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TOP COPY

A TEXTUAL AND CRITICAL STUDY OF POEMS BY EDWARD THOMAS, SELECTED FROM MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

An abstract of the thesis presented for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of Durham, by Peter J. Knock, B.A. (Dunelm).  
June 1975.

The Critical Introduction examines Thomas's 'way of seeing', approached through words, with their strengths and limitations as a means of communicating. Memory and the rôle of past experience in the present and future, sensuous perception with its limits as a means of understanding and content, humility and honesty in apprehending both folklore and the lore of child and creature, all are seen as integral to the poet's determination to understand himself and his relationships under the pressure of a war seen as part of a greater and continuing war of values. Notable, too, is the poet's treatment of his foreseen sacrifice and its relative insignificance.

The Textual Introduction surveys B.M. Add. Ms. . 44990 and, more fully, Bodleian Don. d. 28, establishing the different uses to which Thomas put them, the chronology of these drafts in relation to other data, and the relationship of printed editions to these sources. Bodleian Don. e.10 - a commonplace book of 1901 - provides hitherto unmentioned evidence of Thomas's earlier interest in matters explored in the poems. The preparation of the early editions is covered, and a descriptive bibliography of early editions is included.

The Text presents 32 poems from B.M. Add. Ms. . 44990, 1 from an early pamphlet, and 17 from Bodleian Don. d. 28, totalling 50 from some 130 consulted. (Drafts from Lockwood Memorial Library are examined in the Critical Introduction). The Notes cover alteration of these drafts in print, or as mentioned in letters to Farjeon. Critical commentary clarifies items of textual interest (e.g. Don. d. 28 f. 22 - "Roads") and amplifies the Critical Introduction.

A Bibliography, Index to the Poems, Appendices on Titles, Chronology of known ms. drafts, a Biographical Table 1914-17 and photographs of biographical interest are included, as are photocopies of textually significant readings from the Bodleian book and from early editions.

(xiii, 290p, 16 plates)

A  
TEXTUAL AND CRITICAL STUDY  
OF  
POEMS BY EDWARD THOMAS  
SELECTED FROM  
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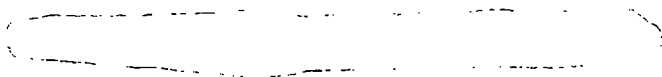
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A THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

by

PETER J. KNOCK B.A. (DUNELM 1968)  
JUNE 1973.

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ABBREVIATIONS

For ease of reference, titles of key primary and secondary works are abbreviated in the footnotes and in the notes to the Text. Fuller titles are given where reference has been made to two works by the same critic, and where a work has not been mentioned recently. Names of key characters are similarly abbreviated, thus:

Edward Thomas....ET; Eleanor Farjeon....EF; Gordon Bottomley....GB;  
Helen Thomas....HT; Edward Garnett....EG.

Manuscript and book titles appear as follows:

Bodleian Manuscript Don.d.28.....Don.d.28.  
(Poems reproduced from this are headed Bodleian)  
Bodleian Manuscript Don.e.10.....Don.e.10.  
British Museum Additional Manuscripts 44990.....B.M.Ms.

This England(1915), edited by Edward Thomas.....TE  
Six Poems(1916) by Edward Eastaway.....SP  
Root and Branch(various issues).....RB  
An Annual of New Poetry(1917).....ANP  
Poems(1917) by Edward Thomas.....Poems 1917, P17  
Last Poems(1918) by Edward Thomas.....Last Poems, LP  
Collected Poems(1920) by Edward Thomas.....CP(1920)  
(Later editions are referred to in similar format)  
Selected Poems of Edward Thomas(1927), edited  
by Edward Garnett.....SPG  
As It Was, World Without End(1936) by Helen Thomas.....AIW  
Edward Thomas - A Biography and Bibliography (1937)  
by R.P. Eckert.....Eckert  
Edward Thomas(1956) by H. Coombes.....Coombes  
Edward Thomas - The Last Four Years(1958)  
by Eleanor Farjeon.....Farjeon  
Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley(1968)  
edited by R.G. Thomas.....Letters  
Edward Thomas, A Critical Biography(1970)  
by W. Cooke.....Cooke

( It is hoped that abbreviations obviate unnecessary repetition.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to record with thanks my debt to the following people and institutions that have made this research possible:

The Librarian and staff of the Bodleian Library for access to and photocopies of manuscripts Don. d. 28 and Don. e. 10.  
The staff of the British Museum Reading Room and Manuscript Department and the staff of the University of London Library, for similar facilities.

I should like to express a general debt to the critical and biographical work on Edward Thomas, especially by R.P. Eckert, H. Coombes, Eleanor Farjeon, R.G. Thomas and W. Cooke.

In addition I should like to thank my family, especially my wife, for their patience, help and encouragement.

EPIGRAM

(from f.9 of Bodleian Don. e. 10.)

Know then, I propound five ends to myself  
in this Book: First To Gain Some Glory to God:  
Secondly To preserve the Memories of the Dead.  
Thirdly, To present Examples To the Living:  
Fourthly To Entertain the Reader with Delight,  
and lastly, which I am not ashamed publicly  
to profess, to secure some honest profit to  
myself.

Thomas Fuller, Worthies, pp. 1-2

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of  
my mother, Margaret Knock (1916 - 1972),  
teacher of English, through whom I first  
learned to appreciate literature.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

### CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The tasks of the Critical and Textual Introductions are separate, yet complementary. The task of the Critical Introduction is to deduce and establish characteristics of Thomas' poetry. To this end, material outside the presented selection of poems has been consulted. This cumulative appreciation of Thomas' poetry includes a critical evaluation of certain textual alterations (1), considering them to be indicative of the poet's honest and uncompromising efforts to enact his insight and perspective. Fuller consideration of the presented text will be found in the Textual Introduction, and in the notes accompanying the selected poems. We shall there see how critical criteria, established in this Critical Introduction, help the study of the text.

How Thomas became a poet is well documented, as are many biographical facts (2), in some degree relevant in forming an idea of the man as a poet. More immediately relevant than biographical data is a consideration of Thomas' own critical views formed over many years as a reviewer, views arising from his sincere awareness of the necessary interrelation of literature and life.

As a critic, Edward Thomas reveals a steady growth of interest in, and perception of, the necessary precision of expression in creative writing. The absence of this precision was noted in writers whose work he reviewed. Indeed, before he was fully established as a reviewer, he wrote to Gordon Bottomley in 1902, regarding his writing:

---

(1) See p.46 ff.

(2) A Biographical Table appears in the Appendices, p.279 ff.

The expression does not properly clothe the fancy...  
you hover continually on the verge of what is probably  
inexpressible. (1)

When he came to write poetry himself this awareness stood him in good  
stead. A letter to Edward Garnett of March 1915 is explicit on this  
subject:

Dimness and lack of concreteness I shall certainly do my  
best against. I hate them too much in others to tolerate  
them in myself. (2)

Thomas had formulated theories on the nature of poetry, which can  
be found in his books of criticism, especially after 1908. Writing on  
Maeterlinck in 1911 he said:

Anything, however small, may make a poem; nothing, however  
great, is certain to. Concentration, intensity of mood,  
is the one necessary condition in the poet and in the  
poem. By this concentration something is detached from  
the confused immensity of life and receives individuality. (3)

It is concentration of this sort which substantiates Thomas' tentative  
analysis of his own prosody, contained in a letter of 2nd March 1915 to  
Gordon Bottomley:

Perhaps it is only like doing the best parts of my prose in  
verse and leaving out the connecting futile parts. That  
would be something if it were self contained and better than  
the best of my prose as I imagine it is. (4)

Characteristically, Thomas undervalues the significance of his writing,  
and the change of power in the transition from prose to verse, made during  
November 1914. Words, which he had always valued, now became the necessary

- (1) Letters, p.41 (10 November 1902)
- (2) E. Garnett (ed.) Selected Poems of Edward Thomas,  
Gregynog 1927, Intro. p. vi ff. (17 March, 1915)  
(see pp 148-50 below)
- (3) Quoted by R.P. Eckert, Edward Thomas (1937), p.151
- (4) Letters, p.245



words which he had sought in vain. He poignantly and acutely revealed his own dilemma while writing ostensibly of Jefferies in 1909:

...The seeing eye of child or lover, the poet's verse, the musician's melody, add ... continually to the richness of the universe. Jefferies early possessed such an eye, such an imagination, though not for many years could he reveal some of its images by means of words. In fact, he was very soon to bear witness to the pitiful truth that the imagination does not supply the words that shall be its expression; he was to fill much paper with words that revealed almost nothing of his inner and little more of his outer life. (1)

Several years earlier, in 1904, Thomas had written to Bottomley regarding his own process of composition:

While I write it is a dull blindfold journey through a strange, lovely land. I seem to take what I write from the dictation of someone else. Correction is pleasanter. For then I have glimpses of what I was passing through as I wrote. (2)

But, by 1909 Thomas had learnt that imagination could not supply the necessary words. Nor, he commented, could these come from sheer effort.

Certainly deliberateness and patience alone can hardly make any writing perfect....There must be an impulse before deliberate effort and patience are called in, and if that impulse has not been powerful and enduring the work of its subordinates will be too apparent ... they (i.e. words) stick out because the labour of composition has become so self-conscious and mechanical that cohesion and perfect consistency are impossible. The words have only an isolated value; they are labels; they are shorthand; they are anything but living and social words. (3)

(1) Richard Jefferies (1909), p.57.

(2) Letters, p.53 (17 March 1904)

(3) Walter Pater (1913), pp.198-9, & p.213  
cf. Lafcadio Hearn (1912), pp. 73-4

"For some writers the unconscious is strong and full in the first and only form of a book or chapter; for others, doubtless, only in the third or tenth revision."  
See also p. 66 below.

Thomas had learnt that neither imaginative apprehension of his surroundings, nor sheer hard work would provide him with the means of self-expression. We have already seen his awareness of the difficulty of endowing visions with words which would exactly reflect his feelings for proportion and connection of experience. In 1909 he wrote:

Words are no longer symbols, and to say 'hill' or 'beech' is not to call up images of a hill or a beech tree, since we have so long been in the habit of using the words for beautiful and mighty and noble things very much as a book-keeper uses figures without seeing gold and power. (1)

In October 1915 Thomas found words to convey gold and power in his poem "October", words of cohesive value (2) directed by a sense of perspective.

The green elm with the one great bough of gold  
 Lets leaves into the grass slip, one by one, -  
 The short hill grass, the mushrooms small, milk white,  
 Harebell & scabious & tormentil,  
 That blackberry & gorse, in dew & sun,  
 Bow down to : & the wind travels too light  
 To shake the fallen birch leaves from the fern;  
 The gossamers wander at their own will.

(1) The South Country (1909), p.136

(2) As noted below, Thomas had also written in Maeterlinck (1911), p.27 -  
 "...no word, outside works of information, has any value beyond its surface value except what it receives from its neighbours and its position among them." See also Appendix III, p.287.

A strange perspective pervades these words. The 'bough of gold', individually mentioned, superior in size and thus more noticeable, condescends to allow leaves to slip into the grass. The leaves are seen 'one by one' and the even more insignificant 'short hill grass' takes on unusual power. The 'mushrooms', innocently 'milk white', the delicate and beautiful wild flowers,-light blue scabious, blue harebell, yellow tormentil, and the blackberry and yellow gorse, prickly and forbidding close contact, all 'bow down to' the short hill grass. One can either find this petty in incident, or one can see the genuine and perceptive enactment of the interrelation of these various items, where the least is seen as the greatest in terms of the word 'bow', with its associations of fidelity and subservience. (1) Everything in this closely realised autumnal scene has its place, everything its value, a value not immediately apparent.

The introduction of the wind, 'too light' to move the 'fallen birch leaves' pervades the atmosphere with stillness and peace. As Thomas had said:

....words can entangle and hold fast all that is loveliest and strongest, and fleetest, and most enduring, in heaven and earth. (2)

But words had to be lived with.

Unless a man writes with his whole nature concentrated upon his subject he is unlikely to take hold of another man. (3)

---

(1) cf. "February Afternoon"

.....the first are the last until a caw  
Commands that last are first again, - a law  
Which was of old....

(2) Richard Jefferies (1909), p.336

(3) E. Thomas, Walter Pater (1913), p. 215

In his better poems such as "October", Thomas communicated through the power of his concentration, and his light but firm hold of words so long elusive. These words were indeed

Worn new  
 Again and again:  
 Young as our streams  
 After rain.

("Words")

A return to "October" (1) will show how the closely realised opening is used to communicate the inner life, which as F.R. Leavis has noted, 'the sensory impressions are notation for.' (2)

At heavier steps than birds' the squirrels scold.  
 The rich-scene late year has grown fresh again and new  
 As Spring, & to the touch is not more cool  
 Than it is warm to the gaze; & now I might  
 As happy be as earth is beautiful,  
 Were I some other or with earth could turn  
 In alternation of violet & rose,  
 Harebell & snowdrop, at their season due,  
 And gorse that has no time not to be gay.  
 But if this be not happiness, - who knows?

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(1) Text here used as found in Bodleian Ms.

(2) New Bearings in English Poetry (1932), p. 70  
 cf. also New Bearings, p. 69

It is as if he were trying to catch some shy intuition on the edge of consciousness that would disappear if looked at directly.

Some day I shall think this a happy day,  
 And this mood by the name of melancholy  
 Shall no more blackened & obscured be.

Human intrusion into this self-sufficient scene leads to the squirrels' scolding. A manuscript break here points to the break in the sense - now comes the explanation of the significance of this finely realised outward scene in terms of the poet's apprehension of his own personality: or as Leavis pointed out (1), the shift of focus. It is noteworthy in passing that the 'rich scene' of the Bodleian fair copy is there corrected, in pencil, to 'late year'; this correct version appears only in Collected Poems (1928). The poet's light touch in his realisation of this scene, undoubtedly rich in variety and wealth and significance, leads one to question, as he clearly did himself, the necessity of this underlining given by 'rich scene'. 'Late year' seems more desirable. The line itself, in whichever guise, refers to the constant renewal of life in the midst of seeming decay. In fact it is deliberately compared to the more obvious symbol of renewal, Spring. The complexity of growth from decay, in the midst of decay, and despite decay, is peculiarly significant to the poet in his analysis of his own spiritual autumn (2). The senses are appealed to in the specific but muted half negative expression of 'touch' and 'gaze' - the latter word especially suggestive of prolonged thoughtful watching, both at the time being recalled and in the recalling. The muted warmth suggests the tentative identification felt by the poet with his scene. The conditional 'I might/As happy be as earth is beautiful'

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(1) op. cit., p.70

(2) See p.41 & p.207 below

is fitting in its introduction of a curious and representative juxtaposition of the almost indefinable 'happy', a recurrent theme of Thomas', and 'beautiful', which has been very closely realised and thus made tangible. The impossibility of change in the poet's personality - 'Were I some other' - is juxtaposed against a concept simultaneously attractive and unattractive. The poet considers the possibility of being subject to earth's seasons, bereft of self-determination. As the earth changed, inevitably, 'In alternation of violet and rose', and 'Harebell and snowdrop, at their season due', the poet also could change hue and texture, size and form without moral responsibility of choice. There is, too, the 'gorse, that has no time not to be gay', but the dubious benefit of this is clear on consideration of the muted effect of the double negative; a course irrevocably fixed would not suit. So the poet comes to his conclusions. If this moment, whether of actual perception, or of remembering, is not one of happiness, as considered now, it is yet possible that one day in the future, in retrospect, this mood shall not be blackened - a word suggestive not merely of obscurity, but of ignominy - or obscured. Thomas himself said some months later, in "As The Team's Head Brass":

If we could see all, all might seem good.

Thus for all its analysis of non-happiness and non-contentment, there is positive hope, and positive participation in and identification with his surroundings, rather than mere subordination. (1)

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(1) cf. "Liberty" - analysed later in this introduction-  
written 26.xi.15, some six weeks later. See p.58 below.

"October", enacting earlier observations regarding words and methods, is a poem representative of Thomas' hard won skills. He had learnt from his analyses of others' work. The words used do not show evidence of deliberate and clumsy effort. The poet has held true to the facts of outward form and inward feeling. The effect is a cumulative communication of perspective, which does not depend for its main effect upon anything outside itself except the humanity of the reader. The poem's necessary unity shows that:

....no word outside works of information, has any value beyond its surface value except what it receives from its neighbours and its position among them.....  
 In the mainly instinctive use of language, the words will all support one another, and if the writing is good, the result of this support is that each word is living its intensest life. (1)

Facts of outward form and inward feeling communicate the poet's perspective, his sense of due importance, of the inclusive relevance of the seemingly trivial. Thomas realised this, writing of Jefferies:

But five senses are not the sum even of a sensual man, and in Jefferies they are humble in the service of the soul that apprehends the beauty of life and the bitterness because that must fade or die by the hand of Fate or Time or Man himself. (2)

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(1) E. Thomas, Maeterlinck (1911), p.27

(2) Quoted by H. Coombes, Edward Thomas (1956), p.134

A further comment on Jefferies is also revealing of the writer himself:

though the abundance of what he saw will continue to attract many, it is for his way of seeing....that we must chiefly go to him. (1)

The one poem already considered fits all these comments, but what of the other poems, and of the overall effect, and the conclusions regarding Thomas as a poet? Beauty, bitterness, and his way of seeing his world and himself in relation to it must send us to this poet 'concerned with the finer texture of living.' (2) Repeatedly and yet with constantly renewed vision, Thomas explores the fundamental stresses of his own personality, a personality which he comes to view with sufficiently objective insight and detachment for us to feel that we can see in these poems more than mere personal musings. His was a distinctively modern sensibility, and he did devote great technical subtlety - the emphasis is on subtlety - to its expression. F.R. Leavis took little time to substantiate these claims, with an acute but brief examination of "October" and "Old Man". (2) Let us follow this further and see another approach to recognisably similar problems. What is particularly interesting is the fact that "Old Man", for all its air of accomplishment, was begun as a prose draft in November 1914 and was completed on 6 December 1914, being his fourth completed poem. The value of his long apprenticeship to words is clear. The words are endowed with, and communicate, Thomas' sense of the interrelation of time and experience in all its intricacy.

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(1) Quoted by H. Coombes, op.cit., pp.135-6

(2) F.R. Leavis, op. cit., p.69



Old Man's Beard 17:xi:14

Just as she is turning in to the house or leaving it, the baby plucks a feather of old man's beard. The bush grows just across the path from the door. Sometimes she stands by it, squeezing off tip after tip from the branches and shrivelling them between her fingers on to the path in grey-green shreds. So the bush is still only half as tall as she is, though it is the same age. She never talks of it, but I wonder how much of the garden she will remember, the hedge with the old damson trees topping it, the vegetable rows, the path bending round the house corner, the old man's beard opposite the door, and me sometimes forbidding her to touch it, if she lives to my years. As for myself I cannot remember when I first smelt that green bitterness. I, too, often gather a sprig from the bush and sniff it and roll it between my fingers and sniff again and think, trying to discover what it is I am remembering. I do not wholly like the smell, yet would rather lose many meaningless sweeter ones than this bitter one of which I have mislaid the key. As I hold the sprig to my nose and slowly withdraw it, I think of nothing, I see, I hear nothing; yet I seem too to be listening, lying in wait for whatever it is I ought to remember but never do. No garden comes back to me, no hedge or path, no grey green bush called old man's beard or lad's love, no figure of mother or father or playmate, only a dark avenue without an end. (1)

He had for years made notes on his ramblings, and on the seasons and various phenomena he encountered. A note on one such commonplace book will be found in the Textual Introduction (2). At least two of

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(1) Lockwood Memorial Library, reproduced by W. Cooke, Edward Thomas (1970), p. 171 ff.

(2) See p. 120 ff. below

his earlier poems are extant in prose drafts, an interim stage between notes, mental or otherwise, of the experience, and the final poem. He soon found that what was worthwhile remained in the mind, and his poems steadily reflect the growing sureness of touch. However, "Old Man" had its genesis in the prose draft - "Old Man's Beard", dated 17:xi:14. This is a powerful and evocative piece of prose in its own right, examining the whole significance of experience, its future value if any, the meaning of experience to two individuals of different age and experience, the whole viewed in relation to the curious timelessness of the bush, old man's beard, 'still only half as tall as she is, though it is the same age'. The simultaneously similar, yet different action of child and poet in shrivelling the tips of the bush between fingers suggests the way that all experience is transmuted by individual approach and reaction. The child's destructive curiosity leads the poet to wonder

how much of the garden she will remember, the hedge with  
the old damson trees topping it, the vegetable rows, the  
path bending round the house corner, the old man's beard  
opposite the door, and me sometimes forbidding her to touch  
it, if she lives to my years.

The interesting syntax here suggests two interpretations - will she remember this? or, will she remember me forbidding her to touch in the event of her reaching my years? That is to say, we can see implicit here the suggestion that Thomas does not wish the child to have the burden he has, the evaluating of past experience half remembered,

I seem too to be listening, lying in wait for whatever  
it is I ought to remember but never do.

Thomas' action in gathering a sprig from the bush, sniffing it, and

rolling it between his fingers is a series of actions in which he seeks to employ the various senses to recapture 'whatever it is I ought to remember'. The smell is not wholly attractive - a characteristic note - yet the poet attempts an honest appraisal which leads him to the long list of negatives which concludes the passage:

No garden comes back to me, no hedge or path, no grey  
green bush called old man's beard or lad's love, no  
figure of mother or father or playmate, only a dark  
avenue without an end.

a more foreboding vision than the present 'path bending round the house corner' - a path, though, we note on both occasions seen in relation to this grey green bush of ambiguous name. We perhaps remember T.S. Eliot's opening to Burnt Norton:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.

Even in the prose draft Thomas has successfully approached this same problem of time and experience, where he has realised his tentative conclusions in tangible terms.

But five senses are not the sum.....in the service of  
a soul that apprehends the beauty of life and the  
bitterness because that must fade or die by the hand  
of Fate or Time or Man himself. (1)

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(1) Quoted by H. Coombes, op. cit., pp.135-6

This applies to the prose draft, and to the particular poem arising from it, with its further shades of insight on the nature of identity.

Old Man 6:xii:14

Old Man, or Lad's-love - in the name there's nothing  
 To one that knows not Lad's-love, or Old Man,  
 The hoar-green feathery herb, almost a tree,  
 Growing with rosemary and lavender.  
 Even to one that knows it well, the names  
 Half decorate, half perplex, the thing it is:  
 At least, what that is clings not to the names  
 In spite of time. And yet I like the names.

The herb itself I like not, but for certain  
 I love it, as some day the child will love it  
 Who plucks a feather from the door-side bush  
 Whenever she goes in or out of the house.  
 Often she waits there, snipping the tips and shrivelling  
 The shreds at last on to the path, perhaps  
 Thinking, perhaps of nothing, till she sniffs  
 Her fingers and runs off. The bush is still  
 But half as tall as she, though it is as old;  
 So well she clips it. Not a word she says;  
 And I can only wonder how much hereafter  
 She will remember, with that bitter scent,  
 Of garden rows, and ancient damson trees  
 Topping a hedge, a bent path to a door,  
 A low thick bush beside the door, and me  
 Forbidding her to pick.

As for myself,  
 Where first I met the bitter scent is lost.  
 I, too, often shrivel the grey shreds,  
 Sniff them and think and sniff again and try  
 Once more to think what it is I am remembering,  
 Always in vain. I cannot like the scent,  
 Yet I would rather give up others more sweet,  
 With no meaning, than this bitter one.

I have mislaid the key. I sniff the spray  
 And think of nothing; I see and I hear nothing;  
 Yet seem, too, to be listening, lying in wait  
 For what I should, yet never can, remember:  
 No garden appears, no path, no hoar-green bush  
 Of Lad's-love, or Old Man, no child beside,  
 Neither father nor mother, nor any playmate;  
 Only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end.

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Most immediately noticeable and significant is Thomas' use of the contradictory names as a point of departure. In the prose draft the alternative name of Lad's-love appeared as an afterthought. With the consideration of the names we recall the preoccupation present in the critical comments of 1909 -

Words are no longer symbols, and to say 'hill' or 'beech'  
 is not to call up images of a hill or a beech tree, since

we have so long been in the habit of using the words  
for beautiful and mighty and noble things very much as  
a book-keeper uses figures without seeing gold and power. (1)

The identity of an object is not conclusively contained in its name -  
'in the name there's nothing' - unless one has specific knowledge and  
memory of that object. The contradictory nomenclature of 'Old Man, or  
Lad's-love' seems to 'half-decorate, half-perplex the thing it is,' even  
for those who know the actual plant well. The concept of relative age  
and significance is contained here in terms of the 'hoar-green feathery  
herb'. We note the added poetic and thematic intensity in contrast to the  
prose draft's 'grey green bush'. 'Hoar' suggests age, 'feathery' suggests  
the ephemeral part of the plant, 'herb' has overtones of medicinal remedy.  
Further paradox is contained in 'almost a tree' which suggests latent  
growth. The opening section concludes:

At least, what that is clings not to the names  
In spite of time. And yet I like the names.

Habitual use does not confer significance. Nevertheless, the very  
puzzle there contained attracts the poet's interest and appraisal.

This opening has no parallel in the prose draft, where the child's  
actions provide the opening. From the names, we progress to a consideration  
of the actual herb which Thomas finds no intrinsic reason for liking, yet  
he is able to love it, for its past significance, we feel, in view of the  
comparison of the poet's love and the child's love. The child, we note  
'will love it' - in the future, and emphatically. T.S. Eliot's lines are  
again an interesting parallel:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future....

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(1) E. Thomas, The South Country (1909), p.136

The child's recognition of the significance of present experience ('who plucks a feather from the door-side bush') in the future, when it will be viewed as the past, is seen in terms of the poet's apprehension of his own reality. In the prose draft Thomas wondered how much the child would remember. On further reflection, he wonders, but he is emphatic that she will not only remember but love, here separate from evaluation. The frequency of her association with the herb is 'sometimes' in the prose draft, but 'often' in the poem. The method of picking the plant is at once briefer and more deliberately planned - 'squeezing' becomes 'snipping', and the quasi-destructive overtones of the prose draft become almost creative: 'So well she clips it.' The contrast in size and relative significance of herb and child remains unchanged. A further notable shift in emphasis is shown by the child's prolonged and noted waiting in the poem. The association both of poet and child with the experience, the outward scene that provides notation for inward feeling, is more intensely realised in the poem.

The child does not speak in either version - her inability or reluctance to express in words what she feels is fitting in the context of doubtful power assigned to names and words. The bitter scent remains an enigma, the old damson trees become 'ancient', and the sense of time future contained in the syntactical ambiguity already noted, 'if she lives to my years', is less explicitly contained in earlier references to future, in the poem. The forbidding is more specific in the poem - 'touch' has become 'pick' - a more positive participation, perhaps suggesting choice.

The latter halves of poem, and of prose draft are more closely similar, often to the extent of actual phrase. The poet's failure to recapture past experience - a recurrent theme - from present sensuous

identification is constant in both drafts. His attempt to do so is repeated:

I, too, often shrivel the grey shreds,  
 Sniff them and think and sniff again and try  
 Once more to think what it is I am remembering,  
 Always in vain.

We note the way that the metre unobtrusively supports the sense - the repeated effort, and the heavy 'Always in vain' at the opening of the new line. Thomas' use of the opening phrase of a line is of interest - we note, too, the emphasis thus given to 'With no meaning', when he reiterates his simultaneous dislike for and interest in the bitter scent. Images of familiarity, more explicit in the prose draft, such as the door and the path, find reflection in the images used to suggest the unknown. He has 'mislaidd the key', to the known, yet unknown past, and thus the future also. His senses tell him nothing -

..... I sniff the spray  
 And think of nothing; I see and I hear nothing;

Despite this, his tenacity finds expression, for he seems

.....to be listening, lying in wait,  
 For what I should, yet never can, remember,

It is worth noting how much more adept in his use of word and rhythm he has become in expressing this particular concept. The prose draft read:

to be listening, lying in wait for whatever it is I ought  
 to remember but never do.

'Whatever' is more vague than 'what', and the parenthetical 'yet never can', coming between 'should' and 'remember', imparts emphasis



to both words, as well as to the phrase itself. 'Can' implies ability, 'do' action.

Nothing appears to his memory - no garden, no path, no hoar-green bush - its age and youth we are reminded of by the juxtaposition of 'hoar' and 'green', and more explicitly, 'Lad's-love or Old Man' - we note a reversal of order since the opening line, and since its appearance in the prose draft. The negatives accumulate - we should note the slight change of 'no figure of mother or father or playmate', to the more emphatic

Neither father nor mother nor any playmate.

The final line continues the reflection of the actual present images - the path has become the grander and more remote 'avenue, nameless, without end'. If time past and present are indeed contained in time future the inability to recall or evaluate hinders the perception of what is to come. We note finally how Thomas revised his ending.

W. Cooke has called attention to this change of text. (1)

<u>Prose draft</u>	only a dark avenue without an end
<u>1st draft</u>	only a dark avenue without end or name
<u>2nd draft</u>	only an avenue dark without end or name
<u>Annual of New Poetry (1917)</u>	only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end (2)

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(1) W. Cooke, Edward Thomas (1970), p.177

(2) A further instance of concern with, and resulting increase in strength from a revised ending occurs in "March", dated 5 December 1914 in the Lockwood Ms. The closing four lines read

.....Not till night had half its stars  
 And never a cloud was I aware of silence  
 Sweeter for those screams and songs, a silence  
 Saying that Spring returns, perhaps tomorrow.

A typescript of this draft alters the penultimate line to:

Rich with all that riot of songs, a: silence

Finally, in Poems (1917), the line reads:

Stained with all that hour's songs a silence

As H. Coombes points out, 'Stain may beautify or mar or beautify while it mars.' - Edward Thomas (1956), p.182.

See also Cooke, pp. 177 & 143, & p.45 below.

We note the rounding off of the construction of the poem with the introduction of the 'name' that is lacking. Despite the explored ambiguity and inaccuracy of the name which is central to the poem, it is at least some quality, although

.....What that is clings not to the names.

The utter lack of identity is suggested in the resonant final line of the current version, with its emphatic pauses.

We have thus seen how Thomas developed a powerful prose version into the more complex and thought-provoking poem. As in "October" the outward scene is integral to the expression of the inward feeling. The past is vitally meaningful to him, and he returns to this constantly, often indeed viewing it, as here, in relation to the future. The relationship of himself to others, ("Old Man") and to his natural surroundings ("Old Man" & "October") is repeatedly explored within the perspective of time. "Old Man" is a self-sufficient poem which relies for its appeal on the humanity of the reader. Yet it is interesting to fill in some background detail to this poem at this stage, having shown the poem's self-sufficiency. The event on which the poem is based took place in the herb garden near to his study on Ashford Hanger; to its immediate surroundings one can trace several poems, notably "The Combe" and "The Path". More immediately relevant to this poem and the action endowed in retrospect with so much thought, is J.W. Haines' information, writing of the poem he knew as "Lad's Love":

I remember that, for the whole of the last evening he spent with me, he at intervals pulled some mysterious object out of his pocket to smell. What it was I never saw, but it seemed to give him nearly as much satisfaction as his pipe

....

In truth his sensations were often almost too much for him. He heard and saw and felt too acutely....he heard every sound and every silence, nor could he detach himself from what he saw and heard. (1)

As a person, Thomas did indeed lack the detachment from his senses necessary for a comfortable life. However, as "October" and "Old Man" so richly show, his poetry at its best had this simultaneous detachment and truth to experience which marks great creative work.

Lest it be thought that Thomas' poetry, for all its universality, arises only from his own relationships with nature and time, his concern for humanity, seen in his involvement with his daughter's experience in "Old Man" and implicit in any case in his concern for the finer points of human experience, should be characterised. His very first poem, "Up in the Wind" a long and prosaic conversation poem (2), shows sympathy and interest in the experience of those he met on his walks. The wild girl's loneliness, 'eleven houseless miles' from civilisation, in a

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(1) "As I Knew Him", In Memoriam Edward Thomas (1919)

(2) Letter from ET to John Freeman, 8 March 1915 -

...What I have done so far have been like quintessences of the best parts of my prose books - not much sharper or more intense, but I hope a little; since the first take off they haven't been Frosty very much or so I imagine and I have tried as often as possible to avoid the facilities offered by blank verse and I try not to belong - I even have an ambition to keep under 12 lines but rarely succeed.

(J. Moore, Edward Thomas (1939), p.326)

country inn, hidden away - 'it's the trees you see, and not the house' - is well conveyed and told with vigour. The poet's sympathy with loneliness that he well knows informs the text. Yet although this type of long poem is more easily recognisable as showing concern, the very similarity of these poems to his prose accounts seems to hinder them from the fullest success. The conversational nature of "Man and Dog", for instance, is almost wholly descriptive. The brief glimpse of present reality -

His sons, three sons were fighting...  
 ...Many a man sleeps worse tonight  
 Than I shall. 'In the trenches.' 'Yes, that's right.'  
 But they'll be out of that - I hope they be -  
 This weather, marching after the enemy. —

does not redeem the rather trivial nature of the narrative, belatedly given minor significance in terms of time and nature:

....at his heels the crisp leaves scurried fast,  
 And the leaf coloured robin watched. They passed,  
 The robin till next day, the man for good,  
 Together in the twilight of the wood.

A less than adept use of rhyme is a further blemish. Some ten or so poems come within this category of conversational poems, using a partially characterised person often as a mouthpiece or sounding board (1), or relying on an accurate re-creation of some trivial incident which seems to lack sufficient significance to inspire the writer any further than

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(1) See also critical commentary on "The Chalk Pit" for Thomas' characterisation of his alter ego, pp. 77-9 & 213 ff. below.

the mundane. "The New Year" fails to convince; "The Penny Whistle" ends lamely:

And her brother who hides apart in a thicket  
 Slowly and surely playing  
 On a whistle an old nursery melody  
 Says far more than I am saying.

We can but agree! Correction after correction has failed in this case. These are poems of the first six months, and their prose ancestry is in fact more noticeable than the actual extant prose draft of "Old Man".

Concern and fascination with human tradition, in the form of songs, led him to experiment on three occasions with the use of refrain. Two poems, written during Christmas 1914, are constructed round two such songs, "A-Roving" and "The Lincolnshire Poacher"; to both he gives some more specific context, but in neither is he happy with the rhythm of the song imparted by the rhyme. His return to such a task in June 1916, when he wrote "Early One Morning" (1) met with more success. This depends less on the song "Rio Grande" than it does on the verses Thomas has written - the final one being the significant statement -

The past is the only dead thing that smells sweet,  
 The only sweet thing that is not also fleet.

The refrain from the song

I'm bound away for ever,  
 Away somewhere, away for ever

concludes this strange poem, with its suggestion of escape. Not self-evident is the background detail of army life, which could explain the

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(1) See p. 251 below

deliberate refrain, suggesting the unknown future, and the increasing impossibility of escape, impossible even in days of liberty.

I could not return from my liberty,  
To my youth and my love and my misery.

The past, here in the form of traditional songs, is seen in modern light. His most successful fusion of past - in the form of myth - and present reality will be seen in the full analysis of "Roads" which appears with the text, (p. 239 below).

Later poems of conversational type, like "As The Team's Head Brass" (1) do succeed. This poem of May 1916 is superficially similar to the earlier poems of conversation. There seems here to be less conscious effort to find significance, and a correspondingly surer touch. The scene itself is well suited to the subsequent conversation. The poet watches the ploughman, his

...plough narrowing a yellow square of charlock.

As the horses turned at the end of each furrow the ploughman rested and discussed the weather or the war. Then

Scraping the share he faced towards the wood,  
Aidscrewed along the furrow till the brass flashed  
Once more.

The effect of weather is felt, for the poet sits on an elm felled by the blizzard 'back in March'. The intrusion of war is implicit, for there is no-one to remove the fallen tree. The two men are then more specific about the individual effect of and reaction to war. The ploughman asks:

'Have you been out?' 'No.' 'And don't want to, perhaps?'

The poet replies:

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(1) See text pp. 249-50 below

'If I could only come back again, I should.  
 I could spare an arm. I shouldn't want to lose  
 A leg. If I should lose my head, why, so,  
 I should want nothing more....Have many gone  
 From here?' 'Yes.' 'Many lost?' 'Yes, a good few.  
 Only two teams work on the farm this year.  
 One of my mates is dead. The second day  
 In France they killed him. It was back in March,  
 The very night of the blizzard, too. Now if  
 He had stayed here we should have moved the tree.'

Something is here detached from the confused immensity of war and given particular application (1). The threat to the rural community (2) is immediate. Without war certain things would get done -

'.....it would have been  
 Another world!' 'Ay, and a better, though  
 If we could see all, all might seem good.'

The ploughman returns to his task; the lovers - a fleeting suggestion of normality in the midst of the unusual - leave the wood. Life continues. The easy conversational tones have here no loaded significance; an immense subject is seen in terms of individual humanity, seen as part of a continuing and larger whole - the countryside, the land and the seasons, insignificant themselves in relation to the unseen 'all'. There is also the personal foreboding of the ploughman's question to the poet. 'Have you been out' suggests, as W. Cooke has said (3), that the writer is in uniform. The final lines continue the overtone of personal as well as communal threat.

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- (1) See p. 3 above  
 (2) See p.69 ff. below  
 (3) Cooke, p.240

The horses started and for the last time  
 I watched the clods crumble and topple over  
 After the ploughshare and the stumbling team.

The philosophical conclusions have arisen naturally from the action.

Yet, for all this, Thomas' better poems concerned with human individuality and relationships seen in the controlling perspective of time are as a rule shorter, and more varied in form (see note p.22). "A Private", of January 1915 (see pp. 173-4 below) expressed Thomas' sympathetic identification with the ploughman private - a short but eloquent poem on social worth and identity. Other eloquent appraisals of humanity in terms of war can be found, apart from brief references, in "In Memoriam, Easter 1915":

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood  
 This Eastertide call into mind the men,  
 Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should  
 Have gathered them and will do never again.

In May 1916 Thomas again expressed his awareness and sympathetic perception of the dead in the presence of natural events.

The cherry trees bend over and are shedding  
 On the old road where all that passed are dead,  
 Their petals, strewing the grass as for a wedding  
 This early May morn when there is none to wed.

These and other poems written during 1915 and 1916 bear the impression of war. Thomas however was concerned with individuals, in connection with war, and quite apart from war, in their own social relationships. His own awareness of the suffering of others as well as his own finds eloquent expression in "The Owl" of February 1915. The owl's cry in the



midst of his own temporary comfort finds his intuitive sympathy:

And salted was my food, and my repose,  
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice  
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,  
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

The word 'salted' is the significant word here - made sharp, with its association of tears, and wounds, yet flavoursome, too, - it is an instance of a word made necessary, fusing outward detail and inward feeling.

The shadow of war is also present in Thomas' poem of his friendship with Robert Frost, 22 May 1916 "The Sun Used to Shine",

We turned from men or poetry  
To rumours of the war remote  
Only till both stood disinclined

.....

This is an interval watched over by 'a sentry of dark betonies' -

.....Everything

To faintness like those rumours fades.

and others will come to experience similar events. We note in passing ironical references to past crusades and imperial battles seen in relation to time (1). Some few months later, in September 1916, the intrusion of war is more marked -

The Blenheim oranges  
Fall grubby from the trees

As when I was young -  
And when the lost one was here -  
And when the war began  
To turn young men to dung.

---

(1) See pp. 50, 76, 221-2 below re. "The Word".

This is a particularly powerful passage from "Gone, Gone Again", (3:ix:16). Blenheim needs little comment in the context - we recall "Digging" (21:vi:15) 'What matter makes my spade for tears or mirth' (1) - decay is suggested by 'grubby', and the finality is reinforced by the double rhyme of 'young' and 'dung'. Rumours were not now so remote. W. Cooke (2) makes the valid comment that 'The pity of war' entered Thomas' poetry before Owen had even enlisted.'

Thomas' concern for humanity, and his humility in giving all due importance, find fresh expression in poems about his family, fresh and light, yet informed with his constantly honest appraisal.

What shall I give my daughter the younger

.....

Her small hands I would not cumber

With so many acres and their lumber,

But leave her Steep and her own world

And her spectacled self with hair uncurled,

Wanting a thousand little things

That time without contentment brings. (8:iv:16)

The last line sounds a characteristic warning.

And you, Helen, what should I give you?

....a far better art

Than mine can be, all you have lost

Upon the travelling waters tossed,

Or given to me.....

I would give you back yourself,

---

(1) See text pp.228-31 below

(2) Cooke, p. 224, my *italics*.

.....fair days free from care  
 And heart to enjoy both foul and fair,  
 And myself, too, if I could find  
 Where it lay hidden and it proved kind. (9:iv:16)

Once more, in the midst of a poem of ease and sureness, rueful in its approach and clearly an exercise in crystal-gazing, there is this characteristically honest humility, especially in the final couplet. An earlier poem to his wife, "No One So Much As You" (1) (11:ii:16) written three months previously, had also contained honesty of a rare kind, which examines the poet's struggle to communicate,

We look and understand,  
 We cannot speak  
 Except in trifles and  
 Words the most weak.

More especially it expresses his doubt as to whether he has responded in kind. W.W. Robson published a letter from Thomas to Helen Thomas, (of April 1916, in the TLS 23:iii:1962 p. 208) in which the following appears:

Nobody but you would ever be likely to respond as I wished.  
 I don't like to think anybody but I could respond to you.  
 If you turned to anybody else I should come to an end  
 immediately.

This is reflected in the poem:

.....I have kept  
 Only a fretting  
  
 That I could not return  
 All that you gave  
 And could not ever burn  
 With the love you have.

---

(1) Interesting is the fact that Helen Thomas later disclaimed this poem saying it was written to the poet's mother. However, it makes more sense seen in relation to his wife.

A further poem to his wife, Helen, written in June 1916, shows again Thomas' honest appraisal of his own personal relationship.

After you speak	Before he must
And what you meant	Soar in lone flight
Is plain.	So far,
My eyes	Like a black star
Meet yours that mean,	He seems -
With your cheeks and hair,	A mote
Something more wise,	Of singing dust
More dark,	Afloat,
And far different.	Above,
Even so the lark	That dreams
Loves dust	And sheds no light.
And nestles in it	I know your lust
The minute	Is love

He recognises his wife's desire for love; with characteristic self doubt, he questions his ability to respond, though realising his grateful dependence.

As with many themes explored in his poetry, precedents can be found in his prose. Such a passage is this, on a character, recognisable as a self-portrait, called Hawthornden, taken from Light and Twilight (1911), p.56.

He would look up from a poem sometimes and see his wife reading or embroidering, and then take his eyes away with a sigh and only the faintest dissatisfied recognition that he was becoming more and more incapable of being passionate himself and of meeting the passion of another.

Not all his relationships were friendly - reading the poem to his

father, entitled "P.H.T." (8:ii:16) will reveal this.

I may come near loving you  
 When you are dead  
 .....  
 You can do and undo no more  
 When you go hence  
 .....  
 But not so long as you live  
 Can I love you at all.

Not all of his poems basically concerned with human relationship are confined to his own immediate experience, and not all human relationship is seen in terms of tangible reality. "The Unknown" (14:ii:16) is concerned with the elusive Muse, ethereal - yet seen as human.

The simple lack  
 Of her is more to me  
 Than others' presence,  
 Whether life splendid be  
 Or utter black.

Towards the end of 1916, faced with the prospect of the Western Front, Thomas wrote a curious poem, entitled "What Will They Do?" (15:ix:16). In it he wonders to what extent he has influenced people in his relationships. It seems

They will do without me as the rain  
 Can do without the flowers and the grass  
 That profit by it....

Yet the poet wonders

But what if I in them as they in me  
 Nourished what has great value and no price?

Although the final conclusion is derision at this thought, the fact that so self-assertive a thought could be considered seems evidence of Thomas' sense of possible fulfilment (1). His characteristically whimsical tone on the subject of his own worth is also seen in "The Clouds that are so Light". In this poem, of January 1916, he pinpoints relative value -

But clouds would have, without earth  
 To shadow, far less worth:  
 Away from your shadow on me  
 Your beauty less would be.

And this, he proceeds to point out, will remain so.

And if it still be treasured  
 An age hence, it shall be measured  
 By this small dark spot  
 Without which it were not.

Light is seen in relation to dark, and so he finds some justification for himself. The two approaches to similar thoughts remind us that Thomas' outlook, and thus performance, is by no means uniformly solemn in method, or purpose. The poet in relation to inexorable nature, the mutability of life, to people individually and at large - is a list of headings under which many meaningful approaches were made by Thomas. His was a sensibility constantly alive to beauty and bitterness and frustration; his achievement was to write positively and honestly of these, with sufficient detachment to evaluate his experiences and insights.

The inhabitants of Thomas' world are constantly seen in relation to time. On occasion it is specific and limited, as in "To-night" (30:iv:15), the brief vision of urban love where

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(1) See pp. 69-70 below.

The larks in Castle Alley  
 Sing from the attic's height  
 As if the electric light  
 Were the true sun...

More often, the specific and the general are seen in contrast, or fused.  
 The varied perception of time finds expression in "Ambition" (23:i:15)

A train that roared along raised after it  
 And carried with it a motionless white bower  
 Of purest cloud, from end to end close-knit,  
 So fair it touched the roar with silence. Time  
 Was powerless while that lasted.....  
 .....no mind lived save this.....  
 Omnipotent I was, nor even deplored  
 That I did nothing.....

Power over time, however fleeting, is attractive. Yet the power of time  
 returns. In "February Afternoon" (7-8:ii:16)

Time swims before me, making as a day  
 A thousand years.....

Man and nature are seen in relation to time, birds' actions recur and  
 man's too -

.....while the broad ploughland oak  
 Roars mill-like and men strike and bear the stroke  
 Of war as ever audacious or resigned,

The sense of the oak expressing feeling, as man and bird - (the opening  
 we remember used this same word - also used in "Ambition" -

Men heard this roar of parleying starlings, saw,  
A thousand years ago even as now,)

is fitting in this atmosphere of growth and reaction, change and similarity. The ploughland oak is the one constant feature of the outward scene. I am here indebted to W. Cooke for his comments on the contrast between the bird's inevitable rhythmic change, and man's unnatural reactions. -'Men strike and bear the stroke'- an emphasis reinforced by the rhyme scheme. Natural pastime and surroundings merge, jangling, with the stroke of war. 'Oak' - 'mill-like' - 'strike' - 'stroke'. Cooke's positioning of the poem is also acute:

the last two lines utterly refute any misplaced faith in war as a crusade, watched over by a benevolent deity. (1)

Constant in the inward analysis, in the poet's view, is the inaction of the man-endowed God.

And God still sits aloft in the array  
That we have wrought him, stone-deaf and  
stone blind.

God as envisaged by man we note, is bereft of the senses necessary to react to a situation - war as ever - given sorrowful inevitability in the context of other timeless inevitabilities and expressed specifically in terms of sound and sight. Any power over time is fleeting and there is no faith to provide comfort. Retreat into the past cannot help, as we learn in "Parting". The past is not fully real -

Wind blows not there, nor does rain fall:  
...Pleasure and pain there have no sting,  
The perished self not suffering  
That lacks all blood and nerve and wit. (2)

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(1) Cooke, p. 236

(2) These lines appear on the Memorial window at Lambourn, Berks.



This poem of 11 February 1915 casts retrospective light on the stresses of "Old Man", and "Over the Hills" written the previous month. Then he had decided

.....Recall

Was vain : no more could the restless brook  
 Ever turn back and climb the waterfall  
 To the lake that rests and stirs not in its nook,  
 As in the hollow of the collar-bone  
 Under the mountain's head of rush and stone.

The stream of time is here given tangible particularity. This poem looks forward to the closely realised allegory of "The Other" in its suggestion of quest in search of the intangible. The value of the present is not recognised until too late. Time's ironical majesty sweeps on - sometimes seemingly still, sometimes compressed as we have noted in "February Afternoon".

The rich fusion of the worth of sensuous experience in relation to time, seen in "October" and "Old Man" especially, finds expression too in "The Glory"(1). The poem envisages a meaning found instinctively by the blackbird and the dove - cf. "The Word".-

That tempts me on to something sweeter than love;

Yet although he can appreciate the 'glory of the beauty of the morning' in 'Sublime vacancy', he is left

.....scorning

All I can ever do, all I can be,  
 Beside the lovely of motion, shape, and hue,

---

(1) This is one of seven poems of unknown date. In "The Glory" mere sensuous perception is seen to be no antidote to the inexorable power of Time. Power over Time, seen in "Ambition", is only fleeting; faith has no power in "February Afternoon" - the past offers no escape - "Parting".

On further reflection he seems to doubt the actual significance of the birds' joys - we remember the similar withdrawal in "October". He asks whether he should seek out significance in

Harkening to short-lived, happy-seeming things  
That we know naught of.....

but seems more certain in his acceptance, although questioning, of discontent.

.....must I be content with discontent  
As larks and swallows are perhaps with wings?

An honest sense of acceptance leads him to realise that he will still

.....ask at the day's end once more  
What beauty is, and what I can have meant  
By happiness? .....

Faced with seeming imponderables, he nonetheless rejects surrender.

.....shall I let all go,  
Glad, weary, or both? .....

Temporary and fleeting solution is all he can find

.....shall I perhaps know  
That I was happy oft and oft before,  
Awhile forgetting how I am fast pent,  
How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to,  
Is Time? I cannot bite the day to the core.

Even this solution is not certain - he asks for rather than states his knowledge. Time is specifically characterised here, and its ambiguous nature which we have noted elsewhere is expressed in the half contradictory 'dreary swift'; its purpose, too, is doubted - 'with naught to travel to'. (1)

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(1) We may here recall the ending of "The Signpost", (7:xii:14)- 'Wondering where he shall journey, O where?'

