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**RICHARD WILBUR'S LOVE CALLS US TO THE THINGS OF  
 THIS WORLD -A THEMATIC OVERVIEW**

*Jayashree M. G., Rayalaseema University, AP, India*

*Dr. Venkateswaran, Research Guide & Professor & Director (Retd), Regional Institute of English, South India, Bangalore*

**Abstract:**

*The Post Modernism period bustling with literary activities, many new literary styles and foundation of many Schools of Thought emerged. Anthony Hecht, Howard Nemerov, Richard Wilbur, and Mona Van Duyn had explored the possibilities of form during the 1960s and '70s, they had been schooled by New Critics, including Yvor Winters, John Crowe Ransom, and Allen Tate, who had been outspoken in defense of formalist verse..Richard Wilbur belongs to one such School of Formalism, focus on Form and Meter. His perception of poetry is to retrieve from abstractions and put them into sensibilities and he also tries to balance between two worlds physical and spiritual world tries to bind through things exist in the physical world. The paper on 'Love calls us to the Things of this World' a poem from third volume of poetry collections from "Things of This World" by Richard Wilbur appeared in 1956 has taken theme for analysis and an overview of it, substantiating his poetic concept within the formalist tradition.*

**Keywords:** *Post-modernism, formalism, new critics, chaos, illusion and escapism.*

During post-modernism, many new literary styles have evolved, have set the American literature in a new direction. Predominantly two literary modes appeared, on one hand, a group of poets disheartened with overwhelming free verse during the Cold War and by the notion that metrical patterns, harkens the poets to adopt old and classical mode of systematic and methodical approach to the poem., they belong to the School of Formalism. They advocate traditions, aesthetics, and practices they believed, had been all but abandoned by many of their contemporaries.

The theorist of this school advocated methodical and systematic approach in reading of the texts, return to traditional accentual syllabic verse they influenced and dominated most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. They value poetry, rich in ambiguity, irony and intent to make literary criticism a Science. On the other hand, a group of poets in the year 1950-60s started a movement called Beat Movement rejecting established literary social and literary values. poets like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, William S. Burroughs, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti belongs to the group.

The present article has taken for analysis a poem by Richard Wilbur's Third volume of Poetry collections the title poem "Love calls us to the Things of this World and other Poems" focuses on the theme, form, content and his craftsmanship. It is one of the much anthologized poems in the English language. Since its publication in the year 1956, it has been considered an achievement for its style, authorial content and form, more significantly the collection of poetry "Things of this world and other Poems" has won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

Wilbur defines poetry thus: "The poem is an effort to articulate relationship not quite seen, to make or discover some pattern in the world. It is a conflict with disorder". The poet has dealt with the disorders - Chaos vs. destruction and another is illusion vs. escapisms. His response as both a poet and humanist is to maintain a firm focus on reality as represented by objects, by the things of this world.

Richard Wilbur was a prolific and gifted poet, translator and was appointed as the Second Poet

Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in the year 1987 and two times won the noble Pulitzer Prize for his works "*The things of this world and other Poems (1956)*" and "*New and collected Poems (1989)*".

The title poem 'Love calls us to the Things of this World' is written in Blank Verse in six stanza using Symbols and Imagery of laundry, spirit and angels and the dawn. The selection of words in the present poetic creation exhibits the versatility of the poet. From the beginning of his vocation of writing poetry, brimming with it and metaphors and other poetic textures, it is characterized by a formal and refined beauty. His poetry finds illumination in everyday experiences and expressed within poetic composition.

The title holds biblical references to fourth century St. Augustine's 'Confession' in which the Saint laments that the beautiful things of this world have created distance between him and God. St. Augustine's response to the gospel of St. John, advises humans to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" which serve the basis for the poem. The Poems stems from the idea of cloth which is temporal, the poets takes from us this momentary enchantment of desire for human contact and awareness to live and love the world, to something stable and stout in the face of madness, misfortune and inequity. Wilbur tries to balance the impetuous and design, materialistic and spiritual world. He draws the central imagery laundry to express the theme in the poem.

The poem has two parts; the first part, it begins with a central image of laundry makes the reader think objectively of emotional detachment. The first two lines open up with the awakening of the consciousness:

The eyes open to a cry of pulleys,  
And spirited from sleep, the astounded soul

(Love calls us to the things of this world)

'spirited'- past tense of the spirit which is the soul was carried out from the sleep, it wakes up and hangs outside the body for a while. It is surprised by the sound of the pulleys.

The laundry comes live with motion lifted by breeze. The spectral motion of the linens makes them look like angels, flapping as angels do with their wings. The angels are granted human identities.

"Now they are flying in place, conveying  
The terrible speed of their omnipresence, moving"

(Love calls us to the things of this world)

Continuing the conceit that the laundry is moving due to the presence of angel, he attributes to the speed with which it is whirling around to the angels "omnipresence". These lines speak about the kinetic energy of the angels slowing down the reflexes of the poet's mood. In the second part, the somber mood stands in contrast with first half of the poem that includes joy and excitement, waking the new encounter with the physical world, each morning is characterized negatively, human spirit does not wish to believe that the supernatural beings do not exist, but it is only uncomfortable with the idea of heavenly powers being involved in earthly life. The poet acknowledges the complexity of the human situation. The body and soul being two separate entities, the soul which has been the observer of the physical world

Yet, as the sun acknowledges  
With a warm look the world's hunks and colors,

(Love calls us to the things of this world)

Like sun, warm and bright showing the shapes of the physical objects with its hue enters the body which is the third entity and makes an alliance between the physical world with spiritual awareness.

