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The Portrait of the Artist as a Dead Dog: Dylan Thomas

Some poets write words, while others paint pictures. Dylan Thomas, a romantic of his time, didn't just scribble lines, but created paintings of movement, space, and nature. He paints with a brush, not a pen, envisioning humanity as the thread that ties everything together. His own existential dread bred both gorgeous lyrics of sound in his work as well as grueling self-indulgent habits of alcoholism. With not just one, but two wars that ruled the entirety of his lifespan, Thomas was not shy of an evil tongue from cynic people in his life and a fate of death that surrounded him. Thomas elevates his personal encounters of the unknown and deeply destructive feelings, calling for the reader's attention in knowing how dead an alive man can be.

Section One: Biography of Poet

Dylan Thomas, born on October 27th, 1914, was destined to become a great poet (Authors and Artists for Young Adults). Raised in the Welsh seaport of Swansea, Carmathenshire, Thomas lived with his father, an English master at Swansea Grammar School, and his mother, a simple and religious woman. He was the second child of the family, with a sister nine years older than him. Attending the same school where his father worked, Thomas discovered his distaste for formal education and an interest in English, beginning to write poetry at a young age and publishing his work in school magazines. By 1930, Thomas was only sixteen

years old and already filling notebooks with poems that were published in the “Poet’s Corner” of the *Sunday Referee,* a popular English newspaper (AAYA). Flunking his school exams, Thomas avoided a university degree and opted for a career in writing. A lot of his work written in his teenage years would later be published in his first volume, *Eighteen Poems*. These poems revealed a lot about Thomas– as Jacob Korg describes in his book *Dylan Thomas*, they "related to love affairs, to industrial civilization, and to the youthful problems of finding one's identity” (AAYA).

Success and critical acclaim arrived with the publication of his first volume, quoted from an anonymous review as “individual but not private,” praising his ability to turn his internal thoughts into surreal images. In a letter Thomas once wrote, he explains it best: "My own obscurity is quite an unfashionable one, based, as it is, on a preconceived symbolism derived (I'm afraid all this sounds wooly and pretentious) from the cosmic significance of the human anatomy” (AAYA). Thomas credits his ability to his inspiration James Joyce, obsessed with the rhythm and sound of words. This style of inner thought began to move outward following the release of his second volume, *Twenty-five Poems.* Around this time, Thomas was married to the love of his life Caitlin Macnamara, having two sons, Llewelyn and Colm, and a daughter, Aeron. It was also around this time that Thomas began to develop a serious drinking problem (Encyclopedia of World Biography Online).

Although poetry was the main passion in Thomas’ life, it wasn’t the best source of income, and with a growing family to support, Thomas worked numerous other jobs. At the start of World War II, Thomas briefly worked as an anti aircraft gunner (EWBO). It was this same year that Thomas released his third volume, *The Map of Love*, which was a commercial failure,

most likely due to the focus on the war. Thomas managed to get out of serving in the war, claiming health problems to be the reason, but it is speculated that these problems might have been only mental (AAYA). He found employment in writing documentary scripts for the BBC. Although Thomas didn't necessarily enjoy this work, it provided a primary income for him up until his death. Thomas also worked on broadcast scripts and screenplays, all while still writing his own poetry. Closer to the end of the war, Thomas worked as a poetry commentator on the BBC, making a total of three lectures where he recited hundreds of poems. Here Thomas was able to demonstrate not just his own writing ability, but his powerful speaking voice (EWBO).

Thomas continued to release more poetry and prose, combining his first three volumes into one collection titled *The World I Breathe*. The following year, Thomas released a more light-hearted and fun collection of prose stories titled A *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, a title he claims was not to parody James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Thomas later released two more bodies of work, containing some of what many say is his best work: *Death and Entrances* in 1946 and *In Country Sleep* in 1951. These collections weren't entirely new, as Thomas didn't write much nearing the last six years of his life, only creating a total of six poems. Thomas always from a young age had appeared deeply troubled, evident by the internally complex poems in *Eighteen Poems,* and having most of his work tied to the war impacted his personality and his writing. He began to believe he would die young, creating a persona of a wild Welsh bard who indulged in alcohol. His final release titled *Collected Poems* contained all of the work he wished to preserve. It was when celebrating the success of this release, celebrating his 39th birthday, Thomas collapsed. On November 9th, 1953, Dylan Thomas had died in St. Vincent's Hospital in New York of what some would attribute to his acute alcoholism or to

encephalopathy, a virulent brain disease. Only after his passing was his stage play *Under Milk Wood* finalized, now one of his most recognizable pieces of work (EWBO).