The questions recognise the possibilities, but doubt their fruition. The one definite note after the opening creation of the outward scene in all its splendour, is the final negative - 'I cannot bite the day to the core'. This is a rich image suggesting the inadequacy of sensuous perception alone as the means to a full interpretation of his surroundings. The Tree of Knowledge is suggested (1), echoing the earlier 'tempts' in the fourth line. He is, we recall, tempted to seek 'something sweeter than love' by the 'happy-seeming things'. In view of the associations of 'tempt', his inability to understand fully is not wholly an admission of defeat.

Edward Thomas' probing honesty into the nature of experience in poems such as "October", "Old Man", and "The Glory", with its incisive treatment of time and nature in terms of the individual, is accompanied by humility, which seeks the recognition of due importance. This, seen in his scorn at his own achievement in "The Glory", is clear in his appreciation of a child's vision in the poem "Snow" (7:i:15):

In the gloom of whiteness,  
 In the great silence of snow,  
 A child was sighing  
 And bitterly saying: 'Oh,  
 They have killed a white bird up there on her nest,  
 The down is fluttering from her breast! '  
 And still it fell through that dusky brightness  
 On the child crying for the bird of the snow.

The line between pretentiousness and appealing innocence is fine; here Thomas has captured a child's poetic vision, simply and without the moral complexity of the adult. Elsewhere he fails; "The Child on the Cliffs" (1:ii:15) seems false and sentimental, despite his

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(1) Choice & recognition of Good & Evil cannot be attained by simple sensuous action.

own comment to Eleanor Farjeon of 25:iii:15.

...It is a memory between one of my young brothers and myself which he reminded me of lately. He was most of the child and I have been truthful. (1)

The child's wish

I should like to be lying under that foam,  
Dead, but able to hear the sound of the bell,

is at the root of this exercise in irregular ballad metre. The sense of bewitchment is suggested by the unusual brightness, and strange taste perceived by the child. Furthermore, there is the lively image of the green knight - reminiscent of medieval shapeshifters. Nonetheless it does not transcend deliberate exercise, and the childish death wish seems mawkish. Indeed, as we saw earlier, Thomas' attempts at narrative in his early conversational poems are uneven. "The Child in the Orchard" (October 1916) is a simpler poem. Childish curiosity, running together actual and imaginary, living and dead, is potentially a rich vein, and the poet is not wholly successful. The repetition of the final line of each stanza indicates the poet's conscious intervention, yet there are such lines as:

There is so much to learn, for men,  
That I dare not go to bed again.

whose conscious simplicity jars. The poet's attitude to his material seems ambiguous - is it to speak for itself? - or is he to relate the incident, placing emphasis on significant points? Thomas' humility in his willingness to learn from children, present and remembered, is unquestioned. His technique seems at fault in these two narrative accounts. More successful is the child's natural intrusion into the poet's

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(1) Eleanor Farjeon, The Last Four Years (1958), p.127 .

reverie in "The Brook", of July 1915.

.....then the child's voice raised the dead.  
 'No one's been here before' was what she said  
 And what I felt, yet never should have found  
 A word for, while I gathered sight and sound.

The poet's emotional and intellectual humility is indeed seen at all times in his concern for giving due importance to all things, bitter or sweet, abstract or tangible, foul and fair - we recall, from "But These Things Also", (18:iii:15)

The shell of a little snail bleached  
 In the grass; chip of flint, and mite  
 Of chalk; and the small birds' dung  
 In splashes of purest white: (1)

(We recall too his attachment of importance to "The Huxter").  
 In this determination he does reach some fulfilment. Sensuous perception in "Digging", (4:vi:15) leads to a degree of satisfaction.

To-day I think  
 Only with scents....

dead leaves, bracken, wild carrots' seed, tree roots cut by a spade,  
 rose, currant, raspberry, goutweed, and finally the smell of the bonfire -

---

(1) Mention should be made here of the evidence of the commonplace book of 1901-4, Don e.10 in the Bodleian Library. Among a mixed bag of contents from life and literature is the following extract from "Ecclesiastes" by G.K. Chesterton:

There is one sin: to call a green leaf grey,  
 Whereat the sun in heaven shuddereth.  
 There is one blasphemy, for death to pray  
 For God alone knoweth the praise of death.  
 There is one creed; 'neath no world terror's wing  
 Apples forget to grow on apple trees.  
 There is one thing needful - everything  
 The rest is vanity of vanities.

Flowing from where a bonfire burns (1)  
 The dead, the waste, the dangerous,  
 And all to sweetness turns.

There can even be good in decay, and, for once,

It is enough  
 To smell, to crumble the dark earth,

There are times when sensuous perception is enough - and, as in "The Glory", times when it is not self-sufficient. Part of the sensuous perception here is the listening: ~~of~~

..the robin sings over again  
 Sad songs of Autumn mirth.

The final line reflects the paradox of the bonfire turning decay into goodness - there is, for this moment of perception, interdependence and purpose. At other times it is more difficult to interpret the overall purpose - to see 'all', and to appreciate that there is some purpose to explain the situation - we recall especially the philosophical resignation of the ploughman in "As the Team's Head Brass".

Another such interlude - the word is used in the manuscript final verse, crossed out - is the poem "Sowing" (23:iii:15 - see p.188.) The self-sufficiency of the 'long stretched hour' is clear, for Thomas uses the rare word 'perfect' to describe the situation.

(1) cf. "The Wasp-Trap" (27:iii:15)

Nothing on earth  
 And in the heavens no star  
 For pure brightness is worth  
 More than that jar,

For wasps meant, now  
 A star - long may it swing  
 From the dead apple-bough  
 So glistening.

One may add how superior the less derivative, less "Frosty" "Digging" seems in comparison.  
 See also p.8 above. Also Helen Thomas, World Without End (1956), p.108.

It was a perfect day  
 For sowing; just  
 As sweet and dry was the ground  
 As tobacco-dust.

Again, sensuous perception has its own reward.

I tasted deep the hour  
 Between the far  
 Owl's chuckling soft first cry  
 And the first star.

The harmony - not unison - of the scene is concluded by the soft  
 rain

Windless and light  
 Half a kiss, half a tear,  
 Saying good-night.

The final verse in the manuscript is more specific regarding the  
 intrusion of the word 'tear'.

A kiss for all the seeds'  
 Dry multitude,  
 A tear of ending this  
 March interlude.

The poet is grateful for this 'perfect' interlude, but recognises it  
 as an interlude in his struggle.

Some months later, on 13 July 1915 (1), he wrote what is almost a  
 prayer, in which, after three verses listing various natural and man-  
 made desires - 'A house that shall love me as I love it' - he concludes:

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(1) That day he enlisted in the Artists' Rifles.

For these I ask not, but, neither too late  
 Nor yet too early, for what men call content,  
 And also that something may be sent  
 To be contented with, I ask of Fate.

Characteristically he faces his predicament, and asks for content - a term often equated in his poems with happiness - neither too late nor yet too early. He is not giving up the fight to find it for himself. It is clear from poems such as "Digging" and "Sowing" that he did enjoy interludes of content, but he would not be contented easily, and he continued to search. At times, indeed, he had felt that he was compelled to grieve - two days earlier he had written, on 11 July 1915, in a poem called "Aspens",

Aspens must shake their leaves and men may hear  
 But need not listen, more than to my rhymes.

Whatever wind blows, while they and I have leaves  
 We cannot other than an aspen be  
 That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,  
 Or so men think who like a different tree.

Always perceptive of his own difficulties, he faced up to them and to his surroundings, human, natural, and animal with an approach not only genuinely humble, but also quietly incisive. In March 1916 he wrote these four lines, entitled "Thaw".

Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed  
 The speculating rocks at their nests cawed  
 And saw from elm-tops, delicate as flower of grass,  
 What we below could not see, winter pass.



This recognises the instinctive wisdom of the rooks - we remember his vision of the millenium contained in "February Afternoon" written the previous month. It recognises, also, the rooks' consideration of humanity, and their ability to see 'what we below could not see', through their simultaneously particular and general vision, imparting a precise perspective. We may here recall Thomas' desire for such perspective found in "The Lofty Sky", written the previous year, in January 1915.

Where.....I look  
 Down even on sheep and rook,  
 .....  
 I sicken of the woods  
 And all the multitudes  
 Of hedge-trees.....

More concisely we find similar sentiment expressed in the later poem "Thaw". We note particularly the fine particularity of 'flower of grass' in its singularity, and the rhythmic reflection of thought, aided by the chime of 'freckled' and 'speculating'. The syntax enables the simile 'flower of grass' to refer to winter, and the elms. Relative importance and perspective were important and find subtle expression in this short poem.

The poet's willingness to take note of the lore and language of the natural inhabitants of the countryside - specifically the birds - finds further expression in two poems written within a short space of time - "Sedge-Warblers" (23-4:v:15) and "The Word" (5:vii:15). Both poems explore characteristic stresses - the past, the ability of words

to reflect experience, within the perspective of experience felt by the birds. In "Sedge-Warblers" he rejects the attractive dream of a perfect past - 'a time/Long past and irrecoverable', whose gentle yet strong beauty - 'Kingcup bright as brass' - supported 'a nymph whose soul unstained (1)/ Could love all day, and never hate or tire.' The earlier draft of the poem, found on B.M. f.75, dated 23:v:15 (see text, pp.217-9) in common with the later draft, begins the longer second section with a qualifying

And yet, rid of this dream, ere I had drained  
Its poison.....

before expressing a more definite satisfaction than the later draft:

(Its poison) quite, the sun's past light & fire  
Bred me a deep content with what the water  
Clearer than any goddess or man's daughter  
Had for its voice.....(23:v:15)

The later draft is less explicit in its degree of fruition - the poet waits, and hearkens - definite content with what he definitely heard is postponed.

Its poison, quieted was my desire  
So that I only looked into the water,  
Clearer than any goddess or man's daughter,  
And hearkened.....

The greater clarity of the water in comparison to any mythical or actual person is common to all versions. The brook is central to the poem - the source of the natural life and the source of inspiration. The contrast between it and the imagined representatives of humanity is heightened by the personification, pointing to similarities, contained

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(1) See footnote to p.20 above.

in

.....while it combed the dark green hair  
 And shook the millions of the blossoms white  
 Of water-crowfoot, and curdled to one sheet  
 The flowers fallen from the chestnuts in the park  
 Far off. (Six Berns)

The brook is thus seen as simultaneously nymph-like and actual, and thus of more worth than the merely pastoral and literary nymph.

The postponement of the contentment noted in the second draft adds to the strength of the poem a sense of progression arising from the quiet involvement in the scene, by looking and listening. His intense sensuous involvement has endowed the poem with his own sense of touch - 'combed', 'shook', and taste - 'curdled', as well as the more obvious sight and sound. He proceeds to associate the sedge-warblers with this closely particularised scene.

.....sedge-warblers, clinging so light  
 To willow twigs, sang longer than the lark,  
 Quick, shrill or grating, a song to match the heat  
 Of the strong sun, nor less the water's cool,  
 Gushing through narrows, swirling in the pool. (Six Berns)

It is characteristic of Thomas to place importance on the less immediately obvious significance. The 'grating' song of the sedge-warbler, the sound of the thrush, or the pewit, or even the unknown bird, is, for Thomas, as or more significant than the lark or the nightingale. His dismissal of the lark, seen above, echoes the dismissal of the nymph - the actually experienced, rather than the

conventionally literary is what he seeks. Their song matches the strength of the sun's beat, or the brook's cool business.

Their song that lacks all words, all melody  
All sweetness almost, was dearer then to me  
Than sweetest voice that sings in tune sweet words.

Although he cannot understand the language of the birds, he readily and fully respects their individuality - and, as noted in the later poem "Thaw", is willing to respect their perspective on human affairs; the poet does not seek to emulate their seeming happiness - but he can learn from it.

This was the best of May - the small brown birds  
Wisely reiterating endlessly  
What no man learnt yet, in or out of school.

"Sedge-Warblers" is of interest not only for the ideas and the description, but for the technique. Many of his poems employ a similar method - a fully realised and explored outward scene, providing expression of inner feelings. We are able, however, to see here, in action, the poet's feelings for word and phrase in relation to the poem as a whole. The alteration in progression noted in the second draft is of particular interest. Noteworthy too, is the alteration from

.....sedge-warblers that hang so light  
On willow twigs.....

of the first draft, to

.....sedge-warblers, clinging so light  
To willow twigs

found in the second draft. The emphasised delicacy imparted by the

vowel sounds is simultaneously strengthened by the force of the idea of clinging, itself reinforced by its consonantal strength. Within the opening section of ten lines there are three main items of interest, indicating Thomas' care in revision, for the final version found in the B.M. Ms. was revised before print. In the third line 'from such brooks shining and racing clear' (23:v:15) became 'river of such radiance racing deep' (24:v:15). The printed version, (clearly Thomas', for this appeared in Guthrie's edition of Six Poems by Edward Eastaway) returned to the first version for 'brook' as opposed to 'river', but retained the singular concept of the second draft. The alliterative 'radiance racing' became 'radiant racing', but a return to 'clear' as in the first draft was made - l.14 echoes this word. In l.6 'leans' is changed to 'bends' and finally 'leans' again. Most noticeable of all the changes is the later specific introduction of myth in the form of the nymph in l.8, which in the draft of 23:v:15 read:

Newborn of it, whose happy soul unstained

The other 'beauty, divine and feminine' is thus in the poet's dream to appear from such brooks. The tortuous syntax is relieved in the second draft by the alteration of 'straight appear' to 'bear', and by the expansion of 'it', not to 'brook' but 'sun'; thus the second draft reads:

Child of the sun, whose happy soul unstained

In print we find

Child to the sun, a nymph whose happy soul unstained.

The straightening of the syntax had made the already remote identity of the contrasting beauty even more remote. The explicit antecedent found in print is thus welcome.

We see, then, in "Sedge-Warblers" not only a fine poem of critical interest, but a poem whose detailed progress we can see through revised drafts. What is particularly refreshing is that this poem of textual interest is also of critical significance. Thomas' meticulous revision of word and phrasing leads to a meaningful adjustment of emphasis, verbal, rhythmic and thematic. We may here recall Thomas' letter to Gordon Bottomley many years previously (17 March 1904):

While I write it is a dull blindfold journey through a strange lovely land. I seem to take what I write from the dictation of someone else. Correction is pleasanter. For then I have glimpses of what I was passing through as I wrote. (1)

As suggested earlier, through many years of reviewing critical writing, Thomas had come to see the inadequacy of utter reliance on an elusive muse. (2) Nevertheless he did - we remember "The Unknown" - still believe in inspiration. We feel, I think, that this inspiration was in fact gained through years of assimilation of matters important to him. On close analysis the majority of his poems reveal thoughts and perceptions of value, and, almost incidentally, we note the subtle method - and variety of method in terms of rhythmic and verbal accuracy. "Sedge-Warblers" is but one specific example of meticulous correction to ensure the optimum result.

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(1) Letters, p.53

(2) See pp. 4-5 above

He returned, just over a month later, to the perennial and mostly incomprehensible wisdom of birds, in a poem called "The Word", (5:vii:15). Here he considers the curious role of memory, what it cares to remember, and what it forgets - into the 'undefiled Abyss of what will never be again' go

.....names of the mighty men  
That fought and lost or won in the old wars,  
Of kings and fiends and gods and most of the stars. (1)

Apparently insignificant things are recalled:

.....One name that I have not -  
Though 'tis an empty thingless name - forgot  
Never can die because Spring after Spring  
Some thrushes learn to say it as they sing.

The echo of "Old Man" -

.....in the name there's nothing.....  
.....the names  
Half decorate, half perplex, the thing it is:  
At least, what that is clings not to the names  
In spite of time. And yet, I like the names. —

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(1) We note in passing later ironic references to the 'old wars' in "February Afternoon" (7-8:ii:16), "The Sun Used to Shine" (22:v:16), "The Trumpet" (26-8:ix:15), and the poem of 17:iv:15, entitled "Home"

.....One nationality  
We had, I and the birds that sang,  
One memory....

and "Adlestrop" (10:i:15) -

Yes, I remember Adlestrop  
 The name.....  
 .....What I saw  
 Was Adlestrop - only the name —

is reinforced in the lines which follow:

There is always one at midday saying it clear  
 And tart - the name, only the name I hear.

- 'tart' is characteristic in its suggestion of sharp sweetness. Further echoes are found in the mention of scent -

While perhaps I am thinking of the elder scent  
 That is like food; or while I am content  
 With wild rose scent that is like memory.

The ruminative posture is at once interrupted and stimulated by the sudden sound -

Over and over again, a pure thrush word.

We are once again asked to think of the identity and true nature of experience, our reaction to it, and its relative importance to us, as individuals. The lesser things are remembered - are they less important? Are the 'names of the mighty men' any more meaningful than 'a pure thrush word'? The poet does not preach - 'tis an empty thingless name' - but by attaching due importance to this he in fact questions readily accepted values (1).

A less obvious but nonetheless definite questioning is present in poems of richer sensuous texture such as "Haymaking" (6-8:vii:15). It is essentially a subtle examination of a vision of calm 'After night's

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(1) The willingness to appreciate the instinctive and incomprehensible wisdom of the birds leads naturally to a questioning of the more readily accepted and understandable order of humanity based on language and memory.



thunder'. Yet 'The fiery day had a kernel sweet of cold'; 'sweet' and 'perfect' in the following line are tempered by 'cold', and more emphatically by the recognition of 'misery' -

.....in the perfect blue the clouds uncurled,  
Like the first gods before they made the world.  
And misery, swimming the stormless sea.....

The vision seems thus to be placed before misery. The particular evocation continues with the motionless 'smooth white empty road'; we are told later that

Only the scent of woodbine and hay new mown  
Travelled the road.....

We note, too, the fall of the holly's leaves - a discordant note, and the spontaneous joy of the mill foot water. Yet as the poet sees it, this scene is not fully narcotic;

.....in the little thickets where a sleeper  
For ever might lie lost, the nettle creeper  
And garden-warbler sang unceasingly;

There is further the 'fierce glee' of the swift, of this incisive image, suggestive of the cessation of hostility;

.....with wings and tail as sharp & narrow  
As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.

Throughout the poem we have a tension between the representational 'picture of an old grange' and the poet's deeper sense of the situation. The immobility seems total;

.....The tosser lay forsook  
Out in the sun; and the long waggon stood  
Without its team: it seemed it never would  
Move from the shadow of that single yew.

The timelessness, the 'great age untold', is pervasive, beyond 'the men, the beasts, the trees, the implements'; yet natural change continues - the oaks cast shade

Upon a circle of grass and weed uncut,  
And on the hollow, once a chalk-pit, but  
Now brimmed with nut and elder flower so clear.

These small details offset the overall picture -

The men, the beasts, the trees, the implements  
Uttered even what they will in times far hence -  
All of us gone out of the reach of change -  
Immortal in a picture of an old grange.

The early comparison of the clouds to the first gods, with its sense of immortality, finds thematic echo in this conclusion. Change can only be caught and stopped in such a picture; the timeless majesty will continue, after our passing beyond the reach of change, yet the poet can see change even within the scene - it is indeed but an interval, not to be taken at face value.

Having characterised Thomas' range of interests and approaches to time and change, to individuality of all sorts, human and otherwise, a critical survey of his work would yet be incomplete without reference to his more overtly philosophical poems. Six poems in particular come in this category: "Two Pewits" (24:iii:15 and 4:v:15), "Liberty" (26:xi:15), "Rain" (7:i:15), "Lights Out" (6:xi:16), "Out in the Dark" (24:xii:16). The sixth poem, "The Other", has no known manuscript, and is thus undated. (When one considers that "Old Man" was his fourth poem, the difficulty of dating on any internal evidence is apparent.) "The Other" is one

of Thomas' few successful narratives, a particularised allegory of the poet's quest for his alter ego. The narrator is on a hike when he comes to an inn - we should note in passing the hollow relief on leaving the forest - a recurrent symbol of difficulty - only to find renewed crisis at this symbol of warmth and friendliness. Perhaps we recall "The Owl" - 'Then at the inn I had food fire and rest' - where he is similarly denied total comfort. He is asked at the inn whether he has already been there on the previous day. He travels fast, to outrun the other.

.....I pursued  
 To prove the likeness, and if true  
 To watch until myself I knew.

He travels 'An eager but a weary way', in vain. He follows 'the unseen moving goal', unhelped by people -

.....For they poured out all  
 And that was naught.....

He searches then in solitude - described in terms reminiscent of so much of his poetry, but endowed also with a fuller degree of fulfilment. The dark images are seen fully, but they are less dangerous:

.....the crocketed dark trees,  
 A dark house, dark impossible  
 Cloud-towers, one star, one lamp, one peace  
 Held on an everlasting lease:

Earth and sky are closed in darkness; sound is reconciled with silence:

.....A dog barked on a hidden rise;  
 A marshbird whistled high unseen;  
 The latest waking blackbird's cries  
 Perished upon the silence keen.

The poet's feeling under the darkening skies, where

The last light filled a narrow firth  
Among the clouds.....

(The sense of merging earth and sky is reinforced by the word 'firth', we note) is expressed in words rare for the poet:

.....I stood serene,  
And with a solemn quiet mirth,  
An old inhabitant of earth.

This is a characteristic interlude - soon we are told 'That time was brief' - yet 'serene' is a rare word for Thomas to use. Of further interest is the subsequent rejection of 'melancholy' as an apt description for times when:

It was not happiness and powers  
Coming like exiles home again,  
And weaknesses quitting their bowers,  
Smiled and enjoyed, far off from men,  
Moments of everlastingness.....

In this poem of allegorical quest, the separation of 'powers' and 'weaknesses', 'far off from men' seems apt; there they can enjoy 'moments of everlastingness'. We note the description of the poet's powers 'Coming like exiles home again'. In this stanza we have the rare sense of the degree of self-sufficiency there is in the searching, let alone the finding.

And fortunate my search was then  
While what I sought, nevertheless  
That I was seeking, I did not guess.

The past search, and the continuous search are both contained here in what can easily be mistaken as merely clumsy rhyming.

The narrator finally reaches 'the other'; faced with his displeasure, the narrator slips away. The final stanza reflects conclusively the poet's recognition of his fate - we recall "For These", and feel that he has indeed had a degree of contentment -

And now I dare not follow after  
 Too close. I try to keep in sight,  
 Dreading his frown and worse his laughter.  
 I steal out of the wood to light;  
 I see the swift shoot from the rafter  
 By the inn door: ere I alight  
 I wait and hear the starlings wheeze  
 And nibble like ducks: I wait his flight.  
 He goes: I follow: no release  
 Until he ceases. Then I also shall cease. (1)

The near furtive movement towards the light is characteristically qualified by his sensuous delight in the midst of his difficulties. The final two lines rhythmically and verbally reflect his understanding of the limits of his existence.

He goes: I follow: no release  
 Until he ceases. Then I also shall cease.

There is in fact no release, yet the degree to which there is definite confrontation and analysis of such constant problems as melancholy imparts an overall strength of purpose and some fulfilment. It would seem on this evidence to belong to 1916 - it seems to embody understanding

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(1) See p.213 below - "The Chalk Pit".

necessary to "Lights Out" and "Out in the Dark", and to have assimilated itself the perceptions of "Liberty" and "Rain".

Common to the remaining five poems assigned to this category, and a strong element in "The Other", is the use of light and darkness reflecting moral states of mind. They are reconciled in "The Other"; in "Two Pewits" the ghost is left to wonder at the pewits' freedom from commitment (1). In the first draft explicitly we are told that

They care not for the sigh  
Of the traveller wondering why

The revised draft (further consideration of these differences will be found with the text pp.191-4) omits this, but both wonder why

So merrily they cry and fly,  
Nor choose 'twixt earth and sky,  
While the moon's quarter silently  
Rides, & earth rests as silently. (2)

The specific freedom of sound, movement and choice of the small black and white pewits have more general significance in "Liberty". Here the moon and poet find opportunity to reflect and consider in neutral light the nature of freedom of choice. Impersonal as the moon, and as searching, the writer freezes past and present in the frosty night and asks what is the nature of general conditions

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(1) Similar spectatorial involvement is found in "Interval", (6:i:15), where the poet contemplates 'This roaring peace'.

See p. 71. below.

(2) An explanatory note as to the comparative significance of the pewits can be found in "Beauty", (21:i:15), an earlier poem -

Not like a pewit that returns to wail  
For something it has lost.....

on which experience depends. Paradox abounds between black and white, rich and poor, action and inaction. We begin with an emphatically final darkness - but not complete darkness -

The last light has gone out of the world, except  
The moonlight lying on the grass like frost

Colour and action are forgotten:

It is as if everything else had slept  
Many an age, unforgotten and lost  
The men that were, the things done, long ago,  
All I have thought.....

The two minds which remain active and perceptive are the poet's, and the moon's. They stand idle over the grave of past experience. Utter freedom of choice is theirs, and yet this complete freedom is not wholly desirable -

There's none less free than who  
Does nothing and has nothing else to do,  
Being free only for what is not to his mind,  
And nothing is to his mind.

Without action and experience of all sorts, there can be no thought, and no relative judgements, no perspective. Furthermore, time will not stand idle if the poet could refuse every hour 'like this one passing'. (A particularly good touch conveys time passing even in the midst of this frozen scene.) If the past hours

Were piled before me, and not lost behind,  
And I could take and carry them away  
I should be rich.

If with power over time he had also power over 'regret', he would

'be rich to be so poor'. For, in this vision of complete freedom of choice, the poet clearly sees the abuse of it, and the sterility that would result. Despite his ability to imagine, he is never far from the actual.

And yet I still am half in love with pain,  
 And what is imperfect, with both tears and mirth,  
 With things that have an end, with life and earth,  
 And this moon that leaves me dark within the door.

Both best and worst are necessary: life is an affair of frustration and tension, even, (we remember "The Glory") when less obviously so. "Liberty" expresses more generally the attitude which had, the previous month, rejected the life of 'gorse that has no time not to be gay.' ("October").

Solitude emphasised by the dark is given another dimension in "Rain", of January 1916. Here he confronts the death wish, traceable throughout his writing. (1)

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(1) W. Cooke calls attention to a hitherto unknown poem of 1899, op. cit., pp. 28-9.

I gaze: the sun is low  
 And lucid breezes blow:  
 The trees are blank;  
 The sward is green  
 Liquidly like the green of happier climes:  
 I think that I  
 At last am there  
 Where I have dreamed but never hoped to be:  
 Exalted and  
 In purer air  
 Dead, gazing on the azure plains of heaven.

Interesting, too, is the evidence of Bodleian Don.e.10, where we find, from Spenser's 36th Sonnet,

Tell me, when shall these weary woes have end  
 Or shall their ruthless torment cease.

Thomas' sole known attempt at verse between his Oxford days and 1914 is also concerned with death. This appears in Beautiful Wales of 1905 (pp.82-3) - (Second verse)...

She is dead, Eluned,  
 Who sang the new songs  
 And the old; and made the new  
 Seem old, and the old

As if they were just born and she had christened them.  
 The supposed poet, Llewellyn the Bard, is a frustrated poet;  
 Thomas quotes one of Llewellyn's 'imitative songs, reduced to  
 its lowest terms by a translator'.



The mesmeric quality of the rain is conveyed by the repetition of the opening line,

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain  
 On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me  
 Remembering again that I shall die  
 And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks  
 For washing me cleaner that I have been  
 Since I was born into this solitude. (1)

'Again' in the third line reflects the cumulative thoughts suggested in the weary addition of the syntax. The natural baptismal cum cleansing cum absolving quality of the rain is fused in the following line -

Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon.

The quasi-religious statement, (found in the earlier passage from The Icknield Way (1913) p. 278) is qualified by the poet's concern for others; he finds absolution in the mesmeric rain, but, although he can consider death as 'perfect' later in this poem, he is sufficiently aware of others and the actual effect of death, physical or spiritual, to pray for them.

But here I pray that none whom once I loved  
 Is dying tonight or lying still awake  
 Solitary, listening to the rain,  
 Either in pain or thus in sympathy

We note the sense of 'whom once I loved' - an echo of earlier and

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(1) See text on p.234 below.

later doubts as to his ability to love. Death, and absolution are seen not only as physical but spiritual. To the poet there seems no answer to spiritual aridity but death. He does not see this as an absolute solution, however, even though he, or one whom once he loved is lying

Helpless among the living and the dead,  
 Like a cold water among broken reeds,  
 Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,

The singular image of 'a cold water', striking in its simplicity, refers back to 'thus in sympathy'. He cannot help or communicate - he is merely an added discomfort for the soldiers symbolised by 'the broken reeds all still and stiff'. His present death would help no-one, living or dead (1). The rain's hostility is then emphasised in contrast to the absolving quality stressed earlier. 'This wild rain' has dissolved all love except the love of death. The final two lines conclude this ambiguity of attitude toward death explored in the poem. Can it be love for something which is perfect? Has the poet not already rejected the merely perfect on many occasions? Is it, indeed, love? -

If love it be for what is perfect, and  
 Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

We have thus seen the poet analyse his tendency to see death as an attractive solution. In viewing the inadequacy of this solution for others, he comes to view the solution as inadequate, or doubtful for himself.

The essentially philosophical poems, mostly seen against a physical situation of darkness, which examined moral choice, freedom, death and the overall purpose of the poet's existence, culminated in

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(1) See p.32 above re. "What Will They Do?"

two poems - "Lights Out", and "Out in the Dark" (1). The former, written in November 1916 plays on the ambiguity of sleep and death, employing allegory reminiscent of "The Other". Sleep is ostensibly the subject (2), viewed as 'The unfathomable deep/Forest'. Paths and directions, employed in several poems ("The Signpost", "Old Man", "The Path") are of no avail. Darkness blurs the dividing lines. All conscious feeling ends:

Here love ends.  
 Despair, ambition ends;  
 All pleasure and all trouble,  
 Although most sweet or bitter,  
 Here ends in sleep that is sweeter  
 Than tasks most noble.

The traveller must turn from love of literature or life and enter, and leave, alone. The idea of leaving is the sole indication of the intended subject - although we may well recall not only other writers' use of this ambiguity, but Thomas' own statements in Rose Acre Papers of 1904 (3). 'Sleep is a novitiate for the beyond.' In view of the poet's gladness to leave the forest in "The Other", and in view of the undoubted overtones of the poem as a whole, we can but admire

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(1) In Don.e.10, written out in full, is W.B. Yeats' poem "Into the Twilight", beginning

Out-worn heart in a time outworn  
 Come clear of the nets of wrong and right:  
 Laugh, heart, again the grey twilight,  
 Sigh heart again in the dew of the morn,  
 Light and darkness, right and wrong, are fundamental stresses in Thomas' writing, not least in his poetry; his interest in the expression of these is here traced back to 1902-03.

(2) See p. 288 below

(3) Quoted by Eckert, p.48

his determination to proceed.

Its silence I hear and obey  
That I may lose my way  
And myself. (1)

The technique is also worth mention. The light touch is essential in a metre such as this; the use of rhyme, too, is adept, and makes the assonance of 'bitter' and 'sweeter' more noticeable.

Even less explicit in manner is his last poem, written on Christmas Eve, 1916, just over two years after "Up in the Wind". The poem opens with the description of the fallow fawns -

Out in the dark over the snow  
The fallow fawns invisible go  
With the fallow doe;  
And the winds blow  
Fast as the stars are slow.

We note the characteristic contrast of 'dark' and 'snow', the harmony of 'fawn' and 'doe', and the contrast of the 'fast' winds and 'slow' stars, the latter, in contrast to the fawns, are visible. The animal notation is extended when the darkness takes on animal qualities - not of fawn, but of 'swiftest hound'. The single lamp, and, in the next verse, the single star may recall "The Other" -

.....one star, one lamp, one peace  
Held on an everlasting lease:

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(1) W.B. Yeats' "Into the Twilight", already mentioned, is more explicit in its relationship of individual and country. 'Your mother Eire is always young' - and there is the hope of God, yet certain echoes remain.

And love is less kind than the grey twilight  
And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn.

The darkness '....haunts round'; it is more than animal in power -  
it moves

At a swifter bound  
Than the swiftest hound  
.....all else is drowned:

The rhythmic flux reflects the fluidity of movement in the first verse, and the change of speed from stealthy to sudden in the second verse. The single rhyme sound of each verse imparts unity to that particular stage of progression. Internal rhyme, as we see in the third verse, is the more noticeable for this unity of rhyme. The four separate elements are united in the opening line of the third verse - perhaps we recall the echo of the 'moon and I' from "Liberty" -

And star and I and wind and deer,  
Are in the dark together, - hear  
Yet far, - and fear  
Drums on my ear  
In that sage company drear.

Fear is conveyed through the sense of sound, all the more noticeable in the otherwise silent world. The other occupants are wise, but 'drear', suggesting, as well as rhyming with, fear. The 'universe of sight' we are reminded is small, as is 'love' and 'delight' compared to all pervading darkness, an instinctively mistrusted element. One can indeed agree here with de la Mare (1), the poem 'ennobles by simplification'. There is a lyric (2) surety of touch here of word and thought, showing another aspect of Thomas' versatility within his sphere of concern.

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(1) W. de la Mare - Foreword to Collected Poems of Edward Thomas, (1920) p.x.

(2) See p.287 below.

What conclusions then can we form as to Thomas' art? Above all we may conclude that the poems have a cumulative effect, arising from concern and insight expressed in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of depth, of humour, of seriousness.

A characteristic poem of his has the air of being a random jotting down of chance impressions and sensations, the record of a moment of relaxed and undirected consciousness. The diction and movement are those of quiet, ruminative speech. But the unobtrusive signs accumulate, and finally one is aware that the outward scene is accessory to an inner theatre. (1)

We have seen some poems - the earlier narratives, and one or two others, which are hardly so relaxed and instinctive as Leavis suggests. However, from "Old Man" to "Out in the Dark" there is a rich vein of poetry, most of which will indeed support Leavis' assertion. Some poems, as we have seen, describe and analyse - "October", "Old Man"; some describe with little or no analysis - "Haymaking"; some philosophise in tangible terms - "Lights Out", "Out in the Dark".

Metre and attitude and approach vary. He was himself adamant as to his sense of metre, regular or otherwise. He wrote to Edward Garnett about "Lob" in 1915: (2)

I am doubtful about the chiselling you advise. It would be the easiest thing in the world to clean it all up and trim it and have every line straightforward in sound and sense, but it would not really improve it.....I think you read too much with the eye perhaps. If you say a couplet like:

If they had reaped their dandelions and sold  
Them fairly, they could have afforded gold,  
I believe it is no longer awkward.

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(1) F.R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry (1932), p.69  
See also comment by E. Garnett quoted on p.149 below.

(2) E. Garnett (ed), Selected Poems of Edward Thomas (Gregynog 1927),  
Intro. p.vii ff.

In his review of Robert Frost's North of Boston, Thomas wrote with delight at seeing a kindred spirit:

Many if not most of the separate lines and separate sentences are plain and in themselves nothing. But they are bound together and made elements of beauty by a calm eagerness of emotion. These poems are revolutionary because they lack the exaggeration of rhetoric, and even at first sight appear to lack the poetic intensity of which rhetoric is an imitation... the metre avoids not only the old-fashioned pomp and sweetness, but the later fashion of discord and fuss. (1)

The lack of discord and fuss is as refreshing today in the work of both these poets. Thomas reminded Frost in a letter that he had got onto the scent already (2) - and his earlier criticisms of writers such as Pater and Swinburne show this.

He (Pater) describes the communicants receiving morsels of 'the great white wheaten cake'. Pater is so bent on making it impressive that I see the fact and not the cake at all. (3)

Rhyme certainly acted upon Swinburne as a pill to purge ordinary responsibilities.....the rhyme 'deathless' leads him to speak of 'the breathless bright watchword of the sea'. This is extraordinarily near nonsense, almost a bull's eye. (4)

Concern for technique as well as matter is evident in Thomas' poems in the absence, in most cases, of deliberate posturing.

A greater awareness of verbal techniques, and as Coombes suggests (5), 'development in its widest sense, growth of sensibility and character', have given us in his poems with new economy and sharpness, with a

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(1) "A New Poet", The Daily News and Leader, 22 July 1914, p.7

(2) Letter of 19 May 1914 referred to by Cooke, p.147 - op.cit.

(3) Pater (1913) p.153

(4) Swinburne (1912) pp.158-162

(5) H. Coombes, Edward Thomas (1956), p.187

relaxed intensity and detachment, many times more impact, sensuous and intellectual, than similar matter had done in his prose. Is there an identifiable impulse beyond the general wish for self-expression and the hackneyed and inaccurate idea of the inspiration imparted by Robert Frost? (1) The answer one can find is quite briefly, an external conflict of values culminating in the Great War. Some extracts of his prose written in 1913 (2) suggest his feelings confronted with mass civilisation and minority culture.

The countryman is dying out, .....He had long been in a decline, and now he sinks before the Daily Mail like a savage before pox or whisky.

In his poetry he met with limited success in writing of the countryman, though showing in "Lob" his awareness of the timeless nature and value of country myth, and its close relation with actuality (2). Even more central to his personality, as expressed in his poems is this, from the same article:

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- (1) Relevant to the question of help or inspiration is this quasi-prophetic statement contained in a letter to Gordon Bottomley, of 26:xii:06 and applicable to the rôle of Eleanor Farjeon, or Robert Frost.

I feel sure that my salvation depends on a person and that person cannot be Helen because she has come to resemble me too much or at least to play unconsciously the part of being like me with a skill that could make me weep. It is unlikely to be a woman because a woman is but a human being with the additional barricades of (1) sex and (2) antipathy to me - as a rule. Letters 129-30

- (2) The Country, pp. 21-2 & p.6. We recall these lines from "Lob":

one of the lords of No Man's Land, Good Lob -  
 Although he was seen dying at Waterloo,  
 Hastings, Agincourt, and Sedgemoor too, -  
 Lives yet. He never will admit he is dead  
 Till millers cease to grind men's bones for bread.

Thomas inserted the "Old Wars" after the final corrections to the B.M. Ms. This extract typifies the personification in the form of the legendary figure of Lob, of good country common sense, timeless; and yet 'No Man's Land' has grim overtones of the present, and the earlier mention in l.20 of 'aeroplanes' reminds us that this is no mere nursery tale of the past. The spirit of Lob is alive, but clearly threatened, and less obviously present than in the writer's youth. See commentary, pp.202-6 below.



There is nothing left for us to rest upon, nothing great, venerable or mysterious, which can take us out of ourselves, and give us that more than human tranquility now to be seen in a few old faces of a disappearing generation. To be a citizen of infinity is no compensation for that tranquility. When we grow old what will grant any of us that look? Certainly not statistics and the knowledge that we have lived through a time of progress unparalleled in history. (1)

The culmination of this war of values was, for Thomas, the Great War - seen in "February Afternoon" as the millenium. In September 1914 he wrote an essay entitled "This England" - which contained this paragraph. (2)

I thought, like many other people, what things that same new moon sees eastward about the Meuse in France. Of those who could see it there, not blinded by smoke, pain or excitement, how many saw it and heeded? I was deluged, in a second stroke, by another thought, or something that overpowered thought. All I can tell is it seemed to me that either I had never loved England, or I had loved it foolishly, aesthetically, like a slave, not having realised that it was not mine unless I were willing and prepared to die rather than leave it as Belgian women and old men and children had left their country. Something I had omitted. Something, I felt, had to be done before I could look again composedly at English landscape.... at the purple-headed wood-betony with two pairs of dark leaves on a stiff stem, who stood sentinel among the grasses or bracken by the hedge-side or wood's edge. What he stood sentinel for I did not know, any more than what I had got to do.

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(1) op.cit. p.6

(2) The Last Sheaf (1928), p.221. J.W. Haines, op.cit.,<sup>(p. 22 above)</sup> recalls the time spent by Thomas, Frost and himself in the Valley of the Leadon, whence arose this article, and, later, "The Sun Used To Shine".

What Thomas stood sentinel for is expressed in his poetry for all time. His ultimate concerns transcend contemporary lore; it is for this reason that his great poems are not limited by considerations of social history. Concern for mankind, for the finer textures of living, will keep Thomas' poetry alive. He is alive to the imperfections; his imagination is closely tethered to the actual.

His own persistent doubts, his constant awareness of time in its many guises, and his seeming lack of personal fulfilment tend to mute the nature of this achievement. Even the vast arena of nature held no permanent and fixed fulfilment for him - as we have seen in "The Glory" he scorns his own achievements in relation to that of his natural surroundings, and even the creatures are only 'happy-seeming'. T.S. Eliot's "Unreal City" has its parallel here, although we may indeed feel, like H. Coombes, that 'Thomas' weariness is not so dismal as Mr. Eliot's sometimes is' (1). The very presence of possible, if rarely attained joy, at moments of intense spiritual frustration ensures that this is so. Thomas' own individualised perceptions of possible

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(1) H. Coombes, ep. cit. p.201

fulfilment in terms of a natural world whose happiness he can doubt is a less ethereal concept than Eliot's intellectual and spiritual perception of the possibility of - and finally, for Eliot, the fact of - Christian redemption. Thomas never reached this stage of accepting redemption (1) - and to this extent is his poetry bereft of the fulfilment of Four Quartets. The comparison of the two poets is interesting, nonetheless - Eliot could well have written lines such as these:

.....this my right hand  
 Crawling crab-like over the clean white page,  
 Resting awhile each morning on the pillow,  
 Then once more starting to crawl on towards age.

We recall Prufrock -

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. (2)

It is the final line of Thomas' poem, with its reference to the opening line - the actual vision from the window - not the slotted, distracting window of "Ash Wednesday" - which recalls us to the way of thought of the writer.

The hundred last leaves stream upon the willows.

More important than verbal reminders, though, is their common awareness of danger individual and communal in a world of shifting values and apocalyptic war. For Thomas this was the culmination of the long fight to understand self and surroundings and to assess their relative value.

The war itself Thomas did not, characteristically, oversimplify. 'This is no case of petty right or wrong' he wrote, in the midst of familiar surroundings, at Steep, on Boxing Day 1915. Politicians,

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(1) See p.68 above

(2) T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".

philosophers, journalists, industrialists - 'one fat patriot' - mean  
less to him than

The storm smoking along the wind  
Athwart the wood..... (1)

Typically he envisages the struggle as one involving myth and unreality,  
and actuality. The weather succeeding the storm 'shall rise clear and  
gay'. From the other cauldron his forecast is less accurate -

.....an England beautiful  
And like her mother that died yesterday.

Perhaps more acutely he envisages the possibility that

The phoenix broods serene above their ken.

The turning of waste into matter worthwhile was an actuality -  
"Digging" (4:iv:15)

.....a bonfire burns  
The dead, the waste, the dangerous,  
And all to sweetness turns.

This possibility is more to him than historical justice or injustice.  
For this

....with the best and meanest Englishmen  
I am one in crying, 'God save England', lest  
We lose what never slaves and cattle blessed.

We recall the article of September 1914 -

(1) This is reminiscent of "Interval", written, we recall, during his  
enforced inactivity in the early months of 1915.

The beeches keep  
A stormy rest  
Breathing deep  
Of wind from the west.

The last line of the poem - 'This roaring peace' takes on added  
significance in view of the later poem.

I had loved it but like a slave not having realised that it was not mine unless I were willing and prepared to die rather than leave it.....(1)

The final four lines - perhaps the most memorable of a poem often dismissed as an occasional outburst - yet chosen by Thomas for his Six Poems - should be read in this light.

The ages made her that made us from dust;  
 She is all we know and live by, and we trust  
 She is good and must endure, loving her so:  
 And as we love ourselves we hate her foe. (2)

His trust in her was by no means blind, as his poems bear witness.  
 In "The Chalk Pit" he states

.....I should prefer the truth  
 Or nothing.....

His search for truth, for personal identity and communal identity is the mainspring of his poetry; many years of thought compressed into two years when he was, under pressure of war, given

.....powers  
 Coming like exiles home again. ("The Other")

His utter honesty which led him to trust only after thorough search, led him also to realise the relative insignificance of his own sacrifice in the struggle - a sacrifice the more poignant in that he was in full possession of his poetic powers. This knowledge is embodied in a

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(1) The Last Sheaf, p.221

(2) On p.154 of The Last Four Years we read how Eleanor Farjeon asked him, 'Do you know what you are fighting for?' He stopped, and picked up a pinch of earth. 'Literally, for this.' He crumbled it between finger and thumb, and let it fall.'

poem of June 1916, known as "There Was A Time". Here he recalls a time of physical and spiritual health that he rarely acknowledged -

except sometimes in a frosty air  
 When my heels hammered out a melody  
 From pavements of a city left behind

In retrospect he acknowledges his tendency to self-pity, and faces the irony that now he has a task for youth and strength, he no longer has either.

.....I deny the age,  
 The care and weakness that I know - refuse  
 To admit I am unworthy of the wage  
 Paid to a man who gives up eyes and breath  
 For what would neither ask nor heed his death.

Voluntary and thankless sacrifice is what his decision to volunteer for officer training, and France, entailed. Biographically his voluntary sacrifice, at the age of 39, is humbling; critically the prospect imparted an incisiveness to his thought and expression which we feel present throughout his poetry (1). With a disturbing honesty he examined what he could sacrifice, and for what. One is indebted to W. Cooke for reminding us of Robert Frost's comment on Edward Thomas' poetry.

His poetry is so brave, so unconsciously brave. He didn't think of it for a moment as war poetry, though that is what it is. It ought to be called Roads to France. (2)

Once in France, Thomas had only time to begin to acclimatise himself. In the village of Achicourt near Arras the 'rock-like' mud of "The Manor Farm" was replaced by mud in which

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(1) The Green Roads (1965) - selection of ET's poems, Introduction by Eleanor Farjeon p.12:

From March 1915 it was almost as if he were writing against time.

(2) Cooke, p.242 quotes from Selected Letters of Robert Frost, p.217

....you nearly pull your leg off, and often your boot off, at each step in the worst places. (1)

There were ghastly sights too -

Jagged gables at dawn when you are cold and tired out look a thousand times worse from their connection with a certain kind of enemy shell that has made them look like that, so that every time I see them I half hear the black grisly flap that it seems to make as it bursts. (2)

His senses were still uncompromising. In the midst of this, he could find his own happiness too.

This is a fine hilly country with trees only on the roads and a few woods. The villages lie along the slopes above the streams, with tiled roofs and mud in brick walls and churches with towers and short spires, something like Sussex, but often shell-bitten. There are hardly any hedges. You see nothing yet but snow and field telephone posts and barbed wire entanglements. (3)

He felt that he would enjoy it more if he knew he would survive -

I can't help allowing it to trouble me, but it doesn't prey on me and I have no real foreboding, only occasional trepidation and anxiety. (4)

A letter to Helen Thomas is more explicit.

My dear, you must not ask me to say much. But I, you see, must not feel anything; I am just, as it were, tunnelling underground and something sensible in my subconsciousness directs me not to think of the sun. At the end of the tunnel there is the sun.....my state of mind.....is really so preoccupied with getting through the tunnel that you might say I had forgotten there was a sun at either end.... (5)

Comments such as these, and from his last letter to Eleanor Farjeon

Well, this is the eve, and beautiful sunny day after a night of cold and snow, (6)

show his constant awareness, his appreciation of 'both foul and fair'

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- (1) Farjeon, The Last Four Years (1958), p.257. Letter of 22 March 1917  
 (2) Cooke, p.97 quotes from letter to Frost of 2 April 1917  
 (3) Farjeon, p.249, 13 February 1917 (4) Farjeon, p.258, 27 March 1917  
 (5) J. Moore, Life and Letters of Edward Thomas (1939), p.264, 6 April 1917  
 (6) Farjeon, p.265, 3 April 1917.

("And You, Helen"). 'What is imperfect, and things that have an end, (with) life and earth' ("Liberty"). That he wrote no poetry there is characteristic also, for, he wrote to his wife he wished he felt like writing - his preoccupation has already been mentioned - but added

It is the most impossible thing in this new disturbing world where I am so far only a spectator. (1)

He had to experience fully to write of experience. (Knowing of this, Frost had inquired impishly,

Will you have to visit the battlefields of Oudenarde, Blenheim and Malplaquet?

when Thomas was commissioned to write a book on the Duke of Marlborough.) (2)

On 19 May 1914 he had written to Frost of his doubts as to whether he could express his feelings adequately -

Even with registered post, telegraph, or all modern conveniences I doubt if I could transmit it. (3)

Almost three years later, on 6 March 1917 he wrote to Frost,

I should like to be a poet, just as I should like to live, but I know as much about ~~my~~ chances in either case. (4)

We should be grateful that he did manage to transmit, in words, his poetic perception of many of the subtleties of life. He knew words -

You are light as dreams

Tough as oak

Precious as gold

....as dear

As the earth which you prove

That we love.

("Words" 26-8:vi:15).

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(1) John Moore, op.cit., p.253

(2) Selected Letters of Robert Frost p.165 - see also footnote to p.81 below.

(3) Quoted by L. Thompson, Robert Frost - The Early Years (1967), p.603

(4) Quoted by Cooke, p.96.- op.cit.



We may indeed regret his death, we can echo his own words on hearing of Brooke at Antwerp -

There are so many we could have sacrificed, too. (1)

However, he had established a fund of poetry which has led slowly to his recognition; his poetry is his memorial, mightier than the names

.....of the mighty<sup>1</sup>men

That fought and lost or won in the old wars, ("The Word", 5:vii:15),

and, unlike them, worth remembering. To use his own words, written of Jefferies:

..though the abundance of what he saw will continue to attract many, it is for his way of seeing.....that we must chiefly go to him. (2)

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(1) "Letters to W.H. Hudson" London Mercury pp.439-40  
 (a selection printed in To the Memory of Edward Thomas (1937)  
 by James Guthrie - see Appendix III below pp.285-6.)

(2) Quoted by Coombes, op.cit., p.134.

TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

I. B.M. Add. Ms. 44990

COMMENTARY

AND

FOLIATION

Various sources of information mentioned in the Bibliography help to explain the significance of the internal evidence of the manuscript books found in the B.M. and Bodleian Library.

Thus, a letter to Eleanor Farjeon, dated 6:i:15, provides a useful comment on the early use of the B.M. manuscript :

I have got out some of my verses, all you haven't seen. All except "The Manor Farm" are my only copies, so if you would like to keep any of the others would you make copies? I find typing at present too awkward. (1)

This is the first mention of his sending poems to Eleanor Farjeon, and could explain the state of the first 8 poems in the B.M. manuscript. In view of the evidence of the American manuscript in Lockwood Memorial Library, discussed at length by W. Cooke (2), and alluded to in the Critical Introduction, one would expect to find early work heavily corrected. The letter to Eleanor Farjeon could explain the fair copy appearance of "The Manor Farm" in comparison to the others—his only copies. Clearly the B.M. manuscript book was used for early drafts, as this letter bears witness. Some months later, in the Bodleian manuscript, there is evidence that later versions as well as earlier versions of that manuscript were sent to Eleanor Farjeon (3). At other times it was used for fair copies of poems that had been typed by Eleanor Farjeon, commented on, argued over, and perhaps sent to publishers, or to Robert Frost.

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- (1) Farjeon, p.109  
 (2) Cooke, pp.163-177, and pp.11-21 above.  
 (3) See p. 102 below.

Of the 8 poems in the B.M. book dated before the letter of 6:i:15, one, f.4, "The Combe", has no alterations at all and has every appearance of being a fair copy (1). Two other poems, f.1, "The Manor Farm" (2) and f.7, "The Source of the Ouse at Selsfield", have minor alterations; f.6, "The New Year" (3) has several emendations; ff. 2 and 3 are covered with alterations, and different drafts of various stanzas (4); f.5, "The Hollow Wood" (5), is unique in having three separate drafts, and f.8, "The Penny Whistle" (6) has two drafts. We could take these eight poems as a typical cross-section of the material to be found in the B.M. book and, in view of the letter to Eleanor Farjeon, make some conclusions. As there is apparently another copy of f.1, its appearance here, with only minor alterations, is to be expected. More strange is the case of f.4, unaltered and yet the only copy. Most interesting is the fact that four of the eight poems are reworked in some detail, to the extent that there are three drafts of f.5.

The following hypotheses can be established. Either Thomas sent earlier versions and corrected them on return in the process of copying them out, or the 'only' copies he is referring to are to loose-leaf copies of the manuscript. Eleanor Farjeon could have received fair copies of the poems after their alteration in this book. The latter case seems more likely in this instance - although the former idea would correspond to the process outlined below regarding the Bodleian manuscript (7). It seems possible that

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- (1) p.159
  - (2) pp.154-5
  - (3) p.165
  - (4) pp.156-8; cf. Bodleian f.51, pp.251-2. The three poems are based on folk-song refrain.
  - (5) pp.160-4
  - (6) pp.166-169
  - (7) pp.99-100, and pp.250-1.

at this early stage of his poetry, earlier drafts existed, satisfactorily worked on in the case of f.4, but not to his satisfaction in the case of the other poems (1).

However, as all ten poems taken through further drafts found in the manuscript books consulted, are in the B.M. book, it is likely that the B.M. book was used as an earlier stage of composition than the Bodleian book. The frequency of heavily corrected drafts diminishes with the establishment of a regular process of sending drafts to Eleanor Farjeon, to be typed. Furthermore, notwithstanding the presence of later poems, heavily corrected, there seems to be growing fluency after the early conversational poems (2), developed painstakingly from prose or from notes. Biographical details, such

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- (1) This curious mixture of fair copy and heavily altered poem can only be explained by the presence of earlier drafts. Thomas would hardly ever have composed a poem and have been sufficiently satisfied not to alter any details. He was fascinated by words:

Only when a word has become necessary to him can a man use it safely. (E. Thomas, Pater, p.215)

No word, outside works of information, has any value beyond its surface value except what it receives from its neighbours and its position among them..... (E. Thomas, Maeterlinck, p.27)

I find myself engrossed and conscious of a possible perfection as I never was in prose. (Letter to Frost, 15 Dec.1914 quoted by Cooke, p.82)  
(op.cit.)

- (2) See pp.21-22 & 25 above.

as the sprained ankle of New Year's Day, 1915, which gave him enforced leisure for nearly three months, before the commission for Marlborough, in April 1915, taken with the manuscript evidence, support the theory that his method of composition developed both from experience and expediency. The majority of the longer poems, of a conversational nature, are found in the B.M. book. Time and conditions made it expedient for the later poems to be more compressed - see pp. 98-100 below regarding the Bodleian manuscript, and his writing immediately before, and after, enlistment in July 1915 (1).

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- (1) a) W. Cooke, op.cit., pp.163-71, and the Critical Introduction to this present work, pp.12-20 above, trace the development of prose draft to poetry, as seen in the Lockwood Memorial Library manuscript.
- b) J.W. Haines, in "As I Knew Him", In Memoriam Edward Thomas (1919), mentions the growth away from notes, (such as are found in Bodleian Don.e.10, and early prose works, such as The Woodland Life (1897)):

He told me on one occasion, that for years, on his walks and rides, he made the most elaborate notes as he went along and afterwards used these for his books and essays .....he had even done this with some of his earlier poems; but.....he had come to the conclusion that what was really valuable remained in the mind and.....notes were rather a hindrance than a help, because they preserved the memory of unimportant things that would otherwise be forgotten.

- c) Eleanor Farjeon, in her Introduction to The Green Roads (1965), a selection of Thomas' poems, states on p.12:

From March 1915, it was almost as though he were writing against time.

Nevertheless, the poems with significant alterations, found in the B.M. book, show how Thomas put his own criticism of others into practice. He wrote to Garnett on 17:iii:15:

Dimness and lack of concreteness I shall certainly do my best against. I hate them too much in others to tolerate them in myself - when I see them.

(Quoted by Garnett in Intro. to Selected Poems (1927) - see p. 149 below)

His own self-doubt and self-criticism were hard taskmasters. Aware of the possibility of perfection, he doubted that he could write so much and that it could still be good, for he had doubled his output by the end of January and wrote:

Just look at all these verses, mostly written since my ankle went wrong three weeks ago. This will prejudice you against them. A man can't do all that and be any good. I haven't thrown away anything. (Farjeon, p.114)

Thomas was enabled by three months of enforced inactivity to turn most of his attention to poetry. Not until April was Marlborough commissioned (1). This spate of activity is reflected in the B.M. book, which continues along the lines of ff.1-8 in including fair copy and final working draft or drafts. While the majority are clearly late drafts requiring only detail correction, nine poems are found with a full alternative draft:

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(1) Footnote on Marlborough

It is interesting to note Thomas' attitude to this task. His compassion, shown in poems such as "A Private" of January 1915, is reflected in his attitude to these wars:

people hear of fights, sieges and many deaths. But they see nothing; the talk leaves a slight and transient impression. They ought.....to see the dead horses and the intolerable marshes for a rainy season; they should smell the stinks of mortality. (p.118)

5:i:15	f.7v/f.8, ("The Penny Whistle") - see pp.166-9 (1)
6:i:15	f.9, ("A Private") - a further third draft not found here was printed, see pp.173-4
7:i:15	f.10, ("Snow") - see p.175
8:i:15	f.10v,f.11, "Adlestrop" - see pp.176-8
15:i:15	f.16v,f.17, "Swedes" - see p.181
22-23:iii:15	f.38v,f.39, "The Barn and the Down" - see pp.186-7
24:iii:15	f.42)
4:v:15	f.70) ("Two Pewits") - see 191-4
28:iii:15	f.46, ("A Tale") - see p.196
23-4:v:15	ff.75,76,77, ("Sedge-Warblers") - see pp. 217-9.

One further poems appears with three separate drafts:

31:xii: ff.4v,5,5v, ("The Hollow Wood") - see pp.160-4.

Five of these ten poems are dated within nine days, and a further poem only a week later. Three of the others fall within six days during March. Two particular points arise. Despite intense activity, Thomas retained his meticulous care over words in his search for possible perfection. Moreover, these drafts reflect the simultaneous spate of writing (2) and degree of care at an early stage in a period of composition made necessarily brief both by the poet's eagerness to write and the encroaching time as he considered enlistment and accepted the task of the book on Marlborough.

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(1) Titles added in print are given in parentheses

(2) Twenty four poems were written between 24:xii:14 and 23:i:15. Two have no known manuscript, but "After Rain" and "Interval" are referred to in a letter of 6:i:15 - Farjeon, p.109. As well as the six poems of eleven days with alternative drafts, ff.2 and 3 are radically altered, having more than one draft of some verses, - see pp.156-8.



After January 1915 (1), although many poems are substantially altered, only four of all the manuscript poems actually show a full alternative draft - three of these are found between 22 and 28:iii:15 - one being revised as late as 4:v:15 - and finally, ff.75-77 of 23,24:v:15. Thus, from January onwards, it appears that the B.M. book was used for fair copies. The poems of February are especially examples of this, for of the six poems dated during February, four are fair copies complete with title; this compares with six titles of the poems dated in January. However, with the dozen poems of March came the variant drafts again, and few of these poems are without some alteration, "March the Third" 23:iii:15 being thoroughly revised (see pp.189-90). Meticulous alteration of his longest poem, "Lob" (ff.51-55, 3,4:iv:15) is found in this book. From the abbreviations, it is quite clear that earlier working had already taken place, but many further alterations are found here, and further alterations were made prior to printing - (see Notes on "Lob" pp.197-206 below; also p.132). There are no alternative drafts of the fifteen poems of April, but several show emendation.

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- (1) It should be noted, in passing, that a further five poems dated 3:xii:14 - 7:xii:14 - "Up in the Wind", "November", "March", "Old Man", "The Sign-Post" - are to be found in the Lockwood Memorial Library, with alternative drafts - see Cooke, pp.249-50.

A further five poems, five of the last six to be written during January 1915, "The Unkown Bird", "The Mill-Pond", "Man and Dog", "The Gypsy" and "Ambition" are to be found with alternative drafts in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.

Of the five poems of May, four are fair copies - "Fifty Faggots" - f.74 with its heading - "British Museum?" - points forward to the Bodleian book in its localising of the poem as an aid to dating, often some weeks after the initial draft. The final poem of May 1915 - "Sedge-Warblers" - appears in two drafts. The earlier draft sprawls over two folios, 75 & 76. This is cancelled, and in neater, smaller writing, a slightly shorter draft appears on f.77.

A closer examination of the handwriting and ink reveals further useful information regarding the use and nature of this collection of autograph poems, especially as regards the corrections, and revised drafts - from the evidence of ff.42 and f.70 mentioned earlier it is clear that revision was not necessarily of the same time as the copying up of these drafts. It is rare that one can identify several poems as being written up at one time (1), but there are instances where the ink and handwriting of alterations corresponds to the form of another, later poem. Such is the case in f.1, itself little altered, where the alteration of 1.22 corresponds in form to the originals of ff.2 & 3 - it seems likely that these latter poems were copied up at one time, followed by a re-reading and correction of f.1. Similarities in the heavy black ink used to correct ff.2 & 3 suggest that these were worked on at a similar time. The correction of the second draft of "The Hollow Wood", (ff.4v, 5, 5v) shows the alternative third stanza in ink similar to the corrections of the final couplet of the first draft. Draft 2 seems to have been written out prior to the correction of draft 1. The final third draft is in ink similar to the final alteration of stanza 3 in the second draft. The two uncancelled drafts on f.9

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(1) This is a major distinction between the B.M. and the Bodleian books. See below pp.114-9.

seem to have been written up at different times - they are not merely fair copies. The reworking in several poems suggests later revision at different times rather than solid work on one occasion - e.g. ff.10/10v/11, where the title is added to the earlier draft in ink similar to the second draft. (Neither draft is cancelled.) The alteration of l.3 on f.11 is prior to the rewriting on the opposite page; most of the difficulty lay in the opening, worked over four times ("Adlestrop"<sup>2</sup>; see pp. 176-8 below)

A letter to Robert Frost of the previous year, dated 19 May 1914 carries Thomas' doubt as to whether he could write poetry. He ironically commented that he doubted whether he could transmit poetry, even with the help of radio or telegraph (1). As already noted, by the December he could write that he was

conscious of a possible perfection as I never was  
in prose. (2)

It is this consciousness of the possibility of perfection, aided by his constant wish to be honest and true in his expression of feeling which sent him back to his drafts time and again, especially in the earlier poems, to correct and reshape, perhaps only a word - but words had their own individual magic and importance. Thus there are three attempts at one word in the otherwise unaltered copy of "The Manor Farm" - (see p.154 below).

Often in the B.M. book there is more than one poem a day; although the dates given are not absolute authority for the first draft, the interval between first idea and fair copy in this book was far shorter than was later the case in the Bodleian book. As is shown in the section Early Editions, correction sometimes even took place after the final alterations in manuscript and, while doubt can be cast on some of these departures from the manuscript authority, the

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(1) Quoted by L. Thompson, Robert Frost, The Early Years (1967) p.603

(2) Letter to R. Frost, 15 Dec. 1914, quoted by Cooke, p.82. op.cit.

fact that later alteration takes place in poems during his lifetime indicates this constant concern for accuracy of word and phrase.

There are instances in this manuscript book where several poems are of similar appearance - ff.21-25, 21-23:i:15, also f.34 & f.35, 11 & 12:iii:15. The choice of titles is erratic, and, as noted, the presence of titles in the majority of the poems of February would indicate a similar time of copying up - furthermore, f.31, f.32, f.33 are all in similar ink. (See Appendix pp.276 ff. below re. Titles).

However, the appearance of the two drafts of "The Barn and the Down", after a run of fair copies, is interesting, especially the later insertion in the earlier draft of the opening stanza, which would suggest that the draft of f.39 is early in the process of composition. (pp. 186-7 below) Although correction and alternative draft are less frequent after January, it is clear that at no time was the book merely a repository of worked out fair copies: ff.40 & 41 carry significant alterations (see pp.188-90 below). A further three fair copies - ff.43, 44, 45, separate these from f.46 - the prime example of the error of not consulting holograph sources in the preparation of a full edition. In all printed editions the cancelled earlier version, dated 28:iii:15, appears. The revised version, written at a different date, 31:iii:15, in different ink, has never been printed (see p.196 below). Ff.47-50 are of similar appearance; ff.51-55 "Lob" has already been mentioned above; a later revision of f.56 did not cancel the false start, and ff. 57 & 58 and ff.59-63 are of similar appearance, continuing the pattern of revised draft, and fair copy.

Almost all of the remaining folios have something of interest, reflecting the use made of this book in the process of composition. The revision of stanza order in f.64 could be a miscopying or a later alteration, although not much later, and indeed, perhaps the order was changed after the copying. F.65, although a fair copy, was altered prior to printing. F.66, 24:iv(15) "A Cat" provides an instance of alterations being made at the time of making the fair copy - the revision of the ending seems contemporaneous with the remainder of this folio. F.68 underwent two stages of alteration, one in manuscript and one prior to print. In f.69 - "April" 2:v:15 the writing reflects the unsure poem. F.70 - a fair copy of a revised f.42 - "Two Pewits", clearly retains the original reading of 'surf' in l.4, which was altered in print to 'surge' (see notes on this text, pp.191-4 below).

There is a sheet missing between f.70 and f.71, which has been carefully torn out; no trace of its contents remains, but it is feasible, although without precedent, that f.71 is a fair copy of the missing sheet. "The Chalk Pit" on ff. 72-3 appears in print with a further dozen lines, not extant in manuscript (see pp.213-5 below). Finally, ff.75-6, 23:v:15, two months after the last dual draft poem, are cancelled after minor alterations. The final version of f.77 is not a fair copy of the altered earlier version - certain departures are made. (pp. 217-9 below)

(P) section on Early Editions calls attention to instances of revision between the final version found in the B.M. and Bodleian manuscript books and the poem's first appearance in print. The manuscript, together with biographical data, reflects the pressures under which many early poems were written, and the increasing certainty shown by the poet.



- f.4v (cancelled draft)  
Out in the sun the goldfinch flits
- f.5 3l:xii:14  
(cancelled draft)  
Out in the sun the goldfinch flits
- f.5v 3l:xii:14  
Out in the sun the goldfinch flits  
("The Hollow Wood") (1)
- f.6 1:i:15  
He was the only man I met up in the woods  
("The New Year")
- f.7 4:i:15 The Source of the Ouse at Selsfield. (2)  
("The Source")
- f.7v The new moon hangs like an ivory bugle  
(uncancelled draft)
- f.8 5:i:15 ("The Penny Whistle")  
The new moon hangs like an ivory bugle (uncancelled).
- f.9 6:i:15  
A labouring man lies hid in that bright coffin  
7:l:15  
The labouring man here lying slept out of doors  
(Neither draft cancelled - revised version - "A Private")
- f.10 7:i:15  
In the gloom of whiteness, ("Snow")  
(Two drafts - neither cancelled)
- f.10v Adlestrop (uncancelled)
- f.11 8:i:15 Adlestrop (title later addition - draft uncancelled).

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- (1) Titles added in print appear thus: ("Snow")  
(2) Titles found in ms. appear thus: Adlestrop

- f.12 8:i:15  
It seems I have no tears left. They should have fallen—"Tears"  
———— blank sheet —————
- f.13 9:i:15  
Often & often it came back again, ("Over the Hills")
- f.14 Today I want the hills, ("The Lofty Sky")
- f.15 (ctd.) And sees the sky, or grieves
- f.16 15:i:15 The Cuckoo
- f.16v They have taken the gable from the roof of clay
- f.17 15:i:15 Swedes  
(neither draft cancelled)
- f.18 17:i:15 The Unknown Bird  
(ink indicates title later addition)
- f.19 (ctd.) This surely I know that I who listened then,
- f.20 18:i:15 The Mill-Pond
- f.21 20:i:15  
"It will take some getting." "Sir, I think 'twill so."  
("Man & Dog")
- f.22 (ctd.) "No rabbit, never fear, she ever got,"
- f.23 21:i:15  
What does it mean? Tired, angry, & ill at ease,  
("Beauty")
- f.24 22:i:15  
A fortnight before Christmas Gypsies were everywhere:  
("The Gypsy")



- f.25 23:i:15  
Unless it was that day I never knew ("Ambition")
- f.26 3,4:ii:15  
One hour: as dim he & his house now look  
("House & Man")
- f.27 11:ii:15 Parting
- f.28 11:ii:15 First known when lost
- f.29 15:ii:15  
There never was a finer day, ("May the Twenty Third")  
f.30 (ctd.) "Where did they come from, Jack?" "Don't ask it,
- f.31 22:ii:15 The Barn
- f.32 23:ii:15 Home
- f.33 24:ii:15 The Owl
- f.34 11:ii:15  
Mother, the root of this little yellow flower  
("Child Upon the Cliffs")
- f.35 12:ii:15  
I have come a long way today: ("The Bridge")
- f.36 16:iii:16 Goodnight
- f.37 18:iii:15  
But these things also (1)
- f.38 19:iii:15 The New House
- f.38v 23:iii:15  
(uncancelled draft)  
It stood in the sunset sky<sup>o</sup>

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(1) See Appendix, p.276.

- f.39 22:iii:15 The Barn & the Down
- f.40 23:iii:15  
It was a perfect day ("Sowing")
- f.41 23:iii:15  
Here again (she said) is March the 3rd.  
("March the Third")
- f.42 24:iii:15  
Two pewits sport & cry (- see also f.70)  
("Two Pewits")
- f.43 25:iii:15  
Will you come? ("Will you come?")
- f.44 26:iii:15  
I know a path running along a bank,  
("The Path")
- f.45 27:iii:15  
This moonlight makes ("The Wasp Trap")
- f.46 28:iii:15  
There once the walls  
(cancelled draft)  
31:iii  
Here once flint walls (cancelled draft published as "A Tale")
- f.47 1:iv:15  
They met inside the gateway that gives the view,
- f.48 (ctd.) 'Dear me! How cd that be? But pardon me.'
- f.49 (ctd.) Now you may say that tho you understand  
("Wind & Mist")

- f.50 2:iv:15  
'He has robbed 2 clubs. The judge at Salisbury  
("A Gentleman")
- f.50v (four lines only - correction of opening on f.51)  
At hawthorn time in Wiltshire travelling
- f.51 3,4:iv:15  
~~His face by 70 English winters out~~
- f.52(ctd) He's dead sir these 3 yrs! This lasted till
- f.53(ctd) That Mother Dunch's Buttocks sh<sup>d</sup> not lack
- f.53v (three lines - correction of f.54 opposite)  
Earlier than this, while he grew thick & strong
- f.54(ctd) Since he alone, unlike squire, lord & king,
- f.55(conc) In hazel & thorn tangled w<sup>th</sup> old man's beard  
("Lob")
- f.56 4:iv:15  
Except with scents ("Digging")
- f.57 5:iv:15  
The 2 men in the r<sup>d</sup> were taken back  
("Lovers")
- f.58 6:iv:15  
The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood  
("In Memoriam : Easter 1915")
- f.59 14:iv:15  
The downs will lose the sun, white alyssum  
("Head & Bottle")
- f.60 17:iv:15  
(~~Home~~)
- f.61 18:iv:15  
4 miles at a leap over the dark hollow land  
("Health")

- f.62(ctd) With health & all the power that lies
- f.63 20:iv:15  
The huxter has a hump like an ape on his back;  
("The Huxter")
- f.64 21:iv:15  
She dotes on what the wild birds say  
("She Dotes")
- f.65 22:iv:15  
She is beautiful  
(first stanza omitted in print) ("Song")
- f.66 24:iv (15)  
She had a name among the children;  
("A Cat")
- f.67 25:iv:(15)  
The rain & wind, the rain & wind, ~~roared~~ raved endlessly.  
("Melancholy")
- f.68 30:iv:15  
Margaret, you know at night  
(altered opening - "Tonight")
- f.69 2:v:15 April (- written over capital G)
- f.70 (- see f.42 -)  
Revised 4:v:15  
Under the after-sunset sky ("Two Pewits")
- 
- (Sheet torn out neatly between f.70 and f.71 -  
no indication as to what text this had.)
- f.71 7:v:15 July



(f.78) Official notice of no., and date of binding, and examination.

No. of ms. 44990

No. of folios 77

Foliced by SJH

Date March 1953

Examined by JM

12 folios, including (f.78) without writing, plus preliminary folio, before f.1.

Book as we now have it comprises the following -

- a) preliminary blank page
- b) f. 1-77
- c) 12 blank sheets, one missing folio between f.70 & 71.

92 sheets of quarto - 20 x 25 cm.

paper by Partridge & Cooper of Chancery Lane.

II.

BODLEIAN  
Ms. Don. d.28

COMMENTARY  
AND  
FOLIATION

Bodleian Don.d.28 is a ledger, bound in leather, with marbled endpapers. Its paper bears the watermark of 1806, and on the final fly leaf, f.127 there are details of a financial transaction in the Thomas family in April 1817.

It is probable that the book was in Thomas' possession for some time before he started to use it for his poems. Many leaves have been neatly cut out. Others have been torn out. In view of Bodleian Don.e.10 (a commonplace book of Helen and Edward Thomas) and the writing by Edward Thomas of a quotation from The White Devil by John Webster on Don.d.28 f.43v, it is probable that it had been used in much the same way as Don.e.10. Thomas copied up his poems in this book from June 1915 until December 1916.

Not all the poems are in chronological order - f.35 is dated 5:v:16; ff.36 & 37, 30:iv:16; f.41 is dated 11,12,13:v:16; f.42-7 & 8:v:16; f.48 - 8,9,10,11:vi:16; f.49 - 4,5:vi:16; f.54 - 3 & 4:vii (16); f.55 - 1 & 10:vii:16 (1). This alone indicates later copying in batches of two, three or more, sometimes after a gap of some weeks.

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(1) See Cooke, p.257, and pp.114-118 below.



"The Trumpet", for instance, on f.65 headed Sept.26-7-8? was copied out not long before 3:xii:16, when a letter to Eleanor Farjeon mentions copying it out (1). F.61, dated 10:viii:16, was altered prior to its being written out, according to the evidence of a letter of 20:viii:16 (2). There is moreover the actual writing and method of dating which often clearly indicates that several poems were written out at one time (3).

The poems were transferred to the book when Thomas went home on leave. Sometimes there would be a longer delay when they were sent to Eleanor Farjeon for typing. On several occasions an earlier version was included in a letter to Eleanor Farjeon, the version in the Bodleian book being the revised version. However, the earlier version may still be the best remembered - for instance, ff.12, 68 (see pp.228, 257-8 below).

The poems themselves were usually the result of a few hours without a specific task (4). The first immediate outpouring of the early months of 1915 had slowed, and, in any case, army life had its effect on poems written after the end of July 1915 - in fact there are almost three months between f.14 and f.15. The poems were written in spare moments - f.17 was written The day I was in as hut-orderly while the rest went to South Weald.(5). F.16 was written Going home from Harehall Camp, f.19 Coming home from Harehall, indicative of being written out at home. Almost every poem in the Bodleian book has the place of composition, often easier to remember than the date. F. 70 was written

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- (1) Farjeon, p.230
  - (2) ibid p.209, and see p.253 below.
  - (3) See analysis, pp.114-119 below
  - (4) Letters, p.258
  - (5) See Farjeon, p.172, and see p.269 below

one evening (15:xii:16) (1) after writing to Eleanor Farjeon:

I was very much alone for a time (till a dog began to kill a cat outside the hut) and wrote 15 lines. But I doubt if I shall do anything with them.

The first draft of f.65 was written in the middle of a group of men, and only the capitals indicate the lines (2).

J.W. Haines, in the article entitled "As I Knew Him", (op.cit.), stated that:

A great many poems were composed in railway trains after it was too dark for him to read and were written down later. He frequently altered them. The poem "Words" he composed partly on a bicycle ride between Gloster and May Hill, and partly on the hill itself. He brought it down, written out, to breakfast next morning, and finally polished it on the road to Coventry in the afternoon.....

....He told me on one occasion that for years, on his walks and rides, he made the most elaborate notes as he went along and afterwards used these for his books and essays.....he had even done this with some of his earlier poems; but he had come to the conclusion that what was really valuable remained in the mind, and.....notes were rather a hindrance than a help, because they preserved the memory of unimportant things which would otherwise be forgotten.

From this we can surmise that the method which produced "Words" seems to be typical of these poems in the Bodleian, which tend to be shorter than those in the B.M. book.

Various references to the Bodleian book dismiss it as of little interest, merely fair copies written out for his wife (3). But in fact this book, taken in conjunction with earlier drafts reproduced by Eleanor Farjeon, show that Thomas' methods of composition had perforce developed from the earlier gropings of the B.M. book. Scribbled down in railway carriages, jotted down on scraps of army note-paper,

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- (1) Farjeon pp.234-5, and see p.259 below  
 (2) Ibid p.218-9, and see p.254 below  
 (3) Cooke, p.257.

his poems seem to have crystallised through the adverse conditions in which he wrote them. Very few of the poems in this Bodleian book are over 20 lines in length (1). Variations are often slight from what is taken to be the first draft. On the other hand certain poems show that, despite pressure of time, Thomas did revise and check over this collection and it is not merely a collection of untouched fair copies. Helen Thomas has testified that when

(he) came home on his short leaves he always spent some hours in his study at the top of the hill. He loved the little room looking out to the downs and beyond to the sea, and there he wrote several of his loveliest poems. (2)

The attempt to analyse the poems regarding the likely group in which they were transferred to this book is interesting for the light that it sheds on the true importance of the Bodleian book. Through examination of the ink, and the methods of dating which often distinguish one group from the next, one forms a picture of the part this book played in the process from earliest draft to printed text. As suggested, with many of these poems, there are no alternatives because the very pressure of the conditions under which they were written often produced a poem which would perhaps benefit from a minor alteration or two, but which, in essence, was adequate. Helen Thomas commented:

His own inner life was submerged under these strange and difficult conditions, only coming to the surface in the odd moments when he could be alone, when he found infinite comfort and satisfaction in expressing himself in his poems. (3)

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(1) See footnote to p.22 above

(2) Helen Thomas, World Without End (1956) p.166 - also relevant is p.169.

(3) Ibid p.165

The dating, although at times dubious, is a further help to forming an idea of the composition of his poems. There is, for instance, a three month break during his initial army training, (during which, one must admit, it is possible poems were written of which there is no known manuscript) while he grew acclimatised. Moreover, he was billeted with his parents at this time, never a congenial atmosphere for his writing.

Lack of opportunity, new and strange conditions led to the contrast that 13 poems appear before his initial training, then a three month gap, and then one poem - "October". Another month and then but four poems before the end of 1915. The first three poems of 1916 appear one a week, and a further half dozen during February. Three in March, four in April are followed by thirteen during May - more than at any other time during his army career. Another six appear for June. Hare Hall seems, despite its bleak atmosphere evoked in the poem "Home" (f.30,31) of March, to have allowed him time to write, and leave during which to transfer the poems to the book. By contrast, two of three poems written during July were written on leave - one at Selsfield with Helen, one going home to Steep, and the one poem of August was written in hospital at Hare Hall.

September found him at Handel Street, for officer training prior to an artillery commission. The three poems of this month were written out on the leave starting on the 15th. These three show a growing concern, an awareness of possible death, and the struggle to communicate this awareness. Trowbridge produced four poems, including "The Trumpet".

F.65 and 66 seem to be the penultimate batch, and according to letters to Eleanor Farjeon, these were copied as late as December 3rd, by which time at least three other poems had been written (1). The imprecise dating of the final six poems in this book indicate the growing pressure of these last months in England, with not only the prospect of 'going out' to the Front, but the proposed book by Ingpen, and the Annual being prepared by Bottomley (2), whom Thomas visited on 22nd November. Returning, he wrote the poem known as "The Sheiling".

The last four poems in this book (excluding the loose leaf of f.70) seem to have been copied at more or less the same time - the final poem - "Out in the Dark" seems to have been written out separately, quite probably without much prior working. (3)

The loose leaf, sent from Codford, would indicate that by the time Eleanor Farjeon received the poems they were more or less as finally printed. The first drafts reproduced in The Last Four Years are no more revised or corrected than the copies in this manuscript. This indicates that, as suggested previously, the majority of the poems written after June 1915 had little or no revision after the first draft, and that in most cases the Bodleian manuscript is a fair indication of the poem as first written. On at least two separate occasions, the Bodleian draft was copied out before notifying Eleanor Farjeon of changes, or discussion of these changes. (4)

These poems, written out often hurriedly on paper covered with artillery notes, and scrawled out into his book, often weeks later, quite clearly did not get as full attention as Thomas would have liked under better conditions. Many years previously, on 17th March 1904 he had written to Gordon Bottomley:

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- (1) Farjeon, p. 230
  - (2) See pp.128-9 below re. Early Editions
  - (3) See pp.260-2 below
  - (4) See f.16, pp.232-3 and ff.48-9, pp.249-50 below.

While I write it is a dull blindfold journey through a strange, lovely land. I seem to take what I write from the dictation of someone else. Correction is pleasanter. For then I have glimpses of what I was passing through as I wrote. (1)

Although there are no alternative drafts in the Bodleian book, it would be a mistake to forget Thomas' earlier comment on correction. "Roads" (f.22) is covered with detail alterations (2). Very few of the poems have not received some finishing touch, however rushed. Titles were another matter, for here Thomas rarely had much preference. Poems which had no manuscript title are often referred to by quite different soubriquets than their final published title, (see note on Titles, p.276 below). Whenever possible Thomas would correct his proofs, and urged that John Freeman, Eleanor Farjeon and Gordon Bottomley would be as meticulous as he (3).

All except five poems have a pencilled number which corresponds to the pagination of Collected Poems (1920). Whether this is evidence of this book being used in the preparation of that edition is debatable. The numbers could have been added later. Certainly Collected Poems (1920) perpetuates certain discrepancies found in Last Poems, such as the ignoring of the latest alteration in l.5 of f.3, ("The Word") (4) and the curious departure from the manuscript in f.71 - "Out in the Dark" (5). Similarly, discrepancies such as in l.10 of f.15 - "October" where the printed text of Poems 1917 ignores the later alteration (6), are perpetuated in the Collected Poems of 1920. It would seem that, although this manuscript was available, the text of the Collected Poems took as little heed of it as the earlier editions, and merely reprinted the contents of the two earlier editions in one volume.

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- (1) Letters, p.53  
 (2) See pp.239-44 below  
 (3) See pp.128-9 below  
 (4) See p.221 below  
 (5) See pp.260-2 below  
 (6) See p.8 above.

Strange, too, is the decision of the editors not to print the five poems unnumbered in the manuscript book. Critically there seem to be no grounds for this, for two at least - "The Watchers" and "No One So Much As You" are fine poems, certainly as worthy of inclusion as some others.

Further commentary regarding the relationship of this manuscript book to the printed text, and to Thomas' methods and conditions of writing, will be found in the section Early Editions, and in notes accompanying the text of the poems. Representative references have been made in footnotes and in the text of this section.

Textual Description of Bodleian Don. d. 28.

1. On the reverse side of all the extant sheets, there is an inked number, in copperplate, dating from the original use of the ledger. These numbers indicate the number of sheets missing. Thus the reverse of f.1. is numbered 3, f.2. is numbered 11, f.3 is numbered 16 and so on, as indicated in the descriptive analysis which follows.

2. Each poem, with the exceptions of "No One So Much As You", "The Watchers", "P.H.T.", "The Wind's Song", "The Lane", has a pencilled number which corresponds to the pagination of Collected Poems (1920). The five poems not so numbered did not appear in that edition.

3. The first 27 poems (ff. 1-28) have holograph foliation. Thereafter, the foliation has been added by the Bodleian cataloguer.

4. Titles and headings found in the manuscript appear thus:

Anecdote, October, Steep Again. Titles added in print appear thus: ("The Thrush").

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Presented through the Friends of the Bodleian by Mrs. Edward Thomas,  
16 June 1932. (reverse of end-paper)

Edward Thomas	(in holograph on the first sheet of the ledger. This
Steep	book was used for his poems from June 1915 until
Petersfield	December 1916)
vi.15	

(The third sheet is blank. Six sheets from the original ledger are missing before f.1.)



- f.1. 25:v:15. Anecdote (Ink 1; pencil 101;  
Ledger C/D 3.)  
I built myself a house of glass;  
("I Built Myself a House of Glass")
- f.2. 26-28:vi:15. Anecdote - on the road from Gloster to Coventry.  
(Ink 2, pencil 84;  
Ledger T/V 11.)  
Out of us all ("Words")
- f.3. 5:vii:15. Steep again (Ink 3; pencil 156; Ledger 16.)  
There are so many things I have forgot ("The Word")
- f.4. 5:vii:15 (Ink 4; pencil 111; Ledger 17.)  
When these old woods were young ("Under the Woods")  
(-----one sheet missing-----)
- f.5. 6,7,8:vii:15 (Ink 5; pencil 57; Ledger 19.)  
After night's thunder far away had rolled ("Haymaking")
- f.6. (ctd) Upon a circle of grass & weed uncut, (Ink 6; Ledger 20)
- f.7. 7&8:vii:15. (Ink 7; pencil 108; Ledger 21)  
Over known fields with an old friend in dream ("A Dream")
- f.8. 10:vii:15. (Ink 8; pencil 77; Ledger 22.)  
Seated once by a brook, watching a child ("The Brook")
- f.9. 11:vii:15.. (Ink 9; pencil 159; Ledger 23)  
All day & night, save winter, every weather, ("Aspens")

- f.10. 12:vii:15 (Ink 10; pencil 106; Ledger 24)  
 Only the sound remains ("The Mill-Water")  
 (-----two sheets missing-----)
- f.11. 13-14:vii. (15- added later) (Ink 11; pencil 120; Ledger 27.)  
 An acre of land between the shore and the hills, ("For These")
- f.12. 21:vii. London (Ink 12; pencil 103; Ledger 28)  
 What matter makes my spade for tears or mirth, ("Digging")
- f.13. 22:vii. London (Ink 13; pencil 104; Ledger 29.)  
 Between a sunny bank and the sun ("Two Houses")
- f.14. 23:vii. London (Ink 14; pencil 83; Ledger 30.)  
 Out of the wood of thoughts that grow by night ("Cock-Crow")  
 (-----one sheet missing-----)

Note There follows a gap of three months.

Letter to Eleanor Farjeon, 19:viii:15 -

I have been so busy at private soldiering that I couldn't write.

(Farjeon, p.165)

Letter to Eleanor Farjeon, 17:x:15, from High Beech.-

Will you take some verses for a letter? I have been lame with an injured knee 2 days and this is what I have done with them.....

(Farjeon, p.169)

Letter to Gordon Bottomley, 6:xi:15, from Steep.-

I am now at home for a weekend gardening, lighting a fire in my study up on the hill.....I can't write. Once when I had a bad knee I got 20 lines written and felt just as I used to, which is more than I dare do as a rule. It is curious how the mind steadily refuses to hanker after what it knows is absolutely forbidden for (it believes) a comparatively short time..... (Letters, p. 256)

- f.15. 15&16:x:15 High Beech October (Ink 15; pencil 64; Ledger 32.)
- f.16. 18-19:xi:15 Harehall Camp Gidea Park (Ink 16; pencil 76; Ledger 33.)  
 There's nothing like the sun as the year dies,  
 ("There's Nothing Like The Sun")
- f.17. 26:xi:15 Going home from Harehall Camp (Ink 17; pencil 66; Ledger 34.)  
 The last light has gone out of the world, except ("Liberty")
- f.18. xi:15 Harehall. The day I was in as hut-orderly while  
the rest went to South Weald.  
 (Ink 18; pencil 99; Ledger 35.)

A Thrush ("The Thrush")

(~~four sheets missing~~)

- f.19. 26:xii:15 Steep (Ink 19; pencil 168; Ledger 40.)  
 This is no case of petty right or wrong  
 ("This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong")
- f.20. 7:i:16 Coming home from Harehall Rain (Ink 20; pencil 73; Ledger 41.)
- f.21. 15:i:16 Harehall Song (Ink 21; pencil 45; Ledger 42.)  
 As the clouds that are so light  
 ("As the Clouds that are so Light")
- f.22. 22:i:16 Coming home from Hare Hall (1) Roads (Ink 22; pencil 165; Ledger 43.)
- f.23 4,5,6,7,8&9:ii:16 London The Ash Grove (Ink 23; pencil 96; Ledger 44.)

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(1) The alternative versions 'Hare Hall' and 'Harehall' have been retained as they stand in the manuscript.

f.24. London 7 & 8 February Afternoon

(Ink 24; pencil 102; Ledger 45.)

( The cataloguer for the Bodleian Library has emended the holograph 24 to 24a, to enable him to list the following half sheet 24b ult. Half a sheet has been cut out, following f.24.)

f.25. London Feb 8

(Ink 25; pencil -; Ledger 47.)

I may come near loving you ("P.H.T.")

f.26. London Feb 9

(Ink 26; pencil 157; Ledger 48.)

These things that poets said ("These Things That Poets Said")

f.27. 11:ii:16 Going home on sick leave

(Ink 27; pencil -; Ledger 49.)

No one so much as you ("No One So Much As You")

f.28. 14:ii:16 Steep

(Ink 28; pencil 116; Ledger 50.)

She is most fair ("The Unknown")

f.29. 4:iii:16 Hare Hall Camp Celandine

(Ink-now added by cataloguer- 29; pencil 95; Ledger 51.)

f.30-1 7 & 10:iii:16 Hare Hall Camp 'Home'

(Ink 30,31; pencil 74; Ledger 52,53)

(-----three pages missing-----)

f.32. 10:iii:16 Going home

(Ink 32; pencil 13; Ledger 57.)

Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed ("Thaw")

f.33. 6:iv:16 At Little Warley & Hare Hall

(Ink 33; Ledger 58. The number 19 has been added in ink, not in pencil.)

If I should ever by chance grow rich

("If I Should Ever by Chance")

f.34. 7:iv:16 Hare Hall

(Ink 34; pencil 21; Ledger 59.)

If I were to own this countryside ("If I were to Own")

- f.35. 8:iv:16 Harehall (Ink 35; pencil 20; Ledger 60.)  
 What shall I give my daughter the younger  
 ("What Shall I Give?")
- f.36. 9:iv:16 Harehall (Ink 36; pencil 23; Ledger 61.)  
 An you, Helen, what should I give you?  
 ("And You, Helen")
- f.37. 5:v:16 Going home from Harehall (Ink 37; pencil 92; Ledger 62.)  
 I never saw that land before  
 ("I Never Saw that Land Before")
- f.38. 30:iv:16 Hare-Hall (Ink 38; pencil -; Ledger 63.)  
 Dull-thoughted, walking among the nunneries  
 ("The Wind's Song")
- f.39. 30:iv:16 Hare Hall (Ink 39; pencil 16; Ledger -.)  
 Like the touch of rain she was  
 ("Like the Touch of Rain")
- f.40. 1:v:16 Hare Hall (Ink 40; pencil 28; Ledger 64.)  
 When we 2 walked in Lent  
 ("When We Two Walked")
- f.41. 1:v:16 Hare Hall (Ink 41; pencil 56; Ledger 65.)  
 Tall nettles cover up, as they have done  
 ("Tall Nettles")  
 (also on f.41, without heading, or pencilled number)  
 By the ford at the town's edge ("The Watchers")
- f.42. 11,12,13:v:16 Harehall (Ink 42; pencil 34; Ledger 66.)  
 It rains, & nothing stirs within the fence  
 ("It Rains")

f.43. 7&8:v:16 (Ink 43; pencil 33; Ledger 67.)

The cherry tree leans over & is shedding  
("The Cherry Trees")

(f.43v. quotation from The White Devil in Thomas' writing;

I. The White Devil.

Monticelso "...Cold Russian winters that appear so barren  
As if that Nature had forgot the Spring.")

f.44. 13&14:v:16 Hare Hall & train (Ink 44; pencil 46; Ledger 68.)

Some eyes condemn the world they gaze upon  
("Some Eyes Condemn")

f.45. 22:v:16 Hare Hall (Ink 45,46; pencil 62; Ledger 69,70)

f.46. The sun used to shine while we 2 walked  
("The Sun Used to Shine")

(-----one sheet missing-----)

f.47. 25&26:v:16 Hare Hall (Ink 47; pencil 164; Ledger 72.)

No one cares less than I ("No One Cares Less than I")

f.48. 27:v:16 Hare Hall (Ink 48, 49; pencil 11; Ledger 73,74.)

As the team's head brass flashed out on the turn  
("As the Team's Head-Brass")

f.50. 3:vi:16 Going home (Ink 50; pencil 26; Ledger 75.)

After you speak ("After You Speak")

f.51. 8,9,10,11:vi:16 Hare Hall (Ink 51; pencil 32; Ledger 76)

Early one morning in May I set out  
("Early One Morning")

f.52. 4,5:vi:16 Hare Hall (Ink 52; pencil 44; Ledger 77.)

Bright clouds of may ("Bright Clouds")

f.53. 21:vi:16 Hare Hall (Ink 53; pencil 55; Ledger 78.)

It was upon a July evening ("It Was Upon")

- f.54. 22:vi:16 Hare Hall (Ink 54; pencil 51 31; Ledger 79.)  
 Women he liked, did shovel bearded Bob,  
 ("Women He Liked")
- f.55. 23:vi:16 Hare Hall (Ink 55; pencil 162; Ledger 80.)  
 There was a time when this poor frame was whole  
 ("There Was a Time")  
 (-----twenty-one sheets missing-----)
- f.56. 28:vi:16 Hare Hall (Ink 56; pencil 54; Ledger 102.)  
 The green roads that end in the forest  
 ("The Green Roads")
- f.57. 3&4:vii Selsfield (with Helen) (Ink 57,58; pencil 70;  
 f.58 Ledger 103,104)  
 There was a weasel lived in the sun  
 ("The Gallows")  
 (f.58v. fragment of writing, dating from 1817, on freedom of speech)
- f.59. 1&10:vii:16 (Ink 59; pencil 94; Ledger 105.)  
 Dark in the forest & deep, & overhead  
 ("The Dark Forest")
- f.60. 15:vii going home to Steep (Ink 60; pencil 77; Ledger 106.)  
 When he should laugh the wise man knows full well;  
 ("When He Should Laugh")
- f.61. 10:viii:16 Hospital Hare Hall (Ink 61; pencil 59; Ledger 107.)  
 How at once should I know,  
 ("How at Once")

- f.62. 3:ix:16 Handel St. (Ink 62; pencil 60; Ledger 108.)  
Gone, gone again, ("Gone, Gone Again")
- f.63. 10:ix:16 Handel St. (Ink 63; pencil 150; Ledger 109.)  
That girl's clear eyes utterly concealed all  
("That Girl's Clear Eyes" - Last Poems.  
Subsequent editions have added, in  
parenthesis, (Handel Street). )
- f.64. 15:ix:16 Going home to Steep (Ink 64; pencil 113; Ledger 110.)  
What will they do when I am gone? It is plain  
("What Will They Do?")  
  
(-----autograph poem has been torn out here-----)
- f.65. September 26-7-8? Trowbridge Barracks (Ink 65; pencil 161; Ledger 112.)  
~~October~~  
  
~~Arise,--arise~~  
~~While yet the earth new born~~  
Rise up, rise up  
("The Trumpet")
- f.66. October Trowbridge (Ink 66; pencil 151; ledger 113.)  
He rolls in the orchard; he is stained with moss  
("The Child in the Orchard")
- f.67. November Lights Out Trowbridge (Ink 67; pencil 81; Ledger 114.)
- f.68. November Trowbridge (Ink 68; pencil 65; Ledger 115.)  
The long small room that showed ~~the-dieten~~  
willows in the west  
("The Long Small Room")
- f.69. Nov. 23 travelling back from Gordon Bottomley's (Silverdale)  
(Ink 69; pencil 69; Ledger 116.)  
  
It stands alone  
("The Sheiling")



- f.70. (This is a loose leaf, labelled f.70. There is no heading, but a note has been added in Eleanor Farjeon's writing - sent from ? Codford.  
For dating and comment see p. 259 below.)

Some day, I think, there will be people enough  
("The Lane")

- f.71. 24:xii:16 High Beech (Ink 71; pencil -; Ledger 117.)

Out in the dark over the snow  
("Out in the Dark")

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In the interests of clarity, the above descriptive foliation has standardised the order of date and heading, although retaining the alternative versions of Hare Hall. In the following exercise, note has been taken of the various forms of manuscript heading, the methods of dating, the size and shape of the handwriting and the colour of the ink so as to establish as far as possible how the poems were written up in batches, when Thomas was on leave. To avoid confusion of number, the groups of poems have been lettered.

- A. The writing of ff.1 and 2 corresponds to the entry on the flyleaf, made when Thomas began using the ledger for his poems. Also both folios have similar heading - Anecdote.  
f.1. 25:vi:15  
f.2. 26,28:vi:15
- B. Ff.3 and 4 bear the same date; the pen runs dry at the foot of f.3, and the ink is darker at the top of f.4. F.3 indicates his return to Steep.  
f.3. 5:vii:15  
f.4. 5:vii:15
- C. Ff.5,6,7 are close in date. The corrections to f.6 and the writing of f.7 are in similar ink.  
f.5,6,6,7,8:vii:15  
f.7. 7&8:vii:15
- D. From the method of dating, and the similarity of heading, it would appear that ff.8-11 were written up within a short space of time.  
f.8. 10:vii:15  
f.9. 11:vii:15  
f.10. 12:vii:15  
f.11. 13-14:vii (15)

- E. Thomas enlisted on 13 July 1915. The next three poems are each headed London. F.14 was dated after the corrected dates of ff.12 and 13.  
 f.12. 23 21:vii London  
 f.13. 24 22:vii London  
 f.14. 23:vii London
- F. The next poem was the only one entered in the book between July and November 1915.  
 f.15. October High Beech 15 & 16:x:15
- G. The ink and method of heading ff.16 & 17 are similar - and in view of the second heading it is clear that the two were copied up at home. (See p.269)  
 f.16. Harehall Camp. Gidea Park 18/19:xi:15  
 f.17. Going home from Harehall Camp. 26:xi:15
- H. The writing of f.18 and f.19 is similar. Moreover, from Thomas' inability to remember the precise date, one can deduce that it was written up some time after the first draft. (On p. 269 below it is argued that 29-30:xi:15 is a feasible date). The remembered location, reminding him of the date, is a feature of the Bodleian book.  
 f.18. A Thrush. Hare Hall xi:15 - the day I was in as hut-orderly while the rest went to South Weald.  
 f.19. Steep 26:xii:15
- I. f.20. Rain. Coming home from Hare Hall. 7:i:16
- J. From the headings of ff.20-22 one can establish the pattern of poems written at camp, or on the way home, later to be written up in the Bodleian book. Also the writing of ff.21 & 22 is similar. It is interesting to note the number of corrections which appear on f.22 in the course of writing up. (See photocopy, text and notes, pp.239-44 below.)  
 f.21. Song (Hare Hall 16 15:i:16)  
 f.22. Roads (Coming home from Hare Hall 22:i:16)
- K. The next five poems are of similar date, though dated in three different ways. The information given on f.27 would indicate that they were written up on his return to Steep, on sick leave. Notwithstanding differences in dating, the ink and writing seem to suggest this.
- KA. f.23 The Ash Grove London 4,5,6,7,8 & 9:ii:16
- KB. f.24. February Afternoon London Feb 7 & 8  
 f.25. London Feb 8  
 f.26. London Feb 9
- KC. f.27. Going home on sickleave 11:ii:16

- L. The faint, delicate writing and careful heading of the next poem seem to separate it from the previous section.  
f.28 Steep 14:ii:16
- M. The next three poems repeat the pattern of section J - poems drafted in camp are written up together with one written while returning to Steep.  
f.29. Celandine Hare Hall Camp 4:iii:16  
f.30. 'Home', Hare Hall Camp 7 & 10:iii:16  
f.31.  
f.32. Going Home 10:iii:16
- N. The next four poems - the poems for his family - are inaccurately dated in view of letters quoted by Eleanor Farjeon, op. cit., pp.193-4. The hurried writing is common to the four poems, as they appear here.  
f.33. 6:iv:16 (At Little Warley & Hare Hall)  
f.34. 7:iv:16 Hare Hall  
f.35. 8:iv:16 Hare Hall  
f.36. 9:iv:16 Hare Hall
- O. The next six poems - two on f.41 - were written up together in view of the muddled chronology. The most recent poem was written up first.  
f.37. 5:v:16 Going home from Harehall  
f.38. 30:iv:16 Hare Hall  
f.39. 30:iv:16 Hare Hall  
f.40. 1:v:16 Hare Hall  
f.41. 1:v:16 Hare Hall

- P. Confusion over dates, similar to that found in the previous section, characterises this section. The pattern of writing the poems up at home, on leave, is again repeated.
- f.42. 11,12,13:v:16 Hare Hall
  - f.43. 7 & 8:v:16
  - f.44. 13 & 14:v:16 Hare Hall & train
- Q. The next four poems repeat the established pattern.
- f.45. 22:v:16 Hare Hall
  - f.46.
  - f.47. 25 & 26:v:16 Hare Hall
  - f.48. 27:v:16 Hare Hall
  - f.49.
  - f.50. 3:vi:16 Going home
- R. Inverted dates appear again in this section.
- f.51. 8,9,10,11:vi:16 Hare Hall
  - f.52. 4,5:vi:16 Hare Hall
- S. Similar dating and heading and writing seem to group the next four poems together.
- f.53. 21:vi:16 Hare Hall
  - f.54. 22:vi:16 Hare Hall
  - f.55. 23:vi:16 Hare Hall
  - f.56. 28:vi:16 Hare Hall
- T. ff.57,58 could be separate from the two other poems in this section, but in view of the overlap in assigned date of composition, and the heading of f.60, it seems as likely that they were written up at a similar time.
- f.57. 3 & 4:vii Selsfield (with Helen)
  - f.58.
  - f.59. 1 & 10:vii:16
  - f.60. 15:vii Going home to Steep

- U. This poem, from heading and writing, seems separate.  
 f.61. 10:viii:16 Hospital, Hare Hall
- V. The writing in the next section starts off in heavy dark ink;  
 half way down f.63, the nib has been changed, the writing then  
 becomes thin and spidery.  
 f.62. 3:ix:16 Handel St.  
 f.63. 10:ix:16 Handel St.  
 f.64. Going home to Steep 15:ix:16

(An autograph poem has been torn out from between f.64 and f.65.)

