THE SPIRITUAL Quest FOR GOD, WALES AND SELF IN SELECTED POEMS OF R.S. THOMAS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on R.S Thomas’s enchantment with the spiritual aspect of his relationship with the Divine, his life as a Welshman and his journey as a poet-priest. It discusses why Thomas had such an unconventional view of the Almighty and what his struggles were concerning being a Welsh poet.

Chapter One gives a brief introduction of Thomas’s background and the factors that shaped his poetic and spiritual vision. These include his being Welsh-born but English-bred. This introductory chapter defines Thomas’s horizons as a poet and how being Welsh and being a clergyman influenced his writings. It touches briefly on his views concerning the unwelcome influence of the English.

Chapter Two deals more closely with Thomas’s struggle with a far-away God evident in his earliest poems. It discusses Thomas’s image of a machine-like God and the intrusion of modernisation into the relationship between man and God. It further defines the poet’s concept of a Dark God, one who is either hidden, far away or even absent. Here, Thomas learns to look for answers in the silent darkness that presents itself to him as a life of faith.

The next chapter looks into Thomas’s fascination with Wales and the Welsh. It investigates his ‘peasant’ poems which are ascribed to his time spent in service in his different parishes. Here, Thomas reflects on the link between man and nature. This chapter also highlights the role of the character Iago Prytherch and examines him in the context of his representation of Wales and his connection with Thomas. It concludes with Thomas acknowledging the unfortunate impossibility of the existence of his ideal Wales.
The subsequent chapter delves deeper into the poet’s personal life as poet and priest. It articulates his struggles as a spokesperson for the things of God (a priest), and a spokesperson for the emotions of man (a poet). We find Thomas going to great lengths to define his dual but intricately interwoven roles. We confront the poet’s contentions with the challenges in these roles.

The final chapter concludes the arguments of Thomas’s spiritual search which led to an acceptance of a silent but real God, an imperfect but inspiring Wales, and an infusing but complementing task as poet-priest. It concludes a study of the life and works of a man who wrote for a span of more than half a century and who remains relevant and interesting to today’s world.
ABSTRAK

Disertasi ini meninjau kegemaran R.S. Thomas dengan aspek rohaniah dalam perhubungannya dengan Tuhan, kehidupannya sebagai seorang rakyat Wales dan perjalanan hidupnya sebagai seorang penulis dan paderi. Ia meneliti sebab-sebab Thomas memiliki pandangan mengenai Tuhan yang begitu berbeza dan apakah pergelutannya sebagai seorang penulis Wales.


Bab Dua mengkaji dengan lebih mendalam pergelutan Thomas dengan Tuhan yang jauh dan ini boleh dilihat melalui pembacaan puisi-puisinya yang terawal. Ia membincang mengenai imej Thomas mengenai Tuhan yang seolah-olah mesin dan campur tangan modernisasi terhadap perhubungan manusia dan Tuhan. Seterusnya, bab ini mendefinisikan konsep Thomas mengenai Tuhan seperti ‘a Dark God’, iaitu Tuhan yang tersembunyi, jauh dan tiada di kehadiran. Di sini, Thomas mempelajari untuk mencari jawapan-jawapan di dalam kegelapan, iaitu untuk menjalankan kehidupan dengan keimanan.

Bab seterusnya meliputi kegemaran Thomas dengan negara Wales dan orang-orang Wales. Ia mengkaji puisi-puisi Thomas mengenai petani-petani yang Thomas


Bab terakhir menutup tirai hujahan-hujahan pencarian rohaniah Thomas dimana beliau menerima Tuhan yang benar tetapi diam. Wales yang tidak sempurna tetapi yang membawa inspirasi, dan tugas mencabarkan tetapi membawa komplimen sebagai seorang penulis dan paderi. Bab ini mengakhiri analisis kehidupan seorang penulis yang telah menulis puisi dan prosa untuk jangka masa lebih daripada setengah abad dan masih relevan dan penting untuk dunia kini.
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