Section Two: Time and Era

Months prior to the birth of Dylan Thomas began what was first considered the "European War" (Merriman and Winter). Numerous conflicts between the European nations culminated with the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of Austria. Two sides ultimately were created: the Triple Entente, composed of France, Russia, and Britain, and the Triple Alliance, made up of Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. Having the European powers focused on battling one another created an unpleasant span of life for the people themselves, dealing with economic hardships and internal social conflict. There was a sense of dehumanization in the war culture; many involved in the fighting became increasingly hostile (Merriman and Winter). This change in society in the time of Thomas' youth most likely impacted his outlook on life, observing from a young age a primarily cynical society.

Although the "Great War" ended with the peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, the culture of war lasted all until the launch of World War II in the late 1930s due to unclear winners and losers, Germans refusing to accept defeat (Citino). The war front never exactly reached the heart of Germany, resulting in a lack of discipline to Germany's military. Riding off the wave of vengeance among the Germans rose war veteran Adolf Hitler, and the domination of the Nazi Party. With the allied powers dealing with their own problems, the terrible plan of "appeasement" allowed Germany to expand further without any repercussions. America decided after the losses from WWI that the country should isolate itself, another overall poor decision that allowed Hitler to grow. Conflict ensued and eventually came to a head in 1945, this time

with the Allies not making the same mistakes they had in WWI and forcing the enemies to surrender (Citino).

With a general culture of war spanning a majority of the 20th century, the literary style of Modernism came to fruition, made up of social unrest, pessimism, and nostalgia (The Turn to Modernism: Literature and Music). Artists of all sorts were swept up in a movement that expressed political opinions and longed for a better period of time. This transition in artistic movement to a more outward critical approach is a direct extension to the prior movement: Romanticism. The late 18th century began this approach of inward thought and personal identity, private thoughts now publicly expressed (The Challenge of Romanticism: Literature and Music). Characters and the development of a person became the primary focus over plot; feelings of melancholy intermingled with the exploration of beauty in the everyday life of a human being.

Although Thomas lived in the modernist time period, he is viewed as one of the last romantic poets. As mentioned previously, the war culture was a part of Thomas' life since birth, resulting in what probably led Thomas to lead a more internal and self deprecating life, notably, his belief that he was to die young, followed by a serious drinking problem (EWBO). His poetry in later works turned outward, following his marriage and work-life balance, but at its core, Thomas predominantly wrote about characters and thought-provoking images: the beauty in love, life, and death. His popular play commissioned by the BBC, *Under Milk Wood*, demonstrated a large cast of people in their charm or eccentricity. His poems captured life in nature, creating the heavily revised "Fern Hill" (EWBO). Living in modern society and carrying the weight of human skepticism, Thomas remained a romantic.

Section Three: Statement of Thesis and Common Theme

Consumed by growing hostility in a time of anxiety and warfare, Dylan Thomas troubled himself with ideas of life in humanity and what could come after. His work revealed internal insecurities and his personal confrontation with death. Thomas indulged in self-destructive habits to cope with a war-hungry society, and his works reflected that in his descriptive language, depicting an ever-approaching, unstoppable force of evil. Despite his sorrows, Thomas lived the life he wanted to, making meaning of everyday events like his own poetry and the contrast of evil with beauty found in the human spirit. Thomas was a romantic, stuck in a world obsessed with conflict.

Section Four: Explications of Three Poems of Common Theme

"We Lying By Seasand" was written by Dylan Thomas in 1937, just two years before the start of World War II. The poem dramatically describes a surge of weather on the beachside that reflects the narrator's uneasiness and inability to experience change in his life, heading towards what he seems to fear as an inevitable death. This narrator is, at some level, a reflection of the poet himself, as Thomas himself lived a short and fearful life. Thomas and another, perhaps his own wife, lie together, mocking those who trail away from the boringness of life described as "yellow" and follow the "red rivers" (Thomas, 1-3). Ironically, these words fall short as he acknowledges the "calling for color" that comes with the wind, comparing this hope for change to the "grave" he sits at the shore of (Thomas, 6-7). He envisions a better change in his life, but where he sits, he realizes he is stuck between life and death, resulting in his mockery towards those who strive for change. Thomas hopes for the changing of day, the sun setting and night approaching, to become an omnipotent being that can somehow change the tide and cure his fears, but when the wind pushes the boring "yellow" sand back over the beautiful landscapes, he