The confused dating and often hurried writing of the remaining poems in the Bodleian manuscript book testify to the increased pressure towards the end of 1916. September had been spent as an Officer Cadet at St. John's Wood and the Royal Artillery School, Handel Street. October was spent at firing camp at Trowbridge, in Wiltshire. Gordon Bottomley was asked to supervise the proofs of Annual of New Poetry, which was to contain six poems to be found in the Bodleian manuscript book -

- f.3 "The Word"
- f.8 "The Brook"
- f.9 "Aspens"
- f.11 "For These"
- f.22 "Roads"
- f.28 "The Unknown"

In November, Thomas was commissioned and posted to Lydd in Kent. He visited Bottomley, Haines and Guthrie. He volunteered for overseas service. This hectic period from September to December 1916 produced ten poems to be found in the Bodleian book.



III

BODLEIAN

Don.e.10

COMMENTARY

Bodleian Don. e. 10 is a pocket book, about 4½" by 8", of 124 folios, supplied by the Civil Service Supply Association, serial number 152884. It was presented through the Friends of the Bodleian by Mrs. E. Thomas in March 1935.

The foliation is as follows:

ff.1,2,4,5 are blank;f.4 has been cut.  
f.3 has, in Edward Thomas' handwriting:

Edward Thomas

A Golden Book

"Deus, ecce, deus" - Virgil

London 26.iii.1901

ff.6-29 are paginated in red ink, 1-49. The folio originally numbered 43-44 is missing.

ff.6-31v. show that the book was used as a commonplace book.

ff.6-17v. and f.31v. were used by Edward Thomas.

ff.18-30v. are artistically embellished, showing work by Edward and Helen Thomas.

f.32 is blank.

ff.32v.-41v. contain general notes by Helen Thomas.

ff.42-118 are blank.

ff.118v-119 and ff.120-124 have been used as a diary by Helen Thomas.

The contents illustrate a wide literary taste, including items echoed in the prose and poetry. Moreover, the general notes on philosophy and natural phenomena are similar to those found in his early work. These themes are echoed in his poetry. Helen Thomas' diary amplifies the material found in As It Was, World Without End.

The folios 6-31v. contain work by a wide variety of authors. Virgil, Pliny, Lucan, Plautus, Catullus, Pergius, Sophocles, Heraclitus, Mariannus Scholasticus and Carmina Medii Aevi represent the classics. Quotations are in the original. Goethe, Rostand, Anatole France, Maeterlinck are also found, quoted in the original. Chaucer, Sydney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Browne, Sir William Temple, Burton, Thomas Fuller, Sir Walter Raleigh, Marston, George Herbert, Cory, (Lamb) Essays of Elia, Shelley, Keats, Scott, R.L. Stevenson, W.B. Yeats, Pater, Chesterton, Nancy Mitford, and Stephen Phillips are represented.

This passage from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy is emphasised, written in red ink:



Erasmus vindicates fools from this sort of melancholy catalogue, because they have most part moist brains and light hearts, they are free from ambition, envy, shame and fear, they are neither troubled in conscience, nor macerated with cares, to which our whole life is most subject.

Similarly emphasised is this, from Temple's Of Health and Long Life:

When I was young, and in some idle company, it was proposed that everyone should tell what their wishes would be, if they were sure to be granted: .....mine were health, peace and fair weather; which, though out of the way among young men yet might pass well enough among old: they are all of a strain; for health in the body is like peace in the state, and serenity in the air: the sun in our climate at least, has something so reviving that a fair day is a kind of sensual pleasure and of all others the most innocent.

These passages are reflected in poems such as "Ambition", "There Was A Time", "Health". More generally revealing of Thomas' philosophy are passages such as this, from Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici:

There is therefore a secret glome, or bottome of our days: 'twas His wisdom to determine them, but his perpetual and waking providence that fulfils and accomplisheth them - there is therefore some other band that twines the thread of life than that of Nature: our ends are as obscure as our beginnings: the line of our days is drawn by night, and the various effects therein by a pencil that is invisible.

The curiously ambivalent attitude to the self-sufficiency of Nature is found in "The Glory". "Ecclesiastes" by G.K. Chesterton is similarly interesting in its comment on relative significance:

There is one sin: to call a green leaf grey,  
Whereat the sun in heaven shuddereth.  
There is one blasphemy: for death to pray  
For God alone knoweth the praise of death.  
There is one creed; 'neath no world terror's wing  
Apples forget to grow on apple trees.  
There is one thing needful - everything -  
The rest is vanity of vanities.

"As The Team's Head-Brass" reflects this puzzle:

If we could see all, all might seem good.

"Lights Out" and "Out in the Dark" are foreshadowed in W.B. Yeats'

"Into the Twilight":

And love is less kind than the grey twilight  
And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn.

The Dedication, from "The Shadowy Waters" by Yeats, similarly calls to mind certain stresses of Thomas' own poetry - verbal echoes are found in "Haymaking", thematic echoes abound:

How shall I name you, immortal wild proud shadows?  
I only know that all we know comes from you,  
And that you come from Eden on flying feet.  
Is Eden far away, or do you hide  
From human thought, as hares and mice and coneys  
That run before the reaping hook, and lie  
In the last ridge of the barley? Do our woods  
And winds and ponds cover more quiet woods,  
More shining winds, more star glimmering ponds?

The mystery of Time and Nature in relation to man's perception is constantly explored in Thomas' poetry (see Critical Introduction pp.33-38).

The notes which follow supply an interesting biographical context for this hitherto unmentioned evidence of Thomas' literary taste at this period. The notes are in two groups. Between f.32v. and f.41v. there are intimate glimpses of Helen Thomas' daily life:

f.32v-f.33 September 28th Wednesday (1903) The hope which is to keep me going is that after say six months of life in town with a day at home here and there, he will not only have become more established in his work, but that the quiet, solitude etc. will have cured the nervousness that makes his work at home impossible.

f.34v.-f.35 (this refers to Mervyn and Bronwen):

Especially did Mervyn and I enjoy his lesson. He got on splendidly and got quite excited over the new words, and we made long stories about the funny, one would think uninteresting little woodcuts at the top of the pages. He wanted to go on when I thought he had done enough. Dear old boy, I want you always to be good friends with me. It will be fine to be chums with my own boy.....Baby was not asleep, but was busy arranging her animals on the pillow by her side.

It is interesting to find primary sources illustrating, with a clarity not always evident in As It Was, World Without End, the pattern of the Thomas' family's existence. The philosophical content of this later work is foreshadowed by this statement on f.38, headed In Tune With The Infinite:

Like attracts like. Happy hopeful thoughts attract a like surrounding. Thoughts affect others. The physical is affected by thought. Fear and depression bring on disease of the body. Fear of anything attracts the condition one fears. Fearing (an) ailment attracts it. Health of mind and body (are) contagious as well as disease. We are part of the creative spirit from which everything comes.

Of more particular relevance to Edward Thomas' work are the Out of Doors Notes, in Helen Thomas' writing, between f.40 and f.4lv. They show the awareness of everything as needful; they correspond to notes incorporated in The Woodland Life, and particular details are later found in the poems.

- f.40      Snow after mild weather      Honeysuckles first leaves  
 Feb.3rd. Hazel catkins in full bloom  
 Feb.4th. Numbers of primroses on bank facing East. Daisies by the roadside and dogs mercury just beginning to bloom. Willows, catkins just out all soft and silvery. Bitter north winds. The carter is bringing in freshly cut faggots from the copse.  
 Feb.12th. Skylark singing gloriously. A bee flew past me buzzing in the sunshine.  
 Feb.14th. A very sleepy bee on scullery window.  
 Feb.16th. Noticed wild periwinkle on bank.
- f.40v.  
 Feb.27th. Heard yellow hammer sing for the first time this year  
 Mar.3rd. Chaffinch singing a good song near the house.  
 Mar.6th. Found the first celandine and gathered many primroses. Saw many coltsfoot also. No violets except blue ones in the garden.  
 Mar.7th. Found the first cuckoo flower by the stream in the big meadow. 'Bread & Cheese' out all green & fresh on the hawthorn trees. On the farm the carter is ploughing the mangold field, the day labourers are loosening the earth about the roots of the hops to let in the lovely sunshine. We sit without fires for the sky is cloudless and the breeze is very gentle coming from the west. The gorse everywhere is in full bloom covering the bushes with blossom.  
 f.41  
 Mar.8th A wet windy day. Noticed nothing. But in the evening a white owl flew about in the place. We watched it some time. On the farm there (sic) are bringing in the thick wood to store for the charcoal burners.  
 Mar.9th. (No entry)  
 Mar.11th. Found the first white violets  
 Mar.12th. Snow and north winds  
 Mar.17th. The first wood anemone and bright red leaves of herb Robin (?) just above the ground. A tortoiseshell butterfly.  
 Apr.3rd. close round buds of king cups  
 Apr.7th. king cups in flower: hazel leaves  
 Apr.9th. horse chestnut leaf buds bursting.  
 Apr.10th. First bluebell, buttercups and stitchwort.  
 Harrowing meadow grass and picking up sticks stones etc. from the meadow.

Many of these items occur in the poems, notably the faggots in "Fifty Faggots", the wood and the charcoal burner in "Up in the Wind" and "The Penny Whistle", and the periwinkle in "A Tale".

At the back of the book, from f.124 to f.120 are notes of February 1903, including news of Edward Thomas' commission to write a book on Oxford for £100 (f.121 - Monday 16th February). The final entry occurs on f.119 and f.118~~w~~ (f.119~~v~~. is blank). This is headed At Ivy Cottage  
Jan 12 1904:

Edwy and I set out over the wet fields, but it was not raining and it was good to be out, for the air was soft and sweet and more than all Edwy was there! We did not talk of any one thing particularly.....Anyhow, whatever we did or said does not matter; I could have danced along at his side like a child, so happy I was, and he was happy too. After tea, Edwy played with the children who love a romp with him and then I went to the station and in the darkness our hands met and tho he did not see me, I stood to see the train move away. So now he is gone again and now after soothing Bronwen who I suppose got over excited, for she has been screaming violently, and singing to Merfyn while I undressed him, I am tired and lonely, but still that meeting of our hands in the dark comforts me. I shall read a little and then go to bed. I will just write a teeny note to Edwy, he will be looking for it - and bid him Goodnight.

This summary of the contents of Don. e. 10 indicates that there is much of interest. There is here primary evidence of literary taste, philosophical preoccupations, interests and the close interaction of their personalities, all later reflected in the poetry. It is also interesting to find contemporary and hence unsentimentalised recording of material later found in Helen Thomas' biography of their life together, written as a therapeutic exercise after Edward Thomas' death.

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(1) Additional information has been added - hence the revised pagination.

IV.

EARLY EDITIONS

COMMENTARY

R.P. Eckert has comprehensively listed these in his Bibliography of 1937, but inaccurately states, concerning Poems 1917, that there were no textual alterations. The path from the text found in the B.M. and in the Bodleian to the now generally "accepted" (even if wrongly so) text of the Collected Poems is one strewn with minor discrepancies of spelling, number, tense, punctuation, and sometimes even whole verses.

From the beginning of 1915 onwards, Thomas sent out typescripts of his poems to magazines, under the pseudonym of Eastaway. The first inkling of this is in a letter from Steep of 9:ii:15:

I haven't yet made up my mind though to publish any of the verses except anonymously and don't know how to contrive that for periodicals. (1)

They discuss pseudonyms, first Phillips, then Marendaz, and finally Eastaway. Eleanor Farjeon sent the typescripts to Blackwood's Magazine saying that they were the work of a friend. Poems, rejections or acceptances were to be sent to her at 30 Fellows Road. By March 1915, Blackwood's had rejected all the poems: The Times followed suit. Harold Munro rejected them and so did others.

Eventually in Autumn 1915 James Guthrie's Pear Tree Press, Flansham, Bognor, published Root and Branch (Number 4 of the Series)

Guthrie is going to print some things in his rummy magazine over an assumed name. It will be my first appearance as a bard. (2)

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(1) Farjeon, p.117  
 (2) Letters, p.256

Included were two poems by Edward Eastaway - "House and Man" and "Interval". "House and Man" (see pp.170-1 below) has four minor discrepancies and "Interval" (see pp.170-1 below) has an early version of the second stanza.

Also at this time, November 1915, two of Thomas' poems appeared in This England, published by OUP, edited by Thomas himself. (J.W. Haines said that the style was recognisably Thomas, although he did not know of the pseudonym which Thomas had adopted to save his poems from any bias attached to a well known name in literary circles.) The two poems, "Haymaking" and "The Manor Farm", both differ from the current version (see pp.223-5 & 154-5 below).

These appearances did not herald any general change and in January 1916, Thomas refused to entangle himself in that 'order of disappointments' by sending "This is no case of Petty Right or Wrong" to publishers. He was however hoping -

to have two things in Form (which Guthrie has now left) and perhaps in a booklet or sheet which Guthrie wants to publish. (1)

In March 1916 Eleanor Farjeon selected some 30 poems of his with a view to publication. In a letter to her of 15 March 1916 Thomas mentions sending 40 poems to Bottomley:

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(1) See Farjeon, p.181  
Six Poems was published by James Guthrie at the Pear Tree Press at Flansham, Bognor, Sussex. It was printed by hand, and the edition was limited to 100 numbered copies.

Some will soon be out in a booklet by Guthrie - 6 by E.E. I shall remain E.E. till I find if people like him at all. Out of your 30 I should think I retained 20. I brought in some you rejected.....I want to have the last word over them. (1)

Through the agencies of Farjeon and Bottomley many poems were hawked round publishers with no success. Thomas hid his feelings under a cloak of indifference:

If Marsh likes any of them well and good. But I should not be vastly interested in his adverse opinion. (2)

Throughout the early months of 1916 there are references to the proposed selection to be published by Constables (eventually An Annual of New Poetry - 1917) and the publication of "Lob" and "Words" in Form. Thomas commented to Bottomley:

the company in Form will be.....rum.....As long as they don't misprint me I shan't mind my company or care if it minds me. (3)

Form was due to be published before April 1916, but as it was delayed Thomas was in some doubt and wondered whether the two poems could be used by Bottomley for the Annual. Of the poems Bottomley proposed using,

one at least occurs in half a dozen that Guthrie is using. (4)

But Form was in type and the poems could not be used.

In March he complained of the delay over Form:

I haven't had a final proof I was promised. Of course, if it should be postponed indefinitely or dropped I would rescue "Lob" and "Words". (5)

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- (1) Farjeon, p.192
  - (2) Letters, p.254
  - (3) Letters, p.259
  - (4) Letters, p.260
  - (5) Letters, p.263



By April Bottomley had made a preliminary choice for the Annual. Thomas looked forward to 'proofs and print' (1) - yet on May 28th he wrote to Eleanor Farjeon:

Trevelyan threatens that the Annual with my verses in it may not appear. Constables are offering miserable tyrannical terms. (2)

Form finally appeared in July 1916. Thomas wrote to Bottomley on 30th July 1916:

I have looked at Form. It seems an ugly tasteless mess. (3)

There were only detail alterations in the presentation of "Words" but one spelling difference, ten punctuation differences and one line alteration are found in the version of "Lob" published in July 1916. By November 1917 these had been changed again to the current version (4).

Correspondence continued with Bottomley over the proposed Annual. Despite lack of time Thomas was clearly determined to have a say in the selection:

Is it too late for you to reconsider one of the pieces you included in your selection? "Wind & Mist" is perhaps a little too like "The New House" to be put with it in such a small number, & I thought you might take "Aspens" and "After Rain" in its place. I am sending them for you to look again. "Aspens" I have thought was decidedly one of the better pieces. (5)

Bottomley also had decided views and Thomas agreed to "Wind & Mist" but still asked for "After Rain", perhaps in place of "The Glory".

In August 1916 Thomas met John Freeman and Walter de la Mare and

a brother-in-law of his who may publish some Eastaway in a volume. (6)

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(1) Letters, p.264

(3) Letters, p.269

(5) Letters, pp.263-4

(2) Farjeon, p.197

(4) See text and notes, pp.197-206 below.

(6) Farjeon, p.208

Bottomley's long friendship, and meticulous response to the poems Thomas sent him, led to a request that Bottomley should correct the proofs if Thomas were not available. On 2 October 1916 Thomas wrote from Trowbridge:

So the Annual is beginning to be. I really believe I shall have to ask you to see the proofs. I will look at them but I can't be careful over them as I should wish. The question is whether you or I should see them first. Perhaps you should - if you would. Have you by chance a list of my pieces? Because there may be a volume published some time & I don't want to use any from the Annual, of course, before the year is up. (1)

By the end of October it seemed likely that Thomas would be in England until well into December, by which time he expected to know more about the proposed book of his verses. He refers to the correction of proofs for the Annual, and selection of material for the book to be published by Selwyn and Blount in a letter of December 1916:

I shall be glad if you will do as you suggest. I had no red ink so I have left my corrections in pencil in the hope that you had some.

From this we know that Thomas did in fact see the proofs to the Annual. He continued,

I am still at liberty, but spending it at present in preparing my book of verses for Selwyn and Blount - 64 pp., - but I find I can get a lot into 64 pp. (2)

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(1) Letters, p.271

In fact, none from the Annual were duplicated in Poems 1917, although four poems previously published were included.

See pp.142-5 below.

(2) Letters, p.275

A letter of 11 December 1916 provides further proof that Thomas did play a part in correcting proofs for the Annual. Bottomley's query is answered:

all your queries were sound. "Mabinogion" it should be - just the substantive used adjectivally. I sent the changes in to Constable and I hope they will make them. (1)

Thomas did not live to see the Annual which contained the largest body of his work yet published, but he did see the review in the Times Literary Supplement and commented on this, (see p.280 below).

This covers all the work published during Thomas' lifetime. During 1915 four poems appeared - two under his own control as editor, and two in a magazine printed by his friend, James Guthrie. It seems unlikely that these were printed without full proof-reading and approval.

1916 was busier as the letters and drafts testify. Four separate proposed publications figure in the correspondence, firstly the two poems to be published in Form, delayed beyond its proposed publication date of April until July 1916. Some concern for the proofs is expressed and in "Lob", at any rate, there are some seemingly careless errors of punctuation which indicate some lack of thoroughness. Preparations for An Annual of New Poetry were lengthy and attention has

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(1) Letters, p.276

been drawn to the concern Thomas felt for meticulous proof reading, and his own attempt at this in the prevailing conditions. Fifteen of the eighteen poems appear as they subsequently appeared in Last Poems with no interim version from the manuscript. 1.16 of "Wind and Mist" follows the latest manuscript alteration and was altered to its present form as found in Last Poems after Thomas' proof-checking. On the other hand, 1.5 of "The Word" (see p.221 below) has been altered in draft to its present version, as printed in Last Poems. The Annual prints the second variation. Thomas either missed this in checking the proofs, or altered the draft after the beginning of December. 1.2 of "A Private" follows the manuscript as in Six Poems. Last Poems changes 'frosty' for 'frozen' as subsequently printed.

Four poems previously included in Six Poems (the third publication venture of 1916) were included in the Annual - "A Private", "Beauty", "Aspens" and "Sedge-Warblers", the last three named having been altered to their current version in the interim. There was, in addition, the proposed selection to be published by Selwyn and Blount. We can conclude that the poems and editions mentioned above, concerning the publication of twelve poems in private editions or magazines, with a further fourteen (plus four previously published) published in Annual of New Poetry, (1917) were checked by Thomas as well as he was able.

A further 115 poems have been published since his death in April 1917. A selection was in progress, commissioned before Thomas' death by Selwyn and Blount.

"Will You Come"

and "As the Team's Head Brass"

from Poems 1917.

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(facing p. 131)

## WILL YOU COME ?

Will you come ?  
Will you come ?  
Will you ride  
So late  
At my side ?  
O, will you come ?

Will you come ?  
Will you come  
If the night  
Has a moon,  
Full and bright ?  
O, will you come ?

Would you come ?  
Would you come  
If the noon  
Gave light,  
Not the moon ?  
Beautiful, would you come ?

Would you have come ?  
Would you have come  
Without scorning,  
Had it been  
Still morning ?  
Beloved, would you have come ?

If you come  
Haste and come.  
Owls have cried ;  
It grows dark  
To ride.  
Beloved, beautiful, come.

## AS THE TEAM'S HEAD-BRASS

As the team's head-brass flashed out on the turn  
The lovers disappeared into the wood.  
I sat among the boughs of the fallen elm  
That strewed an angle of the fallow, and  
Watched the plough narrowing a yellow square  
Of charlock. Every time the horses turned  
Instead of treading me down, the ploughman leaned  
Upon the handles to say or ask a word,  
About the weather, next about the war.  
Scraping the share he faced towards the wood,  
And screwed along the furrow till the brass flashed  
Once more.

The blizzard felled the elm whose crest  
I sat in, by a woodpecker's round hole,  
The ploughman said. "When will they take it away  
"When the war's over." So the talk began—  
One minute and an interval of ten,  
A minute more and the same interval.  
"Have you been out?" "No." "And don't  
to, perhaps?"  
"If I could only come back again, I should.  
I could spare an arm. I shouldn't want to lose  
A leg. If I should lose my head, why, so,  
I should want nothing more. . . . Have many gone  
From here?" "Yes." "Many lost?" "Yes  
good few.

Only two teams work on the farm this year.  
One of my mates is dead. The second day  
In France they killed him. It was back in March,  
The very night of the blizzard, too. Now if  
He had stayed here we should have moved the tree.

Eleanor Farjeon tells us that, during November 1916,

he was making his final choice from poems as he wrote them, discarding others he did not like so well. (1)

This selection contained 64 poems, six of which had appeared before his death. 22 poems are to be found in the British Museum book, (pre May 24 1915), 36 are in the Bodleian (post June 25 1915). Two are in the Lockwood Memorial Library (pre December 24 1914), 4 have no known manuscript. 24 do not correspond with the manuscript:

1. "The Manor Farm", which had appeared in Thomas' anthology, This England (OUP 1915) reverted to the B.M. reading in 1.9 (p.154) (2)
2. "As the Team's Head-Brass" followed Thomas' own revisions, as given by letter to Farjeon 4:vi:15 (Farjeon, p.144) (p.249-50).
3. "Interval" has a rewritten second verse, compared to the version in Root & Branch (Nov. 1915) (p.170-72)
4. "And You, Helen" inserts a word perhaps unintentionally omitted from the Bodleian manuscript.
5. "Head & Bottle" departs from the manuscript, as does (p.208)
6. "Sowing", which omits one verse uncanceled in B.M., apart from one other alteration (p.188)
7. "The Cherry Trees" appears in the plural, contrary to the Bodleian manuscript (p.247-8)
8. "The Bridge" has a minor alteration unauthorised by the B.M. manuscript

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(1) Farjeon, p.219.

(2) Page nos. refer to the text given below.

9. "Lob" revised after the B.M. draft for publication in Form in July 1916, departs further from this manuscript (p.197 ff.)
10. "The Clouds that are so light" appears without the comparative 'as'; 1.5 also does not follow the Bodleian manuscript (p.159)
11. "Some Eyes Condemn" differs from the Bodleian manuscript
12. "May the Twenty Third" differs from the B.M. draft which refers to May the 20th.
13. "Melancholy" departs from the ms. (B.M.)
14. "Adlestrop" " " " " (B.M.) (pp.176-8)
15. "The Green Roads" " " " " (B.M.)
16. "The Mill-Pond" " " " " (B.M.) (p.182)
17. "It was Upon" " " " " (Bodleian)
18. "Tall Nettles" " " " " (Bodleian)
19. "Haymaking" has minor alterations from the version published in This England (OUP 1915), which itself did not fully correspond to the Bodleian manuscript (pp.223-5)
20. "October" does not follow the latest Bodleian alteration (see index)
21. "Rain" does not follow the Bodleian manuscript (pp.234-5)
22. "There's Nothing like the Sun" does not follow the Bodleian (p.232)
23. "An Old Song" does not follow the B.M. manuscript (pp.157-8)
24. "The Penny Whistle" does not follow the B.M. manuscript (p.166)

Of these 24 poems which do not correspond with the manuscript, 23 have been altered at an unknown date, not necessarily by Thomas. 1 poem does not follow the latest manuscript emendations (see also "The Word", p.221). Alterations from the earlier B.M. book are



perhaps more readily acceptable, but the Bodleian presents a late fair copy and there are departures from this. Four of the six poems previously published were altered prior to being printed in Poems 1917. "The Manor Farm" is particularly interesting in that it reverts to the manuscript in 1.9.

Soon after the death of Thomas, Bottomley wrote to Eleanor Farjeon. She replied:

You know since he began to write poetry I have typed it nearly all for him, and with John Freeman have revised the proofs of this book. It was good of you to offer to help Helen with the proofs. There's much unpublished work still that may presently be collected. (1)

Farjeon and Freeman were apparently responsible for the proofs of Poems 1917, with their vagaries. Bottomley it would seem, despite his work with the Annual was not involved. Whoever was responsible for the publication of one poem (not included in Poems 1917) - "The Lofty Sky" in Root and Branch, (December 1917) allowed one interesting discrepancy in 1.6, where, contrary to the manuscript, which reads 'rook', the version printed here read 'rock' (see p.180 below). This poem's appearance here (under the name of Eastaway) is also interesting in the light it sheds on the proofs of Last Poems.

At the beginning of 1918, then, the situation was this: 26 poems had appeared, with his approval, during Thomas' lifetime; a further 58 had appeared in Poems 1917, 22 altered since the manuscript, one reverting to the manuscript, and one ignoring the latest variant. In

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(1) Letters, p.285

addition, one poem had appeared in Root and Branch, possibly submitted before Thomas' death, with an interesting discrepancy. Although departures from the B.M. book are more acceptable, some of these departures seem to indicate a lack of thoroughness in the proof-reading - despite the mitigating difficulties of having no author to have the final word. Fifty-six poems remained to be published, apart from those previously only published in magazines, an anthology and a private edition.

Two further poems were published in Root and Branch in June 1918. Both "The Unknown Bird" and "Home" (GP p.128) follow the fair copies found on ff.18/19 and 60 respectively of the B.M. book.

Last Poems appeared on 28 December 1918, and contained 71 poems. 48 appeared for the first time (leaving a further 6 poems unpublished). The remainder had appeared in the various publications noted above. 41 of the 71 poems here published depart from the manuscript in some way:

1. "I Never Saw that Land Before" - minor emendation l.2 from Bodleian
2. "Celandine" minor emendation l.19 from Bodleian.
3. Ms. title "A Thrush" changed to "The Thrush" (see p.276)
4. "I Built Myself a House of Glass" written without stanza break between ll.4 and 5, as in Bodleian.
5. "February Afternoon" l.11 minor emendation from Bodleian
6. "Digging" (see pp.228-231)

7. "Under the Woods": ll.17 and 21 differ from Bodleian
8. "To-Night" - opening revised since B.M. draft (see p.212)
9. "A Cat" ll.6 and 11 differ from B.M. (see p.211)
10. "Song" - omits opening stanza which is uncanceled on B.M. f.65  
(see p.210)
11. "She Dotes" - two minor alterations from B.M. (see p.209)
12. "For These" l.14 altered since Bodleian
13. "The New House" l.13 alters punctuation of ANP.
14. "Over the Hills" altered since B.M. draft (see p.179)
15. "The Hollow Wood" stanzaic breaks differ from B.M. (see pp.160-4)
16. "Wind and Mist" l.16 does not follow the latest variant, printed in ANP.
17. "The Lofty Sky" - over enthusiastic proof correction without regard to meaning in l.32 (see photocopy and typescript, with explanatory notes p.180)
18. "Digging" (B.M. f.56-CP p.136) minor alterations in second stanza (see p.207)
19. "But These Things Also" - title provides precedent for other first line titles (see notes on Titles p.276)
20. "The Barn" l.11, l.21 altered from B.M. (see p.185)
21. "The Barn and the Down" - minor alterations from B.M. (see pp.186-7)
22. "Good-Night" - minor alterations from B.M.
23. "The Wasp Trap" " " from B.M.
24. "July" l.8 rewritten since B.M.
25. "A Tale" - for some inexplicable reason the editors of Last Poems printed the earlier, and cancelled draft found on B.M. f.46. The revised draft has never been printed (see p.196)
26. "Lovers"-minor alterations since B.M. - sanctioned by ANP
27. "That Girl's Clear Eyes" - minor alteration from Bodleian.
28. "First Known when Lost" - two alterations, including change of tense since B.M.
29. "The Word" - follows ANP in not following latest variant found in Bodleian f.3 (see p.221)

30. "Home" - l.8 altered since B.M.
31. "Ambition" - tense change l.18 B.M.
32. "Roads" - Bodleian reads Steep; all editions, following Last Poems (and ANP) read Sleep (see photocopy, typescript and detailed notes pp. 239-44)
33. "The Chalk Pit" - several alterations, and an additional 12 lines not found in B.M. (see pp.213-15)
34. "Health" two alterations since B.M.
35. "Beauty" follows ANP in l.7 contrary to B.M. and SP
36. "The New Year" several alterations from B.M. - addition of last line, different spelling l.11 (see p.165)
37. "The Brook" ll. 10, 11, 14 depart from Bodleian - follows ANP.
38. "The Gypsy" several alterations from B.M. (see p.183)
39. "Man and Dog" - minor alterations since B.M.
40. "A Private" l.2 'frosty' in B.M. and in ANP is changed to 'frozen' (see pp.173-4)
41. "Out in the Dark" - see photocopies of version in Bodleian and in Last Poems, which departs from this manuscript (pp.260-2)

Most of the alterations made are justifiable, some seem unnecessary. There is no definite ruling that one can deduce - archaisms are replaced by modern expressions in one poem, and vice versa elsewhere. Certainly there is no reason for the printing of the cancelled version of "A Tale", the punctuation correction in "The Lofty Sky" which obscures the meaning, or the alteration to "Out in the Dark". The alteration in "A Private" seems unnecessary fussiness, going against not only the manuscript but ANP. Titles - (see p.276 ff.) - are also a vexed point - neither poem entitled "Digging" has this title in manuscript - the later poem (Bodleian) is completely different in subject matter. The opening stanza of "Song" (B.M. f.65) is omitted, although uncanceled

in manuscript. Mistakes found in An Annual of New Poetry - "The Word" - are perpetuated, while other readings, following the manuscript - "A Private" - are changed. "Roads" follows ANP contrary to Thomas' own explicit instructions by letter to Eleanor Farjeon when she typed out the poem. (1)

It is difficult to reach any firm conclusions as to what considerations were taken into account by the editors. There seems to be no overriding consistency - some errors or clumsy expressions found in the earlier manuscript are changed, but as many errors, if such they are, as were changed, are made anew by the editors. One's overall impression of Last Poems is that, despite its known delay, insufficient care was taken over its preparation. This is forgivable, but the unfortunate fact is that such errors as that over "A Tale" were perpetuated when Collected Poems appeared in 1920, taking the earlier edition as its authority.

There remained six poems unpublished; one - the first to be written, dated 3 December 1914 in the Lockwood Memorial Library, finally appeared in a pamphlet entitled In Memoriam, Edward Thomas published in July 1919. It was there entitled "Up in the Winds", and appeared with one minor difference from the version subsequently printed in Collected Poems.

Ten poems had appeared in an anthology, published by Selwyn and Blount, titled A Miscellany of New Verse. All had appeared in Last Poems, which was published at the same time. The last two stanzas of "Home", reprinted from the New Statesman, and entitled "Evening", appeared in The Living Age published in April 1919. This curious exercise seems more typical of 1915, than 1919, when Thomas'

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(1) See text and notes pp. 239-44 below.

poems were selling sufficiently well for Selwyn and Blount to issue a second edition of his Poems 1917.

The two volumes issued by Selwyn and Blount were collected in 1920. No effort was made to order them, date them or in fact to do anything other than to collect the contents within one volume. The one poem published since Last Poems, "Up in the Wind", appeared, sandwiched between the contents of the two previous editions, and entitled "Up the Wind". Its title was finally corrected to "Up in the Wind" in the de luxe edition of 1920. Walter de la Mare's "Foreword" appeared in the 1920 Collected Poems, as did a signed photograph of the poet, taken in 1911 by F.H. Evans.

This format found in the Collected Poems of 1920 persists to the present Collected Poems issued by Faber and Faber. Certain differences are to be found in the typographical layout - "I Built Myself a House of Glass" now appears as two stanzas, "The Clouds That Are So Light", having undergone various whimsical alterations is now "As the clouds..." (1). Half-hearted proof-reading seems to have continued in the preparation of Collected Poems (1920). "Out in the Dark" in l.7 departs from the correct version taken from the manuscript and produced in Last Poems, but in l.11 perpetuates the error of Last Poems. The second point has been cleared up since 1920, but the error introduced in l.7 continues. "As the Team's Head Brass" correctly follows Poems 1917 in ll.4-5. Collected Poems (1928) reverts to the Bodleian, corrected in a letter to Eleanor Farjeon of 4:vi:15 (2).

Five other poems have appeared since 1920. Ingpen and Grant issued a new edition in 1928, which included four poems from the Bodleian still unpublished. (Two of these, "The Lane" and "The Watchers"

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(1) See pp. 236-8  
 (2) Farjeon, p.144

had appeared the previous year in a limited edition entitled Two Poems.)  
 Also included were "No One So Much As You" and  
 "The Wind's Song". All four follow the manuscript exactly. This  
 edition of 1928 follows the pagination of 1920, and, in view of some  
 of the alterations made in this edition, it is possible that the  
 Bodleian book was used as authority - although doubt must be admitted  
 for there is no pagination in this book for the four poems first  
 included in 1928. Nevertheless, in several instances, Collected Poems  
 (1928) reverts to the text found in the Bodleian book and ignored in  
 earlier editions, for instance, f.3 "The Word" (1) and f.5, 6  
 "Haymaking" (2) - interesting as a different version had appeared in  
 1915 in Thomas' anthology This England. F.15 "October" is reproduced  
 in Collected Poems (1928). This is the only instance of this later  
 emendation being extant in print (3). Moreover, Collected Poems (1928)  
 restores the Bodleian reading of f.21 ("As the Clouds") subsequently  
 and currently garbled in all Faber editions (4). Collected Poems (1928)  
 follows the Bodleian f.43 in the last line despite ignoring its  
 singular version in ll. 1 and 3. (5). Collected Poems (1928) half  
 corrects the version of "As The Team's Head Brass" found in the  
 edition of 1920 (6). Collected Poems (1928) departs from the manuscript  
 version of f.71 found in Collected Poems (1920) (7).

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- (1) See p.221  
 (2) See pp.223-5  
 (3) See pp.8, 237, 250  
 (4) See pp.236-8  
 (5) See pp.247-8  
 (6) See pp.249-50  
 (7) See pp.260-2

One can conclude that Collected Poems (1928), although closer in places to the Bodleian, is not consistent in its reproduction of that manuscript. Either other authorities were used or insufficient thoroughness. These partial revisions, especially of poems commissioned for publication after Thomas' death (poems not published either before his death, or in Poems 1917) arise from the absence of any authoritative revision by the poet himself. Where there are alternative versions, as in f.15 of the Bodleian, the edition of 1928 was clearly correct to follow the latest emendation. Similarly it restored other poems which were altered after the Bodleian (see notes on f.71 pp.260-2) but this revision in 1928 was not complete and consistent, and no attempt was made to indicate the difficulties in establishing the text presented in that edition. Subsequent editions have perpetuated errors arising from the early editions. Many of these instances, noted in this section, are considered in relation to the selection of poems reproduced in their manuscript version below.



V

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EARLY

EDITIONS & COMMEMORATIVE EDITIONS

1.

THIS ENGLAND / AN ANTHOLOGY / FROM HER WRITERS / COMPILED BY /  
EDWARD THOMAS / O.U.P. / H. MILFORD / LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO MELBOURNE /  
AND BOMBAY / 1915.

Preface

....I wished to make a book as full of English character  
and country as an egg is of meat. If I have reminded  
others, as I did myself continually, of some of the  
echoes called up by the name of England, I am satisfied.

Contents [ ]: This England; Merry England; Her Sweet Three Corners;  
London; Abroad & Home Again; Great Ones; The Vital Commoners.

Eastaway appears under "Her Sweet Three Corners" - last two  
in this section, thus :

Haymaking : The Manor Farm .....E. Eastaway.

2.

ROOT AND BRANCH, a seasonal of the Arts.

Nos. 1-4 Spring 1912 - November 1915.

published by James Guthrie, Pear Tree Press.

No. 4 pp. 59-60	House and Man	}	by
	Interval		

No. 5 Vol. II, No. 1. Sept. 1917. Morland Press, London.

No. 6 Vol. II, No. 2. Dec. 1917 " " "

- p.32 The Lofty Sky by E. Eastaway

- No. 7. Vol. II, No. 3. March 1918. Morland Press, London.  
 No. 8. Vol. II, No. 4. June 1918 " " "  
 - p.67 The Unknown Bird } by  
           Home } E. Eastaway.  
 No. 9. Vol. III, No. 1. Aug-Sept. 1919. Pear Tree Press.  
 (No evidence to support R.P. Eckert's 12 nos.)

3.

FORM, / A Quarterly / of the Arts.  
 April / 1916 / No.1. / Vol. 1.  
 John Lane, London / John Lane Company, New York.  
 (publication delayed until July 1916, in fact)  
 conducted by the proprietors at 298.  
 Kennington Park Road, S.E.

(Under heading of) Literary Contributions

Lob. Poem by Edward Eastaway, p.33.

Words. Poem by Edward Eastaway, p.34.

(p.32. full page female nude, entitled Bacchae, by Austin O. Spare)  
 (other poems by Laurence Binyon, Laurence Houseman, W.B. Yeats,  
 de la Mare, Harold Massingham, T. Sturge Moore, J.C. Squire, &  
 W.H. Davies.)

FORM / A / QUARTERLY / JOURNAL / CONTAINING  
 Poetry, Sketches, Articles of Literary and Critical Interest, /  
 combined with Prints, Woodcuts, Lithographs, Calligraphs, /  
 Decorations and Initials.

EDITED BY / AUSTIN O. SPARE AND

FRANCIS MARSDEN

(No. 2 appeared April 1917, from 190, Ebury Street  
 whence appeared The Green Pasture Series.)

4.

SIX POEMS / BY / EDWARD EASTAWAY.

Printed by hand / by / James Guthrie / at /

The Pear Tree Press.

(contents)

Sedge-Warblers

This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong

Aspens

A Private

Cock Crow

Beauty

} (on same page)

Limited to 100 copies.

two issues - 1916-21, and 1922.

(second issue has engraving of the name Edward Thomas underneath

"This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong".)

5a.

AN ANNUAL OF NEW POETRY. 1917

CONSTABLE AND CO. LTD. (March 13th)

(prepared by Lascelles Abercrombie &amp; R.C. Trevelyan)

contributors:

G. Bottomley pp.3-19

W.H. Davies pp.19-27

John Drinkwater pp.27-29

E. Eastaway pp.37-63

R. Frost pp.63-75

W.W. Gibson pp.75-109

T. Sturge Moore pp.109-123

R.C. Trevelyan pp.123-147

(poems by E. Eastaway)

Old Man	Aspens
Snow	A Private
The Cuckoo	Sedge-Warblers
The New House	For These
Wind and Mist	Roads
The Unknown	The Source
The Word	Lovers
After Rain	Beauty
The Brook	Song

5b

POETRY (CHICAGO) Vol. IX (Feb 1917)  
pp. 247-50

Old Man, The Word, The Unknown

6

POEMS / BY / EDWARD THOMAS / "EDWARD EASTAWAY" /  
WITH A PORTRAIT / FROM A PHOTOGRAPH / BY DUNCAN  
WILLIAMS / LONDON / SELWYN & BLOUNT 1917 / TO /  
ROBERT FROST.

Two editions prepared.

- a) Poems 1917 - Edward Eastaway - in no substantial way different from version finally published - bibliographical trivia excepted. No textual alterations. This text given to Ingpen by Thomas before going to France - generally accepted that this edition in press when Thomas was killed.

(See R.P. Eckert, Bibliography 1937, p. 242)

Edward Thomas, a Biography  
and a Bibliography

- b) Poems 1917 - Edward Thomas, "Edward Eastaway".

Contents 64 poems. Following included which had already been published:

Haymaking, The Manor Farm (This England)  
Interval (Root and Branch)  
Lob, Words (Form)  
Cock-Crow (Six Poems)

525 copies for England: 525 for Holt of America

First edn. July 1917.

Second edn. October 1917, reprinted Nov. 1917

American edn. Jan. 1918.

Notice of Poems 1917 and Last Poems 1918,  
from Last Poems 1918.

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facing p. 145.

## "THAT GOLDHEIM

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[In Preparation.]

## LAST POEMS.

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("EDWARD EASTAWAY.")

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"He leaves us more than we deserved, something that will be treasured by posterity for ever. As his body fell its cloak melted off the soul and we caught a glimpse which confounded our poor recollections of the man, and the words of his still telling round our ears makes us aware that for him this dark casualty had a different meaning."—*Mr. T. STURGE MOORE in the English Review.*

7a

LAST POEMS / BY / EDWARD THOMAS /  
LONDON / SELWYN & BLOUNT / 12, YORK  
BUILDING, ADELPHI, W.C.2 / 1918.

(Poems 1917 & Last Poems) printed at The Chapel  
River Press, Kingston, Surrey)

Published 28 Dec. 1918 @ 4s.6d.

Contents 71 poems; 48 appeared for the first time.

Previously published:

1. House and Man (Root and Branch) Nov. 1915
2. Sedge-Warblers, This is no case, Aspens,  
A Private, Beauty. (Six Poems) 1916.
3. Old Man, The Unknown, The Word - (Poetry, Chicago) Feb. 1917.
4. Old Man, Snow, Cuckoo, The New House, Wind and Mist,  
The Unknown, The Word, After Rain, For These, Roads,  
The Source, Lovers, The Brook, Song, (and Aspens,  
A Private, Sedge-Warblers, Beauty) (Annual of New Poetry) 1917.
5. The Lofty Sky (Root and Branch) Dec. 1917.
6. The Unknown Bird, Home (Root and Branch) June 1918.

7b

Simultaneously published was A MISCELLANY OF NEW VERSE,  
by SELWYN & BLOUNT.

Included were the following 10 poems, all included in

Last Poems:

The Dark Forest, The Thrush, To-night, March the Third,  
The Hollow Wood, Good-Night, The Mountain Chapel,  
The Ash Grove, These Things That Poets Said, Out in the Dark.

8.

Last two stanzas of "Home", (published in Root and Branch, June 1918  
and in Last Poems) included in The New Statesman, and in The Living Age,  
19 April 1919, entitled "Evening".

9.

IN MEMORIAM : EDWARD THOMAS / BEING NUMBER TWO OF THE GREEN  
PASTURE SERIES.



20 pp.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE MORLAND PRESS LTD.,  
190 EBURY STREET, S.W.1. JULY 1919 2/- net.

Contents

Up in the Winds (sic) : E.T.  
Sonnets of April : Vivian Locke Ellis  
As I knew him : J.W. Haines  
Killed in Action : W.H. Davies  
In Memoriam E.T. : Julian Thomas

designed by James Guthrie.

10.

COLLECTED / POEMS / BY / EDWARD THOMAS / WITH  
A FOREWORD BY / WALTER DE LA MARE / LONDON /  
SELWYN AND BLOUNT LTD / 21 YORK BUILDINGS,  
ADELPHI, W.C.2. / 1920.

published @ 10s.6d.

Contents 136 poems - Poems 1917 - 64  
Last Poems (1918) - 71

(textually unchanged)

and "Up the Wind" (sic) Thomas' first poem, previously published  
in In Memoriam ET (July 1919)

(- correct title "Up in the Wind" referred to in letter to E. Garnett  
15 March 1915 - see p.149 below).

American edition October 1921.

11.

EDWARD THOMAS / TWO POEMS /  
LONDON / INGPEN & GRANT / 1927.

Contents

The Lane

The Watchers (one minor punctuation difference)

Printed at The Curwen Press, Plaistow.

Limited to 85 copies, 75 for sale.

11b.

SELECTED POEMS / OF EDWARD THOMAS /  
 WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY / EDWARD GARNETT /  
 THE GREGYNOG PRESS / MCMXXVII

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Printed by Robert Ashwin Maynard at the Gregynog Press / near  
 Newtown in Montgomeryshire, and completed on the / 24th day of  
 June, 1927 (pp.96).

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The edition is limited to 275 copies, of which this is no. 272 (B.M.).

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Garnett's introduction mentions his own attempts to help Thomas:

I took "Home" and "The Owl" (re-entitled "Those Others")  
 to The Nation in January 1917 and tried to impress on  
 the assistant that these poems were indeed considerable;  
 but they came back to me at the end of the month - 'Mr  
 Massingham much regrets that he cannot use the enclosed ms.'

and includes several extracts from Thomas' letters to him:

Steep, Petersfield. 11:iii:15.

These verses have just come back from Blackwood's. I  
 sent them but under an assumed name, and the poor man  
 Blackwood found them puzzling. Will you let me have  
 these back?

---

13:iii:15

Thank you for your letter and your criticism, which I  
 can mostly agree with, except that I think the line -

England, old already, was called Merry.

looks more eccentric than it is & sounds. I like that piece  
 best perhaps. But I don't think I could alter "Tears" to

make it marketable. I feel that the correction you want made is only essential if the whole point is in the British Grenadiers as might be expected in these times. I can't be sure about the jog trot. Perhaps you are right in finding it at the end of "November" where it gets a shade sententious.... I am now sending you the greater part of what I have done since I began, including the very first, which is the longest one, placed at the end, called "Up in the Wind".... You cannot imagine how eagerly I have run up this by way and how anxious I am to be sure it is not a cul-de-sac....

17:iii:15

I am glad to find you preferring certain things - like "Old Man", and "The Cuckoo" and "Goodnight" - and sorry to find you preferring them to certain others like "The Signpost"... Of course I must make mistakes and your preferences help me to see where they may lie, tho' I shall risk some of them again - e.g. what you find petty in incident. Dimness and lack of concreteness I shall certainly do my best against. I hate them too much in others to tolerate them in myself - when I see them.

---

Garnett comments that:

No poems reinforce one another more insidiously than Thomas'. Each of his poems in turn leads us deeper and deeper into the charmed atmosphere of their creator's inner life, & each in turn mirrors some fresh aspect of nature's character and prodigal loveliness ..... his peculiar power - that of catching in a delicate mesh of thought and emotion the sensation of nature's eternity.....

---

The following 67 poems are included, listed in this alphabetical order, thus:

Adlestrop, After You Speak, And You, Helen, An Old Song, Aspens,  
As the Team's Head Brass, Beauty, The Bridge, Bright Clouds,  
The Brook, The Clouds that are so light, The Combe, The Cuckoo,  
Digging, Early One Morning, Fifty Faggots, First Known When Lost,  
Gone Gone Again, Green Roads, Haymaking, Head and Bottle, Hollow  
Wood, 'Home', I Built Myself, If I should Ever, If I were to Own,  
Interval, It Rains, July, Lights Out, Lob, Lovers, Manor Farm,  
March, Mill-Pond, Mill Water, Mountain Chapel, The New House,  
No One Cares, October, Old Man, Out in the Dark, The Owl, The  
Path, Penny Whistle, A Private, Roads, Sedge-Warblers, She Dotes,  
Snow, The Source, Sowing, Swedes, Tears, Thaw, There was a Time,  
This is No Case, Trumpet, Two Houses, Two Pewits, Unknown Bird,  
The Unknown, Up in the Wind, What Will they do, Will you Come,  
Women he liked, Words.

