the purse. His eyes used to glitter just after getting a one pound note. The poet here states how absence didn't ever touch him and how getting of demand gave him pleasure.

The poet also mentions that he was handsome and well-off boy in his childhood. He was well-off in the sense that his desires were limited and he used to feel happy after getting his demand. No sense of lack was there in his childhood. By idealizing his childhood, the poet means to say that his matured reality is quite different. This difference causes fire in temper and the poet feels disappointed.

As the poem comes to an end, the poet states that his childhood had extraordinary charm. So, whenever he catches the news of the old world or recaptures his childhood, he happens to be humming:

Sharp and shrill my silly tongue scratches

Words on the air as the fire catches

You never did and *he* never did. (16-18)

This concluding stanza clarifies that Dylan Thomas Cherishes the memory of his childhood. Whenever the childhood reminiscences trigger him, he cannot stop scratching sharp and shrill sound stating that his childhood was quite unique and special from that of others.

In short, the poem is about reminiscent celebration. By restating charming days of his childhood, the poet here projects his idealized attitude towards childhood.

ONCE IT WAS THE COLOUR OF SAYING

In the poem "Once it was the colour of saying," Thomas talks about brightly coloured past at school, at the seaside and in the park. The school mentioned in the poem is Swansea Grammar School where Thomas studied, seaside refers to the area around Swansea and Laugharne where he used to go for spending holidays and the park refers to Cwmdonkin park of Swansea where he spent many of his joyous childhood days.

As the poem begins the poet presents a shadow image of a hill with a capsized field where he could visualize a school and a white and black patch of girls. The image presented here is multi-coloured shadowy past of the poet which is being blurred and overturned by the time:

Once it was the colour of saying
 Soaked my table the uglier side of a hill
 With a capsized field where a school sat still
 And a black and white patch of girls grew playing;
 The gentle seaslides of saying I must undo
 That all the charmingly drowned arise to cockcrow and kill. (1-6)

The poet in these lines mentions that his brightly coloured past which is capsized by the time had its own colour and charm. The memories of the past are not erased. They are rather like living oceans and are folded in unconscious mind. The particular image of the past is not as clear as it used to be. It is like a shadow but its killing charm is imprinted in his memory.

The poem is very much enriched by childhood reminiscences. The poet restates juvenile behaviour of childhood so as to present how his childhood had special attraction of its own:

When I whistled with mitching boys through a reservoir park

Where at night we stoned the cold and cuckoo

Lovers in the dirt of their leafy beds,

The shade of their trees was a word of many shades

And a lamp of lightening for the poor in the dark. (7-11)

The tone of the poem over here is nostalgic. Here Thomas is saying good bye to his early manners. With these colourful manners he associates his brightly coloured past at school, at the seaside and in the park. In the reservoir park by night, he and other naughty boys whistled and annoyed cuckoo (mad in spring) lovers under the trees. For them shade was off colour protection but for him trees were words and shade of words were the colour of saying. Summer lightning, unwelcome lamp to lovers, was creative spark to him.

At the end of the poem, the poet says that his entire past is capsized by the shadow of time and he has to unreel it in order to have look on it:

Now my saying shall be my undoing

And every stone I wind off like a reel. (12-13)

As movies, implying light and projection, preserve the past, so does the poet's memory. Here the poet valorizes memory world which has preserved the killing charms of his childhood.

POEM IN OCTOBER

"Poem in October" is written on the celebration of Thomas's thirtieth birthday. The poem is concerned with visionary experience associated with childhood. Laugharne seascape is memory's centre here where Dylan Thomas as a child moved here and there with his mother.