describes sorrow through his broken heart, longing for “red rock” to remain (Thomas, 19-20). The poem, although written earlier in Thomas’s life, finds its resting place in Thomas’ last release: *Collected Poems*. This lyrical poem made up of one stanza highlights Thomas’ love for the sound of words, utilizing a strong amount of alliteration. He combines this with the juxtaposition of words, creating a sense of unease and emotions of gray. His rhyme scheme is inconsistent, but with his use of alliteration and euphonious word choice, the words flow with grace. Together, the poem crafts a beautiful image that is both uniquely stunning and grim, reflective of the narrative Thomas paints. The poem reflects his fear of death and the conflict that always found its way into his life, trying to make meaning out of creative endeavors and the people close to him while fending off what he saw as a hostile and, quite frankly, boring society.

Thomas uses a strong symbol of color throughout this poem. The primary two forces at play are “yellow”, the very color of the sand Thomas lies on, and “red”, represented in rocks and rivers. The yellow sand describes a boring and mundane way of life, dry and devoid of emotion. “We lying by seasand, watching yellow / And the grave sea, mock who deride / Who follow the red rivers, hollow / Alcove of words out of cicada shade” (Thomas, 1-4). Thomas throughout the poem compares the sea to the wording “grave”, acting as a double meaning, as grave acts as both an adjective to describe the fear that comes with seeing the sea as well as a symbol for a presence of approaching death. This meaning comes about when he describes the sandy shore next to the sea as “yellow”, comparing the words of the people (himself) who sit at shore to desert images, words made out of “cicada shade”. The little shade provided by the desert insects elevates the picture that these people are stuck and unable to move. The “red rivers” are a great juxtaposition to this yellow sand, as there is no description of dryness here at all, but only the vibrant color of

red. The red represents the opposite of boringness: excitement. The bright color combined with the grace of a river gives us an image of great flow and movement, as opposed to the lack of movement in the "lying" of these two people. The river also provides a euphonious feeling of coolness and comfort, again, as opposed to the dry lands of the seaside shore. The image of color shines through the entirety of the poem, as Thomas uses the word "color" numerous times, describing "a calling for color" and "a one-colored calm" (Thomas, 6, 13). The yellow and red colors are spotted once more in the final stretch. "Watch yellow, wish for wind to blow away / The strata of the shore and leave red rock" (Thomas, 19-20). By the end of the poem, Thomas, our narrator, is coming to a conclusion, or really, a cry for help. This yellow continues to blow over the beauties of his life, drying him out of excitement, and he just wishes for the vibrant color of red to remain in the rocks hidden in the sand, but the sand remains. Ultimately, Thomas uses these two colors to convey a sense of good and bad, leaving Thomas "bound by a sovereign strip"; stuck in the middle of it all (Thomas, 18).

A feeling of neither good nor bad, black nor white, and the fear of death appears as a thematic statement from Thomas in his oxymoronic comparisons and the symbols he creates. Thomas appears to be expressing his awareness of change that is coming, or needs to happen, but feels that there isn't much control over his own life. "That's grave and gay as grave and sea / Sleeping on either hand" (Thomas 7-8). He shuts down the calling for color he is aware of by essentially saying that it is pointless, comparing a dark word like "grave" to the lighthearted word of "gay," making use of this oxymoron to capture this feeling of grayness. Thomas feels that there is something bad going on in life, or maybe society, and even if you try to go down a "red river", it will still impact you, as it is "sleeping on either hand" (Thomas, 3, 8). What this