12.

COLLECTED POEMS, 1928.

Ingpen &amp; Grant, 12 Bury St. London W.C. @ 6/-

149 poems

- four additions to 1920 CP

"The Lane" }

"The Watchers" }

Two Poems 1927and for the first time,

"No One So Much As You"

"The Wind's Song"

There is a minor quibble over "The Clouds that are so Light" which appears here as "As The Clouds that are so light" - and thus in the text, for the first time, following Bodleian text.

Text of the cheap edition 1928 follows the Bodleian text in four places, as explained earlier, pp. 138-40 above.

13.

COLLECTED POEMS, 1936

Faber and Faber

published @ 3s.6d.

(all minor quibbles over titling cleared up concerning

"Up in the Wind" and "The Clouds".) 149 poems.

(one poem since added - in June 1949, "P.H.T." - to E.T.'s father)

Ninth impression April 1965.



Julian Thomas - In Memoriam E.T.

No more can I love spring though cuckoo's here,  
    Since I mourned you before that note was heard,  
    Who there beyond the guns forgot cold fear  
    To see the nesting of a homely bird.

Amid the late snows of that dreadful year  
    Swift thy soul passed into the written word;  
    Never to die whilst English names are dear  
    And England breeds the men you characterized.

A light rain ceases, clear one chiff-chaff sings  
    Fresh drops are glistening on each green-tipped tree.  
    Fair spring you loved the saddest memory brings  
Of Eastertide, when you rode forth with me  
    In quest of something we were not to find.  
    Perhaps another world has proved more kind.



THE TEXT

- I. POEMS FROM B.M. Add.Ms. 44990

"The Manor Farm",  
from This England, 1915.

---

facing p. 154.

Older than Clare and Cowper, Morland and Cromie,  
 Than, at the field's far edge, the farmer's home,  
 A white house crouched at the foot of a great tree,  
 Under the heavens that know not what years be  
 The men, the beasts, the trees, the implements  
 Uttered even what they will in times far hence—  
 All of us gone out of the reach of change—  
 Immortal in a picture of an old grange.

#### II. THE MANOR FARM

THE rock-like mud unfroze a little and rills  
 Ran and sparkled down each side of the road  
 Under the catkins wagging in the hedge.  
 But earth would have her sleep out, spite of the sun;  
 Nor did I value that thin gilding beam  
 More than a pretty February thing  
 Till I came down to the old Manor Farm,  
 And church and yew-tree opposite, in age  
 Its equals and in size. Small church, great yew  
 And farmhouse slept in a Sunday silentness.  
 The air raised not a straw. The steep farm roof,  
 With tiles dusky glowing, entertained  
 The mid-day sun; and up and down the roof  
 White pigeons nestled. There was no sound but one.  
 Three cart-horses were looking over a gate  
 Drowsily through their forelocks, swishing their  
 tails.

Against a fly, a solitary fly

The Winter's cheek flushed as if he had drained  
 Spring, Summer, and Autumn at a draught  
 And smiled quietly. But 'twas not Winter—  
 Rather a season of bliss unchangeable  
 Awakened from farm and church where it had lain  
 Safe under tile and thatch for ages since  
 This England, Old already, was called Merry  
 EDWARD EASTAWAY.

## IV. LONDON

Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is  
 willing to leave London.—JOURNOX.

#### UP FROM THE COUNTRY

I SHOULD say that I scarcely walked less than  
 thirty miles about the big city on the day of my  
 first arrival. Night came on, but still I was walking  
 about, my eyes wide open, and admiring everything  
 that presented itself to them. Everything was new  
 to me, for everything is different in London from  
 what it is elsewhere—the people, their language, the  
 horses, the *tout ensemble*—even the stones of London  
 are different from others—at least it appeared to me  
 that I had never walked with the same ease and  
 facility on the flagstones of a country town as on  
 those of London; so I continued roving about till  
 night came on, and then the splendour of some of  
 the shops particularly struck me. 'A regular  
 Arabian nights' entertainment!' said I, as I looked  
 into one on Cornhill, gorgeous with precious mc-  
 chandise, and lighted up with lustres, the rays of  
 which were reflected from a hundred mirrors.

GEORGE BORROW, *Lavengro*.

#### COVENT GARDEN

MANY and many a pleasant stroll they had in  
 Covent Garden Market: snuffing up the perfume  
 of the fruits and flowers, wondering at the magni-  
 ficence of the pine-apples and melons; catching

1828

I.

24.xii.14. B.M. f.1. Untitled

The rock-like mud unfroze a little and rills  
 Ran & sparkled down ~~both~~ ~~si~~ each side of the road  
 Under the catkins wagging in the hedge.  
 But earth would have her sleep out, spite of the sun;  
 Nor did I value that thin gilding beam  
 More than a pretty February thing  
 Till I came down to the old Manor farm,  
 And church & yew-tree opposite, in age  
 Its equals and in size. The church & yew  
 And farmhouse slept in a Sunday silentness.  
 The air raised not a straw. The steep farm roof,  
 With tiles duskily glowing entertained  
 The mid-day sun; and up & down the roof  
 White pigeons nestled. There was no sound but one.  
 Three cart-horses were looking over a gate  
 Drowsily through their forelocks, swishing their tails  
 Against a fly, a solitary fly.

The Winter's cheek flushed as if he had drained  
 Spring, Summer, & Autumn at a draught  
 And smiled quietly. But 'twas not Winter -  
 Rather a season of bliss unchangeable waited(2)  
 Awakened from farm and church where it had lurked(1) la in  
 Safe under tile and thatch for ages since  
 England, Old already, was called Merry.

### Notes

Title - all printed versions - "The Manor Farm". Referred to as  
 "The Manor Farm" in letter to EF 6:i:15. (Farjeon, p. 109)

1. 2, 8, 9, 13, 19: CP and (P 17
1. 9 : TE Small church, great yew / (CP The church and yew
1. 12: TE etc. glowing,
1. 24: TE This England,

1 : This poem, with "Haymaking" was published in November 1915 in the  
 anthology This England edited by Edward Thomas, published by  
 OUP. They appeared under the pseudonym Edward Eastaway.  
 In the list of contents they are listed on one line, thus:

Haymaking, The Manor Farm . . . . . E. Eastaway.

and in the text the titles are prefaced by the numerals I and II.

/contd.

2: W. Cooke states:

a slightly earlier version of "The Manor Farm"  
was included in his anthology This England. (Cooke, p. 250)

From the evidence of the manuscript date and the addition to 1.24 in all printed versions of the poem, it seems that this manuscript version is in fact the earlier version. The manuscript reading of 1.9 was altered in TE and subsequently realtered to the original version in Poems 1917, the next occasion on which it appeared in print. As all printed versions retain the reading 'This England' in 1.24 (an alteration possibly inspired by the title of the anthology it originally appeared in) the version printed in Poems 1917 was neither taken from this manuscript nor from the printed version of 1915. One can therefore surmise that Thomas could have authorised the alteration of 1.9, late in 1916 when we are told in a letter to Gordon Bottomley:

I am still at liberty, but spending it at present in  
preparing my book of verses for Selwyn and Blount. -  
( sent from High Beach, Loughton,  
c. 1 Dec 16. (GB) Letters, p. 275 )

( \* Article written for The Nation (Nov 1914) also entitled  
"This England." )



26.xii.14. B.M. f.3. Untitled.

1. The sun set, the wind dropped, the sea  
Was like a mirror shaking:  
~~One little~~ The one small wave that clapped the land  
A mile-long snake of foam was making:  
The tide had smoothed and wind had dried  
The vacant sand.

2. A light divided the swollen clouds  
And lay most perfectly  
~~Then one~~ Like a long narrow footbridge bright  
That crossed over the sea to me;  
And no one else in the whole world  
Saw that same sight. (- origl. That bridge of light )

3. I walked elate, my bridge always  
Just one step from my feet:  
A robin sang, a shade in shade:  
And all I did was to repeat:  
'I'll go no more a-roving  
With you, fair maid.'

(4A.) 'Tis an old, a  
~~The song's~~ /a sailor's song and coarse  
But tho its ribaldry  
Did jar at first, the chorus made  
The song the best song of the sea  
I'll go no more a roving  
With you fair maid.

The lewdness  
was outweigh'd  
By the wild trick and chorus  
played

(4B) Theis ~~earse-old~~ sailor's song of merry loving  
With dusk & seagull's mewing  
Mixed sweet: the lewdness ~~little~~ nothing weigh'd  
Against the ~~tune-guise~~ trick the chorus played  
I'll go no more a roving  
With you fair maid  
A roving, a roving, since roving's been my ruin  
I'll go no more a roving with you fair maid.

4(C) The sailors' song of merry loving  
With dusk and sea-gull's mewing  
Mixed sweet, the lewdness far outweighed  
By the wild ~~tunes~~ charm the chorus played:  
'I'll go no more a-roving . . .  
With you, fair maid:  
A-roving, a-roving, since roving's been my ruin,  
I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid.'

5. In Amsterdam there lived a maid -  
Mark well the words I say;  
In Amsterdam there lived a maid  
And she was a mistress of her trade:  
I'll go no more a roving  
With you fair maid:

/contd.

26.xii.14      B.M. f.3.      Untitled (contd.)

A-roving, a-roving, since roving's been my ruin,  
I'll go no more a-roving, with you fair maid.

Notes

Title, Poems 1917 etc "An Old Song."  
Poems 1917 etc. } 1.1 fell, 1.9 straight  
 have these } 1.5 Where tide ...  
 emendations (St. 5) 11 1 & 3 dwelt.

The stanzas are numbered in **Ms**:

Stanza 4

Drafts A & B crossed out; 11. 11 & 12 original obliterated.

Draft A is in dark ink, Draft B is in a light ink.



30.xii.14      B.M. f.4      Untitled

The Combe was ever dark, ancient & dark.  
 Its mouth was stopped with bramble, thorn & brier;  
 And no one scrambled over the sliding chalk  
 By beech & yew & perishing juniper  
 Down the half precipices of its sides, with roots  
 And rabbit holes for steps. The sun of Winter,  
 The moon of Summer, & all the singing birds  
 Except the missel-thrush that loves juniper  
 Were quite shut out. But far more ancient & dark  
 The Combe looks since they killed the badger there,  
 Dug him out & gave him to the hounds,  
 That most ancient Briton of English beasts.

Notes

Title, Poems 1917 etc., "The Combe."

1.1. 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 11. Poems 1917 etc. and.

1.2 P 17 etc. Its mouth is stopped with bramble, thorn, and briar;

1.3     "         scrambles

1.8     "         juniper,

1.9     "         Are ; quite shut out.

31.xii.14.	B.M.f.5.	Untitled	(Draft A)
Out in the sun/	the goldfinches	flit s	1
Along thistle tops,	& flits and twit s		
Above the hollow wood			
Where birds swim like fish -			
Fish that laugh & shriek			5
To & fro, far below			
In the pale hollow wood,			
Where <del>moss</del> , lichen, ivy & moss			8
Keep evergreen & bright			
<del>Trees-upright.</del>			
Half-flayed trees, upright but dying,			11
And dead trees, on hands & knees,			
Deep in lichen, ivy and moss:			
<del>But out in the sun goldfinches flit</del>			14
<del>On thistletops hear flit and twit</del>			
But down out of <del>starlight</del> the sun there drops			
The goldfinch's twit along thistletops.			17

### Notes

This draft is cancelled, the final four lines having been emended in darker ink. Earlier emendation seems to have taken place at the time of writing, in view of the change from plural to singular in the opening lines. Of some interest is the cancelled concept of starlight, not found in the later drafts.

Undated            B.M. f.4v            Untitled            (Draft B, opposite Draft A)

	Out in the sun the goldfinch flits the	1
	Along / thistletops, flits & twits	
	Above the hollow wood	
	Where birds swim like fish	
	Fish that laugh & shriek	
	<del>Far below</del>	6
	To and fro, far below	
	In the pale hollow wood,	
(X)	Where lichen, ivy & moss <del>Keep evergreen and bright</del>	9
	Half-flayed <del>trees</del> trunks, upright & dying, And dead trees, on hands & knees, Deep in lichen, ivy and moss:	
	(Y) Where lichen, ivy & moss	14
	Keep evergreen the trees That stand dying & half-flayed And the dead trees, on hands & knees Deep fern in dog's mercury	
	<del>Drop</del> in lichen, /ivy & moss	18
	<del>But down out of the sun there drops</del> among	
	<del>The goldfinches twit along thistletops</del>	20
	But the bright twit of the goldfinch drops	
	Down as he flits on thistletops.	22

### Notes

The revised section Y, is added in darker ink, inserted next to the cancelled section X. The entire draft was subsequently cancelled.

31.xii.14      B.M.f.5v      Untitled      (Draft C)

Out in the sun the goldfinch flits  
Along the thistletops, flits and twits

Above the hollow wood  
Where birds swim like fish  
Fish that laugh & shriek -  
To & fro, far below  
In the pale hollow wood.

Lichen, ivy & moss  
Keep evergreen the trees  
That stand half-flayed & dying,  
And the dead trees on their knees  
In dog's mercury, ivy & moss:

And the bright twit of the goldfinch drops  
Down as he flits on thistletops.

#### Notes

Draft C was published in Last Poems, entitled "The Hollow Wood", with the following emendations:

- 1.4 LP etc.      fish -  
1.8    "            Lichen, ivy, and moss  
1.12 "            In dog's mercury and moss:  
1.14 "            Down there as

There is no stanzaic break between ll. 2 & 3, and ll.12 & 13 in LP etc.  
"The Hollow Wood" is the only poem of the 129 poems consulted in manuscript that has three separate drafts.

Central to the poem is the idea of relative significance, and the ambiguity inherent in our apprehension of this. The comparison of birds and fish can be found in "The Lofty Sky", B.M. f.14<sup>10</sup>1:15; this later poem can provide some clue to the poet's purpose here. In "The Lofty Sky"<sup>(1)</sup> we find the poet seeking a vantage point from which to appreciate the gradations of existence. The air of the lofty sky is seen as 'the river of air', and the contrasting viewpoints of bird and fish, explored in this earlier poem, are seen in due insignificance in terms of total perspective. Yet there is significance in the fulfilment, however limited, these creatures of height and depth may find. This allusion seems useful, confronted with the otherwise puzzling comparison in 1.4 of "The Hollow

(1) see p. 180 below.

31.xii.14 B.M.f.5v Untitled (Notes contd.)

Wood'. Between the two extremes lies 'the pale hollow wood'. Within this we see ambiguities of value. 'Lichen, ivy & moss / Keep evergreen the trees' - yet these superficially attractive plants are destructive parasites. (A much later poem - "The Watchers" - l.v:16, embodies similar opposites 'stuffed fish, vermin & kingfishers' of beauty and vermin.) The silent destruction of nature by nature continues - the goldfinch is not involved; he skims - 'flits' - along the thistletops, his 'bright twit' is 'the one sound under the sky' (B.M. f 42, 70 - "Two Pewits", 24:iii:15/4:v:15). Sound in relation to inanimate objects - seen here in human terms in the phrase 'the dead trees on their knees' - is a recurrent idea - cf. "The Penny Whistle" B.M. f.8, 5:i:15, (where, moreover, the habitat of the fish that 'laugh & shriek', itself a striking fusion of opposites, is seen in relation to the forest), and "The Gypsy" B.M. f.24:22:i:15 - written within the next month.

"The Hollow Wood", as a poem, itself reflects the disparity between first reaction and deeper study. Its very lightness of phrase, seemingly superficial, serves to reflect thematic lack of involvement. The alterations made in the course of two revised drafts, a fair copy, and printing, should be seen in this light. There are two main areas of difficulty, after the opening change from plural to singular, with the suggestion of solitary detachment. The precise rhythm and balance of the destructive plants, how to suggest the feeling of the trees, inexpressible in itself, and, finally, how to conclude by an echo of the opening - these areas are revised meticulously. 'Bright' is finally omitted in section X of Draft B - f.4v 'Sun' in the opening line is sufficient illumination for

the 'pale' wood - 'hollow' is, of course, significant in sound and sense. 'Starlight', with suggested merging of black and white - found in "The Penny Whistle" and "The Gypsy" - is rejected in the Draft 'A'. The image of the trees on hands and knees is fortunately/moderated - the final 'dead trees on their knees' is successful and sufficient, as suggested above. The reversed order of 'half-flayed' and 'dying' which has taken place by 1.10 of Draft C is logical, and rhythmically more effective. The conclusion presented difficulty; significant is the early rejection of 'hear' in Draft A - 1.15. The separateness of wood and goldfinch is necessary to the effect. The bright, carefree sound of the goldfinch drops down 'there' - in print - a notable alteration. 'Where' in 1.8 has been omitted. The final distancing is achieved more successfully by the addition to the final line in print. A further small rhythmic effect is also found in print in 1.12, where the omission of 'ivy' makes for a more abrupt end to the description of the wood.

So, throughout the drafts, one can perceive steady and meticulous working towards the desired lightness of touch necessary for the idea central to the poem, a slight but nonetheless interesting study, with sinister elements not obscured by the method. Moral judgement does not have to be stated - it seems here to be enacted. Indirect praise is sweeter and more profound; ET wrote in his preface to 'This England' - so, too, can censure be effective if not overt.

1.1.15            B.M. f.6            Untitled

He was the ~~only~~ one man I met up in the woods  
 That stormy New Year's morning; and at 1st sight,  
 Fifty yards off, I could not tell how much  
 Of the strange tripod was a man. His body  
 Bowed horizontal was supported equally  
 By legs at one end, by a rake at the other:  
 And thus he rested, far less like a man than  
 His wheelbarrow in profile was like a pig.  
 But when I saw it was an old man bent,  
 At the same moment came into my mind  
 The games at which boys bend thus, High-cockerlorum,  
 Or Fly-the-garter, and Leap-frog. At the sound  
 Of footsteps he began to straighten himself;  
 His head rolled under his cape like a tortoise's;  
 He took an unlit pipe out of his mouth.  
 And in my stride I said 'A Happy New Year',  
 And he with his head cast upward sideways muttered -  
 So far as I could hear through the trees' ~~read~~ roar -  
~~'A Happy New Year, - and a fastish, - too - one I hope~~  
 'Happy New Year, and may it come fastish, too.'

Notes

Title, Last Poems etc., ~~title~~ "The New Year."

- 1.2 Last Poems etc. first  
 1.5        "                horizontal,  
 1.7        "                Thus he rested,  
 1.8        "                wheel-barrow  
 1.11 Last Poems        High-cockolorum  
       CP                High-cocolorum

11.15 ff.        Last Poems etc.

He took an unlit pipe out of his mouth  
 Politely ere I wished him 'A Happy New Year',  
 And with his head cast upward sideways muttered -  
 So far as I could hear through the trees' rear -  
 'Happy New Year, and may it come fastish, too,'  
 While I strode by and he turned to raking leaves.

There is no ms. original of the extra line which appears in print, although it is clearly a reshuffling of the last four lines of the B.M. ms. in a more expanded form. The printed version does clear up the mention of the rake in 1.6, and avoids the rather abrupt 1.15, although 'politely' seems rather a weak alternative.

This is one of several poems where ET was not satisfied with the ending. One may compare this ending with the less hurried yet more difficult ending of "The Glory".

How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to,  
 Is Time? I cannot bite the day to the core.

Purpose is more difficult to find than the mere sense of time passing.





Undated            B.M.f.7v            Untitled

The new moon hangs like an ivory bugle  
In the naked frosty blue;  
leafy

~~And the cavernous forest, already~~  
ghylls

And the gullies of the forest, already blackened  
By Winter, are blackened anew.

The brooks which cut up & increase the forest,            5  
As if they had never known  
The sun, are roaring with black hollow voices  
Between rage & a moan.

still                            by the                            hollies  
But / the caravan hut ~~up in the clearing holly~~            9  
~~has~~ Like a kingfisher gleams between  
~~Still gleams like a kingfisher statue~~  
Round the mossed old hearths of the charcoal burners  
~~Here - The re~~ First primroses ~~chequer~~ ask to be seen.

The charcoal burners are black, but their linen  
Flutters white on the line;  
And white the letter the girl is reading  
Under that crescent fine;            15

who hides apart in a ~~thicket~~  
~~sits~~                            ~~somewhere hidden~~  
And her brother ~~who sits~~ apart ~~by an oak stump~~  
~~hidden apart in a thicket~~            17

Slowly & surely playing  
On a whistle an olden nursery melody,  
Says far more than I am saying.

Notes

B.M. f.7v appeared in Poems 1917, entitled "The Penny Whistle".

1.8	<u>P 17</u> etc.	Betwixt rage .....
1.14	"	Blows white .....
1.19	"	..... an old nursery melody.

(There is little consistency in these alterations : the archaic 'Between' is replaced by 'betwixt', yet 'olden' is modernised to 'old'.)

This is a poem hovering on the verge of the inexpressible.<sup>(1)</sup> The parallels drawn by the poet seem strained, and his own hesitancy over choice of word and phrase reflects this. Black and white, with familiar overtones of value, are central to this recreation of the outward scene. Sound is immediately suggested in the opening line taken up by the brooks and reflected later in the melody of the boy's whistle. The black forest is blackened anew by the charcoal burners, and this notion of growth in repetition is echoed by the third and final emendation to 1.5 --

'The brooks that cut up and increase the forest'. But the brooks in contrast seem to have some animation, unlike the wood. The 'black hollow voices' recall the earlier poem "The Hollow Wood" of 31:xii:14, with a similar contrast of animate and inanimate. Sudden darting light is successfully suggested by the image of the kingfisher successfully strengthened in the second draft - but the uneven texture of the poem is then clear in the fourth, unrevised stanza, with its simple explanatory statement, almost banal after the previous image. The poet's uneasiness in rhyme is suggested by the fortunately revised 1.12 - 'There are primroses, I aver.' We may note with regret the rejection of 'chequer' in the second draft. 'Chequer' unites the black and white which the poet is attempting to fuse and contrast - it becomes instead - 'ask to be seen'. Most revised is the ending, with the concept of the tune - echoing, as

(1) See p. 3 above.

already noted, earlier suggestions of sound. The final version of the first draft read '..... her brother who sits apart by the hawthorn'. The second draft reverts to 'an oak stump', before introducing 'hidden apart in a thicket', finally revised to the active 'who hides apart in a thicket'. The hidden tune, the hidden meaning are beyond the poet's expression - his ending is suitable in terms of the poem's lack of assurance. The poem is of interest textually, and as one of several treatments of similar themes, but its own success seems strictly limited.

"House and Man"

and

"Interval"

from Root and Branch, November 1915.

---

facing p. 170. (two plates)

TWO POEMS by Edward Eastaway.

I. HOUSE AND MAN

ONE hour: as dim he and his house now look  
As a reflection in a rippling brook,  
While I remember him; but first, his house.  
Empty it sounded. 'T was dark with forest boughs  
That brushed the walls and made the mossy tiles  
Part of the squirrels' track. In all those miles  
Of forest silence and forest murmur, only  
One house—"Lonely," he said, "I wish it were lonely"—  
Which the trees looked upon from every side,  
And that was his.

He waved good-bye to hide  
A sigh that he converted to a laugh.  
He seemed to hang rather than stand there, half  
Ghost-like, half a beggar's rag, clean wrung  
And useless on the briar where it has hung  
Long years a-washing by sun and wind and rain.

But why I call back man and house again  
Is that now on a beech-tree's tip I see  
As then I saw—I at the gate, and he  
In the house darkness,—a magpie veering about,  
A magpie like a weathercock in doubt.

II. INTERVAL

GONE the wild day.  
A wilder night  
Coming makes way  
For brief twilight.

Where the firm soaked road  
Mounts under pines  
To the high beech-wood  
It almost shines.

The beeches keep  
A stormy rest,  
Breathing deep  
Of wind from the west.

The wood is black  
With a misty steam.  
Above, the cloud pack  
Breaks for one gleam.

But the woodman's cot  
By the ivied trees  
Awakens not  
To light or breeze.

It smokes aloft  
Unwavering:  
It hunches soft  
Under storm's wing.

It has no care  
For gleam or gloam:  
It stays there  
While I shall roam,

Die and forget  
The hill of trees,  
The gleam, the wet,  
This roaring peace.



6. i. 15.      Interval

A

Gone the wild day.  
 A wilder night  
 Coming makes way  
 For brief twilight.

Where the firm soaked road  
 Mounts under pines  
 To the high beech-wood  
 It almost shines.

The beeches keep  
 A stormy rest,  
 Breathing deep  
 Of wind from the west.

The wood is black  
 With a misty steam.  
 Above, the cloud pack  
 Breaks for one gleam.

But the woodman's cot  
 By the ivied trees  
 Awakens not  
 To light or breeze.

It smokes aloft  
 Unwavering:  
 It hunches soft  
 Under storm's wing.

It has no care  
 For gleam or gloam:  
 It stays there  
 While I shall roam,

Die and forget  
 The hill of trees,  
 The gleam, the wet,  
 This roaring peace.

B

Gone the wild day:  
 A wilder night  
 Coming makes way  
 For brief twilight.

Where the firm soaked road  
 Mounts and is lost  
 In the high beech-wood  
 It shines almost.

The beeches keep  
 A stormy rest,  
 Breathing deep  
 Of wind from the west.

The wood is black,  
 With a misty steam.  
 Above, the cloud pack  
 Breaks for one gleam.

But the woodman's cot  
 By the ivied trees  
 Awakens not  
 To light or breeze.

It smokes aloft  
 Unwavering:  
 It hunches soft  
 Under storm's wing.

It has no care  
 For gleam or gloom:  
 It stays there  
 While I shall roam,

Die, and forget  
 The hill of trees,  
 The gleam, the wet,  
 This roaring peace.

6.i.15. Interval (contd.)Notes

Draft A appeared in Root and Branch, (Vol.1) No. 4. There had been three previous issues, No.1 dated Spring 1912, and subtitled A Seasonal of the Arts. Nos. 2 & 3 have no date. No.4 appeared during 1915, prior to October. The first no. of Vol.2 appeared in Sept. 1917, No.2 in Dec. 1917, price 2/-, published at The Morland Press Ltd., 190 Ebury Street, S.W.1. The four nos. of Volume 1, were published by James Guthrie at The Pear Tree Press, Flansham, Bognor. A further two nos. were issued by The Morland Press. No.1 of Vol. 3 was printed by hand from plates, Aug-Sept 1919, and contains the drawing The Trees which had appeared in Six Poems, also issued by The Pear Tree Press.

Draft B is the version first printed in Poems 1917, and since.

The version printed in Root and Branch (together with "House and Man") was the first appearance of Edward Eastaway in print.

There is no known manuscript.

Textual differences. Stanza 2 was rewritten prior to Poems 1917.

There is little change in meaning, and the original version does not seem inferior, although the added overtone of 'lost' is gained.

1.26. A.gloam / B. gloom.

Gloam = twilight. Clearly this was no misprint; however, 'gloom' with its striking half-rhyme, compared to the other deliberate rhymes, and its suggestion of some more substantial human involvement, is to be preferred.



6.1.15.        Interval - Notes (contd.)

1.    Date of composition. In the absence of ~~ms.~~ proof, the letters to EF seem the best guide available:

(Letter to EF, 6.1.15)..... I have got out some of my verses, all you haven't seen. All except "The Manor Farm" are my only copies, so if you would like to keep any of the others would you make copies? I find typing at present too awkward.

(Letter to EF, 10.i.15.) This is simply just to say there is no hurry for returning the ms. It was interesting to find you prefer my remarks unrhymed. You hit upon some passages I felt doubtful. But 'under storm's wing' (l.24) was not just for the metre. .... I mean in "Interval" that the night did postpone her coming for a bit for the twilight. Night might have been expected to come down on the end of the day and didn't. 'Held off' would have been stricter .....

(ET also refers to "After Rain" and other matters in this letter - Farjeon, pp 109-11, see appendix.)

On this evidence it is clear that "Interval" was written on or prior to 6.i.15.

2.    There is no query raised over the second verse, which was rewritten after first publication.

3.    Letter to Gordon Bottomley, 6 Nov. 1915. from Steep.

..... Guthrie is going to print some things in his rummy magazine over an assumed name. It will be my first appearance as bard. (Letters, p. 256)

6.i.15.            B.M.f.9.            Untitled

A labouring man lies hid in this bright coffin  
 Who slept out many a frosty night & kept  
 Good drinkers & bedmen tickled with his scoffing:  
 'At Mrs Greenland's Hawthorn Bush I slept.'

7.i.15.

The labouring man here lying slept out of doors  
 Many a frosty night, & merrily  
 Answered good drinkers & bedmen & all bores  
 'At Mrs Greenland's ~~Holly~~ Hawthorn Bush' said he,  
 'I slept' - None knew which bush. Above the town  
 Beyond 'The Drover' a hundred spot the down.

### Notes

A second reworking of the poem led to the following version being published in Six Poems by Edward Eastaway in 1916, and subsequently in Annual of New Poetry.

"A Private"

This ploughman dead in battle slept out-of-doors  
 Many a frosty night, and merrily  
 Answered staid drinkers, good bedmen and all bores:  
 'At Mrs Greenland's Hawthorn Bush' said he,  
 'I slept.' None knew which bush. Above the town,  
 Beyond 'The Drover', a hundred spot the down  
 In Wiltshire. And where now at last he sleeps  
 More sound in France - that, too, he secret keeps.

Prior to publication in Last Poems, 'frosty' in 1.2 was changed to 'frozen.'

All subsequent editions follow this reading, changed after the publication of An Annual of New Poetry, the proofs of which Thomas may have seen - see Textual Introduction, pp128-9, above.

Both textually and critically this is an interesting poem. An enigmatic four line anecdote has been developed in two stages into a poem of substance. In death the labourer sleeps in shelter, whereas in life he needed none. He silences curiosity with scoffing. The pun on bedmen is significant, with the constant comparison of sleep and death. Even the

6.i.15/7.i.15 B.M.f.9. Untitled (contd.)

earliest version is not merely light-hearted. The progression from the indefinite 'A labouring man' to the definite 'The labouring man', and finally 'This ploughman' indicates the move away from the impersonal, continued in the introduction of conversation, and the further reaction of the listeners beyond mere amusement. However, 'this bright coffin' has become 'here lying', a less specific and striking description. 'Merrily', too, leads to the second version's greater joviality. However, here is introduced the mystery of his rest, for there is no mention of this mystery in the earlier version. The mystery of his resting place in death is introduced in the final version, where neither resting place is localised, 'dead in battle' has replaced 'this bright coffin'. Rupert Brooke's 'corner of a foreign field' has become an unknown grave, ironically as unknown as the ploughman's resting place alive. In the third version war has caused the death, The very title is a grim and ironical comment on the absolute privacy of death, the only privacy for a private. Similarly, the euphemism of 'sleeps more sound' provides ironical contrast of sleep and death.

Textually it is an uncomplicated poem, there are no radical textual alterations in manuscript. The poem is doubled in length, yet its origin, centred on the last line of the first version, remains clear. In the final version there is significant alteration to the first line, and the addition of the last two lines, otherwise, but for one discrepancy it is as the second version. Neither B.M. draft is cancelled, and the final version is without definite date. The firm progression from the first version to the second would however indicate that the poem is certainly not much later than the earlier drafts.



8.i.15. B.M.f.11. Adlestrop

~~Yes, - I remember Adlestrop,  
At least the name, - One afternoon~~ (A)  
train

~~The express - / - slowed down there & drew up  
Quite~~

Yes, I remember Adlestrop,  
At least the name. One afternoon (B)  
Of heat  
/The fast<sup>1</sup> train slowed down & drew up  
There unexpectedly. 'Twas June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.  
~~But no one left~~ No one left & no one came  
On the bare platform. ~~All~~ What<sup>1</sup> I saw  
Was Adlestrop, only the name.

And willows, willow-herb, & grass,  
And meadowsweet. The haycocks dry  
Were not less still & lonely fair  
Than the high cloud tiers in the sky.

And all that minute a blackbird sang  
Close by, and round him, mistier,  
Farther & farther off, all the birds  
Of Oxfordshire & Gloucestershire.

(The following draft appears opposite, undated, also entitled "Adlestrop".  
In both instances the title is a later addition.)

B.M.10v

Yes, I remember Adlestrop -  
At least the name. One afternoon (C)  
the express train there  
Of heat ~~the train slowed and~~ drew up  
Against its custom. It 'T-was June.  
~~There unexpectedly~~

Yes, I remember Adlestrop --  
The name, because  
~~At least the name.~~ One afternoon  
Of heat the express train  
drew up there (D)  
~~Against its custom~~  
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.  
~~No one left & no one came~~  
On the bare platform. What I saw  
Was Adlestrop, only the name,

/...

8.i.15      B.M.f.11      Adlestrop (contd.)

And willows, willow herb & grass,  
And meadowsweet. The haycocks dry  
Were not less still & lonely fair  
Than the high cloud ~~lets tiers~~ in the sky.

And all that minute a blackbird sang.  
Close by, and round him, mistier,  
Farther & farther, all the birds  
Of Oxfordshire & Gloucestershire.

### Notes

1. In the four ffs. versions of the first stanza some words are heavily cancelled. In three instances my reading differs from that of W. Cooke, given on p.255-6 of his book Edward Thomas - A Critical Biography.

1.3 (version B) W. Cooke - ~~steam~~ train/ ~~fast~~ train } P. Knock

1.7 (draft f.11) W. Cooke - What I saw/ ~~All~~ What I saw

('What' had been written over the earlier word)

1.4 (version D) W. Cooke - ~~Against the custom~~ / ~~Against its custom~~ -  
(P. Knock)

2. The second draft, f.10v appeared without substantial alteration in Poems 1917. The following alterations had been made to the last two stanzas.

1.10 P17 etc. And meadowsweet and haycocks dry

1.11 P17 etc. No whit less still and lovely fair

1.13 P17 etc. And for that minute .....

3. The two drafts, containing four versions of the opening stanza, indicate the care and precision in this, the most anthologised of all ET's poems. The main difficulty lay in the tone and emphasis of the opening. The poem hinges on the associations the poet attaches to the name, the most simply memorable aspect. The contrast between the heat and sudden unexpected stillness and the train causes the poet to return in version C to the concept of speed, cut out in his revision of version A. 'The express', 'the fast train', 'the train', returns finally to 'the express train'. Similarly important is the suggestion of the impact of the unexpected. The ruminative 'unwontedly' suggests this without disrupting the necessary calm. The still, dry heat emphasises sound and movement. Thus indicated are the high cloud tiers and the song of the blackbird throughout the one remembered minute, heard with renewed vivid perception, contrasted with the thot clearing - with the steam the only other immediate sounds, reverberating and connecting with mistier effects. A quiet welcome is felt in the poet's recall of these small matters, the more welcome for they were unexpected, momentary, and yet remembered, associated with the station name board. Anthologised for its superficially Georgian week-end tone, it is nonetheless individual and not to be devalued from its over-exposure. In passing, attention should be called to some regrettable alterations. The potentially suggestive 'cloud tiers', suggesting

Notes

B.M.f.11 &amp; 10v Adlestrop (contd.)

layers, heirarchy and thus significance - the small are no less 'lonely fair' - have become the more conventional cloudlets. This, regrettable in itself, is emphasised by the accompanying later change in the previous line to 'no whit less', and the rhythm loses its strength beneath the conventional. A final minor point is the alteration of 'all that minute' to 'for that minute'. The original placed due emphasis on the lengthened time perception, the revision minimises it.

9.i.15            B.M.f.13.    Untitled

Often and often it came back again  
 To mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge  
 To a new country, the path I had to find  
 By half-gaps that were stiles once in the hedge,  
 The pack of scarlet clouds running across  
 The harvest evening that seemed endless then  
 And afterwards, and the inn where all were kind,  
 All were strangers. I forgot my loss  
 Till one day 12 months later suddenly  
 I leaned upon my spade & saw it all,  
 Though far beyond the sky-line. It became  
 Almost a habit thro the year for me  
 To lean and see it, ~~in~~ for the wish to do the same  
 Again for two days and a night. Recall  
 Was vain: no more could the restless brook  
 Ever turn back and climb the waterfall  
 To the lake that has no motion in its nook,  
 As in the hollow of the collar-bone  
 Under the mountain's head of rush and stone.

Notes

Title, Last Poems, CP (1920) etc. "Over the Hills"

- 1. 8 LP etc. I did not know my loss
- 1.13 LP etc. To lean and see it and think to do the same
- 1.17 LP etc. To the lake that rests and stirs not in its nook,



"The Lofty Sky".

from Root and Branch, December 1917.

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facing p. 180.

## THE LOFTY SKY

To-day I want the sky,  
The tops of the high hills,  
Above the last man's house,  
His hedges, and his cows,  
Where, if I will, I look  
Down even on sheep and rock,  
And of all things that move  
See buzzards only above:—  
Past all trees, past furze  
And thorn, where naught deters  
The desire of the eye  
For sky, nothing but sky.  
I sicken of the woods  
And all the multitudes  
Of hedge-trees. They are no more  
Than weeds upon this floor  
Of the river of air  
Leagues deep, leagues wide, where  
I am like a fish that lives  
In weeds and mud and gives  
What's above him no thought.  
I might be a tench for aught  
That I can do to-day  
Down on the wealden clay.  
Even the tench has days  
When he floats up and plays  
Among the lily leaves  
And sees the sky, or grieves  
Not if he nothing sees:  
While I, I know that trees  
Under that lofty sky  
Are weeds, fields mud, and I  
Would arise and go far  
To where the lilies are.

Edward Eastaway

10.i.15.          B.M.f.14.      Untitled

Today I want the hills,  
 The tops of the high hills,  
 Above the last man's house,  
 His hedges, and his cows,  
 Where if I will I look  
 Down even on sheep and rook,  
 And of all things that move  
 See buzzards only above:  
 Past all trees, past furze  
 And thorn, where nought deters  
 The desire of the eye  
 For sky, nothing but sky.

I sicken of the woods  
 And all the multitudes  
 Of hedge-trees. They are no more  
 Than weeds upon this floor  
 Of this river of air  
 Leagues deep & leagues wide, somewhere  
 I am like a fish that lives  
 In weeds & mud & gives  
 What's above him no thought.  
 I might be a tench for aught  
 That I can do today  
~~And even the tench has~~  
 Down on the wealden clay.  
 And even the tench has days  
 When he floats up & plays  
 Among the lily leaves  
 And sees the sky, or grieves  
 Not if he nothing sees:  
 While I, I know that trees  
 Under that lofty sky  
 Are weeds, fields mud, and I  
 Would arise and go far  
 To where the lilies are.

### Notes

1. First published as "The Lofty Sky" in Vol. II No. 2 of Root and Branch, December 1917. The author's name was given as Edward Eastaway, despite publication of Poems 1917 by Edward Thomas ('Edward Eastaway') in November 1917. RB (Dec 17) also contained a notice - "The first set of Root & Branch many (sic) now be had in a bound volume at 8/6 post free. The contributors to this set are G. Bottomley, George Clausen, W. H. Davies, R & F Hallward, A. K. Sabin, the late Edward Thomas,

10.i.15. B.M.f.14. Untitled

Notes (contd.)

Jack B. Yeats and James Guthrie."

2. 1.1 RB ) To-day I want the sky  
       LP )

1.5 RB etc. Where, if I will, I look

1.6 RB only sheep and rock  
       All other versions follow ms.

1.34 CP(1965 ) Are weeds, fields, mud, and I

RB follows ~~f.14~~ and gives correctly : Are weeds, fields mud, and I

This reading is the only correct one. The meaning is that the poet knows, without the comfortable illusions that the tench has, that, compared to, and seen from the high hills and the lofty sky, the trees are as weeds, the fields appear as mud. It is not, as an over-zealous proof-reader seems to have thought, a list, to be punctuated; the word to be understood between fields and mud is are. LP ; CP(1920); CP(1920 de luxe); CP(1928); CP(1936) follow RB and ms; current CP makes nonsense.

15.i.15. B.M.f.17 &amp; 16v Swedes

(Draft A.f.17.  
Original versions of  
lines underlined illegible.)

They have taken the gable from the roof of clay  
In the long swede pile. The(y) sun have is let in the sun

(orig. The sun is let in)

~~In~~ To the white, gold & purple of curled fronds  
Unsunned (. It is ) a sight more tender-gorgeous  
At the wood corner where winter moans & drips  
Than when, in the valley of the Tombs of Kings  
A boy crawls down into a Pharoah's tomb  
And ~~first~~ first of Christian men ~~he sees~~ beholds the mummy,  
God & monkey, chariot, & throne & vase  
Of alabaster, & gold & blue faience,  
But dreamless long dead Amenhotep lies.  
This is a dream of winter sweet as spring.

(Draft B. Fair copy on  
f.16v. Original of  
penultimate line illegible.)

They have taken the gable from the roof of clay  
On the long swede pile. They have let in the sun  
To the white, gold & purple of curled fronds  
Unsunned. It is a sight more tender-gorgeous  
At the wood corner where winter moans & drips  
Than when, in the valley of the Tombs of Kings,  
A boy crawls down into a Pharoah's tomb,  
And first of Christian men, beholds the mummy,  
God & monkey, chariot & throne, & vase,  
Of alabaster & gold & blue faience.  
~~But dreamless~~ long-dead Amenhotep lies  
This is a dream of Winter, sweet as Spring.

### Notes

This is the one poem where original readings for ~~four~~ whole lines have been so heavily obliterated as to be illegible. The penultimate line of Draft B. is illegible in its earlier version, and, moreover, the revised version is partially crossed out, although seemingly never altered, as it appears in all printed versions.

1.10 Poems 1917 etc. Blue pottery, alabaster and gold.

18.i.15. B.M.f.20. The Mill-Pond

The sun blazed while the thunder yet  
 Added a boom;  
 A wagtail flickered bright over  
 The mill-pond's gloom:

And doves cooing in the alder-tree  
 Isles of the pool  
 Equalled the thunder, by that plunge  
 Of waters cool.

Scared starlings on the aspen tip  
 Past the black mill  
 Outchattered the stream & the next roar  
 Far on the hill.

As my feet dangling teased at the foam  
 That slid below  
 A girl came out. 'Take care.' she said -  
 Ages ago.

~~Then the storm burst, and as I~~  
 She startled me, standing quite close  
 Dressed all in white:  
 Ages ago I was angry till  
 She passed from sight.

Then the storm burst, and as I crouched  
 To shelter, how she  
 Beautiful and kind, too, / seemed,  
 As she does now!

### Notes

1.5, Poems 1917 etc.

1.7. "

1.11. "

1.13. "

Less than the cooing in the alder  
 Sounded the thunder through that plunge  
 and  
 teased the foam

22.i.15. B.M.f.24. Untitled

A fortnight before Christmas Gypsies were everywhere:  
 Vans were drawn up on wastes, women trailed to the fair.  
 "My gentleman," said one, "you've got a lucky face."  
 "And you've a luckier," I thought, "if such a grace  
 And impudence in rags are lucky." "Give a penny 5  
 For the poor baby's sake." "Indeed I have not any  
 Unless you can give change for a sovereign, my dear."  
 "Then just half a pipefull of tobacco can you spare?"  
 And with that much victory she laughed out content.  
 I should have given more, but away she went 10  
 With her baby and her pink sham flowers to rejoin  
 The rest before I could translate to proper coin  
~~Thanks for~~ Gratitude for her grace. And I paid nothing then,  
 As I pay nothing now with the dipping of my pen  
 For what her brother did by drumming the tambourine 15  
 And stamping his feet, which made the workmen passing grin,  
 While his mouth-organ changed to a rascally Bacchanal dance 17  
 "Over the hills & far away." This & his glance  
 Outlasted all the fair, farmer, & auctioneer,  
 Cheap-jack, baloon-man, drover with crooked stick, and steer, 20  
 Pig, turkey, goose & duck, Christmas corpses to be.  
 Not even the kneeling ox had eyes like the Romany.  
 That night he peopled for me the hollow wooded land,  
 More dark and wild than stormiest heavens. I searched & scanned  
 Like a ghost new-arrived, the gradations of the dark 25  
 That were like an underworld of death, but for the spark  
 In the Gypsy boy's black eyes as he played and stamped his tune, 28  
 "Over the hills and far away", and the crescent moon.

Notes Last Poems etc. Title: "The Gypsy"

- 1.9 LP etc I gave it. With that much victory she laughed content.  
 1.10 LP etc but off and away she went  
 1.12 LP etc to its proper coin  
 1.15 LP etc For her brother's music when he drummed the tambourine  
 1.16 LP etc And stamped his feet.  
 1.21 LP CP(1920) Christmas Corpses CP(1928) as ms.  
 1.24 LP etc than stormiest heavens, that I searched and scanned  
 1.25 LP etc Like a ghost new-arrived. The gradations of the dark  
 1.26 LP etc Were like an underworld of death,  
 1.28 LP etc and a crescent moon

This is an interesting, though only partially successful poem. The situation is reminiscent of "The Penny Whistle", B.M.f.9 written about a fortnight previously. Sound in the form of traditional song - we note that an intervening poem B.M.f.13 was entitled "Over the Hills" - is seen as a potential clue to time and value, for which money is not of necessity "proper coin". The first seventeen lines seem hindered by rhyme and the "rascally Bacchanal dance" is the sole clue to the shift in vision which leads to the more sombre ending. The potential

danger of "Over the hills and far away" can thus be suggested. The "hollow wooded land" (see "The Hollow Wood", B.M.f. 5/4v. 31xii:14), the ghost (see "Two Pewits" B.M.f. 42 & 70) and the "underworld of death", suggested in many poems, sometimes in conjunction with "stormiest heavens" - (see "Interval" 6:i:15) all point to recurrent stresses found in the poems. Here they seem less well enacted and the poem's main interest lies in its echoes of others of this period. It is an advance, however, from the "Old nursery melody" of "The Penny Whistle". The "gradations of the dark" is a fine touch; successful, too, is the poet's association of his own solitude and separateness - 'like a ghost new arrived' with people created and suggested by the wild oblivion of the tune. Thus we can see, even in the less successful poems, definite advance in the poet's critical exchanges with himself.



22.ii.15. B:M.f.31. The Barn

They should never have built a barn there at all -  
 Drip, drip, drip! - under that elm tree,  
 Though then it was young. Now it is old  
 But good, not like the barn & me.

Tomorrow they cut it down. They will leave  
 The barn, as I shall be left, maybe.  
 What holds it up? 'Twouldn't pay to pull down.  
 Well, this place has no other antiquity.

No abbey or castle looks so old  
 As this that Job Knight built in '54,  
 Built for corn, for rats & men,  
 Now there's fowls in the roof, pigs on the floor.

What thatch survives is dung for the grass,  
 The best grass on the farm. A pity the roof  
 Will not bear a mower to mow it. But  
 Only the fowls ~~alone~~ have foothold enough

Starlings used to sit there with bubbling throats  
 Making a spiky beard as they chattered  
 And whistled & kissed, with heads in air,  
 Till they thought of something else that mattered.

But now the starlings find no place  
 Among all those holes, for a nest any more.  
 It's the turn of lesser things, I suppose.  
 Once I fancied 'twas starlings they built it for.

### Notes

- 1.7            LP etc 'Twould not pay to pull down.  
 1.11          LP etc Built to keep corn for rats and men  
 1.16          LP etc Only fowls have foothold enough.  
 1.21          LP etc But now they cannot find a place

23.iii.15. B.M.f.38v Untitled

It stood in the sunset sky  
 Like the straight-backed down,  
 Many a time - the barn  
 At the edge of the town.

So huge and dark that it seemed  
 It was the hill  
 Till the gable's precipice proved  
 It impossible.

Then the great down in the west  
 Grew into sight,  
 A barn stored full to the ridge  
 With black of night;

But far Down and near barn and I  
 Since then have smiled,  
 Having seen my new cautiousness  
 By itself beguiled

To disdain what seemed the barn  
 Till a few steps changed  
 It past all doubt to the Down;  
 And the barn was avenged.

### Notes

This second draft appeared under its ~~ms.~~ title in Last Poems  
 with one alteration.

1.20 LP etc. So the .....

22.iii.15.      B.M.f.39.      The Barn and the Down

Many a time the barn  
At the edge of the town

So huge and dark that it seemed  
It was the hill  
Till the gable-ends steepness proved  
It impossible.

Then the great-~~roof~~ hill in the west  
Grew into sight,  
A barn stored full to the ridge  
With black of night;

And the barn fell to a ~~more~~ barn  
Or even less  
Before critical eyes and its own  
Late mightiness.

And now with far Down and near barn  
I have cause for smiling  
Since we three between us beheld  
My caution beguiling,

Beguiling itself, that day  
When the barn was avenged  
And what I had disdained as the barn  
To the Down was changed.

It stood in the sunset sky  
Like the straight-backed down  
Many a time - the barn  
At the edge of the town,

### Notes

This first draft was originally without the first stanza; only the last two lines appeared. The complete first stanza was inserted to the right of the poem, as shown above. Opposite, on f.38v there is a second draft, with only five stanzas, twenty lines. The first three stanzas are almost identical, the final two stanzas have been rewritten. There is no equivalent to the fourth stanza printed above.

23.iii.15. B.M.f.40. Sowing

It was a perfect day  
For sowing; just  
As sweet and dry was the ground  
As tobacco-dust.