The poem is an elegiac reminiscence of the lost innocence and joy of childhood. It describes how a man gets up early in the morning on his birthday and goes out for a walk through the country to a place from where he can look down on the town where he lives. The man who is celebrating birthday is the poet himself, and the town Swansea, is the place where he was born. The poem begins with the poet's faith in the world's being there for him, and in articulated good faith at that. The poet wakes up at the dawn of his birthday to the sound of voices urging him to celebrate it. His awakening is like a good smooth birth into a welcoming world:

The morning beckon

With water praying and call of seagull and rook

An the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall

Myself to set foot

That second

In the still sleeping town and set forth. (5-10)

As the poet leaves Laugherne in the morning, he finds nature holy. The landscape seems to be sacramental. The water prays and the herons are the priests. The world invites the poet to be born: the morning 'beckons', the water is 'praying' and the birds are 'calling' him to emerge. The poet hears his own foetal response to the world's invitation, in 'the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall'. That knock is in turn followed by his passive emergence as the object of the beckoning. Only in the next stanza after the invitation is repeated in "My birthday began with the birds of the winged trees flying my name", the newborn emerges as an active subject:

And I rose

In rainy autumn

And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.

High tide and the heron dived when I took the road

Over the burden

An the gates

Of the town closed as the town awoke. (14-20)

The symbolic birth is point of departure for the speaker's birthday walk in the country. The poet walks through the lovely confusion of farm and shore, of actuality and memory, 'over the border' of times and weathers. Gates' closing as the town awakes imply rebirth on this birthday. Thomas climbs heaven's hills towards sunlight in the autumn air, a birthday shower of all his days, as the heron, returning to water dives. This side of border, birds and things, however holy, are wet.

The third stanza presents two contrasting landscapes and two weathers: the beautiful and joyous scene on the hill and harsh, cold and troubled place below the hill. Over the border and on to the hill, he suddenly comes into October sun, which, confusing seasons and climates, is both spring like and summery confusion of seasons portends timelessness. Two weathers and two times attend the autumn that makes him a larkful of springs. The first part of this stanza pictures an ideal place, where larks fly in a rolling cloud, the roadside bushes are full with whistling blackbirds, and even the October sun is hot as in the summer season. On the other hand, the speaker sees the slight rainfall and hears the cold blowing in the wood under him. The two landscapes and two weathers suggest the differences in the fantasy world of childhood and the painful reality of the present time. The poet finds that the present is

harsh in comparison to the past. This stanza states superiority of memory world over the harsh present world.

Two contrastive landscapes and weathers are also discussed in the fourth stanza. The poet turns from dwindling harbour, the church, Laugharne castle which is as brown as the owls that frequent it, to see the visionary landscape of childhood, those earlier gardens of spring and summer, clouded by larks alone. Two weathers in one day seem marvel enough but here are two times as well. For the rest of the poem, there are two actual weathers and two times, one present and one past, both simultaneous. Present weather turning to evoke the past allows a 'time shift'.

Following nature's luring sounds, which turnout to be echoes of his voice, the poet comes to meet and eventually unite with the child he once was.

And down the other air and the blue altered sky

Streamed again a wonder of summer

With apples

Pears and red currents

And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's

Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother

Through the parables

Of sun light

And the legends of the green chapels. (42-50)

This turning from October sun brings back the forgotten summer of childhood. The image 'parables of sunlight' suggests glorious and beautiful sunlight as described in legends and

stories. The 'green chapels' and 'parables of sunlight' prove nature holy and childhood holy. Happy Edenic world of childhood is recaptured and celebrated here.

The picture of childhood experiences seen now through adult poet's vision is presented in the sixth stanza. The memory and actuality blend in such a way that the adult poet and his childhood become one. So the tears and the joyful feelings that would come in the childhood affect the speaker in the present. "That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in me" (52). In recapturing his childhood experiences, the poet also places emphasis upon the influence of nature:

There were the words the river and sea

Where a boy

In the listening

Summer time of the dead whispered the truth of his joy

To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide

And the Mystery

Sang alive

Still in the water and singing birds. (53-60)

The 'summer time of the dead' is the boy's past. The poet in his childhood could sense even the inanimate things whispering the 'truth of his joy' to the trees, stones and fish. The nature and its wonder are expressed in terms of mystery personified as a singer. The child, it seems, was already a pantheist and his mystical sense of communion with nature is repeated in adult poet's vision.

The poem closes in the mood of nostalgia. The poet says it is impossible to stay in the heaven of childhood forever. Though the poet still stands in the 'summer noon' of childhood,

he is aware of the town below, 'leaved with October blood', of trees and of his October heart, which sings this truth. This suggests that nostalgia is overcome and the truth of present is at hand:

It was my thirtieth

Yeah to heaven stood there then in the summer noon

Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.