change could be interpreted as is the concept of death, something that is inevitable for everyone. When “the lunar silences”, or the night comes, there are silent tides, a way for Thomas to describe brief momentary lapses of peace in his life (Thomas 9). It’s at this time of day, when things get quieter, does he wish for something to cure his problems, a “dry tide-master” to cure his illness (that he claims is caused by the water) with a “one-colored calm” (Thomas, 13). If the sea is representative of this foreboding sense of dread and fear of what is to come, perhaps the tide-master could be seen as a personification of death; Thomas feels the only way to fix his problems and his fear of death is to simply succumb to it. “The heavenly music over the sand / Sounds with the grains as they hurry” (Thomas, 14-15). The sand continues to blow as the winds pick up, the day time coming in like “heavenly music.” As Thomas opens this poem and titles it with the wording of “lying”, we can understand that these people are in a state of stasis, unable to change, and the wind coming back every day seems to be a way for Thomas to express his frustration over the movement of time. Every day comes a lack of change, more conflict in the world, and Thomas feels stuck. As mentioned earlier, the poem was written just two years before World War II, and although World War I had ended years ago, there was lingering tension for years that built up to World War II. This sense of unrest in a society that surrounded Thomas is what the poem is most likely inspired by. “Lie watching yellow until the golden weather / Breaks, O my heart’s blood, like a heart and hill” (Thomas, 23-24). Thomas watches the sand, the boringness and repetitive conflict covering the world, and his heart breaks. The final line is important because it implies that this feeling is bound to happen again, as his heart is described as being on “a hill”; his heart is bound to roll up and down the wave of emotions over and over again, never settling on a state of rest.

Thomas' rhyme scheme is inconsistent in this poem, but his use of alliteration creates a graceful reading flow similar to the flow we picture of the sea, rivers, and winds he describes. "A calling for color calls with the wind / That's grave and gay as grave and sea" (Thomas, 6-7). Here, the words "calling", "color", and "calls" all follow the same sound, creating a bounce along the words, combined with the description of the wind blowing. This gives us a sense of movement, literally and metaphorically, as this strong movement of wind is also used to describe real change Thomas envisions. In the line after it, the same alliterative technique is used with "grave" and "gay", grave being used twice. Using two words with completely different meanings but similar sound is what helps elevate this image of confusion and conflict in Thomas's life. The same word choice is found again later in the poem: "Of the grave, gay seaside land" (Thomas, 17). With repetition and engaging word choice, Thomas helps guide the reader's attention towards meaning that would otherwise not be found without alliteration. Thomas uses this method as well to invoke vivid imagery, with wording like "mountains and mansions" and "heart and hill" (Thomas, 16, 24). The plural sound at the end of "mountains" and "mansions" combined with the same "m" sound creates an image of vastness, glory, and beauty spread far and wide. It makes the description of the yellow sand covering said beauty all the more depressing. The alliteration of "heart and hill" helps create a more unified physical representation of the internal feelings Thomas has, his emotions constantly in an uncomfortable state of sorrow. With this being the conclusion to the poem, we come to wonder just what our narrator, Thomas, is going to do: if he is going to fight the winds that sweep up the sand he is surrounded by and find red rock, or if he will simply succumb to it, eventually indulging in dangerous habits like his alcoholism to find an escape.

Another poem written by Dylan Thomas is “And Death Shall Have No Dominion”. It was written in 1933, almost exactly halfway through his short lived life. It finds its resting place in the collection *Collected Poems*. Like a lot of Thomas’ work, the concept of death emerges as a thematic device, and this poem does not shy away from it. The poem, narrated by a person who is most likely Thomas himself, repeats a continuous line of “And death shall have no dominion” as an attempt to hold a belief that we as humans are in control of our own lives (Thomas, 1). The force of death that comes at the end of our lives is described using vivid imagery of cosmic significance and movement in nature. The motion of time is similarly described as it is in “Seasand”, giving pictures of the wind hitting the sea when “waves break loud on the seashores” and a motion that can’t be stopped when men are “strapped to a wheel” (Thomas, 14, 21). The narrator throughout the entirety of the poem continues to acknowledge the inevitable outcome that is old age and how it can change a person, but he chooses to believe that resistance is possible and that we can’t allow ourselves to succumb to a lesser version of ourselves. The lyrical poem is 27 lines long, broken up into what feels like 3 sections of 9 lines, each one starting and ending with the title line. It’s a snippet of a conversation, either to himself or to a person in need of these words, as Thomas chooses to start the sentence with the word “and”, implying that this is a continual conversation. The rhyme scheme does not appear consistent but Thomas makes use of alliteration and individual couplets to keep the rhythm going. The primary driving force of rhythm is the repetition of the title line and words like “although” and “though”. Whether or not our narrator’s words really mean anything or are just futile, he continues to try and find reasons to not fear death, the very thing that has surrounded Thomas’ whole life, the one thing he cannot escape from.