And  
~~I relished the hour from when  
I heard far  
& fast  
The owl's first dove-soft cry  
Till the first star~~

I tasted deep the hour  
Between the far  
Owl's ~~sch~~ chuckling soft first cry  
And the first star.

A long stretched hour it was;  
Nothing undone  
                  the early things  
Remained; ~~some they w~~ \*  
All safely sown.

And now, hark at the rain,  
Windless and light,  
Half a kiss, half a tear,  
Saying goodnight.

A kiss for ~~the~~ all the seeds'  
Dry multitude,  
A tear of ending this  
March interlude.

### Notes

1.7 P. 17 etc. first soft cry.

\* Original almost illegible.

All printed versions omit final ~~ffs~~ stanza, itself an interesting echo of the poem of 6.i.15., entitled "Interval", with the concluding paradox - 'this roaring peace'. This instance - 'a long stretched hour' - is an interval of similar nature. The ~~ffs~~ final stanza is thus an interesting placing of significance, though it adds little by expanding the image of the previous stanza, in terms of the poem itself.

23.iii.15. B.M.f.41. Untitled

Here again + (she said) is March the 3rd  
~~Hear~~ And 12 hours' singing for the bird  
 Twixt dawn and dusk, from half-past six  
 To half-past 6, never unheard. 4

'Tis Sunday, & the church-bells end  
 When the birds do. I think they blend  
 Now better than they will when passed  
 Is this unnamed, unmarked godsend. 8

Or do ~~they~~ all mark, & none dares say,  
 How it may shift & long delay,  
 Somewhere before the first of Spring,  
 But never fails, this singing day? 12

And when it falls on Sunday, bells  
 Are a wild natural voice that dwells  
 In hillsides; but ~~some a holiness~~ the birds' songs have 15  
~~Relaxes the jolly thrushes~~  
~~Songs have a~~  
 The holiness gone from the bells 18  
~~A holiness of canticles~~

~~unforetold~~  
 Unpromised, unexpected, more dear 19  
 Than all the named days of the year 20  
 Worthy Seasonable earned seasonable sweets 21

~~We feel how fortunate we are -~~  
~~Lucky, this day, we know we are.~~  
 is  
 O God ~~this~~ This day unpromised was more dear  
 Than all the named days of the year

~~Worth Due, earned, seasons,~~ 26  
 When seasonable sweets come in  
~~find fall~~  
~~We know how fortunate we are~~  
 Because we know how lucky we are.

Notes

Title, LP etc: "March the Third" - with footnote 'The Author's Birthday'.

1.15            LP etc    On hillsides . . . . .

The final six lines have presented the problem. He had written to

Farjeon on 28.iv.15.: "Perhaps I shall be able to mend March the 3rd. I know it must either be mended or ended. (1) On this day, the day when he had been 'born into this solitude' ('Rain' - 7:i:16), he reflects. The contrasting sounds, church bells and birds' voices, symbolise man's choice and birds' instinct; yet man's is not wholly alien - 'a wild natural voice that dwells/In hillsides'. The coinciding songs fuse, too, essential similarities - 'A holiness of canticles'. In the midst of change there is some stability, some continuity - even in the ironic touch found in these revised lines:

..... the birds' songs have

The holiness gone from the bells.

The essential source of joy to the poet lies in the unexpected harmony on this particular day. That it is unexpected and unearned makes it that much more palatable. It is in the conclusion to this train of thought that the difficulty lies. He succeeds in fusing the notion of the inevitable and expected day with the unpromised and unknown qualities which have been found in that day, but can find no better conclusion to the analysis of his joy than 'Because we know how lucky we are.' Curious is his limited success in attempting an affirmative note.

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(1) Farjeon, p. 132.

24.iii.15. B.M.f.42. Untitled

Two pewits sport & cry	1
Under the after sunset sky	
Whiter than the moon on high	
That rides the black surf in the sky,	
Than the pool it is mirrored by,	5
The only light under the sky;	
Blacker than the <del>rest</del> earth. Their cry	
Makes the sole sound under the sky.	
They alone move, low or high.	9
And / Merrily as they cry,	
To the mischievous dark sky,	
Plunging earthward, tossing high.	
<del>Under the after sunset sky</del>	13
They care not for the sigh	
Of the traveller wondering why	
So merrily they cry & fly.	
They choose not between earth & sky	
While the moon's quarter silently	18
Rides, <del>the</del> and earth rests as silently.	

l.11 was inserted after the cancellation of l.13.

Revised 4.v.15. B.M.f.70. Untitled

Under the after-sunset sky	1
Two pewits sport & cry	
More white than is the moon on high	
Riding the dark surf silently;	
More black than earth. Their cry	5
Is the one sound under the sky.	
They alone move, now low, now high,	
And merrily they cry	
To the mischievous Spring sky,	
Plunging earthward, tossing high,	10
Over the ghost who wonders why	
So merrily they cry & fly,	
Nor choose 'twixt earth and sky,	
While the moon's quarter silently	
Rides, & earth rests as silently.	15

f.70 appeared in Poems 1917 entitled "Two Pewits" with one alteration.

l.4. P17 etc the dark surge

24.iii.15. B.M.f.42. Untitled (contd.)

In a letter to Farjeon of 5.v.15 ET writes of rejection by Munro and Ellis, for the poems' "rhythm isn't obvious enough". He continues:

I have stopped writing under stress of Marlborough though.  
This "April" is the last. I send "Pewits" because I have revised it. <sup>(1)</sup>

The second draft, revised after a gap of over a month, makes several significant changes, reducing the length and producing a more concise and accurate tone. The juxtaposition of the opening lines needs no comment. The alteration of the comparative 'whiter' and 'blacker' in ll. 3 & 7 (first draft) to 'more white' and 'more black' in ll. 3 & 5 in the second draft, together with the addition of 'is' in l. 3, second draft, adds length, (countered to some extent by the omission of 'the' in l. 5, second draft) but more especially changes the rhythm of the lines, splitting the sounds and creating a more precise effect. On the other hand, the 'black surf' becomes 'dark surf', and the explanatory l. 5 is omitted. This I find is a loss, for the mention of the 'pool' not only provides the context for the striking concept of the moon amidst surf, but also adds the sense of direct contrast between the black earth, and black sky, and the white moon, mirrored in the pool, and the specks of white in the sky, the pewits. Earth, sky, bird and man is reinforced by this sense of the water, mirroring the moon. Less regrettable is the passing of l. 6, which is expendable. Consonantal strength is reinforced by the alteration of 'sole sound' to 'one sound', and the more precise tone of the second draft continues with the reflection of sudden movement in l. 7, 'now low, now high.'

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(1) Farjeon, pp. 133-4



24.iii.15. B.M.f.42. Untitled (contd.)

'dark sky' in the inserted 1.11 of the earlier draft becomes 'Spring sky', one suspects to avoid repetition after the change in 1.4. Spring is however more emblematic of life. Perhaps the most notable change is the alteration of 'the traveller' to 'the ghost', with the accompanying omission of 1.14 of the first draft, and the explicit statement of the lack of connection or sympathy between the traveller and the free airborne birds, wheeling as they will in this black and white vision. The sense of their carefree joy is emphasised in the pivotal line - 1.7 - 'And merrily they cry' - and they have no need to choose between black and white, evil or good, earth or sky. The interrelation of these two supposed opposites was suggested in the mirror image of the pool, and its omission, although in keeping with the clearer tone of the second draft, is surprising. There is after all, the more shadowy idea of the 'ghost' in the second version. On the simple, verbal level, having omitted the pool, the change found in Poems 1917, is justifiable, but 'surge' is regrettably vague and inferior to 'surf'. What is surprising, too, is that W. Cooke should quote the following lines as representative of certain derivative echoes to be found in Thomas' poetry. (Cooke, p. 191.)

..... the moon on high  
Riding the dark surge silently

He compares this to Milton's lines from Il Penseroso

..... the wandering moon,  
Riding near her highest noon.

It seems clear that there is no simple derivative and conventional tone to Thomas' poem; the subject matter is hardly strikingly original, but the use of words certainly is less derivative than this comparison, or others would

24.iii.15. B.M.f.42. Untitled (contd.)

indicate. This seems to me to further the argument in favour of the more particularly realised image of the pool and the surf.

26.iii.15. B.M.f.44. Untitled

I know a path

running along a bank

A parapet

Running along a bank, a parapet  
 That saves from the precipitous wood below  
 The level road, ~~I know~~ there is a path. It serves  
 Children for looking down the long smooth steep,  
 Between the legs of yew & beech, to where  
 A fallen one checks the sight: while men and women  
 Content themselves with the road and what is seen  
 Over the bank, and what the children tell.  
 The path, winding like silver, trickles on,  
 Bordered & even invaded by thinnest moss  
 That tries to cover roots and crumbling chalk  
 With gold, olive, and emerald, but in vain.  
 The children wear it. They have flattened the bank  
 On top, & silvered it between the moss  
 With the current of their feet, year after year.  
 But the rd is houseless, and leads not to school.  
 To see a child is rare there, and the eye  
 Has but the road, the wood that overhangs  
 And underyawns it, and the path that looks  
 As if it led on to some legendary  
 Or fancied place where men have wished to go  
 And stay; till, sudden, it ends where the wood ends.

Notes Poems 1917 etc, title: "The Path"

The false start in the ~~ms.~~ is not cancelled.

- 1.5 P17 etc the legs of beech and yew,
- 1.6 P17 etc A fallen tree
- 1.7 P17 etc the road and what they see
- 1.16 P17 etc ~~But the road.~~

28.iii.15. B.M.f.46. Untitled

There once the walls  
Of the ruined cottage stood.  
The periwinkle crawls  
With flowers in its hair into the wood.

In flowerless hours  
Never will the bank fail,  
With everlasting flowers  
On fragments of blue plates, to tell the tale.

31.iii.15. B.M.f.46. Untitled

Here once flint walls  
Pump, orchard and woodpile stood  
Blue periwinkle crawls  
From the lost garden down into the wood.

The flowerless hours  
Of winter cannot prevail  
To blight those other flowers  
Blue china fragments scattered that tell the tale.

### Notes

The earlier draft, cancelled in ms., appeared in Last Poems entitled "A Tale". This error has been perpetuated; the revised draft has never been printed. The revised draft is in different ink and seems to be a thorough revision after the earlier version had been entered in the ms. book.

Neither textually, nor critically does there seem to be justification for this anomaly. From the opening line the second version manifests its superiority. The immediacy of 'here' is reinforced by the muscular particularity of 'flint walls'. The Wordsworthian 'ruined cottage' is given specific life - 'Pump orchard and woodpile'. The elaborate personification of the periwinkle is replaced by the simpler description of the second draft. Periwinkle, often found in gardens, is merging once more with the wood. Its colour - blue - is to be echoed with purpose in the final line. The second stanza, too, is more taut. The essential irony around which the poem is built, finds more particular expression in the second draft. The little fragments of plates, insignificant relics, are nonetheless beyond the power of winter, unlike the periwinkle. The languor of 'flowerless hours' is tautened in the second draft by the word 'winter', echoing 'flint'. Similarly, the bank, with its 'everlasting flowers', has less impact than the suggested struggle implicit in the words 'prevail' and 'blight'. The words of the second draft are used more purposefully, and the rhythm too is more alive. Simple reading aloud of the two versions will be sufficient indication of the greater consonantal strength and thus vitality of the second draft. As suggested, the two opening lines are indicative. In all respects the later draft is to be preferred as a more incisive and particular treatment.

Undated B.M.f. 50v Untitled (ll. 1-30.)

At hawthorn time in Wiltshire travelling  
 In search of something ~~no one~~ fortune wd not bring 2  
~~And seeking that which no one to me wd bring~~  
 An old man's face by life and weather cut  
 And coloured, and in rough brown sweet as any nut

(The lines above appear opposite the opening lines on f. 51)

3-4. iv. 15. B.M.f. 51, 2, 3, 4, 5. Untitled

~~His face by 70 English winters cut~~  
~~To something rough, - brown, - sweet as any nut~~  
 A land face, sea-blue eyed - hung in my mind  
 After I had left him many a mile behind. 6  
 He only said: 'Nobody can't stop 'ee. It's  
 A foot-path, right enough. You see those bits  
 Of mounds - that's where they opened up the barrows  
 Sixty years since, while I was scaring sparrows,  
 They thought as there was somewhat there to find, 11  
 But couldn't find it, by digging, anywhere.'

To turn back then and seek him, where was the use?  
 There were 3 Manningfords, - Abbots, Bohun, & Bruce:  
 And whether Alton, not Manningford, it was 15  
 My memory could not decide, because  
 There was both Alton Barnes and Alton Priors.  
 All had their ches, gvyds, fms, and byres,  
 Lurking up to one side up the paths or lanes,  
 Never well seen except by aeroplanes; 20  
 And ~~only~~ when bells rang, or pigs squealed, or cocks crowed,  
 Then only heard. Ages ago the road  
 Approached. The people stood & looked & turned.  
 Nor asked it to come nearer, not yet learned  
 To move out there & live in all men's dust. 25  
 And yet withal they shot the weathercock just  
 Because 'twas he crowed out of tune, they said;  
 So now the copper weathercock is dead.  
 If they ~~have~~ had reaped their dandelions & sold  
 Them fairly, they cd have afforded gold. 30

### Notes

Title - Form, Poems 1917 etc "Lob"

- 1.2 Form etc. chance would never bring,  
 1.3 " face,  
 1.4 " coloured, - rough, brown, sweet as any nut, -  
 1.6 " When I  
 1.7 " All he said was:  
 1.11 " there was something to find there,

Notes (contd.)      B.M.f. 51-5      (11. 31-57)

- 1.15 P17      it was,  
1.18 Form etc. churches, graveyards, farms, and byres,

(I have noted printed expansion of abbreviation only where necessary)

- 1.19 Form etc. paths and lanes,  
1.20      "      Seldom well seen  
1.23      "      turned, / P17 as ffs.  
1.26      "      weathercock, just

(break in ms. here, in Form and in Poems 1917, but not elsewhere).

Long years passed, and ~~then~~ once I went back again      31  
Among those villages, & looked for men  
Who might have known my ancient. He himself  
Had long been dead or laid upon the shelf,  
I thought. One man I ask'd abt him roared      35  
At my description: 'Tis old Bottlesford  
He means, Bill.' But anr said: 'Of course,  
It was Jack Button up at the White Horse.  
He's dead, sir, these 3 years.' This lasted till  
A girl propos'd Walker of Walker's Hill,      40  
'Old Adam Wker. Adam's Point you'll see  
Mark'd on the maps.'  
'That was her roquery',      42  
The next man said, he was a squire's son  
Who lov'd wild bird & beast, & dog & gun  
For killing them. He had loved them from his birth,  
One with another, as he lov'd the earth.  
'The man may be like Button or Walker, or      47  
Like Bottlesford, that you want, but far more  
He sounds like one I saw when I was a child.  
I'd almost swear to him. But he was wild  
And wander'd. His home was where he was free.  
Everyone has met one such man as he.      52  
Does he keep clear old paths that noone uses  
But once a lifetime when he loves or muses?  
He is English as this gate, these flowers, this mire.  
And when at 8 yrs old Lob-lie-by-the-fire  
Came in my books, this was the man I saw.      57

### Notes

- 1.31 Form etc. Many years passed, and I went back again  
1.35      "      I asked about  
1.37      "      another  
1.39      Form      Hes' / P17 etc as ffs.  
1.40 Form etc. proposed  
1.41      "      Walker  
1.42      "      Marked  
         Form      roquery / P17 etc (as ffs.) roquery,

- 1.43 Form etc. said. He was  
 1.44) " loved  
 1.46)  
 1.50 " I could almost swear to him. The man was wild  
 1.51 " wandered  
 1.52 " Everybody

He has been in England as long as dove & daw, 58  
 Calling the wild ~~merry~~ cherry tree the merry tree,  
 The Rose campion Bridget-in-her-bravery;  
 And in a tender mood he, as I guess,  
 Christened one flower Love-in-idleness,  
 And while he walked from Exeter to Leeds 63  
 One April, called all cuckoo-flowers milkmaids.  
 From him old herbal Gerard learnt, as a boy,  
 To name wild clematis the traveller's joy.  
 The blackbirds sang no English till his ear  
 Told him they called his Jan Toy 'Pretty Dear' 68  
 (She was Jan Toy the Lucky, who, having lost  
 A shilling, and found 2d 1d loaf, rejoiced.)  
 For reasons of his own he calls the wren  
 The Jenny Pooter. Before all other men  
 'Twas he 1st called the Hog's Back the Hog's Back. 73  
 That Mother Dunch's Buttocks shd not lack  
 Their name was his care. He too cd explain  
 Totteridge and Totterdown and Juggler's Lane:  
 He knows, if anyone. Why Tumbling Bay,  
 Inland in Kent, is call'd so, he cd say. 78  
 But little he says cpard w wh he does.  
 Whenever a sage troubles him he will buzz  
 Like a beehive to end the tedious fray:  
 The sage, who knows all language runs away.  
 And-yet he has ~~1000~~ 1300 names for a fool, 83  
 And tho he never cd spare time for school  
 To unlearn wh the fox so well expressed,  
 When biting the cock's head off, Quietness is best.  
 He can talk quite as well as anyone  
 After his thinking is forgot and done. 88

Notes

- 1.60 Form etc rose campion  
 1.64 " One April called all cuckoo-flowers Milkmaids.  
 1.66 " Traveller's-joy.  
 1.67 " Our blackbirds  
 1.68 Form. "Pretty dear."/P17 etc. "Pretty dear"  
 1.70 Form etc. a penny loaf,

Notes (contd.) B.M.f. 51--5 ctd.

- 1.71 Form etc. to him the wren  
 1.72 " Is Jenny Pooter.  
 1.78 " called  
 1.79 " new paragraph  
 1.79 " compared with what he does.  
 1.80 " If ever  
 1.81 " to conclude the tedious fray:  
 1.82 " And the sage, who knows all languages,

(Note additional syllables - two, unstressed, - and loss of internal echo)

- 1.83 Form etc. Yet Lob  
 1.85 " To unteach what  
 1.86 " off, - Quietness

- 1) A letter to W.H. Hudson of 1908 finds echo in 1.59 - "By the way, we call wild cherry trees in these parts 'merry trees'." (*Letters of Edward Thomas to W.H. Hudson; To the Memory of Edward Thomas, ed. James Guthrie, 1937.*)
- 2) In his anthology This England, Thomas included material echoed in 1.66 and 1.68. The former line arises from an extract from John Gerard's The Herball, naming Traveller's Joy; the latter from Thomas Hardy's poem, "The Spring Call".
- 3) Blackwoods objected to 1.74 - ET suggested the following - 'That Happersnapper Hanger should not lack' as a 'Blackwood version of the disgusting line' in a letter to EF of June 1915. Form had no such objection! (*Farjeon, p. 145*)

(ll 89-104)

'Twas he first told somebody else's wife, 89  
 For a farthing she'd skin a flint & spoil a knife  
 Worth 6d skinning it. She heard him speak.  
 'She had a face as long as a wet week'  
 Said he, telling the tale in after years.  
 With blue smock & w gold rings in his ears 94  
 Sometimes he is a pedlar, not too poor  
 To-keep his wit. This w is tall Tom that bore  
~~Logs~~ The logs in. He with Shakespeare in the hall  
 Has talked, when icicles hung by the wall.  
 (Chaucer & Wordsworth & all true poets were 99  
 His friends, & Cobbet, Bunyan & Latimer.)  
 As Herne the Hunter he once he knew hard times.  
 On sleepless nights he made up weather rhymes  
 Whi others spoilt. And, when Hob being then his name,  
 He kept the hog that thought the butcher came 104  
 To bring his breakfast. 'You thought wrong,' said Hob.



B.M.f. 51-5 (contd.)

(ll. 104-133)

When there were kings in Kent this very Lob,  
 Whose sheep grew fat & he himself grew merry,  
 Wedded the king's dr of Canterbury;  
 Since he alone, unlike squire, lord, and king,  
 Watch'd a nt by her without slumbering; 109  
 He kept ~~her-merry~~ both waking. When he was but a lad  
 He won a rich man's dr, deaf, dumb, & sad,  
 By rousing her to laugh at him. He carried  
 His donkey on his back. So they were married. 114

Notes

- 1.89 Form etc. He first of all told someone else's wife,  
 1.91 " sixpence .... speak:  
 1.94 " with gold  
 1.97 " The logs in, and with  
 1.98 " Once talked,  
 ll.99 & 100 are omitted in all printed texts: they appear in brackets in the mss.  
 1.101 " he has known hard times.  
 1.103 " which  
 1.105 Form. breakfast: 'You thought wrong' said Hob./P17 etc. as mss.  
 1.108 Form etc. daughter Form: Canterbury:  
 1.110 " Watched a night  
 1.111 " Ms. emendation has been made in pencil.  
 1.112 " rich man's heiress,

And while he was a little cobbler's boy  
 He trick'd the giant coming to destroy  
 Shrewsbury by flood. 'And how far is it yet?'  
 The giant asked in passing. 'I forget;  
 But see these shoes I've worn out on the road  
 And we're not there yet.' He poured down the load  
 Of- Out of his sack. The giant let fall his spade 121  
 Of earth for damming Severn, and thus made  
 The wrekin hill; and little Ercall hill  
 Rose where the giant scraped his boots. While  
 So young, our Jack was chief of Gotham's sages.  
 Even before he ~~got his wisdom~~ could have been wise, ages  
~~Earlier than this, as Jack the giantkiller~~ 127  
~~He knew fame . . . .~~ 128

(Inserted here are the lines which appear opposite, on f. 53v)

Earlier than this, while he grew thick and strong 129

And ate his bacon, or, at times sang-a song  
 And merely smelt it, as Jack the giantkiller  
 He made a fame

. . . . 'Twas he ground up the miller 132

A Yorkshireman who ground men's bones for flour. 133

- Notes      B.M. 51-5 (
- 1.120      Form etc. He emptied out his load
- 1.121      Form,      Of shoes. The giant sighed, and dropped from his  
spade
- P17 etc.      Of shoes for mending. The giant let fall from his  
spade
- 1.122      Form etc. The earth
- 1.123      Form.      Wrekin Hill; ... Ercall Hill
- 1.132      Form etc. He made a name
- Form.      He, too,
- P.17 etc.      He too
- 1.133      Form etc. The Yorkshireman

B.M. 51-5 (contd.) (ll.134-152)

'Do you believe Jack dead before his hour?  
Or that his name w is Walker, or Bottlesford,  
Or Button, a mere clown, or squire, or lord?  
The man you saw, - Lob-lie-by-the-fire, Jack Cade,  
Jack Smith, Jack Moon, poor Jack of every trade,  
Young Jack, /<sup>or</sup> old Jack, or Jack What-d'ye-call,  
Jack-in-the-hedge, or Robin-run-by--the-wall,  
Robin Hood, Ragged Robin, lazyBob,  
One of the lords of No Man's Land, good Lob      142  
Lives yet. He never will admit he is dead      143  
Till millers cease to grind men's bones for bread,  
Not till our weathercock crows once again  
And I remove my house out of this lane  
Onto the road.' With this he disappeared  
In hazel & thorn tangled with old-man's-beard,  
But one glimpse of his back, as there he stood,      149  
Choosing his way, proved him of old Jack's blood,  
Young Jack perhaps, & now a Wiltshireman  
As he has oft been since his days began.

Notes

The following two lines appear in print, between fms. ll. 142-143  
(150 complete lines appear in print).

Although he was seen dying at Waterloo,  
Hastings, Agincourt, and Sedgemoor too, -  
(Form prints 'Sedgemoor')

**1.149. Form. stood / P17 etc. as fms.**

This text, omitting ll. 99-100, and substituting the two lines printed  
above, appeared in the magazine Form, edited by Austin Spare, in July  
1916 - the issue of April 1916. In the list of contents, under the heading  
Literary Contributions, appears the following entry:

Lob. Poem by Edward Eastaway. p.33.

Notes (contd.) B.M. 51-5

('Words' appeared on p.34). Other poems printed were by Binyon, Housman, W.B. Yeats, de la Mare, Massingham, Sturge Moore, Squire, and W. H. Davies.) 'Lob' appeared opposite a rather fine female nude, entitled 'Bacchae', by Austin O. Spare. Among several wry comments on this magazine, is the following, contained in a letter to Farjeon, postmarked 30 January 1916 (Farjeon, p. 184)

It will be a final proof of Lob and Words that will come to 137 Fellows Rd I expect. Spare doesn't seem to suspect me. I agree about his work. I only regard 'Form' as giving me a bit of public, though it will be very little help because I shan't fit in and shall rather suffer from the character of my company.

The poem, with some revisions, was subsequently included in Poems 1917. As late as 11 March 1916 ET wrote to Bottomley that he had not had the proof promised by Spare. This may explain the errors of punctuation and spelling found in Form. (Letters, p. 263)

Not surprisingly, this, the longest of all Thomas' poems, occasioned comment from several friends and critics. Edward Garnett advised Thomas to tidy up the metre. Thomas' reply is a significant comment on his prosody.

I am doubtful about the chiselling you advise. It would be the easiest thing in the world to clean it all up and trim it and have every line straightforward in sound and sense but it wd not really improve it . . . . I think you read too much with the eye perhaps. If you say a couplet like 'If they had mowed their dandelions and sold/Them fairly they could have afforded gold' I believe it is no longer awkward. (see pp. 148-9 above)

It is indeed so, and fittingly true of a poem particularly based on oral tradition. We may note, in passing, the variant of 1.29 above, contained in this letter of April 1915.

Before considering the text in detail, there are further comments, found in ET's letters which indicate the poet's intentions and attitudes. The ancestry of the poem within Thomas' own work is indicated in this letter of 28 November 1915, to Farjeon:

By the time I am a sergeant I shall be really young I suppose. I wish I had gone on where Proverbs left off. Probably I never shall, unless "Lob" is the beginning. (Farjeon, p. 172)

These 'Proverbs' were published as Four and Twenty Blackbirds - as Farjeon explains 'fragments of mock folk-lore based on homely proverbs'. The attraction of this vein of traditional common sense in comparison to the apparently perennial stupidity of war is clear. The poem "Lob", though, is no simple refuge in folk-lore. The awareness that permeates Marlborough, and many poems contemporary to that

Notes (contd.) B.M. 51-5

book - "Digging", for example - can be felt in "Lob" too. Central to the poem is the question, will the spirit of Lob, manifest in so many different ways, withstand present pressure? An earlier essay by Thomas in The Country, posits a similar qualified and concerned affirmation:

You may be sure there were hundreds like him in Shakespeare's time and in Wordsworth's, and if there aren't a good sprinkling of them, generation after generation, I do not know what we shall come to, but I have my fears. (Quoted by Cooke, p. 217.)  
See also pp 67-9 above.

The fears are not quite groundless. Paradoxically, with aeroplane and encroaching road, the villages, where such instinctive wisdom can be found, seem even more remote and close knit. To identify and appreciate what is eventually proven to remain in spirit, is difficult. Wise statements such as this, on the attempt to discover the past by opening the barrows,

They thought as there was something to find there,  
 But couldn't find it, by digging, anywhere.

the couplet already mentioned in the letter to Garnett, and this:

..... he never could spare time for school  
 To unteach what the fox so well expressed,  
 On biting the cock's head off, - Quietness is best,

arise from the earlier mixture of proverb, folk-lore and common sense found in Four and Twenty Blackbirds, and other illustrative anecdotes. Allied to a joyful mixture of English names -

..... while he walked from Exeter to Leeds  
 One April called all cuckoo-flowers Milkmaids  
 [- and legend, oral and literary, -]  
 But little he says compared with what he does .....  
 He kept the hog that thought the butcher came  
 To bring his breakfast. 'You thought wrong', said Hob

this list of folk-lore, old and new, seems to lack the cutting edge of purpose. In passing on to the episodes of the giants, one should pause to note the allusion to Bunyan in the cancelled 1.99. Legendary giants and foul fiends were symbols common to literature and legend. Thomas here makes use of two such episodes, especially the tricking of the giant who came to flood Shrewsbury by damming the Severn. The impish and indestructible spirit is here given a serious task to accomplish. W. Cooke's explanatory allusions on pp 218-9 are interesting, but not essential to the retrospective understanding of the undertones of national threat, or war. Giant-killing was an obvious image in the face of the German war machine. Robert Graves' poem, "Goliath and David", is another instance of this image being used -

..... spike-helmeted, grey, grim,  
 Goliath straddles over him.

(This allusion may well be recalled without prior recourse to Cooke's note).

Notes (contd.) B.M.f.51-5

More immediately relevant are two extracts from Thomas' essay, "It's a Long, Long Way". Writing of the country attitude to the war, he had said:

They not only imagined themselves suffering like Belgian peasants, but being specially attacked in the Forest of Dean by German aeroplanes. Napoleon, a hundred years ago, was expected to sail up the Severn and destroy the Forest: now it was feared that the Germans were coming. (The Last Sheaf, p.136)

Reference is made in this essay to the 'German Colossus' created by the newspapers - here we can look forward to Bodleian f.19 of 26xii:15 :

This is no case of petty right or wrong  
That politicians or philosophers  
Can judge. I hate not Germans, nor grow hot  
With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers.

The image was striking, and an apt adversary for the spirit of Lob. All these scraps of data can be seen as subservient to the text of the poem. Retrospective, understanding of this image - and that of the Yorkshireman who ground men's bones for flour, miller or profiteer, - is given by these lines:

One of the lords of No Man's Land, good Lob  
Lives yet.

To reinforce these undertones of war the following lines were inserted between those:

Although he was seen dying at Waterloo,  
Hastings, Agincourt, and Sedgemoor too,

Lob is the incarnation of a spirit, extolled in the poem by the other speaker, or alter ego, in reply to the questioning of the poet, seemingly too ready to confine Lob's qualities to one countryman. The final affirmation, faced with threats legendary and actual, is found in these lines:

..... He never will admit he is dead  
Till millers cease to grind men's bones for bread

.....

With this he disappeared  
In hazel and thorn tangled with old-man's-beard.  
But one glimpse of his back, as there he stood,  
Choosing his way, proved him of old Jack's blood,  
Young Jack perhaps, and now a Wiltshireman  
As he has oft been since his days began.

Notes (contd.) B.M.f. 51-5

Much of the poem is an apotheosis of what is peculiarly English - the distinguishing names and legends, and ways of action. 'Choosing his way' signifies positive value - freedom of choice<sup>(1)</sup> The later poem, already referred to, summarises much of the attitude inherent in "Lob".

I am one in crying 'God save England'; lest  
 We lose what never slaves and cattle blessed.  
 The ages made her that made her from dust:  
 She is all we know and live by, and we trust  
 She is good and must endure, loving her so:  
 And as we love ourselves we hate her foe.

Thus, in "Lob", Thomas' longest poem, we have a deft conversational debate as to the existence and endurance of a fabled spirit, seen in terms of past name and action. Present difficulties are honestly appraised in these terms and hope for the future is thereby found.

---

(1) note l. 51 : His home was where he was free.

4:iv.15. B.M.f.56. Untitled.

Except with scents  
I cannot think, - scents dead

Today, with scents  
Only, I think, - scents dead leaves yield,  
And sage, - the wild carrots' seed, 5  
And the square mustard field;

Odours that rise  
When the spade wounds the roots of tree,  
Rose, currant, raspberry, & goutweed,  
Rhubarb & celery; 10

The smoke's smell, too,  
Flowing from where a bonfire burns  
The dead, the waste, the dangerous,  
And all to sweetness turns.

It is enough 15  
To smell, to crumble the dark earth,

I singing his

To hear the robin ~~sing his sad song~~  
~~Sad songs of autumn mirth~~ 18  
While the robin sings all the time  
Sad songs of autumn mirth 20

### Notes

**Title, LPetc:** "Digging"

LP etc. stanza 1: Today I think  
Only with scents, scents dead leaves yield,  
And bracken, and wild carrot's seed,  
And the square mustard field;

l. 8 LPetc Root of tree.

ll. 9, 10 " Or for and

ll. 19, 20 " While the robin sings over again  
Sad songs of Autumn mirth.

ll. 19 & 20 are added at a later date in a different ink.

The 'false start' referred to by W. Cooke <sup>(1)</sup> is not cancelled: in l. 5 the dash could be read as '&'. The final correction, ll. 19-20 in ms, are added in a different ink. It is interesting to note that this better known poem was not chosen for Poems 1917 by ET.

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(1) Cooke, p. 252.

14.iv.15.      B.M.f.59.      Untitled

The downs will lose the sun, white alyssum  
 Lose the bees' hum;  
 But head and bottle tilted back in the cart  
 Will never part  
 Till I am cold as midnight sun and my hours  
 Are beeless flowers.  
 He neither sees, nor hears, nor smells, nor thinks,  
 But only drinks,  
~~In the~~ Quiet in the yard where tree trunks do not lie  
 More quietly.

Notes

P17 etc

Title - "Head and Bottle"

1.5, P17 etc Till I am cold as midnight and all my hours

The Ms. version seems more typical of ET's juxtaposition of night and day, dark and light - viz. "The Hollow Wood", "Two Pewits", "Liberty". - and, moreover, avoids the more conventional rhythm of the printed version.



21.v.15. B.M.f.64. Untitled

1. She dotes on what the wild birds say  
Or hint or mock at, night & day -  
Thrush, blackbird, ~~all the birds of all~~ that sing in May  
And songless plover,  
Hawk, heron, owl, & woodpecker.  
They never say a word to her  
About her lover.

ied

2. Yet she has fancied ~~ed~~ blackbirds hide  
A secret, or that thrushes chide  
Because she thinks death can divide  
Her from her lover:  
~~And there she dreamed~~ And she has slept, trying to translate  
The word the cuckoo cries to his mate  
Over and over.
3. She laughs at them for childishness,  
She cries at them for carelessness  
Who see her going loverless  
Yet sing & chatter  
Just as when he was not a ghost,  
And never ask her what she has lost  
Or what is the matter.

### Notes

Title, LP etc: . . . - "She Dotes"

Stanzas 2 & 3, (my nos.) are repositioned in ms., the order, as in Last Poems and subsequent editions, being 1, 3, 2.

The one alteration textually, occurs in the penultimate line - LP etc. Nor ever

22.iv.15. B.M.f.65. Untitled.

She is beautiful  
 With happiness invincible,  
 If cruel she be  
 It is ~~with~~ a the hawk's proud innocent cruelty.

At poets' tears,  
 Sweeter than any smiles but hers,  
 She laughs; I sigh;  
 And yet I could not live if she sh'd die.

And when in June  
 Once more the cuckoo spoils his tune,  
 She laughs at sighs;  
 And yet she says she loves me till she dies.

### Notes

1. The first stanza has always been omitted in print, even when ET included the poem in a letter to EF, 28.iv.15 with the following comment:

..... I am under a thick cloud of Marlborough mostly, tho I wrote a sort of a song in it;

At poet's tears  
 Sweeter than any smiles but hers  
 She laughs: I sigh:  
 And yet I could not live if she should die  
 And when in June  
 Once more the cuckoo spoils his tune,  
 She laughs at sighs:  
 And yet she says she loves me till she dies.

Does it make you larf? (Farjeen, p.132)

2. The poem appeared in Last Poems as in the letter to EF - with 'Poet's' (Ms. poets') in the opening line. Ll. 3 & 7 had semi-colons, 'should' (l.4) was not abbreviated as it was in mss.
3. From ET's flippant comment, it is clear that it was an occasional poem, and it did not appear during his lifetime. It is nevertheless surprising that the opening stanza was omitted, for it adds some weight to the poem with the image of the hawk. That there is justification for omitting the opening mss. stanza is obvious from ET's omission in the letter to EF.
4. Title, LP etc, - "Song".

24.1v.(15) B.M.f.66. Untitled.

She had a name among the children;  
But no one loved though someone owned  
Her, locked her out of doors at bedtime  
And had her kittens duly drowned.

In Spring, nevertheless, this cat  
Ate thrushes, blackbirds, nightingales,  
And birds of bright voice and plume & flight,  
As well as scraps from neighbours' pails.

I loathed and hated her for this;  
One speckle on a thrush's breast  
Was worth a million such; yet ~~once~~ she

~~Sh'd ft. a stranger's dog, this pest.~~  
~~From a stranger's dog I saved this pest.~~  
~~For good of a bird~~  
Lived long till God gave her rest.

Notes

**P17 etc.**

Title/- "A Cat"

- 1.6. P 17 etc. blackbirds, thrushes, nightingales  
1.11 " ; and yet  
1.12 " She lived long, till God gave her rest.

There are four attempts to find the right conclusion  
cf. "March the Third", pp 189-90 above.

30.iv.15. B.M.f.68. Untitled.

Margaret, you know at night  
 The larks in Castle Alley  
 Sing from the ~~Attic's~~ height  
 As if the electric light  
 Were the true sun above a summer valley:  
 Whistle, don't knock, tonight.

~~Come soon my heart tonight~~  
 I shall come early, Kate  
 And we in Castle Alley  
~~Shall-Will~~ sit close out of sight  
 Alone, & ask no light  
 From lamp or sun above a summer valley:  
~~Whistle, don't knock, tonight.~~  
 Tonight I can stay late.

### Notes

Title, LP etc. "To-night"

1.1. LP etc. Harry, you know at night  
 1.11. " Of lamp

An interesting change in the direction of the conversation has taken place. Originally the poem in its entirety is addressed to Margaret, although it is equally feasible that the second verse is her reply. A clear error has been made in the ~~ffs.~~, for, having corrected ll. 6 and 12, it is to say the least, unlikely that it was the poet's intention to have two female characters, as the poem is essentially a conversation of two lovers, who, like the larks, have to make do with their urban environment, bereft of the more romantic 'summer valley'. In fact they will 'ask no light/From lamp or sun', and the amended final line is quite explicit.

8.v.15.      B.M.f.72/73.      The Chalk Pit.

Is this the road that climbs above and bends  
Round what was a chalk-pit once: but ~~it is~~ now it is  
An accidental amphitheatre.

~~The ash~~ Some ash trees standing ankle-deep in brier  
And bramble act ~~all~~ the parts, ~~they~~ & neither speak  
Nor stir'. 'But see! they have fallen, every one,  
And brier and bramble have grown over them.'

5

Hardly can I imagine the drop of the axe,  
And the smack that is like an echo, sounding here'.

10

'I do not understand.' 'Why, what I mean is

That I have seen the place 2 or 3 times  
At most, and that its emptiness and silence

And stillness haunt me, as if just before

It was not empty, silent, still, but full

15

Of life of some kind, perhaps tragical.

Has anything unusual happened here?'

'Not that I know of. It is called the Dell.

They have not dug chalk here for a century.

The ash trees were that age. But I will ask.'

20

'No, do not. I prefer to make a tale,  
Or better leave it like the end of a play,

Actors and audience & lights all gone;

For so it looks now. In my memory

Again & again I see it, strangely dark,

25

And vacant of a life but just withdrawn.

We have not seen the woodman with the axe.

Some ghost has left it now as we two came.'

'And yet you doubted if this were the road?'

'Well, sometimes I have thought of it & failed

30

To place it. No. / And I am not quite sure,

Even now, this is it. For another place,

Real or painted, may have combined with it.

Or I myself ~~was seemed~~ a long way back in time ...'

'Why, as to that, I used to meet a man -

35

I had forgotten, - ~~looking~~ - searching for birds nests

Along the road and in the pit itself.

The wren's hole was an eye that looked at him

For recognition. Every nest he knew.

He got a stiff neck, by looking this side or that,

40

Spring after spring, he told me, with his laugh, -

A sort of laugh. He was a visitor,

A man of 40, - smoked and strolled about.

At orts and crosses Pleasure and Pain had played

On his brown features; - I think both had lost; -

45

Mild & yet wild too. You may know the breed.

'Some literary fellow, I suppose.

I shall not mix my fancies up with him.'

Notes

B.M.f.72/73

The Chalk Pit

Last Poems etc. } 1.2. : was once a chalk-pit: now it is  
 has the following } 1.3. :By accident ...  
 emendations } 1.4. : briar  
 1.6. : But see:  
 1.7. : briar

[No gap between 1. 17 & 18.] 1.18. : call'd

1.20 : That was the ash trees' age.

1.21 : 'No, do not.

1.37 : and in the chalk-pit too.

1.46 : You may know the kind.

ll.47-48 : do not appear in print. The last 12 lines appear thus -  
 (ll.47-58) as in Last Poems etc. -

And once or twice a woman shared his walks,  
 A girl of twenty with a brown boy's face,  
 And hair brown as a thrush or as a nut,  
 Thick eyebrows, glinting eyes - 'You have said enough.  
 A pair, - free thought, free love, - I know the breed:  
 I shall not mix my fancies up with them.'  
 'You please yourself. I should prefer the truth  
 Or nothing. Here, in fact, is nothing at all  
 Except a silent place that once rang loud,  
 And trees and us - imperfect friends, we men  
 And trees since time began; and nevertheless  
 Between us still we breed a mystery.'

Elsewhere in the B.M. Ms. there are poems which have been cut prior to publication, f.36 (Sowing) omits the final stanza; f.54 (Song) omits the opening stanza. This is the most notable instance of a poem being expanded after its insertion in the B.M. book, the other example being f.9, which has two drafts; the final version of f.9 in print changes the emphasis by the addition of two lines, and title, to the second draft.

The additional lines found in LP provide a human counterpart for the imagined drama enacted by the ash trees until overgrown by briar and bramble. 'Its emptiness and silence/And stillness' haunt the speaker; previously the place was full of life - 'Of some kind, perhaps tragical.' The poet's preoccupation with the presence of the past in the present is suggested by the lines:

... In my memory  
 Again and again I see it, strangely dark,  
 And vacant of a life but just withdrawn.

The tone of 'just' is significant; the past is just out of reach, yet felt. 'Some ghost has left it now as we two came;' Despite its avowed impact, the other speaker reminds the poet that he had expressed doubt as to its location. In reply the poet admits that the scene 'may have combined' with 'another place', 'real or painted', or indeed received its significance from his past self. This reminds the poet's acquaintance<sup>1</sup> of a past memory of a man who is clearly in some respects identifiable as the poet himself. Characteristically Thomas is wryly disparaging through the medium of the other speaker; his own insistence on accuracy and open mindedness he sees as a cause merely for a stiff neck. Yet he is positive that neither pleasure nor pain has had the better of him. The revised ending is a significant departure. Originally Thomas was content with the reply

'Some literary fellow, I suppose.  
I shall not mix my fancies up with him.'

The revised ending, as previously suggested, provides a human counterpart for the 'perhaps tragical' drama of the 'accidental amphitheatre.' It also reflects the ambiguities inherent in this narrative structure of ego and alter ego. The 'free thought, free love' attributed abruptly to the newly created 'pair', in place of the single literary fellow, is not to be dismissed thus. We continue the meaningfully ambiguous appraisal with '.... I should prefer the truth / Or nothing.'

This seemingly simple, emphatic statement is complicated by the qualifying

Here, in fact, is nothing at all  
Except a silent place that once rang loud,  
And trees and us.

We may recall similar apparent bathos in "The Brook" of 10:viii:15, where the child's 'No one's been here before' is the obvious parallel level of perception to the poet's. (The child's voice, in dismissing the past, had, we note, 'raised the dead'). Confronted with this apparent contradiction, we must follow the immediately prior instruction - 'You please yourself.' Our level of perception - human or non-human, and our criteria of significance must be our own. The only reconciliation of such opposites that the poet can offer us is the undoubted, yet puzzling ... silent place that once rang loud,  
And trees and us - imperfect friends, we men  
And trees since time began; and nevertheless  
Between us still we breed a mystery.

The revised ending is here a clear and significant progression, finally polarising the contrasting viewpoints of the two speakers.

---

1, whom we may identify as a manifestation of "The Other", traceable through many earlier works, and mentioned by R.P. Eckert as 'Philip' of childhood imaginings. This was a device for expressing personal ideas while retaining reserve and impersonality.

13.v.15. B.M.f.74. Untitled, except for note - British Museum?

There they stand, on their ends, the fifty faggots  
 That once were underwood of hazel & ash  
 In Jenny Pink's Copse. Now by the hedge  
 Close packed, they make a thicket. Fancy alone  
 Can creep through with wren & mouse. Next Spring  
 A blackbird or a robin will nest there,  
 Accustomed to them, thinking they will remain  
 Whatever is for every to a bird: have  
 This Spring it is too late: the swifts ~~having~~ come.  
 'Twas a hot day for carrying them up:  
 Better they will never warm me, though they must  
 Light several Winters' fires. Before they are done  
 The war will have ended, many other things  
 Have ended that I know not more about  
 And care not less for than robin & wren.

### Notes

Title, ~~ET~~ etc: "Fifty Faggots"

- 1.2, 5, 15 : And for & in all printed editions
- 1.3. P. 17~~th~~: Now,
- 1.4. " Thicket fancy
- 1.5. " the mouse and wren.
- 1.9. " late; the swift has come.
- 1.14-15 " Have ended, maybe, that I can no more  
 foresee or more control than robin and wren.

Letter to EF dated 3.vi.15.

You see how I had amended 50 Faggots before your  
 objections to the last lines came. I imagine they leave  
 it clear. (Farjeon, p. 143.)

This is interesting as it shows that on this occasion ET anticipated EF's adverse criticism, perhaps of the ambiguity in the Ms. version here reproduced, and altered the last lines. Without further evidence, however, there remains the possibility that it may have been an earlier version which was corrected.



23.v.15. B.M.f.75-6 Untitled.

This beauty ~~make~~ made me dream there was a time 1  
 Long past & irrecoverable, a clime  
 Where from such brooks shining & racing deep  
 Thro buttercup & kingcup bright as brass  
 But gentle, nourishing the meadow grass 5  
 That scurries in the wind, ~~should~~ would straight appear  
 Another beauty, ~~human~~ & feminine  
   divine  
 Newborn of it, whose happy soul unstained  
 Cd love all day, & never hate or tire,  
 /A lover of mortal or immortal kin. 10  
 And yet, rid of this dream, ere I had drained  
 Its poison quite, the sun's past light & fire  
 Bred me a deep content with what the water,  
 Clearer than any goddess : or man's daughter, 14  
 Had for its voice, ~~then~~ While ~~combing~~ the dark green hair  
   w           it combed  
 And shook the millions of the blossoms white  
 Of water-crowfoot, & curdled to one sheet  
 The ~~petals~~ flowers fallen from the chestnuts in the park  
 Far off; and sedgwarblers, that hang so light  
 On willow twigs, sang longer than any lark, 20  
 Quick, shrill, or grating, a song to match the heat  
 Of the strong sun, nor less the water's cool,  
 Gushing through narrows, swirling in the pool.  
 Their song that lacks all words, all melody,  
 All sweetness almost, was dearer now to me  
 Than sweetest voice that sings in tune sweet words.  
 This was the best of May - the small brown birds  
 Wisely reiterating endlessly  
 What no man learnt yet in or out of school. 29

### Notes

See opposite, under B. M. f.77, for textual notes.

This poem appears in two versions in the B.M. Ms. book. It was first printed in Six Poems by Edward Eastaway, published by James Guthrie, from The Pear Tree Press, Flansham, Sussex, in November 1916. It reappeared in ANP (1917), in Last Poems (1918), and in all CP. In print it differs from either BM draft in several places - see opposite (p. 218). An examination of the textual differences shows that apart from the omission of l. 14 in the second version, there are several other points of interest. ll. 1, 3, 10, 19 show that the second draft, or the printed version, returns to the earlier draft. Throughout both drafts there is some confusion as to the tense, which is reflected in the various versions of ll. 1 and 25. The revision of ll. 12-15 is interesting in its final compression, with the balance of the expanded l. 8, ensuring that the mythical allusion is not lost. See Critical Introduction for analysis and comparison of the two drafts - p. 45 ff.

24.v.(15) B.M.f.77 Untitled

This beauty makes me dream there was a time  
 Long past & irrecuperable, a clime  
 Where ~~brooklet~~ river of such radiance racing deep  
 Through buttercup and kingcup bright as brass  
 And But gentle, nourishing the meadow grass  
 That ~~beads~~ leans & scurries in the wind, would bear  
 Another beauty, divine & feminine  
 Child of the sun, whose happy soul unstained  
 Could love all day, & never hate or tire,  
 Lover of mortal or immortal kin.  
 And yet, rid of this dream, ere I had drained  
 Its poison, quieted was my desire  
 So that I only looked into the water  
 And hearkened while it combed the dark green hair  
 And shook the millions of the blossoms white  
 Of water-crowfoot, & curdled to one sheet  
 The flowers fallen from the chestnuts in the park  
 Far off. The sedge-warblers, that hung so light @  
 On willow twigs, sang longer than any lark,  
 Quick, shrill, or grating, a song to match the heat  
 Of the strong sun, nor less the water's cool,  
 Gushing through narrows, swirling in the pool.  
 Their song that lacks all words, all melody,  
 All sweetness almost, ~~is~~ was dearer now to me  
 Than sweetest voice that sings in tune sweet words.  
 This was the best of May - the small brown birds  
 Wisely reiterating endlessly  
 What no man learnt yet in or out of school.

Notes.

Title, SP(16)etc. "Sedge-Warblers."

