Dylan Thomas Essay, Research Paper

Dylan Thomas combines his vibrant imagery with his adolescent experiences in South Whales and London to produce the realistic tale ?The Followers?. His interest in writing short stories like ?The Followers? stems from the beginning part of his life.

Thomas spent his days growing up in Swansea, South Whales with his father, a grammar school English teacher. His father encouraged his early interest in reading and writing. Some of his early poetry was published in local literary writing journals. Thomas grew up in the late 1920?s and the 1930?s. ?In the 1930?s, when the trend toward social and political commentary dominated the arts, Thomas began pursuing more personal themes that originated in his own experiences? (Gunton and Harris 358). Thomas would then incorporate these experiences into his poetry. For example, the poem ?The Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait? is about a fisherman he probably saw around growing up in Swansea. In 1934 Thomas began moving between London and several villages where he started drinking a lot and ?epitomized the raucous image of an artist? After WW II, Thomas began writing more short stories rather than poetry (Gunton and Harris 358).

Much earlier stories focus on a theme of either birth or death. Because of this, Thomas?s early period has been called his ?womb-tomb? era (Gunton and Harris 358). As Thomas?s writing style evolved, he would begin to experiment with new techniques. He started using vibrant images and using sound as ?verbal music?, creating his own poetic style (Gunton and Harris 358). However, many times Thomas will try to convey emotions that are too complex for any lyrical treatment. Other times the opposite can be true and he gives too intricate an elaboration to simple feelings (Olsen 366). These elements of Thomas? style are evident in his poems and stories, such as ?The Followers?.

The roster of characters in ?The Followers? are the unnamed narrator, his good pal Leslie, and a girl whom they call ?Hermoitte Weatherby?. The narrator and Leslie meet in a pub on a rainy, London night. They leave after a while, due to lack of funds and decide to have a spot of fun by following a girl they don?t know (Hermoitte) to her home. They spend the evening watching ?Hermoitte? and her mom doing a lot of nothing they are discovered by them and a third unknown voice inside. They flee their window perch in a hurry and call it a night.

There is a lot here than meets the eye. There is a lot more than Thomas? vibrant imagery in the story, but a story between the lines as well as a bit of Thomas himself. The part of Thomas I refer to is actually the story itself. The entire story of a couple of guys following people in hopes of some adventure on Saturday night is a common thing. A thing that Thomas very well may have done when he hung out in London. There are also elements of Thomas? vibrant imagery in this story. For example, ?Young women?, who smelt of scent and powder and wet pixie hoods and hair, scuttled, giggling, arm-in-arm after the hissing trams, and screeched as they splashed in the puddles rainbowed with oil between the slippery lines.? This is describing the setting of the story and the detail within the description throws you right onto the wintry, rainy, London street. And this story is not only about two boys following someone for a good time. ?The Followers? incorporates a little of Thomas? ?womb-tomb? factor. The story starts out with the narrator meeting Leslie on a fresh Saturday evening. The night is untouched and unspoiled as yet; the way life is to a newborn. The scene in the pub may have been a reference to his drinking habit and his lack of money to buy a drink also may have been a problem he gave to the narrator that he incorporated from himself. And just before they flee Hermoitte?s house, he is describing the rainy night and himself as cold, damp, and hungry. These are all adjectives many times associated with death. These examples of Thomas? style are only a few bits of the style that made him the unique writer we know him as.

Thomas is not one type of writer. He encompasses several categories of writer. He is a ?Welsh poet, short story writer, dramatist, screenplay writer, essayist, and novelist? (Gunton and Harris 358). ?Thomas had no interest in politics and society; that he was a religious poet, a surrealist, a disciple of Freud, a composer of a nonsense verse? (Tindall 371). This means that Thomas wrote about what he wanted, the way he wanted to write it. We, the public, loved what he had to say. He would bring on a revival of oral poetry in the 1950?s, the height of Thomas? popularity. ??Thomas gained public attention as a touring poet who captivated audiences with readings of his obscure poetry??(Gunton and Harris 358). Thomas was well received on stage, but to handle the pressure of performances, he drank heavily. His prodigious drinking would be his end. While portraying the ?raucous artist? through his drinking, he would die while exhibiting his artwork at his own poetry reading.

Gunton, Sharon & Harris, Laurie Linzen. ?Dylan Thomas 1914-1953.? Twentieth Century Literary Criticism. Volume 45. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1980. 358-359.

Olsen, Elder. ?The Poetry of Dylan Thomas.? Twentieth Century Literary Criticism. Volume 45. Sharon Gunton & Laurie Linzen Harris. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1980. 364-366.

Tindall, William York. ?A Reader?s Guide to Dylan Thomas.? Twentieth Century Literary Criticism. Volume 45. Sharon Gunton & Laurie Linzen Harris.

Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1980. 370-371.