O may my heart's truth

Still be sung

On this high hill in a year's turning. (65-70)

The poem is in fact about the elegiac reminiscence of the lost innocence and joy of childhood. The poet is very much occupied with time especially with the mutability of time. On the surface level it seems that the poet is celebrating his birthday but it is all irony as he is in fact saddened because the spring of his childhood is no longer with him. He accepts the flow of time and comes to reconciliation that the past is past which never comes back. Therefore, the poet simply tries to revive the beauty of his childhood.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, attempts have been made to show how Dylan Thomas is looking back at his childhood through literary reminiscences. It is made clear in foregoing chapters that Thomas's poems are uniquely nostalgic. He recalls his childhood experiences in his poems and contrasts them with shabby realism of adulthood to project a massive shift between the past and the present world. There is a tendency to idealize past experiences in his poems. He highlights the charming and glorious days of childhood so as to idealize them.

In the light of preceding chapters, it is apparent that Thomas, in his poems, is basically concerned with himself, with his individual world of physical and mental sensation which he tries to express emotionally, rather than to objectify, with a minimum of detachment. Many of his poems are written in and concerning his childhood in Wales to which he became most deeply attached. The foregoing analysis of his poems shows that the calmest and the happiest days of Thomas's life were those he spent in Welsh and the chief part of his creative writing was done in the landscape and among the people he was most deeply attached.

It is undoubtedly true that Welsh landscape plays a very important role in the imaginative recreation of Thomas's childhood. In his poems, he increasingly makes direct use of particular Welsh landscape. A loved and familiar landscape becomes the object around which his ideas evolve. Cwmdonkin Park in Swansea, for example, is a mnemonic geography which inspires the poems "The Hunchback in the Park" and "Once It was the Colour of Saying". Thomas recaptures in the charming natural world of Wales something of lost Eden and something of a foretold Heaven and his references to it are always tinged with nostalgia and affection.

Thomas truly is a lyrical genius. He has shown amazing originality in his writing with his unique sense of humour and outlook on life. All of Thomas's poetry is, one way or another, autobiographical and centred on himself. In many of his poems Thomas beautifully recreates a world of child and then contrasts it with the phase of disillusionment in the adult age. The freshness and innocence of childhood is recalled but a sense of mortality and transitory nature of life—found in most of Thomas's poetry— is never far away.

Thomas, in his poems, seems to express that it is only in time and through it, that we escape from it. Time is presented both as jailor and teacher. Childhood is an ignorant escape that time allows and wiser memory another. But art, at once in time and out of it, is time's greatest evader and destroyer. Only in eternity of art will we be freed from the chain of time to roam again in innocence. The green and golden joy of childhood and shadowy sorrow of maturity become the joy of art. In his poems, the adult poet looks at the child's world, and the main focus is not on the pain of knowledge but on the bliss of innocence. Underneath however, is the theme of the final triumph of time over everything mortal. Even at this dire moment intensity of childhood experience still is its own reward. This is perhaps Thomas's great achievement as a poet which makes him different from others.

Although this research work has not been able to include all of Dylan Thomas's poems under analysis, the analyzed poems clearly project his unique reminiscences. In his poems, he descends imaginatively into the quest of childhood state of innocence and grace where all things were spotless, pure and glorious and contrasts it with dark and sinister world of adulthood. His poems are enriched by childhood reminiscences but they are not the poems of obsession of childhood and resistance to maturity. Rather, they are the poems of reconciliation.

Thomas glorifies his childhood in his poems but this glorification does not mean that he tries to recapture what can never be recaptured and attempts to defy the flow of time and

matured reality. This idealistic looking over the shoulder to a bygone state of innocence and joy is one of Thomas's most characteristic attitudes. The poet views the past with nostalgia but along with this he is very much aware of the passage of time and the mortality of individual life. He accepts the flow of time and passing away of childhood. Still, he cherishes his childhood in Welsh. His childhood remains as elevated memory.

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