- 1.1. f.75. ~~makes~~ made/f.77 makes/SP etc made  
 1.3. f.75. Where from such brooks shining & racing deep  
 f.77. Where ~~brooklet~~ river of such radiance racing deep  
SP etc. Where any brook so radiant racing clear  
 'deep' could be read as 'clear' in f.75; the ~~ms.~~ is difficult at this  
 point in both folios.  
 1.8. f.75. Newborn of it, whose happy soul unstained  
 f.77. Child of the sun, whose happy soul unstained  
SP etc. Child to the sun, a nymph whose soul unstained  
 1.10 f.75. A lover/f.77 Lover/SP etc A lover  
 There is no clear ms. break between 11.10 and 11. The present  
 arrangement in CP follows the arrangement of SP.  
 1.12 f.75. Its poison quite, the sun's past light & fire  
 f.77 & SP etc. Its poison, quieted was my desire  
 1.13 f.75. Bred me a deep content with what the water  
 (1.14 f.75 Clearer than any goddess or man's daughter)  
 1.13. f.77 & SP etc. So that I only looked into the water,

Notes (contd.) B.M.f.77 Untitled

- 1.14. has no equivalent on f.77 or in print.  
 f.75-6 29 lines.  
 f.77 etc. 28 lines
- 1.15. f.75. Had for its voice, ~~then~~, W-while ~~combing~~ it combed the  
 dark green hair  
 f.77 & SP etc. And hearkened while it combed the dark green hair
- 1.19 (@)f.75 Far off; and sedgwarblers, that hang so light  
 f.77 Far off. The sedgwarblers, that hung so light  
SP etc. Far off. And sedge-warblers, clinging so light
- 1.20. f.75 & 77 On willow twigs, sang longer than any lark,  
SP etc. To willow twigs, sang longer than the lark,
- 1.25. f.25 f.75 was dearer now to me/f.77 ~~is~~ was dearer now to me  
SP etc. was dearer then to me

II. POEMS FROM Bodleian Don. d. 28.

f. 3.	The Wood	5.vii.15	<u>ANP, LP</u>
f. 5, 6.	Haymaking	6, 7, 8.vii.15	<u>TE, P17</u>
f. 9.	Aspens	11.vii.15	<u>SP, ANP, LP</u>
f. 12.	Digging	21.vii.15	<u>LP</u>
f. 16.	There's Nothing like the Sun 18/19.	xi.15	<u>P17</u>
f. 20.	Rain	7. i.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 21.	The Clouds that are so light	15. i.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 22.	Roads	22. i.16	<u>ANP, LP</u>
f. 33.	If I should Ever	6. iv.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 43.	Cherry Trees	7/8. iv.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 48-9.	As The Team's Head Brass	27. v.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 51.	Early One Morning	8, 9, 10, 11. vi.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 61.	How At Once	10.viii.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 65.	The Trumpet	26/8. ix.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 68.	The Long Small Room	9/10. xi.16	<u>P17</u>
f. 70.	The Lane	15.xii.16	<u>CP (1928)</u>
f. 71.	Out in the Dark	24.xii.16	<u>LP</u>

"The Word" - Don. d. 28, f. 3.

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facing p. 221.

Steep again 5 VII 15

156

There are so many things I have forgot,  
 That one were much to me or that were not,  
 All lost, as is a childless woman's child  
 And its child's children, in the unexplored  
 Abyss of what ~~can~~<sup>can</sup> never be again.

I have forgot, too, names of the mighty men  
 That fought & lost or won in the old wars, —  
 Of kings & friends & gods, & most of the stars  
 And something I have forgot that I forgot.

But some things there are, remembered yet,  
 Than all the others — One name that I have not  
 The 'tis an empty, thoughtless name — forgot  
 Never will die because Spring after Spring  
 Some Witches learn to say it as they sing,  
 There is always one at midday saying it, clear  
 And tart — the name, only the name I hear,  
 While perhaps I am thinking of the elder's scent  
 "That is like food," or while I am content  
 With the wild rose scent that is like memory,

This name, suddenly it does cry out by the head for me  
 Over & over again, a pure harsh word.

(From somewhere in the bushes by the ditch.)

5.vii.15. Bodleian f.3. (Untitled) Steep again

There are so many things I have forgot,  
 That once were much to me or that were not,  
 All lost, as is a childless woman's child  
 And its child's children, in the underfiled  
 Abyss of what (1) ~~shall~~ (2) ~~can~~ (3) will never be again 5  
 I have forgot, too, names of the mighty men  
 That fought & lost or won in the old wars,  
 Of kings & fiends & gods, & most of the stars  
 And Some things I have forgot that I forget.  
 But lesser things there are, remembered yet,  
 Than all the others. One name that I have not -  
 Though 'tis an empty thingless name - forgot  
 Never will die because Spring after Spring 13  
 Some thrushes learn to say it as they sing.  
 There is always one at midday saying it clear  
 And tart - the name, only the name I hear,  
 While perhaps I am thinking of the elder scent 17)  
 That is like food; or while I am content 18)\*  
 With the wild rose scent that is like memory,  
 This name suddenly is ~~clear~~ cried out ~~by the bird~~ to me 20  
 Over & over again, a pure thrush word. 21  
 From somewhere in the bushes by the bird 22

### Notes

Title - ANP etc, "The Word"

- 1.5. ANP, Last Poems, CP(1920): can / CP(1928), (1965)will  
 1.13. ANP and all other printed versions: can  
 1.16 ANP - " - : hear  
 1.22. " - " - : a bird

The poem as originally written out here had 21 lines. In 1.5 the text was altered in the writing out, so that in 1.13 the text reads 'will'. When printed the earlier variant of 1.5 was used, and 1.13 corresponded. Later alteration, in 1928, perhaps taking belated cognisance of this ms. altered the CP text in 1.5, without altering 1.13. The original 21 lines were altered at a different time (see photocopy, note change of ink, and size of writing); line 21 was altered, 1.22 was added, and the two lines were inverted by an arrow.

From the version of 1.5 and 1.13 in ANP, from which in this case the other editions followed,\* would point to the fact that this ms. book played no part in the preparation of ANP, but may well have been consulted, without much thoroughness, prior to the revised version of 1928.

\* 1.17 Ms. - White )  
 1.18 Ms. - Thal ) It would seem that the wrong letter was crossed.



The final *ms.* version of ll. 5 & 13 is more emphatic than either of the printed texts in that the word 'will' suggests a stronger, more affirmative tone than the original 'shall'; the concept of ability or possible ability suggested by 'can' is dropped in the *ms.* This instance of half correction is an interesting contrast to Bodleian f.48-9, "As The Team's Head Brass", where the *ms.* itself is clearly in error and is alternately corrected and half corrected in print. There seems to be similar confusion over the correct text here, but in this instance there seems to be no doubt as to the validity of the Bodleian *ms.* The final addition of l.22 and the inversion of l.22 & l.21 left 'the bird' unaltered. There seems to be no valid reason for the textual alteration to 'a bird' in the published text. Despite 'some' in l.14 the remaining lines are all punctuated by the specific 'the', 'name', 'elder scent', 'wild rose scent', and there seems to be no reason why the specific should be altered to the indefinite.

6, 7, 8.vii.15. Bodleian f.5 &amp; 6 Untitled

After night's thunder far away had rolled  
 The fiery day had a kernel sweet of cold,  
 And in the perfect blue the clouds uncurled,  
 Like the first gods, before they made the world 4  
 And misery, swimming the stormless sea  
 In beauty & in divine gaiety.  
 The smooth white empty road was lightly strewn  
 With leaves - the holly's Autumn falls in June -  
 And fir cones standing up stiff in the heat. 9  
 The mill foot water tumbled white & lit  
 With tossing crystals, happier than any crowd  
 Of children pouring out of school aloud.  
 And in the little thickets where a sleeper  
 /For ever Might lie lost, the nettle creeper  
 And garden-warbler sang unceasingly;  
 While over them shrill shrieked in the his fierce glee  
 The swift with tail & wing as sharp & narrow 17  
 As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.  
 Only the scent of woodbine & hay new mown  
 Travelled the road. In the field sloping down,  
 Park-like, to whir (sic) its willows shaved the brook, 21  
 Haymakers rested. The tosser lay forsook  
 Out in the sun; & the long waggons stood  
 Without ~~their~~ its teams. It seemed ~~they~~ it never wd  
 Move from the shadow of that single yew.  
 The team, as still, ~~under~~ until their task was due,  
 Beside the labourers enjoyed the shade  
 That 3 squat oaks mid-field together made  
 Upon a circle of grass & weed uncut,  
 And on the hollow, once a chalk pit, but  
 Now brimmed withnut & ~~posy~~ elder-flower so clean.  
 The men leaned on their rakes, about to begin,  
 But still. And all were silent. All was old,  
 That morning time, with a great age untold, 34  
 Older than Clare & Cowper, Morland & Crome, 35  
 Than, at the field's far edge, the farmer's home  
 A white house crouched at foot of a great tree.  
 Under the heavens that know not what years be  
 The men, the beasts, the oaks, the implements 39  
 Uttered even what they will in times long hence -  
 All of us gone ~~to where there is~~ no change  
 out of the reach of  
 Immortal in a picture of an old grange.

Notes

Title, This England etc; "Haymaking".

1.9 TE, Poems 1917, CP(1920) standing stiff up / CP(1928) Standing up  
SPG(1927) etc stiff

Notes (contd.) 6, 7, 8.vii.15. Bodleian f.5 & 6 Untitled

- 1.17 TE etc. The swift with wings and tail  
 1.21 TE etc. where its willows showed the brook,  
 1.21 Ms. difficult to read, could be "showed," as in print.  
 1.34 TE etc. This morning time  
 1.35 TE follows Ms, Cowper/Poems 1917 etc Cobbett  
 1.39 TE etc. the beasts, the trees, the implements  
 1.41 TE etc. All of us gone out of the reach of change
- 1.4 TE etc. first gods before  
 1.10 TE etc. mill-foot  
 1.14 TE nettle-creeper/CP(28)nettle creeper.  
       P17 (36)  
 1.15 TE garden warbler/CP(28)garden-warbler  
       P17 (36)  
 1.19 TE new-mown/CP(28)new mown  
       P17 (36)  
 1.30 TE chalk-pit/CP(28)chalk pit  
       P17 (36)

### Commentary

There are several alterations made between the Bodleian Ms. and the publication in This England in the November of 1915. Two alterations - in 1.21 and 1.41 are mere corrections of Ms. mistakes - one of spelling, the other of not fully crossing out the original reading. There remain six instances of quite interesting change - five found in This England, the other not until Poems 1917.

In 1.9 the Ms. reading is the more natural and less awkward to both sense and rhythm. The correction in CP(1928) is welcome.

In 1.17 the alteration better fits the metre, and is more strictly accurate with wings in the plural.

In 1.21 there is a most interesting difficulty. The Ms. is difficult to read and could well read 'shaved' and not 'showed' as printed in all texts. Critically a case can be made for this more striking word. In Keats' "Ode to Autumn" we remember

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

J. A. Burrow has written of the influence of Keats on Thomas (Essays in Criticism vii no.4 Oct 1957 pp.404-415) and W. Cooke in his Critical Biography has pointed to certain echoes of Keats in Thomas' verse. Thomas' book on Keats was published in 1916 and there are undoubted echoes of detail. cf. from Keats' "Hyperion," quoted by Thomas in 1916 -

No stir of air was there,  
 Not so much life as on a summer's day  
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

With this, from Thomas' "October", Bod. f.15 (15, 16x:15)

and the wind travels too light  
 To shake the fallen birch leaves from the fern;  
 The gossamers wander at their own will.

Confronted with this, it seems to me more than mere conjecture that the image of the stubble-plains from the "Ode to Autumn" could not evoke the image of the bending willows swaying in scythe-like motions over the brook - and we remember from "Beauty" (B.M.f.23, 21:i:15)

... while  
 Cross breezes cut the surface to a file,

The effect of movement over water, taking into account the harvest scene of "Haymaking", is not irrelevant in its evocation of the lazy parallel motion of the trees over the water.

Despite this critical argument, in the absence of other proof, "showed" is acceptable, despite being much the weaker word.

In l.34 "This morning time" has the effect of bringing more immediacy to bear than the more distant "That morning time".

The alteration from 'Cowper' to 'Cobbett' is inexplicable, in view of the support of the text of This England, unless one feels that Cobbett of Rural Rides is fitter company for Clare, Morland & Crome!

The change in l.39 of 'oaks' to 'trees' is acceptable in view of there being more trees in this scene than the '3 squat oaks' of l.28.

Regarding the changes within the Ms. itself one can say that it proves Thomas' meticulous care even at the stage of copying up into the Bodleian Ms. book. Several points are altered, the overall effect being of more and more precision of expression, as in the change from 'waggon' to 'waggon', and noticeably in the change of 'posy' to the more accurate (and curiously symbolic to Thomas) 'elder-flower'.

"Aspens"

from Six Poems 1916

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facing p. 226 (two plates)

## ASPENS

**A**LL day and night, save winter, every weather,  
Above the inn, the smithy, and the shop,  
The aspens at the cross-roads talk together  
Of rain, until their last leaves fall from the top.

Out of the blacksmiths cavern comes the ringing  
Of hammer, shoe, & anvil: out of the inn  
The clink; the hum, the roar; the random singing—  
The sounds that for these fifty years have been.

The whisper of the aspens is not drowned,  
And over lightless pane & footless road,  
Empty as sky, with every other sound  
Not ceasing, calls their ghosts from their abode,

A silent smithy, a silent inn. nor fails  
In the bare moonlight or the thick-furred gloom,  
In tempest or the night of nightingales.  
To turn the cross-roads to a ghostly room.

¶ And it would be the same were no house near.  
Over all sorts of weather, men, & times,  
Aspens must shake their leaves & men may hear  
But need not listen, more than to my rhymes.

Whatever wind may blow, while we have leaves  
We cannot other than aspen be  
That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,  
Or so men think who like a different tree.

11.vii.15. Bodleian f.9. Aspens

All day & night, save winter, every weather,  
Above the inn, the smithy, & the shop,  
The aspens at the cross-roads talk together  
Of rain, until their last leaves fall from the top.

Out of the blacksmiths' cavern comes the ringing  
of hammer, shoe & anvil; out of the inn  
The clink, the hum, the roar, the random singing -  
The sounds that for these fifty years have been.

The whisper of the aspens is not drowned,  
And over lightless pane & footless road,  
Empty as sky, with every other sound  
Not ceasing, calls their ghosts from their abode,

A silent smithy, a silent inn, nor fails  
In the bare moonlight or the thick-furred gloom,  
In tempest or the night of nightingales, (Ms. a nightingales)  
To turn the cross-roads to a ghostly room.

And it would be the same were no ~~man~~ house near.  
Over all sorts of weather, men & times,  
Aspens must shake their leaves & men may hear  
But need not listen, more than to my rhymes.

<sup>may</sup>  
Whatever wind blows, while they and I have leaves  
We cannot other than an aspen be <sup>we</sup>  
That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,  
Or so men think who like a different tree.

### Notes

Bodleian Ms. as CP, and ANP (1917)

Also printed in Six Poems by E. Eastaway, with minor differences.

1.7 SP. The clink; the hum, the roar; the random singing -

11.5, 10, 18, 19. SP prints '&' for 'and'.

11.21-24. SP final stanza reads;

Whatever wind may blow, while we have leaves  
We cannot other than aspen be  
That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,  
Or so men think who like a different tree.

i.e. Bodleian Ms. reproduces later version, revised after publication  
(or proof-reading) of Six Poems, which follows an earlier draft.

Bodleian revised from earlier reading which in all but one detail -

1.15 - corresponds to SP.

Letter to EF 21.vii:15 refers to "Aspens": (Farjeon, p.153)

"I was the aspen. 'We' meant the trees and I with my dejected shyness."



Emendation of l.21 would seem to arise from EF's query, but nevertheless, SP follows the original.

SP published November 1916.

1.1 SP night;

1.5 SP blacksmiths (sic)  
LP; CP blacksmith's

1.6 SP shoe & anvil :

Line 5 of the ms. and SP are clearly in error, the correct reading is that of Last Poems and subsequently. Reference has already been made to the smithy in the singular.

The half-alteration in the Bodleian of l.15 is interesting in as much as the version printed in Six Poems is plural, and no other instance occurs of any doubt over this point. In view of ms. slips elsewhere in the Bodleian ms. - n.b. "The Long Small Room" - where ET (*see p. 257*) half remembers an earlier version, it is possible that this is other than a mere error. It would, of course, have a significant effect on the rhythm of the line, and would depart from the other verses where there is a full and deliberate rhyme of ll.1 & 3. While raising this doubt, it is nevertheless most likely, taking all points into account, that this was a ms. error.

21.vii. London Bodleian f.12 Untitled

What matter makes my spade for tears or mirth,  
 Letting down 2 clay pipes into the earth?  
 The one I smoked, the other a soldier (1)  
 Of Blenheim, Ramillies, & Malplaquet  
 Perhaps. The dead man's immortality  
 Lies represented lightly with my own,  
 A yard or 2 nearer the living air  
 Than bones of ancients who, amazed to see  
 Almighty God erect the mastodon,  
 Once laughed, or wept, in this same light of day.

### Notes

LP etc :

Title/ "Digging".(2) There are two poems of this title, both first printed in Last Poems (1918). The earlier poem is on f. 56 BM.4. iv. 15. 'Today I think/Only with scents'

CP. and Last Poems print as in Bodleian Ms. except for 1.3 LP etc. 'the other a soldier.' There is what would seem to be an earlier version quoted by EF as being included in a letter dated 21.vii.15:

What matters makes my spade for tears or mirth,  
 Letting down two old pipes into the earth?  
 The one I smoked, the other a soldier  
 Of Blenheim, Ramillies, and Malplaquet  
 Perhaps. The dead man's immortality  
 Lies lightly represented with my own,  
 A yard or two nearer the air or day  
 Than bones of ancients who, amazed to see  
 Almighty God erect the mastodon  
 Once laughed or wept at what earth had to bear.  
 (Farjeon, p.153)

ET joined up 14.vii.15, and commenced drill 19.vii.15; he was billeted at 13, Rusham Rd., with his parents, from where he sent the letter of 21.vii.15.

The letter containing this poem introduced it thus:

I was a bad prophet, because I have been perspiring  
 these six hours over ten lines which perhaps are not right yet.  
 But if you would type them for me I could see them better.  
 They are (here follows the poem)  
 I suppose it should have been a sonnet, but I can't  
 Rawnsleyise yet.

(1) 1.3 Bodleian follows what must be the earliest draft, following the 'old' pipes of 1.2. in EF version.

(2) There is no evidence that either title was the author's choice.

Notes (contd.)

Letter postmarked 26.vii.15, from Rusham Rd., replies to EF's queries regarding the rhyme scheme. "I have a laugh of you for not detecting the rhyme of soldier and bear (my italics). However to please you I bring the rhyme nearer." (Farjeon, p. 154)

From this evidence the date on the Bodleian Ms. of 21.vii. clearly refers to the version enclosed in letter to EF. It is possible that ET received EF's reply on 23.vii (this would involve an immediate posting and reply - not always the rule in their correspondence) and altered the original version to the extant Ms.

Commentary

The two versions are essentially similar, but there are changes in the degree of emphasis placed on man's decay. The opening lines of both versions ask the question, what contribution to tears or joy will this action make? The burying of the pipes points to the greater significance of the inevitable decay of their owners, whose bones, like the pipes, or the bones of the ancients, will be as so many relics of previous civilisation, buried and hidden, mute symbols of once living people capable (equally of tears or mirth. The idea of dust to dust, or of the clay of man's earthly body is best reflected in the later description of the pipes as 'clay' rather than 'old.' Rather unnecessarily, the Bodleian version transfers the explicit idea of relative age by altering 'other' to 'older', thus introducing a clumsy internal rhyme with 'soldier'. The idea of relative age is in any case explicit in the following line with the reference to the great battles of Marlborough (ET had been working on his biography of Marlborough) which took place on similar ground to the battles on the Western Front in 1915. The idea that the pipes are the sole symbol of man's immortality provides an ironic contrast with Almighty God's seeming power in the penultimate line. The Bodleian version has split the alliteration of the next line of 'lies' and 'lightly'. The sole difference

in significance between the two men lies in the relative position of their relics. Thomas seems not to want or expect any further immortality than this. The 'living air' of the Bodleian is a more successful contrast to the buried immortality of the relics than the earlier 'air of day,' embodying as it does the positive contrast of life, but this emendation, it would seem, arose from EF's criticism of the rhyme scheme more than Thomas' own wish for improvement. His emendation did in any case, necessitate the change in the last line from 'what earth had to bear,' which, quite apart from its distant rhyme with 'soldier' conveyed the idea of suffering, and the reaction of the ancients to this. The amazement of the ancients, confronted with Almighty God - the tone here one should mention is reminiscent of Owen's parable of the old men and the young men - and his new phenomenon, the mastodon, conjuring up the idea of primeval strength and simple savagery, is common to both versions. The contrast lies in the sense of involvement in the face of this new phenomenon in the EF version, and the restoration of day (rhyming with Malplaquet) in the Bodleian version, providing the sense of continuity, but removing the sense of involvement and reaction to new events, be it laughter or weeping.

One can conclude that the ten lines are in essence similar, but gain and lose from the alterations made in the name of the rhyme scheme. The most significant and useful alteration is in the substitution of 'clay' for 'old' in the second line, but the original EF version seems to have the preferable conclusion.

The poem is an interesting example of Thomas' preoccupation

with mortality and immortality, his feeling of the connection of present and past, and the sense of involvement in the face of new difficulties. The compression of his feelings, centred on a single unremarkable action is interesting as an example of his ability to compress and fine down, and a comparison with such longer meditative poems on the intrusion of war such as "As The Team's Head Brass."



18/19.xi.15 (contd.)

An undated letter, placed after 28 Nov 1915, mentions alterations to the 'unfinished' draft sent previously.

You will see I have made just 2 or 3 slight changes. 'This world being made so' is 5 heavy syllables unaccented. I hope you won't object but if you do I want to know.

ET had leave on 26.xi.15. - EF quotes letter postmarked 28 November 1915, headed 'Train to Petersfield, Friday', and f.17 is headed 'Going home from Harehall Camp'. From an examination of the ink, it is probable that f.16 & f.17 were written out at a similar time, especially in view of the time of the leave, in relation to the *ffs.* date of f.16. With this evidence, and the imprecise positioning of the second letter, mentioning the changes, it seems probable that this is an instance where the revised draft found on f.16 was written before the letter notifying EF of the alterations. More usual was the copying out after the discussion and alteration, - but see also Bod. f.48-9, pp 249-50.

7.i.16. Bodleian f.20. Rain - Coming home from Harehall.

The rain, the rain, nothing but the wild rain

On this bleak hut, & solitude, & me

Remembering again that I shall die

And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks

For washing me cleaner than I have been

since I was born into this solitude.

Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon.

But

~~Tonight~~ And here I pray that none whom once I loved

(1. Tonight

(2. And here

(3. But here

Is dying to-night or lying still awake

Solitary, listening to the rain,

Either in pain or thus in sympathy

Helpless among the living & the dead,

Like a cold water among broken reeds,

A million of broken reeds all still & stiff,

who

wild

Like me ~~that~~ have no love which this ~~dull~~ rain

Has not dissolved except the ~~dull~~ love of death,

If love it be for what is perfect and

the , tells me

Cannot, ~~this~~ tempest ~~teaches~~, disappoint.

### Notes

1.1. P17 Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain.

1.14 " Myriads

'midnight' and 'solitude' both recur in a passage on a similar theme in 'The Icknield Way' (1913), p. 278 ff.

1.7 of this poem is found there in full.

..... I lay awake listening to the rain, and at first it was as pleasant to my ear and mind as it had long been desired; but before I fell asleep it had become a majestic and finally terrible thing, instead of a sweet wound and symbol. It was accusing and trying me and passing judgement.



## 7.i.16 (contd.)

Long I lay still under the sentence, listening to the rain . . . . .  
 The midnight rain . . . . . has buried all sound but its own. I am alone  
 in the dark still night . . . . . There is nothing out there but the blackness  
 and sound of rain. Neither when I shut my eyes can I see anything.  
 I am alone. Once I heard through the rain a bird's questioning  
 watery cry - once only and suddenly. It seemed content, and the  
 solitary note brought up against me the order of nature, all its beauty,  
 exuberance, and everlastingness like an accusation. I am not a  
 part of nature. I am alone . . . . . All else has perished except me  
 and the rain. It alone is great and strong. It alone knows joy. It  
 chants monotonous praise of the order of nature, which I have disobeyed  
 or slipped out of . . . . . The truth is that the rain falls for ever and  
 I am melting into it. Black and monotonously sounding is the midnight  
 and the solitude of the rain. In a little while or in an age - for it  
 is all one - I shall know the full truth of the words I used to love, I  
 knew not why, in my days of nature, in the days before the rain:  
 'Blessed are the dead that the rain rains on,' (*op. cit.*, p. 283.)

The poem grows away from the self-centred position of the prose -  
 see Critical Introduction, pp 59-61.

16-15.i.16 Harehall Bodleian f.21 Song

As the clouds that are so light,  
Beautiful, swift, & bright,  
Cast shadows on field & park  
Of the earth that is so dark,

Even so now, light one!  
Beautiful, swift & bright one!  
You set in a heart that was dark,                    on  
Unillumined, a deeper spark.                        mark

But clouds would have, without earth  
To shadow, far less earth:  
Away from your shadow on me  
Your beauty less would be,

And if it still be treasured  
An age hence, it shall be measured  
By this small dark spot  
Without which it were not.

### Notes

Title, Poems 1917 etc: "The Clouds that are so Light."  
CP(1965)<sup>a</sup> "As the clouds that are so light."

Ms. II. 7 & 8 almost illegible in two places, indicated above. The context of the verse itself would allow for the first reading, but in view of the last verse, the second reading seems more likely, especially in view of the letter to EF including these lines.

Ms. mistake in l.10 should read worth  
EF prints another version of this poem on p.204, op. cit.

The clouds that are so light,  
Beautiful, swift and bright,  
Cast shadows on field and park,  
Of the earth that is so dark  
And even so now, light one!  
Beautiful, swift and right one!  
You let fall on a heart that was dark,  
Unillumined, a deeper mark.

But clouds would have, without earth  
To shadow, far less worth;  
Away from your shadow on me  
Your beauty less would be,  
And if it still be treasured  
An age hence, it shall be measured  
By this small dark spot  
Without which it were not.

16-15.i.16 (contd.)

With the exception of 1.6, where Poems 1917 prints 'bright' for 'right', the version printed by EF is as printed in Poems 1917, in four verses. This is unusual, for drafts included with the letters to EF were usually earlier than the copy in the Bodleian (e.g. Bod.f.12 - see typescript p.228). See below for an explanation.

CP(1920) follows Poems 1917 in ll. 1 & 5 The clouds ..... And even so ...  
~~CP(1928)~~ follows Bodleian Ms. as it does re "October."

CP(1936) (1965) garbles the meaning by following the Bodleian Ms. in l.1, but the EF draft in l.5 - As the clouds ... And even so ...

Either the EF version found in Poems 1917 & CP(1920) or the Bodleian version makes sense, but not the mixed version of the current Faber CP, following Faber 1936.

NB - pagination of 1928 corresponds to pagination of 1920.  
 Ms. book could have been consulted for this edn.

Selected Poems (ed. Garnett 1927) follows 1917 & 1920 texts.

Ms. date 16 15.i.16.

Date assigned by EF to letter from ET containing later draft probably July 21 (1916).

This apparent discrepancy is most interesting. There are other instances where the Bodleian date is clearly slightly inaccurate, e.g. ff.31-4. But these are usually cases where the earlier draft was clearly written and received by EF prior to the date given in the Bodleian Ms. In this instance there are, on the face of it, six months between the draft in the Bodleian and the draft sent to EF. This is unlikely; all the more so when the letter itself is consulted.

Saturday.

hut 15 now!

..... I have got 2 hours to myself in the hut, having set free the man who was supposed to look after it till all came in. .... These 2 hours I didn't really know what to do with.

This conceit is the result .....

Is it worth typing? I sent you 2 others last Sunday on my way home. It was the Thrush that Helen didn't like .....

I shan't be a full corporal just yet .....

Things aren't at their best. The new responsibilities and the trouble upset me. Then Christmas perhaps ..... (Farjeon, pp. 204-5)

This letter EF dates July 21. The previous letter, postmarked 17 July 1916, is headed Sunday, and mentions

I got home yesterday .....

This does not tally with the letter in question where he mentions going home on a Sunday. The mention of Christmas is strange in a letter of July. The poem, "The Thrush" is in fact on f.18, dated (30-ed)xi.15. The next letter postmarked 25 July 1916, mentions the final line of "The Green Roads", f.56, 28.vi.16,

That line should be just 'the thrush repeat his song' (Farjeon, p. 205)

These various points cast doubt on the dating of the letter containing the draft of f.21.

Whether the letter belongs to the immediate time of the date found in the ~~ffs.~~ or whether it is, notwithstanding the argument above, substantially later, remains a point of conjecture.

There is a letter, from Hut 15, dated 24.i.16, with the following relevant statements:

I have let a long ~~time~~ go by. In the interval I have been home for 24 hours .... However my trouble is mostly over, and will be entirely if they allow me to have my 2nd stripe this week as I should have done .....

There is not much that is new except these lines about roads .....

(Farjeon, p. 182)

Much of this letter is to do with "Roads", f.22, 22.i.16 Coming home from Harehall. It refers to a long gap, and indeed EF prints no letters between 9.i.16 and 24.i.16. The undated letter could well belong to this period.

Whatever the date, the fact remains that this letter gives a rare occurrence of a draft later than the Bodleian being included in a letter to EF.

"Roads"

from Don. d. 28, f. 22.

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facing p. 239.

I love roads;  
The goddesses that dwell  
For along their invisible  
are my <sup>paranormal</sup> gods.

Roads go on  
While we forget & are  
Forgotten like a star  
That shoots & is gone.  
On this earth, for sure,  
We men have not made  
Anything but 20th grade  
So soon, so long endure.

The hillroad ~~that~~ with rain  
In the sun would not gleam  
Like a winding stream  
If we tried it not again.

Roads are long  
While we sleep, <sup>even lonelier</sup>  
For lack of <sup>the</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>smaller</sup>  
Who's now a dreamer  
Who's now a dreamer.

From dawn's twilight  
I find all the clouds like sheep  
On the mountains of sleep.  
They wind into the night.

The next turn may reveal  
Heaven: beyond the crest  
That ~~forms~~ <sup>clump</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>pine</sup> <sup>clump</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>pine</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>rest</sup>  
And All black, my hell small.

Open footsore, new  
Yet of the road I weep,  
Though long & steep & dreary  
to see it wind forever.

Roads (Coming home from Home 22  
Hall 22-1-16.)  
Helen of the roads  
The mountain <sup>wings</sup> ~~back~~ of Wales  
And the Mabinogion tales  
Is one of the true gods.

Abions in the trees,  
The thirteen & four so come,  
The larger companies,  
That by the roadside be,  
And <sup>under</sup> <sup>beneath</sup>  
Else ~~there~~ <sup>is</sup> <sup>no</sup> <sup>with</sup> <sup>shelter</sup>  
Excepting by the dead:  
And it is her laughter

Here at noon & night I hear  
When the thrush cock sings  
Bright unobscured things,  
And when the chanticleer

Calls back to their own night  
Groups that make loneliness  
With their light foot steps  
as Helen's own are light.

Now roads lead to France  
And heavy is the tread  
Of the living; but the dead  
Returning lightly dance.

Whatever the road bring  
To me or take from me,  
They keep me company  
With their air fluttering,

Crowding the solitude  
Of the loops over the downs.  
Hushing the roar of towns  
and their brief multitude.

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## Roads

22.i.16. Bodleian f.22. / Coming home from Hare Hall

- (1) I love roads;  
The goddesses that dwell  
Far along them invisible  
Are my ~~only~~ favourite gods.
- (2) Roads go on  
While we forget, ~~&~~ are  
Forgotten like a star  
That shoots ~~&~~ is gone.
- (3) On this earth, <sup>'tis</sup> for sure,  
We men have not made  
Anything that doth fade  
So soon, so long endure:
- (4) The hill road ~~th~~ wet with rain  
In the sun would not gleam  
Like a winding stream  
If we trod it not again.
- (5) Roads are lonely  
While we sleep, ~~even~~ lonelier  
For lack of ~~those that were~~ the traveller  
Who is now a dream only  
~~travellers - now dreams only.~~
- (6) From dawn's twilight  
And all the clouds like sheep  
On the mountains of Steep (l.23)  
They wind into the night.
- (7) The next turn may reveal  
Heaven: beyond the crest  
That 1) ~~plume of pines~~  
2) ~~clump of pines~~  
3) close pine clump, at rest  
And all black, may Hell conceal.  
(written over Hell)
- (8) Often footsore, never  
Yet of the road I weary,  
Though long ~~&~~ steep ~~&~~ dreary,  
As (on) it winds for ever.
- (9) Helen of the roads,  
The mountain ~~roads~~ / ways of  
Wales  
And the Mabinogion tales  
Is one of the true gods,
- (10) Abiding in the trees,  
The threes ~~&~~ fours so wise  
The larger companies,  
That by the roadside be,
- (11) A 1) ~~on~~  
n 2) ~~under the cold black~~ rafter  
d 3) ~~beneath~~  
Else uninhabited  
Except by the dead;  
And it is her laughter
- (12) ~~I hear~~ At morn ~~&~~ night I hear  
When the thrush cock sings  
Bright irrelevant things,  
And when the chanticlear
- (13) Calls back to their own night  
Troops that make loneliness  
With their light footsteps'  
press  
As Helen's own are light.
- (14) Now all roads lead to France  
And heavy is the tread  
Of the living; but the dead  
Returning lightly dance:
- (15) Whatever the road bring  
To me or take from me,  
They keep me company  
With their pattering,
- (16) Crowding the solitude  
Of the loops over the downs,  
Hushing the roar of towns  
And their brief multitude.

22.i.16 Bodleian f.22 (contd.)

Notes

1. 3 ANP etc. Far along invisible

1.28 " And black, ...

1.32 " As it winds on for ever. (altered to this in ffs)

1.41 " And beneath the rafter (ffs. 'the' crossed out in error?)

1. Letter to EF, postmark Romford 30 January 1916, headed Sunday, Hut 15.

The typescript is all right. 'They' in 15 (Stanza 15 -ed) refers to 'the dead'. Steep is right too in verse 6. I am glad you like it. I didn't think anything of it one way or the other. If I send it anywhere it will be to Form, (Farjeon, p. 184)

For 'Steep' to fit in verse 6 it would be the name of the village from which ET had not yet moved - see ffs. heading - 'coming home from Hare Hall'.

2. Letter to GB, 18 February 1916

I wish you had liked 'Roads' more. I thought the particular ghosts came in comfortably enough after the ghosts in general. For myself I didn't know whether it came off as a whole or not.

(Letters, p. 260)

Commentary.

The essential contrast in the first few stanzas is between man and the roads he has made which will outlast him. In stanza 5 the roads are endowed with the human feeling of loneliness, an idea reflected in stanza 13 -

Troops that make loneliness  
With their light footsteps' press

- the loneliness is human, the troops are of the dead, summoned by <sup>chanticleer-</sup> and continued with the contrast between the dead and the living troops journeying along roads.

Now all roads lead to France  
And heavy is the tread  
Of the living; but the dead  
Returning lightly dance.



22.i.16 Bodleian f.22 (contd.)

The dead haunt

the solitude  
Of the loops over the downs,  
Hushing the roar of towns  
And their brief multitude.

The brevity of man's life is referred to in that last line.

Throughout the poem Thomas contrasts the actual and the mythical, imaginary qualities of roads, haunted by Helen of the roads, and the dead troops. Helen is at one stage Helen of the Mabinogion, and elsewhere could be Thomas' wife:

As Helen's own are light .

With this contrast and fusion of actual and imaginary, the crux of l.23 in stanza 6 can be argued both ways. However, taking the remainder of the poem as a guide, and remembering Thomas's own strictures regarding words and the significance of their context, the intrusion of the actual hills of Steep into the twilight zone between sleep and waking, night and day, real and imaginary, seems in place. ll.48-9 show precisely this fusion of real and imaginary -

And when the chanticleer  
Calls back to their own night  
Troops that make loneliness

the contrast between the break of day and the personal darkness of spirit - the loneliness mentioned - is clear, and typical of the method of contrast and fusion used in the poem, - a fusion of the dead creating loneliness because they are dead and insubstantial and the present loneliness of spirit. The idea of the dead traveller has already been raised in stanza 5. The close link of dead and living is indeed meaningful in the context of the date of writing. Again in l.44 -

And it is her laughter  
At morn and night I hear

Thomas seems to be fusing the goddess Helen and the actual wife Helen.

On these grounds it seems that 'Steep' is the correct reading of l.23, and in the context of the poem's method is not out of place next to the nursery rhyme atmosphere of 'clouds like sheep' and

The next turn may reveal  
Heaven : beyond the crest  
That close pine clump, at rest  
And all black, may Hell conceal.

## 22.i.16 Bodleian f.22 (contd.)

Taking the structure of the poem, the roads are essentially actual in the opening 5 stanzas, enabling the poet to introduce the mythological overtones of the invisible goddesses, and the lone ghostly traveller of the fifth stanza. Thomas' alteration of plural to singular is significant, for it enables him to develop the lone traveller into the troops of stanza 13. There is also the firm actuality of the idea in stanza 4 of roads being dependent on use. In the sixth stanza we have the firm localised reality of Steep, structurally repeated in stanza 9 with the mention of Wales. The seventh stanza reverts to the mythology of the imagination - the road has become symbolic of life in a simple, yet accurately realised allegory, reminiscent of the earlier poem "Interval" (6.1.15). The poet's personal intrusion follows naturally from this identification of the road and life, with the echo of steep, dreary, weary - a full and resonant rhyme. The ninth stanza fuses the actual and the imaginary - the goddess, and the mountain ways of Wales. Perhaps one should note this singular departure from 'roads', altered in the Bodleian text to 'ways', perhaps for the alliteration with Wales, perhaps to avoid repetition.

The tenth stanza moves onward to connect and contrast the true gods, - here we should note the emphatic 'true' - 'the larger' companies, logically the gods, but pointing forward to 'troops', and the living 'I' of l.45. The progression from 'tree' to 'rafter', rafter originally both 'cold' and 'black' having overtones of death - certainly in contrast to the tree and in conjuring up the scene of a gutted barn or house, points to the movement from the true - or normal (!) gods - to the myriads of the dead. Yet there is once more the intrusion of the actual in stanza 12 with the poet hearing the 'bright irrelevant things' of the thrush cock (an idea common to several of Thomas' poems). The actual however is tinged with the myth of the goddess' laughter.

The 'chanticleer' brings in the folk lore belief that the dead are summoned home at dawn by cock-crow - a logical development from the actuality of the previous stanza. Nordic mythology provides this link between the true gods of Wales and the dead spirits being summoned to Valhalla at dawn. The purposeful ambiguity of stanza 13 has already been noted - the actual 'I' and the troops both merge here in this atmosphere of the proximity of the living and the dead.

The actual world, noted in stanza 6, stanza 9, stanza 12, returns in stanza 14 -

Now all roads lead to France.

We should note the heavy tread of the living contrasting with the light footsteps of the previous stanza, and the light 'dance' of the returning dead - the fusion of the return of the dead spirits to Valhalla and the dead spirits returning from the actual war in France is complete.

22.i.16 Bodleian f.22 (contd.)

The personal intrusion noted in stanza 8 and 12 returns in the last two stanzas, conveying to us the significance of the 'road', not a passive participant, we note,

Whatever the road bring  
To me or take from me,  
They keep me company  
With their pattering,

The poet is haunted by the dead,

Crowding the solitude  
Of the loops over the downs,  
Hushing the roar of towns  
And their brief multitude.

We should note the actuality of the downs of Southern England, and the universality of the final comment on the brevity of man's existence.

A clue to the shift in focus is provided in the change from the 'Roads' under which title it appeared, and which are mentioned in the opening stanza, to the road of stanza 8, itself a change from the specific actual 'hill road' of stanza 4.

Quite apart from the substantial weight of the poem on closer examination, it should leave no doubt as to the correct reading of l.23 taking into account its place in the structure of the poem, the movement between actual and imaginary.

It is a poem typical in so far as it rewards closer study than the first glance suggests.

Despite the *ffs.* where one finds a small cross on the top of the second letter (elsewhere in f.22 his pen has failed to make the full stroke) it is possible that EF misread 'Steep' for 'sleep' but unlikely in view of over a year's typing of *ffs.* and reading of correspondence by January 1916.

Steep is acceptable critically, and if we accept the *ffs.* heading as reliable, it would seem to be logical.

Moreover, in Bod. f.67, "Lights Out", written out hurriedly in December 1916, ET takes the trouble to correct l.17 where he has written 'steep', in error. He makes a loop on the second letter, so there can be no confusion. Having lived in Steep the village for some ten years his natural reaction could lead to some confusion of the two words, especially in view of his not always clear writing. (1)

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(1) See photocopy, facing p. 288.

If he took the trouble to correct 1.17 in "Lights Out," he would surely have done the same in 1.23 of "Roads." He would have made no mistake in the letter to EF as she had clearly queried that particular word.

For these reasons Steep seems the correct reading. There is, one should remember, numbering in the ms. book, so it is not impossible that the book was used for proofs.

If a separate copy was made from the ms. book for the printer and the original typescript by EF was not used for the printed edition this would explain how a crux corrected in correspondence, was nevertheless printed in error.

6.iv.16. Bodleian f.33. at Little Warley and Harehall.

If I should ever by chance grow rich  
 I'll buy Codham, Cockridden, & Childerditch,  
 Roses, Pyrigo, & Lapwater,  
 And let them all to my elder daughter.  
 The rent I shall ask of her will be only  
 Each year's first violets, white and lonely,  
 And the first primroses & orchises -  
 She must find them before I do, that is.  
 But if she finds a blossom on furze  
 Without rent they shall all for ever be hers,  
~~If I should be~~ Whenever I am sufficiently rich:  
 Codham, Cockridden, & ~~Lapwater~~ Childerditch,  
 Roses, Pyrigo & Lapwater, -  
 I shall give them all to my elder daughter.

### Notes

Title, Poems 1917 etc. "If I should Ever by Chance".

1.7. Poems 1917 etc. The first primroses .....

1. Letter to EF, postmark 2 April 1916, headed Sunday (1 April)

..... They have given me my second stripe, so the fine weather makes me content and I have written some verses, one set for Mervyn and one Bronwen (ed. 'my elder daughter') If they are not too bad, will you type them?

### EF comments:

I typed the verses, filled with the Essex place-names which his pleasure in them turned into poetry. (Farjeon, p.193)

EF quotes in full the poem found on f.33, with two discrepancies:

1. 7 The first primroses ..... (as in Poems 1917 etc.)  
 1.11 complete line omitted.

2. Letter to EF, dated 16.iv.16, headed Hut 3.

Thank you for the typed copies of Baba's verses. (op. cit., p.194.)

This refers to "What Shall I Give?" - (the poem for Myfanwy, known as Baba) which is to be found on f.35 - dated 8.iv.16.

3. The verses for Mervyn, mentioned in the letter of 1.iv.16 quoted above, is on Bodleian f.34, dated 7.iv.16.

4. The calendar for 1916 admits no possibility that the postmark of 2 April 1916 has been misread, for the 12th was a Thursday, which would not fit in with the heading of Sunday; at least, this is

## 6.iv.16. Bodleian f.33. (contd.)

5. This instance is one of several which cast doubt on the absolute accuracy of the dates to be found in the Bodleian book. The dates there given of April 6, 7 & 8 would seem, according to the evidence of the letters quoted above, to be inaccurate by a week. Perhaps the previous weekend was the one in question - Friday March 30th, Saturday March 31st and Sunday April 1st. The dates given in the Mss. could in fact be based on the date on which ET received the typed versions from EF, although this is entering the realms of conjecture.
6. There is mention of 'the lines for Baba' - my daughter the younger - in a letter to EF, postmarked 18 November 1915, - op.cit. p.170. Even allowing for inevitable delays in copying up into the Bodleian ms. book, this date seems impossible, especially in view of the mention here of a selection by Trevelyan & Bottomley (for Annual of New Poetry) having been made. On p.191, in a letter postmarked 15 March 1916, ET tells EF of sending 40 poems to Bottomley for him to consider. It is clear that the strange mention of lines for Baba in Nov. 1915 is the result of inexplicable error over postmarks and letters. *In fact this reference is most probably to a tale to be included in Four and Twenty Blackbirds.*

7 & 8.v.16. Bodleian f.43. Untitled.

The cherry tree leans over & is shedding  
On the old road where all that passed are dead,  
Its petals, strewing the grass as for a wedding  
This early May morn though there is none to wed.

### Notes

Title; P17 : "Cherry Trees"; CP 1920 etc : "The Cherry Trees".

In all printed versions, 1917, 1920, 1928, 1936, 1949, 1965, it appears as follows, with the one exception that the CP of 1928 follows the ms. in 1.4.

#### "The Cherry Trees"

The cherry trees bend over and are shedding,  
On the old road where all that passed are dead,  
Their petals, strewing the grass as for a wedding  
This early May morn when there is none to wed.

1.4 Bod. ms; though there is/P17, CP(1920); when there is/  
CP(1928); though there is/CP(1936), (1949), (1965); when there is/

This is one of four instances where the CP of 1928, a cheap edition issued by Ingpen & Grant, stands alone in following the Bodleian ms, despite earlier editions. The Faber Library edition of 1936 perpetrates many errors by following half correct versions, a mixture of 1920 and 1928.

### See also:

- f.15 - "October", p. 7 ff.
- f.21 - "As The Clouds That Are So Light", pp. 236-8.
- f.48/9 - "As The Team's Head Brass", pp. 249-50.
- f.71 - "Out in the Dark", pp. 260-262.

It is notable that although the Bodleian Ms. is a late fair copy, with no ms. alterations, and no letter mentions any alterations, in print the poem becomes plural; not even CP(1928) reverts to the singular of the ms.

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The version found in the Bodleian ms. apart from the obvious change in number, is different in two places - in the first line leans is replaced in print by 'bend', and in the final line there is the change in most printed texts from 'though' to 'when'. Quite apart from the effect of the change in number - like so many alterations one that gains & loses - the effect of these two minor discrepancies is one of emphasis. 'Leans'

7 & 8.v.16. Bodleian f.43 (contd.)

is more gentle and less sudden than bend; though concedes, 'when' states fact. The printed version is thus more emphatic, less quietly elegiac. The change from singular to plural gains the weight of numbers, with the effect of a mute chorus of grief, shedding petals, pink & gentle, onto the old, unchangeable road, where the troops have marched (echoes are found here of "Roads", Bod.f.22, 22.i.16) whose return will not be for a wedding. In the singular version there is the gain of particularity, but this has a less powerful effect than the chorus, shedding petals as confetti, when there is none to wed.



27.v.16. Bodleian f.48-9 Hare Hall Untitled

As the team's head brass flashed out on the turn  
 The lovers disappeared into the wood.  
 I sat among the boughs of the fallen elm  
 That strewed the angle of the fallow, and  
 Watched the plough narrowing ~~the~~ a yellow square 5  
 Of charlock, Every time the horses turned  
 Instead of treading me down, the ploughherd leaned  
 Upon the ~~shafts~~ handles to say or ask a word,  
 About the weather, next about the war.  
 Scraping the share he faced towards the wood, 10  
 And screwed along the furrow till the brass flashed  
 Once more.  
 The blizzard felled the elm whose crest  
 I sat in, by a woodpecker's round hole,  
 The ploughman said "When will they take it away?" 15  
 "When the war's over." So the talk began -  
 One minute & an interval of ten,  
 A minute more & the same interval.  
 "Have you been out?" "No." "And don't want to, perhaps?"  
 "If I could only come back again, I should. 20  
 I could spare an arm. I shouldn't want to lose  
 A leg. If I should lose my head, why, so,  
 I should want nothing more . . . . Have many gone  
 From here?" "Yes." "Many lost?" "Yes, a good few.  
 Only two teams work on the farm this year. 25  
 One of my mates is dead. The second day  
 In France they killed him. It was back in March,  
 The very night of the blizzard, too. Now if  
 He had stayed here we should have moved the tree."  
 "And I shd not have sat here. Everything 30  
 Would have been different. For it would have been  
 Another world." "Ay, and a better, though  
 If we could see all all might seem good." Then  
 The lovers came out of the wood again.  
 The horses started & for the last time 35  
 I watched the clods crumble and topple over  
 After the ploughshare & the stumbling team.

### Notes

Title, Poems 1917 etc: "As the team's head brass" (see also letter to EF)

1. 4. P. 17, CP(1920) an angle of the fallow/CP(1928), (1965) the angle of the fallow (i.e. as ~~this~~ Ms.)
1. 5. All editions follow ~~this~~ Ms.  
 Letter to EF/p.144 (see below for dating)  
 . . . At the beginning "the angle" should be 'an angle' and  
 "the yellow square" 'a yellow square'.
1. 7. P. 17; etc. ploughman/Ms. difficult to read here.
- 1.24. P. 17, CP(1920) "Yes: a good few./CP(1928)etc "Yes, a good few.
- 1.30. P. 17; etc should
- 1.34. P. 17; etc. the wood again:

27.v.16. Bodleian f.48-9 (contd.)

Most interesting is the fact that P17 and CP(1920) follow the correction authorised in the letter, while CP(1928) reverts to the Ms, or, as W. Cooke states, "a half-corrected version that has persisted to the 1965 edition". CP(1928) takes notice of the Ms. elsewhere, as in f.15 ("October"). The final alteration in l.10 of "the rich scene" to "the late year" is only printed in CP(1928). Later editions once more depart from the Ms, yet in this poem the Ms. version printed in 1928, has persisted.

(It is interesting that W. Cooke, although noting the change in f.15 "October" in l.10 persists in accepting the earlier and more obvious ms. reading that has been perpetuated, when he quotes from this poem on p.111, op.cit.)

Letter to EF: ... mentions a possible title:

... What about "The Last Team"? (Farjeon, p.144.)

EF mistakenly places this letter as 4 June 1915. On p.198 she mentions an attack of whooping cough in June 1916. This corresponds to the illness mentioned in this letter, which EF cannot remember. In any case the two poems mentioned in this letter - "As the team's head-brass" and "The sun used to shine" (referred to here as 'Me and Frost') are both in the Bodleian Manuscript book, whereas other poems mentioned in letters of early June 1915 are in the BM. Ms. The date should be 4 June 1916: EF misread the postmark as 4 June 1915.

