DYLAN THOMAS'S *18 POEMS*: A TESTAMENT OF POETIC FAITH

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ABSTRACT

In *18 Poems*, Dylan Thomas's creativity is marked as much as by a search for form as by a fresh exploration of reality. It is the language of assertion, he suggests, that distinguishes him from the fallen poets of thirties who reflect, in their reluctance to commit themselves to any kind of assertion, a loss of faith in an ultimate solution. And it is a measure of Auden's honesty and courage that in his ceaseless exploration of reality and search for salvation, he regards all resolutions and systems that he has arrived at in different poems as tentative and inadequate. Auden's mystery symbolizes at one level the dark void of night, but at another level it represents the intensity of his quest referring to the range of comprehension covering heaven, earth, and underworld that he finally gained and that gave him an exalted position analogous to Eliot's. The failure to order his shifting reactions to a system assumes a special poignancy in Thomas because of his conviction in experiential mode. In *18 Poems* Thomas, while opposing the intellectual trend of Auden's poems, searches earnestly for a system of personal salvation. Thomas Hardy's *Poems for the Present and the Past* and W.B.Yeats's *The Tower* and *Last Poems* gave Thomas the necessary form and faith to "plan for the present." Thomas's *18 Poems* is remarkable for its rigorous craftsmanship and compression leading to obscurity. So, it may be relevant here to inquire into Thomas's attitude to the established systems—especially in religion and politics—and examine the various attempts he made in evolving a system of his own.

KEYWORDS: Human Will, Prefiguration, Paradox, Mutation, and Togetherness