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An English voice

by [Paul Dean](#)

On the poetry & criticism of Edward Thomas.

On Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, at 7:36 A.M., 2nd Lieutenant Philip Edward Thomas, of the Royal Garrison Artillery, was killed by a German shell at Arras. For the world at large, there was nothing to connect this sadly commonplace addition to the war's death toll with the publication, the previous December, of *Six Poems* by "Edward Eastaway," whose larger collection, *Poems*, appeared posthumously, in October, under the same pseudonym. Only with *Last Poems* (1918) was it revealed that Edward Eastaway and Edward Thomas were the same person, whose death at the age of thirty-nine was a grievous loss to English letters. One of the last poems he wrote, "Lights Out," is spoken by someone on "the borders of sleep," imaged as a healing oblivion, a forest (one of Thomas's recurring symbols) which he gladly enters:

...

Paul Dean is Head of English at Summer Fields School, Oxford. He was born in Stockport, England, in 1953 and was educated at the University of Manchester, from which he received the degrees of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. From 1979 to 1999 he taught English in independent senior schools in Manchester and Portsmouth. Dr. Dean has been a contributor to *The New Criterion* since 1994. His work has appeared in many other publications, among them *Essays in Criticism*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, the *London Times Literary Supplement*, *The Use of English*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Times*. For ten years he was a contributor to *The Year's Work in English Studies* and for five years a member of its editorial board. He is an International Advisory Editor of the Dutch journal *English Studies*, for which he also writes an annual survey-review of works of literary theory, history and criticism. In 2000 he was invited to become a Founding Fellow of the English Association in recognition of his services to the teaching profession.

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