Thomas' love for nature and the natural beauty we can find in the world becomes prominent imagery in this poem. Thomas first pictures a man stripped bare, left with just his truest form, all alone. "Dead man naked they shall be one / With the man in the wind and the west moon" (Thomas, 2-3). The "dead man" who is naked is compared to a man who faces the wind and the moon, implying that this man stands alive even when night comes. Thomas is cementing the sentiment that appears throughout the whole poem: the dying should not slip into a lesser version of themself but instead live out their lives strong, as if they were young and alive. He describes this naked man as not just stripped of clothing but truly stripped of anything as his bones are "picked clean", but even so he notes that there are "stars at elbow and foot" (Thomas, 4-5). Here Thomas utilizes what he feels is the great importance of human anatomy, giving it cosmic significance. Perhaps the image of stars on the dying people is a way to envision them up in heaven; they are not looked down upon, but rather looked up to, glowing as bright as a real star, literally and metaphorically. Imagery of nature is found when, like previous poems Thomas has written, the "sea" becomes an image of a foreboding death and the winds that come with it follow similar motions (Thomas, 7, 11-12). He notes that these people both sink into the sea and then are "lying" in it, seemingly a connection to his poem "We Lying By Seasand". This sea imagery appears once more in the final section, where surrounding nature is described as though it is deeply tied to the living soul of a person. "Or waves break loud on the seashores; / Where blew a flower may a flower no more" (Thomas, 21-22). The waves so close to the shore means that these people have been swallowed by the sea and Thomas adds more nature-like imagery by comparing the lifespan of a human being to a flower. The winds over the sea picked up the flowers that have grown and took them away to a place where they can no longer grow,

symbolic of how as humans grow older, we reach a point where we no longer grow and are on our way to death. Thomas gives one last note of cosmic importance to humankind: “Break in the sun til the sun breaks down” (Thomas, 26). As people die, Thomas is saying that we should rage against our dying light, represented by the sun. The sun, as we know, doesn’t die for another couple billion years, so Thomas is dramatizing our ability to push against the force of death when comparing it to the lifespan of the sun. Thomas gives human life great importance when he compares our actions and the changes in our life to cosmic forces and nature, helping convey his message that death has nothing on us.

Thomas does not establish a consistent rhyme scheme throughout the poem but rather makes use of individual couplets with repetition and alliteration to keep the poem alive. The first notable example of this comes from the title line “And death shall have no dominion” that is repeated 6 times in the entirety of the poem (Thomas, 1). Like I had previously mentioned, the repetition of this statement that essentially starts and bookends a section in the poem creates this sense of a conversation, or a speech, that this person is giving. When it is repeated over and over, we get the idea that this message is important to our speaker and perhaps this is not the first time he has spoken it. Alliteration becomes evident when similar sounds are used numerous times in a line. “Though they go mad they shall be sane / Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again” (Thomas, 6-7). Thomas keeps rhythm going and our attention unwavering when he uses the same sound in “though”, “through”, and “they”. Numerous lines in this poem continue to use the same word choice, creating a sense of desperation and a strong attempt at convincing us spoken from our narrator. Thomas wants this poem to become unforgettable in our minds, and his sound techniques help print his message for us to fight against fading out without triumph.

"Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" is another poem written by Dylan Thomas, drafted in 1947 and published some time in 1951 before ending up in his collection *Collected Poems*. Thomas confronts the concept of death in a very personal way in this poem with someone who seems to be very close to him, his father, who is heading out the door soon. Thomas declares similarly as "Dominion" that humanity shall remain triumphant against the inevitable end of our life force. He wants people to not leave without emotion, because he feels that the human body is cosmically important and without our understanding of that, we fade from existence. This poem becomes a great example of the villanelle form, a 19 line poem that is broken up into 5 tercets and a quatrain, using repetition to establish importance over the refrains. Thomas is not commanding in the same sense he has before, but this time he solemnly expresses a more "gentle" wave of sorrow when depicting the slow exit of a dying person, an exit he feels needs to be revitalized with great importance and not just a slow fading of color.