The union of soul and body is referred as human and the experience of their coming together having been separated during sleep, leads the human to reflect on understanding of flesh and spirit, distinction between them.

Bring them down from their ruddy gallows;  
 Let there be clean linen for the backs of thieves  
 Let lovers go fresh and sweet to be undone,

(Love calls us to the things of this world)

The poet allows to alluding moral judgments commonly associated with Thieves, Lovers and Nuns referred in the poem. Finally, in the end, the speaker of the poem accepts life's imperfection, let the clothes be brought down symbolically signifying that let the soul descend into the body and wake him up.

A parallel is drawn between thieves on gallows and angels and lovers who often represent a moral contradiction as they balance between the transcendent aspect of romance and the baseness of carnal relationships. Here the poet refers to the gallows during 1950s are used less and less frequently. Public support for the death in the United States is starting to decline. Mercy for criminals who have been sentenced to die is considered a sign of human compassion.

And the heaviest nuns walk in a pure floating  
 Of dark habits,  
 Keeping their difficult balance

(Love calls us to the things of this world)

The balance here is not only between the physical and spiritual, but between a state of mind that dallies with the physical pleasures and necessary awakening to a sterner, even more challenging ground. Nuns stand for spirituality considered heavenly with an emphasis on their physical presence; they move away from pure vision back to the impure 'keeping their difficult balance': the balance between the things of this world and those of the world of Spirit.

The paradoxes of the last stanza of the poem reflects the theme. The poet presents the ideal world through images of angel, laundry, but, this world is evanescent, seen only for a moment under the light of false dawn. Though man wishes to accept the world of spirit but he has to descend to the world in which he live and accept the bitter love. Wilbur towards the end of the poem is suggestive of acceptance and also to retain the capacity to perceive the world of the spirit in the everyday.

After the war, in 1962, religion in the American society, Church as the thinkers started looking at the whole life differently. For instance the Vatican Council in 1962, liberalized the attire for Nuns. Religious freedom became a social force. Earlier in 1950 with the advent of Science and Technology, Media became more powerful to conduct the Congregations. The Religious practices steered collective thinking away from individualism. In this background of changes, Wilbur was analyzing his poems as true to his opinion of perception, he in this poem also looks at the social scenario and the poem thus attempts to highlight Wilbur's religious, social and cultural thinking that has been the unmediated experience of the individual, has been trying to understand the significance of the religion and that becoming the order of the day.

Wilbur uses very powerful symbols to connect the physical world through the image of laundry and the angles with the spiritual world. The laundry image in the poem is reminiscent of cleanliness of the linen leads to new directions, new realization and spiritual force. Though most of the theologian and philosophers opines that both flesh and spirit exist together through this human being face lot of ordeals. Imagination is more than an entertainment, it is a force to establish relationship to reality which we find in the poem through laundry and angels, soul entering the body. If the imagination does not create a world of independent objects, it is made clear in this poem that love brings union with world objects.

In the early twentieth century, many poets were influenced by the metaphysical poetry in the way they merge poem's form with ideas, Richard Wilbur in particular is often referred twentieth century metaphysical poet with his brimming wit and conceits. The apparent lightheartedness of his approach belies a serious about existence; through extended metaphor make the readers think about a phenomenon from different perspective.

Indeed, Wilbur has earned lasting fame and recognition for a period of time in the American literature during 1940 and 1990. Many critics have acclaimed namely *Richard Eberhart* considers the most important thing about the poem “it celebrates the immanence of spirit of the “punctual rape of every blessed day” (The contemporary poet as artist and critic by Anthony Ostroff 1964). Another critic *Paul Cummins* opines on the poem “Written from a Christian perspective, this short, fort-four-page pamphlet uses the “difficult balance” mentioned in the last line of this poem as a touchstone for examining all of Wilbur's poetry”. *May Swenson* concentrates on Wilbur's balance of the physical and spiritual concluding that “the whole poem...is in fact an epitome of relative weight and equipoise” or counterbalance.(The Contemporary poet as artist and critic by Anthony Ostroff 1964). *Kelly*, Professor of Literature and creative Writing in one of his essay on the poem “Love calls us to the things of this world” is one of the Wilbur's most admired poems, it is one of the most admired and reprinted poems of the twentieth century, and for good reason: it has something for everybody. The poem satisfies realists with its style it is calibrated to almost mathematical precision- but its overall theme is a testimony to the transcendent spirit.”

To conclude, the poem reflects not only an achieved recognition of earthly actualities, of the need to balance claims of the material and spiritual realms, but also something like a divine charity of acceptance and forgiveness. In a milder way to express, the poem ends up displaying on the same wash line, to speak, a colorfully promiscuous variety of loves- material, erotic ,charitable and sacred Wilbur's finds it very difficult to strike a balance with physical and spiritual world between intellect and emotive. He contends that it is in the province of poems to make some order in the world while not allowing the reader to forget that there is a reality of things and also poets are not philosophers “What poetry does with ideas is to redeem them from abstraction and submerge them in sensibility”.

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