4 June 1916 would correspond satisfactorily to the dates of Bodleian ff48-9 and 45-6 (22.v.16 - The sun used to shine ... )

In the Bodleian Ms. ET has only half remembered the alteration mentioned in the letter, if the letter is taken to be written prior to the copying of the poem into the book. Alternatively, in view of the heading of the letter - Sunday - Steep and the heading of Bodleian f.50 3.vi.16 - going home, it is more likely that the copy of ff48-9 and the letter were written on the same day, at Steep. An examination of ff.44-50 will show sufficient similarity of ink, formation of writing, and method of heading to support the theory that these folios were copied out as a batch.

In view of the correction of the Ms in line 5, the Ms. fair copy would seem to be working towards the final version authorised in the letter, quite probably written either later that day, or on the following day.

This is an interesting instance of the close relationship of the Bodleian drafts and the typed copies done by EF and often discussed in letters. (see also pp.232-3, f.16 typescript & notes.)

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#### Footnote

EF's mistake regarding the date of the postmark of this letter makes the positioning of the letter concerning f.21 - see typescript and notes - even more suspect, see pp.236-8 above.

"Early one Morning"

from Bodleian Don. d. 28, f. 51.

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facing p. 251.

8.9.10.11.vi.16

It was then

32

One Friday morning in May I set out  
away forever:  
~~the way~~

Early one morning in May I set out.  
Away for ever  
and nobody I knew was about,  
Away somewhere, away forever.

There was no wind to trouble the weather -  
Away forever.

I had burnt my letters & darned my socks.  
Away somewhere, away forever.

No one knew I was going away ...  
I thought myself I should come back someday.

I heard the brook through the town garden run.  
O sweet was the mud turned to dust by the sun.

A gate banged in a fence & banged in my head  
'A fine morning, Sir' a shepherd said.

I could not return from my liberty -  
To my youth my love & my money.

The best is the only dead thing that smells sweet,  
The only sweet thing that is not <sup>also</sup> ~~only~~ fleet.

8, 9, 10, 11.vi.16. Hare Hall (Bodleian f.51.) Untitled

~~One Friday morning in May I set out  
Away for ever:  
It was early~~

Early one morning in May I set out.  
Away for ever  
And nobody I knew was about,  
Away somewhere, away for ever.

There was no wind to trouble the weather  
Away for ever  
I had burnt my letters & darned my socks.  
Away somewhere, away for ever.

No one knew I was going away ...  
I thought myself I should come back some day.

I heard the brook through the town gardens run.  
O sweet was the mud turned to dust by the sun.

A gate banged in a fence & banged in my head  
'A fine morning, Sir' a shepherd said.

I could not return from my liberty -  
To my youth & my love & my misery

The past is the only dead thing that smells sweet,  
The only sweet thing that is not ~~only~~ also fleet.

#### Notes

Title, Poems 1917 etc: "Early one Morning"

Poems 1917 etc. omit 1.2. and insert modified form between 1.3 & 4

I'm bound away for ever,  
Poems 1917 etc omit 1.6 & 8, and print the following emendations:

- 1. 9.      Going away,
- 1. 5.      trouble the weathercocks (ms. pen runs dry here)
- 1.14.     morning, sir'
- 1.15.     my liberty,

Poems 1917 etc insert the modified refrain after 1.18.

I'm bound away for ever,  
Away somewhere, away for ever.

This version in the Bodleian Ms. is clearly an interim version. ET is not clear about the use of the refrain, originally after the first line of each stanza. The refrain after the second line has been reduced from four lines to two. The full version occurs in the manuscript after the first and last stanzas, and the omitted two lines read:

8, 9, 10, 11.vi.16. Hare Hall (Bodleian f.51.) Untitled

So fare you well, you bonny young girl,  
For I'm bound away for ever.

Thus we are told on p.10 of the Catalogue for the Exhibition held in 1968 quoting from an earlier individual draft. This follows the modification of the use of refrain in B. M. 44990 ff.2 & 3. Letter to EF 24.vi.16.

I have altered 'Rio' because I feel you are right. I have cut out the 3rd & 4th verses and the only refrain is (as above). (Farjeon, p. 200)

Letter. June 9, '16. I am sending you a sober set of verses to the tune of Rio Grande, but I doubt if they can be sung. Are they worth copying? (Farjeon, p. 198).

This Ms. is notable for several reasons. Without the date, one would group it with the poems based on song refrains in the B. M. ffs. of December 1914 (1) It also provides evidence that poems were modified after their copying up here - yet in other cases e.g. Bod.f.15, ("October") a later alteration, made to this ffs, has been ignored in printing.

(1) See Critical Introduction, pp. 24-5.

10.viii.16. Bodleian.f.61. Hospital, Harehall. Untitled.

How at once should I know,  
 When stretched in the harvest blue  
 I saw the swift's black bow,  
 That I would not have that view  
 Another day  
 Until next May  
 Again it is due?

The same year after year -  
 But with the swift alone.  
 With other things I but fear  
 That they will be over & done  
 Suddenly  
 And I only see  
 Them to know them gone.

#### Notes

**Title, P.17 etc : "How at Once."**

Letter to Farjeon 20.viii.16. ref.1.2 "I have changed 'August blue' to 'Harvest blue'." Thus draft in Bodleian written after 20.viii.16.

Letter to E.F. 13.ix.16. "You misread ... about the swifts - missing the point that year after year I see them, realising it is the last time i.e. just before they go away for the winter (early in August). Perhaps it is too much natural history." (Farjeon, p. 209 & p. 212)

This is notable for the commenting letter - we recall the "last time" in "As The Team's Head Brass":

"The horses started and for the last time  
 I watched the clods crumble and topple over  
 After the ploughshare and the stumbling team."

Sept. 26-7-8? Trowbridge Barracks. Bodleian f.65.  
October

Arise, arise,  
~~While yet the earth new-born~~  
Rise up, rise up,  
And, as the trumpet blowing  
Chases the dreams of men,  
As the dawn glowing  
The stars that left unlit  
The land & water,  
Rise up & scatter  
The dew that covers  
The print of last night's lovers -  
Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening  
To the clear horn,  
Forget, men, everything  
On this earth new-born,  
Except that it is lovelier  
Than any mysteries.  
Open your eyes to the air  
That has washed the eyes of the stars  
Through all the dewy night:  
Up with the light,  
To the old wars;  
Arise, arise

### Notes

Title, PI7 etc : "The Trumpet"

1. Despite the date on the Bodleian Ms., Farjeon places the poem in November 1916. An undated letter refers to a lesson on pulleys and weights, mentions the boredom of camp weekday life, and goes on to say:

However you can see I have some ease, because I have written some verses suggested by the trumpet calls which go all day. They are not well done and the trumpet is cracked, but the Reveille pleases me (more than it does most sleepers.) Here is the result. You see I have written it with only capitals to mark the lines, because people are all round me and I don't want them to know . . . . I am still Cadet P.E. Thomas.

The first draft was enclosed,

pencilled on cheap paper dotted with calculations, that I suppose have to do with his lessons on pulleys and weights.  
(Farjeon, p.218)



Bodleian f. 65 (contd.)

Rise up, rise up, And, as the trumpet blowing Chases the  
dreams of men, As the dawn glowing The stars that left unlit  
The land & water, Rise up and scatter The dew that covers  
The prints of last night's lovers - Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening To the clear horn, Forget, men,  
everything On this earth newborn, Except that it is  
lovelier Than any mysteries. Open your eyes to the  
air That has washed the eyes of the stars Through all  
the dewy night: Up with the light, To the old  
wars; Arise, arise!

It is interesting to note that the version copied into the Bodleian book, although ultimately (with the one exception of 'print' for 'prints' (1.9) identical, had another opening.

2. Letter to EF, postmark 12 November 1916

Thank you for your letter and all the type-writing. On the whole I do like the trumpet verses. If they have to be named 'The Trumpet' will do. (Farjeon, p. 219)

3. Letter to EF, postmark 3 December 1916, sent from High Beech.

Thank you for ... the typescript of 'The Trumpet' which I have copied. (*ibid.*, p. 230)

4. If, on the evidence of the letter of 3 Dec., it is accepted that ET copied out this poem as late as this, it is understandable that the tentative dating on          f. 65 is questionable. If it was written at Trowbridge, during his officer training, it could have been written as late as early November. On the other hand EF admits on p. 214 that the letters for October are lost. Nevertheless, two letters dated 2 Nov & 6 Nov are concerned with "Lights Out", (*op. cit.*, pp 217-8) sent to EF with the letter of 6 Nov, and "The Child in the Orchard", mentioned in that letter. If the undated letter were placed at the end of September, it would make sense in view of the Bodleian dating. However, there is still the mention 'I am still Cadet P.E. Thomas', which would seem more relevant to November when his commission was imminent. Moreover, it would place a gap of some six weeks between composition and sending it to EF for typing.

One can only conclude that there are discrepancies whatever date one favours; October, crossed out at the top of          f. 65 may well be the correct compromise, although this would still not explain the prior concern in November with "Lights Out" and "The Child in the Orchard". Perhaps the alleged first draft sent to EF was a reworking, or a return to an earlier idea. This theory could explain the opening of the Bodleian version; an earlier, already discarded version of "The Long Small Room" was in Thomas's mind when transferring that poem to the          book. (see Bodleian f. 68, p. 257 ff.         ) and in "Digging" Bod. f. 12, pp 228-9.

Bodleian f. 65 (contd.)

5. - "he was making his final choice from poems as he wrote them - discarding others he did not like so well ... 'The Trumpet' was the first in the book now under way. (Farjeon p. 219).

6. W. Cooke's comments, *op cit*, p. 235 are both relevant and interesting. He has further pointed out the fact that this poem is hardly to be equated with Brooke's war sonnets, prior to the experience of war, glorifying the call to the righteous cause. Thomas had already written many poems in which his clear understanding of the implications of war cannot surely be ignored. "A Private", "This Is No Case", "As The Team's Head Brass", "The Owl", "The Cherry Trees", are all influenced by this understanding and sympathy. "The Trumpet," inexplicably has been the opening poem in almost every collection of his work. Cooke states correctly that it is a poem arising from 'the ambiguity of Thomas' commitment'. The curious exhortation at the end of the first verse to scatter the dew covering the prints of last night's lovers is made clear when one recalls the role of the lovers in other poems such as "As The Team's Head Brass" and "The Cherry Trees" as symbols of sanity and normality. The act suggested is a curious contrast to the mute grief of "The Cherry Trees," it is an act of desecration of their memory, a reversal of normality, a forced and strange action symbolic of the reversal of nature in response to the martial call. In the second stanza the urge to forget, to cease thinking in the face of this involvement is vaguely enacted, although contrary to Cooke's suggestion that Thomas is 'guilty of making the vaguest of gestures', one could say that this very unsatisfactory vagueness suggests the lack of conviction felt, and moreover, bears echoes of the vague exhortations heard to devote oneself unthinkingly to the cause. Taken at its face value it is indeed a weak gesture —

Forget, men, everything  
On this earth, new-born,  
Except that it is lovelier  
Than any mysteries

but I feel that one can trace a note of weary irony in this reflection of the cant heard and written from Brooke onwards. The weary tone of resignation is completed by the conclusion - the old wars.

Bodleian f.68    Untitled    Trowbridge    November  
 (see notes for further evidence  
 of date)

~~the~~

The long small room that showed ~~distan~~ willows in the west  
 Narrowed up to the end the fireplace filled,  
 Although not wide. I liked it. No one guessed  
 What need or accident made them so build.

Only the moon, the mouse & the sparrow peeped  
 In from the ivy round the casement thick.  
 Of all they saw and heard there they shall keep  
 The tale for the old ivy & older brick.

When I look back I am like moon, sparrow, & mouse  
 That witnessed what they could never understand  
 Or alter or prevent in the dark house.  
 One thing remains the same - this my right hand

Crawling crab-like over the clean white page,  
 Resting awhile each morning on the pillow,  
 Then once more starting to crawl on towards age.  
 The hundred last leaves stream upon the willow.

### Notes

Title, P17 etc : "The Long Small Room."  
 Several letters to EF refer to this poem.

1. Postmark 15 Nov. 1916. Tuesday, Wanstrow. (RGA, Wanstrow, Somerset) i.e. 14 Nov. 16.

..... I am worried about the impression the willow made on you. As a matter of fact I started with that last line as what I was working to. I am only fearing it has a sort of Japanese suddenness of ending. But it is true, whether or not it is a legitimate switch to make. I will think of it as much like somebody else as possible. (Farjeon, p. 221)

(EF would seem to have queried the relevance of 1.16 in the original)

2. Undated letter from Wanstrow. (On internal evidence probably Thursday Nov. 16th.) On Saturday begins our leave, which may last anything from a week to a month. After Sunday with my Mother I am going up to see Gordon Bottomley. I shall be at home probably from the Thursday (23rd) onwards ...  
 Your suspicions about the back of this page are right. I am an unconscionable time becoming silent, I feel. But this last week was not a pleasant one and I had to do something to avenge myself. (Farjeon, p. 221)

EF comments : This letter was written on the back of a sheet on which he had typed the first draft of "The Long Small Room". The first line ran:

The long small room that showed the distant west

Bodleian f.68 Notes (contd.)

In his next letter he changed the line.

3. Postmark 20 Nov. 16 Carnforth Station.

... By the way if the first line were 'The long small room that showed willows in the west' would it make a difference ...

On the evidence of the three letters of November 14th, 16th and 20th, the poem was written during the week preceding Thursday Nov. 16th, i.e. between November 9th and 16th. The letter of November 14th would indicate that some version had been seen by Eleanor Farjeon prior to that date. Thomas' final alteration of November 20th was perhaps not his preference, in view of the comment in the first letter, and the slip in the fair copy in the Bodleian draft.

The date of composition can therefore be fixed between November 9th and November 20th, with the initial version completed by the Saturday, November 11th, in order to enable Thomas to send it to EF, for her to read it and to reply in time for his letter of November 14th to take note of her queries.

Note (1) above gives valuable insight into his methods of composition - here he started with an idea and a line towards which he worked. From a textual and critical point of view, it is clear that from these notes, and the slip in the first line of the Bodleian mss, ET made corrections at times against his own inclination. The earlier version of the opening line is the line he remembers. Other instances of correction at the instigation of EF are found in Bodleian f.12, "Digging," f.51 "Early One Morning"; yet EF's query regarding what seems to be an obvious point in Stanza 15 of f.22 "Roads" shows that her perception was not uniformly excellent. Thomas' own self-doubt led him to seek 'objective' opinion - he himself in the note (1) above states 'I will think of it as much like somebody else as possible.'

Bodleian f.70 On loose leaf of notepaper, obviously folded at some time, with note at the end of the poem in E. F. 's handwriting: 'Sent from Codford'.

Untitled.

Some day, I think, there will be people enough  
 In Froxfield to pick all the blackberries  
 Out of the hedges of Green Lane, the straight  
 Broad lane where now September hides herself  
 In bracken & blackberry, harebell & dwarf gorse.  
 Today, where yesterday a hundred sheep  
 Were nibbling, halcyon bells shake to the sway  
 Of waters that no vessel ever sailed ...

It is a kind of spring: the chaffinch tries  
 His song. For heat it is like summer too.  
 This might be winter's quiet. While the glint  
 Of hollies dark in the swollen hedges lasts -  
 One mile - and those bells ring, little I know  
 Or heed if time be still the same, until  
 The lane ends & once more all is the same.

### Notes

1. Not included in printed editions until 1927. Two Poems 1927 - as in CP 1928 ff. - titled "The Lane".
2. Letter headed R. A. Mess, Tintown, Lydd, date 16.xii.16. mentions 'fifteen lines' "... last night by the way after I wrote that card to you, I was very much alone for a time (till a dog began to kill a cat outside the hut) and wrote 15 lines. But I doubt if I shall do anything with them."

The card referred to was posted (at least postmarked) 15 December 1916. E. F. comments on the mention of 'fifteen lines' (op. cit., pp. 234-5) -  
 'What were the fifteen lines he wrote, but did not send?'  
 (Dated Friday - which would in fact be 15 December 1916)

3. Letter of Sat., 13:i:17:

'Now I have to hang on here (Lydd) till Monday ... then I go to Codford and this is the address (244 Siege By, 15 Camp, Codford, nr. Warminster.)'

He was there until 28th, therefore it would seem that this poem, if it was sent from Codford, was sent sometime between 15 and 28 January, although being composed a month earlier, (EF quotes letters of 17 and 26 January) on 15 December, 1916. (See Farjeon, pp. 242-4)

"Out in the Dark"

from Don d. 28, f. 71.

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facing p. 260.

24 xii 16.

High Beach

Out in the dark over the snow  
The fallow fawns invisible go  
With the fallow doe;  
And the winds blow  
Fast as the trees are slow.

Stealthily the dark hounds round  
And, when a lamp goes, without sound  
At a surfer bound  
Than ringiest hound,  
Arrows, & all else is drowned;

And star & I & wind & deer  
Are in the dark together, — near,  
Yet far, — and fear  
Drums on my ear  
In this sage company deer.

How weak & little is the light,  
All the universe of sight,  
And love & delight,  
Before the night,  
If we love it not, of night.

24.xii.16. Bodleian f.71 High Beech. Untitled.

Out in the dark over the snow  
The fallow fawns invisible go  
With the fallow doe;  
And the winds blow  
Fast as the stars are slow.

Stealthily the dark haunts round  
And when a lamp goes, without sound  
At a swifter bound  
Than swiftest hound,  
Arrives, & all else is drowned;

And star & I & wind & deer,  
Are in the dark together, - near,  
Yet far, - and fear  
Drums on my ear  
In that sage company drear.

How weak and little is the light  
All the universe of sight,  
And love & delight,  
Before the might,  
If we love it not, of night.

### Notes

- Title, L.P. etc: Out in the Dark.  
1. 7 L.P. a lamp/CP, 1920, 28 etc. the lamp  
1. 9 L.P. etc. than the swiftest hound,  
1.11 L.P., CP(1920) And I and star ...  
C.P., 1928 etc. as Ms.  
1.18 All texts omit initial And  
1.20 L.P. etc. If you love it not

E. F. Quicks, op.cit., p.238 a version following f. 71 in ll. 7 & 9  
but L.P. from 1.11 onwards.

Letter to EF 27:xii:16 from Lydd mentions some 'verses I made on  
Sunday. (24th). It is really Baba who speaks, not I. Something she  
felt put me on to it. But I am afraid I am meddling now. A real poem  
would include and imply all these things I am writing, or so I fancy ...  
I will just copy out the verses and send them off ...' (Farjeon, p. 237)

Letter to EF 3:i:17 from Lydd adds in a P.S. 'Thank you so much for  
typing those lines and I wish you could have liked the 3rd verse, because,  
do you know, I like it best. And I do care two pins, too, though now it  
looks more than ever as if I shall not begin writing again for some time.'  
(ibid., p. 240)

J.W.Haines was given a copy of this poem, being told that it was his

/last



24.xii.16. Bodleian f.71 (contd.)

last poem, and that he had written nothing at Lydd. But JWH knew that ET took Ms. paper to France. Letter to H. T. on writing poetry at the front: "It is the most impossible thing in this new disturbing world where I am so far only a spectator." (1)  
(ET's letters to EF show his awareness of his new surroundings, but he had no time to form a full sympathy with his milieu.)

### Commentary.

There are several stages of alteration in this his last poem. Written out hurriedly and without correction in ms, it has nevertheless received several alterations since. Eleanor Farjeon reproduces a version which was published in Last Poems 1918, after the alteration of ll. 7 & 9 noted in the textual notes. The third verse which one presumes EF did not care for from the evidence of the letter of 3.i.17 from Lydd, has been altered in the version produced by EF on p.238. Last Poems 1918, and Collected Poems 1920 follow this altered version, and the edition of 1928 as it does elsewhere (e.g.f.15) reverts to the manuscript. Also similar to other instances of restoration of ms. reading by the 1928 edition, this restoration is not complete, and ll. 7, 9, 18 and 20 remain as in Last Poems.

As with so many alterations from the ms. one can argue for and against. The substitution of the definite the for the indefinite a can be supported by comparison with the surrounding concepts - 'the' dark, 'the' fawns, 'the' winds, and the direct contrast of 'dark' and 'lamp' is strengthened by this more definite parallel. The alteration of l.9 is less explicable, for the rhythm is interrupted by the insertion of the article - it becomes more regular but less representative of the sudden coming of the dark. The change of order in l.11, restored in 1928, seems similarly less justified. The more natural order of the ms. is to be preferred, unless it is felt that the altered order leads to the contrast and echo of 'star' and 'dark' in the next line being more noticeable. There seems to be no definite order of preference in this instance. The omission of the initial 'and' in l.18 leads to a crisper continuation of thought, following on from the 'universe of sight', and avoids the more cumulative effect that two conjunctions would have in this one line. The final line's alteration from the personal we to the impersonal 'you' seems strange in view of the personal I of l.11, and yet adds a shade of impersonal objectivity perhaps. My preference is for the more immediately communicative 'we'.

This poem is an instance of alteration after an unaltered ms. It provides an example of the difficulties any editor will encounter in attempting to deduce the preferable readings, and from the partial return to the ms.

/of

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(1) John Moore, The Life and Letters of Edward Thomas, (1939) p.253.

"Out in the Dark"

from Last Poems 1918

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facing p. 262.

## OUT IN THE DARK

Out in the dark over the snow  
The fallow fawns invisible go  
With the fallow doe;  
And the winds blow/  
Fast as the stars are slow.

Stealthily the dark haunts round  
And, when a lamp goes, without sound  
At a swifter bound  
Than the swiftest hound,  
Arrives, and all else is drowned;

And I and star and wind and deer,  
Are in the dark together,—near,  
Yet far,—and fear  
Drums on my ear  
In that sage company drear.

How weak and little is the light,  
All the universe of sight,  
Love and delight,  
Before the might,  
If you love it not, of night.



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# SELWYN & BLOUNT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

AUTUMN 1918

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12, YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI, W.C. 2.

## Comment on Bodleian f.71 (contd.)

of the 1928 CP. It is clear that no absolute ruling had been made known by Thomas himself, certainly regarding his later poems, poems either too late for detailed and authoritative revision, or poems rejected in his selection made for Selwyn & Blount, to be published as Poems 1917.

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APPENDICES

- I            Chronology of the Ms. Poems of Edward Thomas,  
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- IA           The choice of titles
- II            Biographical Table, November 1914 - April 1917
- IIA          Extract from the Cemetery Register of Agny  
              Military Cemetery, near Arras
- III          Addenda :
- a)            Description of To the Memory of Edward  
              Thomas, The Pear Tree Press, 1937
- also        Extracts from Letters of E. T. to  
              W. H. Hudson
- b)            Extracts from Thomas' own writing,  
              on Poetry, Happiness, and Dreams.

APPENDIX I

Chronology of mss. poems of Edward Thomas, 1914-1916

The majority of the 135 poems found in mss. collections have already been referred to, with date. This list is produced in the interests of clarity. Most of these dates are clearly indicated in mss. A few dates have been deduced from other evidence, produced in detail with the Text. There are no known ms. of seven poems:

"When First", "The Mountain Chapel", "The Glory", "The Other", "Birds' Nests", "Interval" and "After Rain".

"Interval" and "After Rain" seem to have been sent to Farjeon with an accompanying letter, dated 6:i:15,\* which refers to 'some of my verses' - 'all you haven't seen'. The next letter, dated 10:i:15,\* refers to both poems in reply to Farjeon's comments:

... -But 'under storm's wing' was not just for the metre. 'As if they played' I was anxious to have in. It describes the patterns of the fish but it comes awkwardly perhaps after 'inlaid'.<sup>1</sup> I mean in 'Interval' that the night did postpone her coming a bit for the twilight. Night might have been expected to come down on the end of day and didn't. 'Held off' would have been stricter... (\**op. cit.*, pp. 109-10)

We can thus assign 6:i:15 to these poems as an approximate date of composition; for the five other poems there is no similarly convenient reference. Neither is there any means of being more precise regarding the date of "The child in the Orchard", simply labelled 'October' in the Bodleian ms. f. 66.

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<sup>1</sup> See also letter of 16:i:15. '... The 'inlaid' too is at any rate perfectly precise as I saw the black leaves 2 yrs ago up at the top of the hill - so that neither is a rhyme word only ...' - Farjeon, p. 111.

However, four poems with similarly vague headings in *ffs.* can be dated more precisely. The evidence for two of these - ~~on page 257~~ "The Long Small Room", f.68, and "The Lane" f.70 (p. 259) appears with the Text. <sup>(1)</sup> Bod. f.18 entitled "A Thrush" is headed 'November - the day I stayed in as Hut Orderly when the others went to South Weald.' Bod.f.17 is headed 'Going home from Harehall Camp', 26:xi:15. A letter postmarked 28 Nov 1915 and headed 'Train to Petersfield - <sup>(2)</sup> 'Friday' refers to f.17 and to the limited leave - 'there is only Sunday'. He hoped to 'finish this at Steep, or at any rate add a copy of the lines'. We can thus deduce that Thomas went on leave on Friday, 26:xi:15, returning by Monday 29:xi:15. There is no prior reference to "A Thrush" in the letters of November, and so we can date the poem on this evidence as belonging to either 29th or 30th November 1915.

Thus we have precise or near precise dating for 136 poems, with the month of composition of a further one. Five poems remain undated.

(1) for dating of "Lights Out" see p. 255 above.

(2) Farjeon, p.172.

In the following list the *ffs.* sources are referred to as follows:

LML refers to Lockwood Memorial Library, State Univ. of New York.  
 BC refers to Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.  
 BM refers to British Museum Add Ms. 44990  
 B refers to Bodleian Library Ms. Don d.28

The poems appear in the order of dates assigned to these *ffs.* drafts.

1914

3	December	'Up in the Wind'	(LML)
4		'November'	(LML)
5		'March'	(LML)
6		'Old Man'	(LML)
7		'The Sign-Post'	(LML)
24		'The Manor Farm'	(BM)
25		'An Old Song'	(BM)
		('I was not apprenticed ...')	
26		'An Old Song'	(BM)
		('The sun set ...')	
30		'The Combe'	(BM)
31		'The Hollow Wood'	(BM)

1915

1	January	'The New Year'	(BM)
4		'The Source'	(BM)
5		'The Penny Whistle'	(BM)
(6)		'Interval' ) 'After Rain' ) no flss.	
<u>6</u> -7		'A Private'	(BM)
7		'Snow'	(BM)
8		'Adlestrop'	(BM)
8		'Tears'	(BM)
9		'Over the Hills'	(BM)
10		'The Lofty Sky'	(BM)
15		'The Cuckoo'	(BM)

15	January	'Swedes'	(BM)
17		'The Unknown Bird'	(BM)*
18		'The Mill Pond'	(BM)*
20		'Man and Dog'	(BM)*
21		'Beauty'	(BM)
22		'The Gypsy'	(BM)*
23		'Ambition'	(BM)*
3-4	February	'House and Man'	(BM)
11		'Parting'	(BM)
11		'First Known When Lost'	(BM)
15		'May the Twenty-third'	(BM)
22		'The Barn'	(BM)
23		'Home'	(BM)
		('Not the end ...')	
24		'The Owl'	(BM)
11	March	'The Child on the Cliffs'	(BM)
12		'The Bridge'	(BM)
16		'Good-Night'	(BM)
18		'But These Things Also'	(BM)
19		'The New House'	(BM)
22-3		'The Barn and the Down'	(BM)
23		'Sowing'	(BM)
23		'March the Third'	(BM)
24		'Two Pewits' (revised 4 May 1915)	(BM)

\*copies also in BC

25	March	'Will You Come?'	(BM)
26		'The Path'	(BM)
27		'The Wasp Trap'	(BM)
28		'A Tale' (revised 31 March 1915)	(BM)
1	April	'Wind and Mist'	(BM)
2		'A Gentleman'	(BM)
3-4		'Lob'	(BM)
4		'Digging'	(BM)
		('Today I think ...')	
5		'Lovers'	(BM)
6		'In Memoriam : Easter 1915'	(BM)
14		'Head and Bottle'	(BM)
17		'Home'	(BM)
		('Often I had gone ...')	
18		'Health'	(BM)
20		'The Huxter'	(BM)
21		'She Dotes'	(BM)
22		'Song'	(BM)
24		'A Cat'	(BM)
25		'Melancholy'	(BM)
30		'Tonight'	(BM)
2	May	'April'	(BM)
7		'July'	(BM)
8		'The Chalk-Pit'	(BM)

13	May	'Fifty Faggots'	(BM)
23-4		'Sedgwarblers'	(BM)
25	June	'I Built Myself a House of Glass'	(B)
26-8		'Words'	(B)
5	July	'The Word'	(B)
5		'Under the Woods'	(B)
6-8		'Haymaking'	(B)
7-8		'A Dream'	(B)
10		'The Brook'	(B)
11		'Aspens'	(B)
12		'The Mill Water'	(B)
13-14		'For These'	(B)
21		'Digging'	(B)
		('What matter makes my spade ...')	
22		'Two Houses'	(B)
23		'Cock Crow'	(B)
15-16	October	'October'	(B)
18-19	November	'There's Nothing Like the Sun'	(B)
26		'Liberty'	(B)
(29-30*)		'The Thrush'	(B)
26	December	'This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong'	(B)
		<u>1916</u>	
7	January	'Rain'	(B)
15		'The Clouds that are so Light'	(B)
22		'Roads'	(B)
4-9	February	'The Ash Grove'	(B)
7-8		'February Afternoon'	(B)

(\*precise date not given in ffs.)

See p. 269 above.



8	February	'P. H. T.'	(B)
9		'These Things that Poets Said'	(B)
11		'No One So Much As You'	(B)
14		'The Unknown'	(B)
4	March	'Celandine'	(B)
7-10		'"Home"'	(B)
10		'Thaw'	(B)
6	April	) 'If I Should Ever by Chance'	(B)
7		) 'If I were to Own'	(B)
8		) * 'What Shall I Give?'	(B)
9		) 'And You, Helen'	(B)
30		'The Wind's Song'	(B)
		'Like the Touch of Rain'	(B)
1	May	'When We Two Walked'	(B)
		'Tall Nettles'	(B)
		'The Watchers'	(B)
5		'I Never Saw that Land Before'	(B)
7-8		'The Cherry Trees'	(B)
11-13		'It Rains'	(B)
13-14		'Some Eyes Condemn'	(B)
22		'The Sun Used to Shine'	(B)
25-6		'No One Cares Less Than I'	(B)
27		'As the Team's Head-Brass'	(B)

(\* these four dates, given in ~~ms.~~ are clearly approximate in view of references made in letters dated some days previously to these poems. - see Farjeon The Last Four Years p.193)

3	June	'After You Speak'	(B)
4--5		'Bright Clouds'	(B)
8-11		'Early One Morning'	(B)
21		'It Was Upon'	(B)
22		'Women He Liked'	(B)
23		'There Was A Time'	(B)
28		'The Green Roads'	(B)
1 and 10 July		'The Dark Forest'	(B)
3-4		'The Gallows'	(B)
15		'When He Should Laugh'	(B)
10	August	'How At Once'	(B)
3	September	'Gone, Gone Again'	(B)
10		'That Girl's Clear Eyes'	(B)
15		'What Will They Do?'	(B)
26-8		'The Trumpet'	(B)
	October	'The Child in the Orchard'	(B)
		(no reference is made to this poem before 6 November; the Bodleian <i>ms.</i> provides no date other than 'October')	
( 6)	November	'Lights Out' (1)	(B)
(15)	November*	'The Long Small Room'	(B)
23		'The Sheiling'	(B)
(15)	December*	'The Lane'	(B) <sup>1</sup>
24		'Out in the Dark'	(B)

(\*Precise dates are not given in *ms.* See notes to Text of these poems for evidence regarding date of composition, pp. 257-9 above.

(1) see p. 255 above - reference to The Last Four Years, p. 218.

APPENDIX IA

The choice of titles

In the course of the present work, in Critical and Textual Introductions, and in the notes to individual poems, the choice of title has often been mentioned. Only 23 poems of the 135 found in manuscript were given titles in their ms. stage. A further 12 appeared in print prior to March 1917, and another three are referred to by their subsequent title in letters. A further 51 titles are ratified by their inclusion in Poems 1917 (7 ms. titles and 6 already in print make up the 64). 17 titles are similarly ratified by the Annual of New Poetry 1917 (the other poem, which appears as "The Source", was headed in ms. "The Source of the Ouse at Selsfield"). These poems of ANP appear in Last Poems 1918, together with 15 whose titles are given in ms., and those already printed in Six Poems 1916. Thus a further 33 poems which appear in Last Poems 1918, together with the five poems added by 1949, seem to have been titled by the editors..

These titles include the two known as "Digging", the second "An Old Song" (I was not apprenticed ...) and the two entitled "Home". (A third poem, well analysed by W. Cooke<sup>op. cit., p. 229-31</sup>, is ironically and deliberately titled "'Home'" - this was included in Poems 1917.) The ms. title "A Thrush", Bod. f.18 (29/30) xi.15, is altered for no apparent reason to "The Thrush" in Last Poems. The Thrush was the title of a short-lived poetry magazine of 1910 (edited by N. H. Wills and W. Jerrold) which published Thomas' essay "The End of a Day". Apart from these confusions, the titles are predictable, as are the majority of those we

can ascribe to Thomas himself. Many are simply known by their first line. The precedent for this is found in B. M. f. 37, where the poet headed the text with the first line - "But these things also". This simple precedent is followed so that "The Huxter", in receiving its title, loses the first two words of text, which are replaced by the pronoun 'he'; such editorial work is unremarkable, but there are various oddities among their titles. Such an instance, apart from the duplication mentioned above, is the reproduction of the locality given in the Bodleian mss. of 10:ix:16 to the poem known as "That Girl's Clear Eyes". Added to this in all editions has been, in parenthesis, (Handel Street). Thomas was stationed at the Royal Artillery School in Handel Street from 21:viii:16 to 21:ix:16. Many of the poems in the Bodleian mss. have similar localities mentioned. (see Textual Introduction, p. 98 ff.)

More interesting is the occurrence of various soubriquets or provisional titles by which several poems are named in Thomas' letters. These often provide an interesting clue as to the genesis or purpose of the poem. "The Sun Used To Shine" - simply the first line - was referred to as "Me and Frost" in a letter to Farjeon of 4 June 1916, op. cit., p. 14. Without this information it is difficult to establish the nature of the poet's reminiscence.<sup>1</sup> "As The Team's Head Brass" is <sup>also</sup> referred to in <sup>this</sup> letter to Farjeon of June 1916. Thomas wondered about the title: "..... How about "The Last Team?" This seems an apt title in view of the undermining threat of war felt throughout the poem, with its intrusion into the rural community. A letter of May 1916 referred to the poem "Like the touch of rain" as "Go Now". <sup>op. cit., p. 194.</sup> It is a moot point which emphasis of the poem, sensuous beauty, or unpalatable individual reality should

(1)  
 be stressed in the title. There is no ultimate criterion on which to proceed, for not all titles eschew the obvious. One revised title that does is the poem of January 1915, "The Owl", known to E. Garnett as "Those Others".<sup>see p. 148 above.</sup> The less obvious and more subtle allusion is preferred in print. Similarly the poem of September 1916, known as "Gone, Gone Again" (a poem written at, and headed, Handel St. - see above) is referred to as "Blenheim Oranges" in a letter to Farjeon.<sup>op. cit., p. 213.</sup> When printed in Poems 1917, with "The Sun Used to Shine," "As The Team's Head-Brass", and "Like the Touch of Rain", the simple expedient of the opening line as title was adopted.

One can but conclude that there are a few unnecessary duplications, or puzzling alterations. The majority of the poems, though, speak for themselves, and the choice of title is one of several areas of minor significance arising from the conditions of the publications of 1915-20 discussed in detail in the Textual Introduction.

1. "As I Knew Him", In Memoriam, Edward Thomas.  
 J.W. Haines stated in July 1919 that the poem referred to the time spent by Thomas, Frost and Haines in the Valley of the Leadon in 1914. Stanzas 4 and 5 are reminiscent of Thomas' article "This England", which appeared in The Nation in Nov. 1914. "I thought, like many people, what things that same new moon sees eastward about the Meuse in France".

The war  
 Came back to mind with the moonrise.  
 Which soldiers in the east afar  
 Beheld then .....

In the poem even the small items of nature are metamorphosed into reminders of war:

... a sentry of dark betonies ...



APPENDIX IIBIOGRAPHICAL TABLE Nov.1914 - April 1917.

<u>Nov.1914</u>	Writing early poems. Considers emigrating to U.S.A.
<u>Jan.1915</u>	Sprains ankle - unable to walk. Frost returns to U.S.A. ET attempts to publish verse under pseudonym of Eastaway.
<u>March 1915</u>	includes two poems by Eastaway - "Manor Farm" and "Haymaking" - in his own anthology.
<u>April, June 1915</u>	<u>In Pursuit of Spring &amp; Marlborough</u> published.
<u>July 13, 1915</u>	Enlists in Artists Rifles (28th Battalion, The London Regt., Embodied Territorial Force)
<u>Aug., Sept. 1915</u>	Initial training in London - billeted with his parents. He wrote to <u>EF, op. cit. p. 165</u> , on 19.viii:15 - "I have been so busy at private soldiering that I couldn't write."
<u>October 1915</u>	In camp at High Beech, nr. Loughton, Essex.
<u>November 1915</u>	Camp at Hare Hall Camp, Gidea Park, Romford, Essex Guthrie promises to publish some Eastaway poems in <u>Root and Branch</u> ("House and Man" & "Interval") ET promoted L/Cpb.
<u>January 1916</u>	Map-reading instructor at Hare Hall. Two poems accepted by <u>Form</u> - "Words" and "Lob".
<u>February 1916</u>	Plans for <u>Six Poems</u> by E. Eastaway. Convalescent leave spent at Steep.
<u>March 1916</u>	ET sends 40 poems to G. Bottomley, for consideration for <u>An Annual of New Poetry</u> - 18 published - see <u>Textual Introduction</u> . ET promoted Cpl. <u>Keats</u> by ET published.
<u>June 1916</u>	Awarded grant of £300 <sup>1</sup> Applies for artillery commission. Mrs. Lupton evicts ET from his study at Wick Green, on Ashford Hanger.
<u>July 1916</u>	ET spends leave with Helen Thomas. He refuses offer of permanent post at Hare Hall.

Footnote 1. According to R.P. Eckert, <sup>(p. 180)</sup> Thomas left behind him worldly goods of slightly less than a thousand pounds. (Helen Thomas wrote on p.91 of AIW of "that melancholy that had its roots in no material circumstances.")

- August 1916 Ingpen considers publishing 64 poems of ET.
- September 1916 ET Officer Cadet at St. John's Wood and Royal Artillery School, Handel St.
- October 1916 ET at firing camp at Trowbridge, Wiltshire. Asks G. Bottomley to supervise proofs of ANP.
- November 1916 ET commissioned 2/Lt. (20th Nov.) Posted to 244 Seige Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, Lydd, Kent. Spends leave with GB at Cartmel ("The Sheiling" 23rd Nov.) and J.W. Haines in Gloucester, before returning to the cottage at High Beech. Six Poems published.
- December 1916 Volunteers for overseas service. Selwyn & Blount decide to publish selection of poems. Unexpected leave on Christmas Eve.
- Jan 6-12, 1917 Embarkation leave. Firing practice at Codford, nr. Warminster. Arranges for John Freeman and Eleanor Farjeon to supervise proofs of edition by Selwyn and Blount.
- Jan. 29, 1917 Embarkation.
- Feb. 1917 Action near Arras; at Achicourt. ET hears that proofs are going well.
- Feb. 21, 1917 Attached H. Q. Staff
- March 9, 1917 Returns to 244 Seige Battery.
- April 4, 1917 ET sees review of ANP in TLS.<sup>1</sup>
- April 9, 1917 ET killed on opening day of Battle of Arras.

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" . . . . Thomas lies  
'Neath Vimy Ridge where he among his fellows  
Died just as life had touched his lips to song."

---

1 - Footnote on the TLS review of ANP

The reviewer showed incredible obtuseness in his criticism, yet Thomas was grateful for the reviewer's praise. "At present, like most of his contemporaries, he has too little control over his eyes. They are too

/strong



strong for him; and, roving at their will, seeing everything with equal clearness, moving too fast for much growth of thought or love, they make the world for him too like a chaos of scattered and disconnected impressions. What he and others like him seem to need is more concentration of vision, more selection of material, more decision of will as to what the world is to mean for him and what as a poet he is to try to do with it . . . . . ". For all this, the reviewer did note that "he has real imagination", and that "he is a real poet, with the truth in him." The tone of the review is significantly indicated, however, by the reviewer's judgement on "Roads", to him finer than "Old Man". - "All walkers will rejoice in seeing set down in verse what they have vaguely felt of the majesty of a great road." This was the level of critical appraisal for many years; the Critical Introduction to this present work has to thank subsequent slow growth towards a more perceptive and constructive insight. The reviewer continued by suggesting that Thomas' method was "An unconscious survival of a materialism and naturalism which the tremendous life of the last three years has made an absurdity." Although on the whole satisfied by the reception of the first substantial body of his poems, Thomas had substantial reservations.

It is strange to find W. Cooke <sup>(1)</sup> pointing to the following remark as evidence of the poet's approval. "I don't mind now being called inhuman and being told by a reviewer now that April's here - in England now - that I am blind to the 'tremendous life of these three years!'" The emphatic 'now' is significant; he was preoccupied and involved in preparations for the coming battle. Even more noticeable are his ironic echoes of Browning and Brooke; it is grimly amusing to Thomas to be told

(1) Cooke, op.cit., p.99.

by a reviewer, safe in England, that he is blind to the life of these three years. Thomas had indeed referred to the review, "which I was quite pleased with", but further on in this letter to Gordon Bottomley of 4 April 1917, he writes:

"Why do the idiots accuse me of using my eyes? Must I only use them with field-glasses and must I see only Huns in these beautiful hills eastwards and only hostile flashes in the night skies when I am at the Observation Post."

This very letter refutes the review in its perception of fair and foul - each with its individual value:

"The servants are chatting outside in their shirt-sleeves and war is not for the moment dirty or ugly - as it was this morning, when I was well in front and the shining sun made ruins and rusty barbed wire and dead horses and deep filthy mud uglier than they are in the stormy weather or in the pale cold dawn ... " (1)

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(1) Letters, p. 282.

'Till suddenly at Arras you possessed that hinted land.'

Alun Lewis, "To Edward Thomas."

Plot c.43, Agny Military Cemetery, South of Arras.  
Photographed August 1970.

'... it bears your name and trade,  
To Edward Thomas, poet ....'

'A rough white stone upon a flinty spur  
Projecting from the high autumnal woods.'

Alun Lewis, "To Edward Thomas."

The scene has changed since Lewis visited the  
recently unveiled memorial. Now a large yew  
bush obscures the view from the village.

The Memorial Stone, Steep, photographed  
October 1971.



APPENDIX IIA

Extract from Cemetery Register of Agny Military Cemetery near Arras

The Battle of Arras, 9th April 1917

In November 1916 the Allies prepared for 1917; an attack was to be made against the North and South shoulders of the German salient in front of the Arras - Bapaume Road. In Feb-Mar 1917 the Germans evacuated the salient. The Arras attack became an attack on the German line opposite Arras, from Lens to Croisilles . . . . .

The attack was prepared with the greatest thoroughness. It covered a front of nearly 15 miles, from a little South of Givenchy-en-Gohelle, past Vimy, the river Scarpe, Arras and the river Cojeul, nearly to Croisilles. It was begun by the right wing of the First Army (Canadian Corps) and four Corps of the Third Army. It was launched in the early morning of the 9th April, and by the end of the day it had reached an irregular line East of Thelns, Fampoux, Fenchy and Neuville - Vitasse. The Canadian Corps had overrun almost all Vimy Ridge : the 9th (Scottish) and 4th Divisions, on the North side of the Scarpe had reached their objectives . . . . . The Battle of Vimy Ridge and the First Battle of the Scarpe continued to the 14th April . . . . .

Description of Agny Cemetery, from the above Register

The cemetery is bounded by a hedge and a curb, and planted with laburnums, thorns and yews. It slopes up from the north between woods, to the wooded grounds of the ruined Chateau.

The following entry appears in this register:

THOMAS, 2nd Lt. Philip Edward, 244th Seige Bty. Royal Garrison Artillery. 9th April 1917. (Plot No) C.43.

---

Details of the circumstances in which Thomas met his death, and of his final resting place, seem a necessary conclusion in view of his brave acceptance of death, confronted for many years, and examined in prose and poetry with disturbing insight. Finally, his death was not the simple, often longed for escape; it was sacrifice for what he believed in - not blind, not heroic, but characteristically honest. This impending trial was the final pressure under which his poems came to fruition.

APPENDIX IIIAddenda

- a) To the Memory of Edward Thomas /  
by James Guthrie / The Pear Tree Press / 1937.

Contents:

Frontspiece : Portrait of Edward Thomas by Robin Guthrie.

Introductory Note.

Edward Thomas : The Friend and the Artist.

(Poem) Instead of his Voice.

Landscape.

Flowering Currant.

(Inset) View from the Garden at Harting.

Original Advertisement for Six Poems.

Edward Thomas' Letters to W. H. Hudson.

The Stream

(Poem) The Song of Joy.

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(Final page)

..... For kind permission to reprint the paper on E.T.'s  
letters to W. H. Hudson we are indebted to Mrs. H. T. and  
the editor of The London Mercury.

..... resetting of type and press work are by John Freeman.

AT THE PEAR TREE PRESS

Flansham, Bognor Regis, Sussex, England

(Edition limited to 250 copies).

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Extracts from the letters to W.H. Hudson

1. Letter prior to 1908

..... I have done so little with my time - and have so few hopes of doing any more with it, that I set no value on it; only now and then comes a dreamlike, startled feeling that a year has gone by without my being conscious of it until that moment, but that passes, and then I wonder vaguely now and then what and if anything is going to happen .....

2. Letter of November 1914.

..... not that I pretend to be warlike, or to think except with blank misgiving, of any sort of life different from my past: only I can't justify not making an effort except by saying if I did go it would be hard to put and leave things straight at home. It is just a little too late to jump at so very complete a release from the mess of journalism .....

3. Letter of Spring 1915.

..... They have all been written since November. I had done no verses before, and did not expect to, and merely became nervous when I thought of beginning. But when it came to beginning I slipped into it naturally, whatever the results .....

I believe that a man who likes poetry, and says honestly what he likes is about as rare as a good critic, and I am really not sure if the two are not one I....

I wd. very much rather know that you like or don't wholly like a thing than that somebody else thinks it a pity I ever read Frost etc. ....



APPENDIX III

Addenda

b) Extracts from Thomas' own writing on Poetry, Happiness, and Dreams.

i) Poetry (quoted by R. P. Eckert, op.cit. pp.93-4)

"... lyric poetry is in a sense unintentionally overheard, and only by accident and in part understood, since it is written not for anyone, far less for the public, but for the understanding spirit that is in the air round about ... "

" ... the instinct for proportion and connection is the simplest, most inexplicable and most essential of literary gifts ... "

(The latter comment especially lies at the root of all his poetry - viz. for instance, "But These Things Also" and "For These".)

This is the perspective sought for and analysed in the Critical Introduction.)

ii) Happiness (from The Heart of England 1906), quoted by Eckert, op.cit., pp.102-3.)

" ... I have long thought that I should recognise happiness could I ever achieve it. It would be health, or at least unthwarted intensity of sensual and mental life, in the midst of beautiful or astonishing things which should give that life full play and banish expectation and recollection. I never achieved it, and am fated to be almost happy in many different circumstances, and on account of my forethought to be contemptuous or even disgusted at what the beneficent designs of chance have brought. "

"Lights Out."

from Don. d. 28, f. 67.

---

facing p. 288.

Myrtle. Oct

Travels

November

81

If we come to the borders of sleep,  
The comfortable deep  
Of rest, where all must love  
Their way, however straight  
Or winding, soon or late;  
They can not choose.

Alas! a rare stroke  
That once the dream's first creek  
Up to the forest brink  
Deceived the travellers,  
Suddenly now blurs,  
And in they sink.

If the love ends -  
Despair, ambition ends;  
All pleasure - all trouble,  
Although most sweet or bitter,  
Now ends, in sleep that is sweeter  
Than looks most worth.

There is not any book  
Of joy of dearest worth  
That I would not turn from now  
To go into the unknown  
From what enters, or leave, unknown alone,  
I know not how.

The tall first towers:  
The cloudy fountains lowers  
- I head, shall above shall:  
The silence their robes  
That I may love myself  
- but myself.

(This line of thought is treated in several poems - "Beauty", "The Glory", "The Other", "October", etc.)

iii) Dreams (Quoted by Eckert, p.75)  
*op. cit.*

"Dreams, the happiness of dreams . . . . .

"... is one of those magical things, great and small and all divine, that have the power to wield universal harmonies. At sight or sound of them the infinite variety of appearances in the world is made fairer than before, because it is shown to be a many-coloured raiment of the one. The raiment trembles, and under leaf and cloud and air a window is thrown open upon the unfathomable deep, and at the window we are sitting, watching the flight of our souls away, away to where they must be gathered into the music that is being built. Often upon the vast and silent twilight, as now, is the soul poured out as a rivulet into the sea and lost, not able even to stain the boundless crystal of the air; and the body stands empty, waiting for its return, and, poor thing, knows not what it received back into itself when the night is dark and it moves away. For we stand ever at the edge of Eternity and fall in many times before we die."

(cf. "Lights Out".)