Thomas continues his usage of strong imagery and word choice to, in very few words, convey the message he wants to convey. The first refrain that appears is the title of the poem: "Do not go gentle into that good night" (Thomas, 1). Thomas creates a certain tenderness in his language when describing an exit as "gentle" and the night being "good". This softness, while nice, is forgettable to Thomas, and it is the reason he then wishes for a person to rather "burn and rave" (Thomas, 2). He is acknowledging what he and many others assume to be the normal, but his praise of the human spirit and this personal experience with death is what causes a shift in attitude. He says that men know that dark is right, but because "their words had forked no lightning", meaning that they never found meaning or any strength, they should not go gentle into the good night and instead should express what they still want to express (Thomas, 5). He

doesn't want people to leave this world with regrets, or as he puts it, crying about how "their frail deeds might have danced" (Thomas, 8). Similar to his other poem "Dominion", he uses the interstellar planet of the sun as a way to create a great scale of power that humanity can have over our own lives. "Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight / And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way" (Thomas, 10-11). Its depiction is rather reminiscent of the tale of Icarus, a person who flew too close to the sun, literally and metaphorically. Thomas says that these people learn "too late", showing that they have regrets, but follows it with the "good night" refrain. This continues his statement that we shouldn't leave our world with regrets and we should fly to the sun, even if it burns us. This is made very evident in the second refrain throughout the poem: "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" (Thomas, 15). Once more, Thomas compares the lifespan of the sun to humanity, with this time having the light also representative of the spirit of a person, the fire in their eyes that should "blaze like meteors and be gay" (Thomas, 14). Using similar language as "Seasand" to create this contrast with the "grave men" and how they should be "gay" or joyful creates a strong image when he writes that the very "light" that makes up humans is both blinding in power but quite literally blinds men, creating darkness out of too much light, a powerful oxymoron. Thomas utilizes another oxymoron in the quatrain that concludes the poem. "Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray" (Thomas, 17). The wording of "curse" and "bless" put next to each other creates strong emotional layers to this line, as the tears of this person, Thomas' father, both hurts Thomas but also tells him that his father is feeling emotion and fending off death, a blessing to Thomas. He wants his father to not give up on his "sad height", but rather "rage" against the calling of change that is coming (Thomas, 16, 19).

Thomas, like mentioned before, utilizes a villanelle structure to engrave the message conveyed in the two primary refrains. The poem is first made up of 5 tercets, the first line rhyming with the third, and the second line rhyming with every second line in each tercet. The last line in each tercet is a different, alternating refrain. Thomas chooses this style of poetry because of the simplicity in the narrative he is telling but the complexity of the subject matter and the emotions. The scenario Thomas envisions is rather easy to understand, but it's his description and fearlessness in facing the tall subject of death is what allows this rhyme structure to shine. These two primary refrains come together at the very end in the quatrain, making up the last two lines of the poem. When put next to each other like this, they read not just as separate statements that helped support the earlier lines but as a cohesive message Thomas is sharing. Do not simply fade out of existence, let the tide roll over the shore and drain you of color, the wind stripping you of anything, but rather fight against the waves, flying closer to the sun, and rage, rage, against death.

Section Five: Conclusion

Thomas' life, albeit dark and depressing, found light in the craftsmanship of his literature. Against a tidal wave of conflict, war, and death, Thomas fought back with the strength of the human spirit, preserving an influential movement of romanticism when modernism ruled supreme. Although not all of his work contained the motion of death explicitly, the sorrow and desperation felt in watching a peaceful world of unwavering beauty be violently shaken with conflict is an emotional beat undoubtedly apparent in the majority of Thomas' work. His short life gives way to hope for a better, more unified society, one with less conflict and a better understanding of the importance of truly appreciating yourself and the people around you.

If you are interested in fully dunking your head in a pool of clever and fun word choice, check out Thomas' powerhouse of a play *Under Milk Wood*. The story is full of fun and memorable characters combined with some very interesting ideas about how a society functions when filled with a unique ensemble of people. If you are interested in more of Thomas' witty humor and character writing ability, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* is a worthy collection of short stories. If poetry is more to your taste, a great collection of Thomas' best work is found in the late release *Collected Poems*. Whatever you may choose to further indulge in, Thomas demonstrates just how much he loved being able to paint pictures of the world as he sees it and a world he envisions for the better. Thomas lived his life almost as if he were dead, fighting an unspoken depression, but it is in his work that we find a beautiful imagination, a world where Thomas comes to life.

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